

# INTERCULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY



EDITED BY  
WENDY WEN LI, DARRIN HODGETTS,  
AND KOONG HEAN FOO



# ASIA-PACIFIC PERSPECTIVES ON INTERCULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Today's world is more interconnected and interdependent than ever before. Within the context of globalisation and the associated increased contact between diverse groups of people, the psychology of culture is more relevant than ever.

*Asia-Pacific Perspectives on Intercultural Psychology* brings together leading researchers from 11 countries to showcase the innovative, evolving, and diverse approaches that epitomise the development of the psychology of culture across the Asia-Pacific region. The contributors provide a range of examples of how different psychologies of culture can inform engagements with a range of psychological issues. Central to each chapter is the relationship between local cultures and ways of being, and knowledge production practices, imported theories, and methods from the global discipline. It is the resulting tensions and opportunities for dialogue that are central to the further development of intercultural psychology as a diverse scholarly arena.

This important work argues the case for a combination of etic and emic approaches to theory, research, and practice in psychology, that this is foundational to the development of intercultural perspectives and more comprehensive understandings of both the universal and local elements of human experience and psychological phenomena today.

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# 1

## AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH TO THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CULTURE

*Wendy Wen Li, Darrin Hodgetts, and Koong Foo*

Today's world is more interconnected and interdependent than ever before. Within the context of globalisation and the associated increased contact between diverse groups of people, the psychology of culture is more relevant than ever. Although issues of culture are at the fore today, psychology has a long history of responding to issues of cultural difference and the diversity of human experience, thought, and action (Hwang, 2016; Kim, Yang, & Hwang, 2006; Liu & Liu, 1999). Intercultural psychology has been in existence for some time. Internationally, several psychology departments provide undergraduate and graduate courses and programmes dedicated to researching and understanding intercultural relations, intercultural communication, and intercultural health (James Cook University, 2017; University of British Columbia, 2017; University of London, 2017; Victoria University, 2018). Advocates of intercultural psychology propose that when groups of individuals of different cultures (e.g. Western and Eastern) come into continuous contact both physically and virtually, these cultures often change in