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The Development of Indigenous Counseling in Contemporary Confucian Communities

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In view of the limitations of mainstream Western psychology, the necessity of indigenous psychology for the development of global community psychology is discussed in the context of multiculturalism. In addition to this general introduction, four articles underlying a common theme were designed to discuss (a) various types of value conflicts between Confucian cultural heritage and Western individualism in an age of globalization; (b) the psychometric approach for measuring collectivistic conflict; (c) a counseling model of situational self-relation coordination for Chinese clients to handle interpersonal conflicts; and (d) the psychotherapeutic implications of various self-cultivation practices originating from the cultural traditions of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The articles in this special issue may contribute to the development of indigenous counseling practice in multicultural Chinese communities.

As a consequence of rapid changes in telecommunications, transportation, and international trade, the world has become a fabled global village (McLuhan, 1968, 1989) where human beings are forced to encounter people from diverse cultural backgrounds. What happens to a small group of people in one corner of the world may affect the well-being of others at a distant geographic location. The formation of a global village and the rise of the multiculturalism movement urge psychologists to reconsider the adequacy of their knowledge and competencies in helping people to effectively meet the challenges in their daily lives (Douce, 2004).

A review of psychology's history reveals that, as a science, psychology is a by-product of Western cultural tradition (Gergen, Gulerce, Lock, & Misra,

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1996). Psychology has been constructed on the core assumptions of individualism and scientism (Sloan, 1996), with an academic emphasis on such values as independence, objectivity, rationality, and universal truths (Marsella, 1998). Nevertheless, since the U.S. military triumph in World War II and its long-term political dominance over other parts of the world, the ideology of individualism and scientism has spread, penetrated, and dominated the international academic community of psychology (Mehryar, 1984).

However, more countries have been incorporated into the global economic system of capitalism, and their people may have accepted Western or U.S. products, lifestyles, and values; notwithstanding, this acceptance of Western or U.S. ideals does not imply wholesale Westernization. The rise of multiculturalism along with the trend of globalization raises social scientists' awareness that cultural change is a dynamic process of amalgamation and synthesis in which numerous cultural heritages, with a strong preservation of historical and institutional foundations, may be resistant to change in the face of acculturation to Western influences (Enriquez, 1981; Sinha, 1986).

Even though Western cultural values and lifestyles are spreading on a global scale and creating a false belief that Westernized global psychology is scientific and valid everywhere (Moghaddam, 1987; Paranjpe, 1984), a growing number of non-Western psychologists find that the scientific knowledge of Western psychology is mostly irrelevant and meaningless to people residing in non-Western cultural context (Marsella, 1998). Large-scale imposition of Western models of thought through political-economic pressure on non-Western societies may result in not only the pseudo-understanding of the people from alien cultures but also the colonization of the social scientists in non-Western societies (Hwang, 2005; see Misra's section in Gergen et al., 1996).

Cultural-Bound Assumptions of Western Psychology

Such criticisms urge U.S. psychologists to reflect on the ethnocentrism, and its accompanying cultural encapsulation (Wrenn, 1962, 1985), prevailing in the U.S. community of psychology, which may result in serious consequences in the profession of counseling psychology. Lewis-Fernandez and Kleinman (1994) indicated that the profession of mental health in North America is rooted in three core values: first, the egocentricity of the self, which conceptualizes individuals as autonomous and self-contained units of action whose behaviors are determined by one's configuration of

personality traits and internal attributes; second, mind–body dualism, which separates psychological problems from physical problems; and, third, culture as a set of beliefs superimposed a posteriori on an invariant bedrock reality of biology.

All three core values are actually culture-bound assumptions that may not be applicable in non-Western cultures. However, those assumptions are taken for granted by many professionals of mental health in the United States and in other, non-Western countries. Such assumptions imply that U.S. counseling psychologists are the primary providers of global mental health services. U.S. psychology must be more advanced and competent than psychologies in other countries. Therefore, U.S. counseling theories and measures can be packaged for export to other countries without any validity check (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003; Pedersen, 2003). They evaluate other people's ideas and behaviors from the U.S. vantage point. By disregarding cultural differences, such theories and measure develop a false consensus postulating that behaviors described in U.S. textbooks of psychology are most typical of how all human beings should react under the same circumstances.

Global Community Psychology and Indigenous Psychology

All those attitudes can be viewed as manifestations of scientific racism (Sue & Sue, 1999), as originated from an attitude of self-absorption (Rosenzweig, 1984) and even xenophobia (Sexton & Misiak, 1984) prevailing in the U.S. community of psychology. Thus, U.S. psychology has been criticized as being myopic, Anglo-centric, and isolationist (Cheung, 2000; Leong & Ponterotto, 2003; Trimble, 2001). To save the international community from mainstream self-indulgence in scientific racism, some psychologists began to promote ideals of multiculturalism (e.g., Pedersen, 1999). They argued that ethnocultural diversity may provide beneficial options and choices in cultures, psychologies, and worldviews to human survival while addressing challenges from volatile environments. Any attempt to homogenize the world's precious cultural diversity, just like that to plunder our planet's biological diversity, should not be encouraged (Henderson, 1966).

Marsella (1998) advocated the development of a global community psychology, defined as a set of premises, methods, and practices for psychology based on multicultural, multidisciplinary, and multinational foundations that

are global in interest, scope, relevance, and applicability. To achieve this goal, researchers from different regions around the world should be encouraged to explore their indigenous traditions and characteristics of different cultural groups. In their explorations, researchers worldwide should work on academic or research problems that are mutually relevant in diverse local contexts. The multiplicity of indigenous psychologies constructed by multiple paradigms may enrich the psychological discipline (Gergen et al., 1996), facilitate the progress of a global community psychology (Marsella, 1998), and enable the counseling professionals to enhance their global perspectives (Leong & Blustein, 2000) and multicultural awareness (Pedersen, 2000).

As a profession begun in the United States, counseling psychology has a long history of interest and involvement in globalization issues. *The Counseling Psychologist* has published a number of articles on related topics in its International Forum since the mid-1980s. *The Counseling Psychologist* has recently dedicated whole issues to topics on the globalization and internationalization of counseling psychology (January 2000 and July 2003, respectively). In view of the coping necessary with the trend of globalization, many leaders in this field proposed a wealth of ideas for enhancing cross-cultural competencies in counseling psychology (Marsella & Pedersen, 2004). Douce (2004) listed the educational institutions as the first stakeholder in the globalization of counseling psychology. Heppner (2006) summarized a number of training suggestions for increasing cross-cultural awareness and knowledge: immersion experiences in other cultures through study-abroad programs; formal course work in cross-cultural training; second-language requirement; working with international students and colleagues; and seeking information about other countries by reading international novels, viewing international movies, and reading various news sources.

Leong and Ponterotto (2003) argued that to internationalize the counseling psychology curriculum in the United States, its training programs have an obligation to instill in their trainees a global perspective by exposing them to a spectrum of psychological literature from around the world. S. A. Leung (2003) encouraged international counseling psychologists in different regions of the world to submit and publish their scholarly work in U.S. journal outlets, whereas Marsella and Pedersen (2004) suggested that U.S. journals invite more international editors, authors, and advertisers to create a friendly atmosphere for international researchers to submit their descriptive, conceptual, and empirical articles. Recently, Kwan and Gerstein (2008) echoed their advocacy by asking international scholars to contribute articles to *The Counseling Psychologist* on such specific topics as descriptions of mental health treatment practices and culturally indigenous practices around the world.

Emergence of Indigenous Psychology

Meanwhile, the epistemological crisis caused by the blind adoption of Western paradigms of research has been made apparent by a growing number of non-Western psychologists. These psychologists are dissatisfied with the fact that many findings are derived from replicating the Western paradigm and are thus mostly irrelevant to, or inadequate for, understanding the mentality of people in non-Western countries (Enriquez, 1981; Mehryar, 1984; Sinha, 1986).

As such, a movement to indigenize psychology has emerged since the early 1980s in many scientific communities of non-Western countries, including the Philippines, Japan, India, Taiwan, Korea, and Hong Kong (e.g., Kim & Berry, 1993; Kim, Yang, & Hwang, 2005). Many indigenous psychologists advocate the scientific study of human behavior and psychological process within a culturally meaningful context (Adair, Puhon, & Vohra, 1993; Ho, 1998; Kim & Berry, 1993; Kim, Park, & Park, 2000). Such a context is achieved by using a bottom-up model-building paradigm (Kim, 2000) to develop a culturally appropriate psychology (Azuma, 1984)—a psychology based on indigenous realities (Enriquez, 1993), one that relies on native values, concepts, belief system, problem methods, and other resources (Adair et al., 1993; Ho, 1998).

Chinese Cultural Tradition

The indigenization movement urges psychologists to reflect on the influence of their cultural traditions over their daily behaviors. Broadly speaking, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism are three major cultural traditions that have profound influence on Chinese daily life.

Confucianism

Confucianism was founded by Confucius (551-479 BCE), an educator who is respected as China's greatest sage and teacher for his contribution to Chinese civilization during the Warring States period (772-484 BCE). During Confucius's lifetime, feudal princes frequently attempted to usurp the throne. Therefore, Confucius decided to restore social order by advocating an ethical system based on the core value of benevolence (*ren*; Fingarette, 1972; Yao, 2000). Benevolence emphasizes the maintenance of interpersonal harmony by following the principle of respecting superiors (those

above one in the hierarchy) and the principle of favoring the intimate (those with whom one has a blood relationship; Hwang, 2001).

The utility of Confucianism for maintaining social order was soon realized by Chinese rulers after Confucius's death. The Martial Emperor (157-87 BCE) of the Han dynasty designated Confucian doctrine as the official orthodoxy for subordinates to learn from (Shryock, 1966). Confucian classics were the main content of civil service examinations from 690 AD, during the Tang dynasty (618-904 AD), until the exam was abolished in 1905 (Menzel, 1953; Miyazaki, 1976). For more than 1,000 years, *Analects*, a collection of Confucian sayings, has been used as material for teaching Chinese children in school. Because Confucian ethics and wisdom have influenced many East Asian cultural groups in China, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, they are generally termed as Confucian societies with varying ranges of magnitude.

Taoism

Taoism was first proposed by Lao-tzu, a contemporary of Confucius believed to have been a librarian serving the kingdom of Zhou during its decline. According to his primary work, the *Tao-Te Ching*, *Tao* is the way of nature. *Te* refers to morality, or the path (way) to be followed by human beings (Wong, 1990). Lao-tzu's *Tao-Te Ching* suggests that each element in every system within the universe is composed of two opposing components: *yin* and *yang*. These two components are kept in balance by the operation of *qi* (De Groot, 1912).

During the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 AD), the cosmology of Taoism transformed into a philosophy of polar opposites: *yin* and *yang* and the five evolutive phases (*wu-hsing*). In this philosophy, elements of all systems in the universe are believed to correspond to the five transformative phases: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. The fundamental operating rule of the world is the seeking of balance and harmony between humans and nature, between humans and society, and within each human being (Kohn, 2004). With this philosophy, Taoists developed geomancy (*feng-shui*), which is a theory of fate, a system of Chinese medicine, and a therapy of life and death. To maintain a person's well-being, all these systems of knowledge can be viewed as an ontological therapy of culture constructed on Taoist cosmology.

Buddhism

Buddhism originated in India around 500 BCE and flourished there for many centuries, gradually spreading to other East Asian countries. There

are two forms of Buddhism: the Theravada form, found in Southeast Asian countries, and the Mahayana form, found in East Asian countries (Robinson, Johnson, & Wawrytko, 1997). The Theravada ideal is the *arhat*, one who has severed all ties to family, friends, and possessions to become totally free of the world. The Mahayana ideal is the *bodhisattva*, or enlightened being. A bodhisattva is a highly compassionate being who has vowed to remain in this world until all others have been freed from the chains of suffering.

Buddha is not God in the Christian sense. Buddha is an enlightened human being, and human beings are Buddhas who are not yet enlightened. Anybody who is enlightened with the teachings of Buddhism may become a Buddha or a bodhisattva. A human being grappling with a personal problem can ask for help from one of the Buddhas or bodhisattvas described in the scriptures (*sutras*; Das, 1987). Rather than simply encourage belief in its teachings, Buddhism encourages everyone to learn to become a Buddha and to practice the bodhisattvas' way of kindness and mercy.

Confucian Relationalism

In view of Confucianism's profound influence on Chinese culture, a series of theoretical models on Confucian relationalism has been constructed for empirical research in social psychology. These models include the structure of Confucianism (Hwang, 2001), the influence of Confucian ethics on Chinese social behavior (Hwang, 1997–1998, 2000), and the rules of social interaction with people of varying interpersonal ties in Chinese society (Hwang, 1987).

When Confucians were contemplating the ontology of the universe, they did not conceive a transcendent creator as Christians did. Instead, they recognized the simple fact that people's lives are the continuation of their parents' physical lives, just as their descendants' lives are derivatives of their own. Therefore, Confucians adhered to the core value of filial piety and so advocated the ideal of "kind father and filial son" as a prototype to model the relationship between a "benevolent king and loyal minister" (Hwang, 1999). A feudal ruler should rein the state as a father runs his family.

A person who assumes the obligations of Confucian ethics toward relationships in one's social network may manifest the characteristics of a relational self (Andersen & Chen, 2002; S. Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006). Just as people are embedded in family and larger social systems

(Nutt, 2007), an adolescent needs to be socialized to become a relational self, or an interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Parents have the responsibility of nurturing and educating their offspring, whereas children have the obligation to, in return, fulfill their parents' expectations as they grow up. The person has internalized not only the interactional rule of respecting the superior but also the social skills of maintaining interpersonal harmony.

As a result of this internalization and the effects of globalization, East Asian communities all over the world have been going through dramatic social, economic, and political changes in the past two decades. Asian youth have been increasingly exposed to the Western culture of individualism. Western styles of education require them to independently think and make judgments. Young people are encouraged by their peers to pursue personal goals. Thus, culturally Chinese people may experience various kinds of interpersonal conflict that can be conceptualized as a psychological struggle between the relational self (or interdependent self) and the independent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This may be particularly true within the family.

Goals of Indigenous Counseling Psychology

The psychosocial disturbances caused by value conflicts, as well as the therapeutic practices of self-cultivation born from East Asian cultural tradition, have long existed in Confucian societies. The indigenization movement urges psychologists to (a) employ culturally sensitive empathy to study cases of interpersonal conflict in local societies, (b) conceptualize the cases of interpersonal conflict and construct indigenous theories for understanding the local phenomena, (c) develop instruments for measuring the local phenomena, and (d) devise new methods of psychotherapy by referring to resources from all the available cultural heritages.

The five articles in this special issue represent academic works in response to this indigenization movement, as made by a group of counseling psychologists with strong cultural awareness working within Chinese communities in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States. The first article provides a cultural and historical background for understanding the emergence of indigenous psychology in East Asian societies. Given that a client in a contemporary Chinese community tends to experience conflict between the value orientation of pursuing personal development and that of maintaining harmonious social relations, the second article in this issue,

by Leung and Chen (2009), proposes a conceptual framework to classify various types of value conflicts. Using this framework to identify several multicultural themes in Chinese communities in Asia, the authors discuss how the counseling psychology profession can develop indigenous models of theory and practice and how indigenization of the counseling psychology profession can be carried out at the local, national, and culture-specific levels.

Psychologists in Chinese communities and the United States have attempted to empirically study this issue through psychometrics. As such, the third article, by Kwan (2009), reviews a number of psychological instruments developed in Chinese societies and the United States and so observes that cultural conflict is a common theme in the conceptualization of the psychological and personality functioning of Chinese in home communities, as well as Asian Americans. In Chinese societies, the reviewed instruments assess conflicts between traditionality and modernity (Yang, 1998, 2003), face and family orientation, graciousness and meanness, self and social/social sensitivity orientation (Cheung et al., 1996; Cheung & Leung, 1998), and the tendency to live up to parental expectations (Wang & Heppner, 2002). In the United States, counseling psychologists developed instruments to assess internal–external ethnic identity conflicts among Chinese immigrants (Kwan, 2000), family acculturation conflicts among Asian Americans (Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000), and cultural value conflicts among South Asian women (Inman, Ladany, Constantine, & Morano, 2001). Kwan (2009) contends that collectivistic values are Confucius virtues resistant to change and so proposes the construct of collectivistic conflict to better characterize conflicts induced by societal Westernization. To add to the information gathered by face-to-face interviews, these instruments can assess the psychological conflicts experienced by culturally Chinese clients who are undergoing acculturation in various societies.

Self-Cultivation

Cultivation (*shiou-yeang*) literally means “rectification and nurturing.” All traditional religions of China encourage an individual to cultivate oneself by various means of practice. However, the goals of self-cultivation are completely different, depending on the doctrine (Chang & Hwang, 2009 [this issue]).

In Confucianism, self-cultivation means to rectify oneself as a morally upright man or woman by assuming one’s ethical obligations, which implies

that the person may undertake psychological burden caused by social restraint, interpersonal conflict, emotional disturbance, or frustration. The fourth article, by P. H. Chen (2009), traces the conflicts of value orientations to the Confucian cultural tradition and the Western culture of individualism; it analyzes various kinds of interpersonal conflict prevailing in contemporary Chinese society; and, accordingly, it develops a counseling model of situational self-relation coordination for clients with interpersonal conflict. Paradoxically, under the instruction of a counseling psychologist, the process of training oneself with the skill of self-relation coordination can be conceptualized as Confucian self-cultivation.

In direct opposition to self-cultivation in Confucianism, self-cultivation in Taoism aims to emancipate an individual from the ethical bounds of this world. With the analogy of a newborn baby, self-cultivation is performed by following the way of nature and returning to the state of the authentic self. Buddhism advocates the practices of self-cultivation by enlightening the emptiness of this world as experienced through one's sensory organs. Enlightening the emptiness of the world includes the transitory existence of oneself, which is essentially the nonself. All these practices of self-cultivation—especially, those in Taoism and Buddhism—can very well be used to develop culturally sensitive psychotherapies to alleviate suffering. The fifth article, by Chang and Hwang (2009), discusses practices of self-cultivation as originating from the cultural traditions of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, as well as their therapeutic implications for persons living in contemporary Confucian societies.

Conclusion

Theories and practices of mainstream counseling psychology have been constructed primarily on the presumed ideal of individualism, whereas theories and research paradigms of indigenous Chinese psychology are developed on the presumption of relationalism. The sound development of multicultural counseling implies not only a philosophical switch but also a hybrid of two great cultural traditions. Various models of culturally sensitive psychotherapies had been developed with reference to the psychological disturbances prevailing in Confucian communities with different sociopolitical environments, including Morita therapy in prewar Japan, Naikan therapy after World War II, constructive living therapy for Asian Americans, the counseling model of self-relation coordination in contemporary Taiwan, and Chinese Taoist cognitive psychotherapy in the People's

Republic of China (Chang & Hwang, 2009). Articles in the special issue provide examples of alternative mental health services for cross-cultural counseling. They may contribute to the forming of an appropriate conceptualization of training programs for multicultural counseling in the United States. Such training programs may improve the quality of serving immigrants with Chinese cultural heritage, and they may well prepare international students to return their home countries and provide culturally relevant mental health services. Such training may eventually contribute to the development of multicultural counseling in postmodern Confucian societies where traditional cultural heritages coexist side by side with various forms of new cultural patterns imported from foreign cultures.

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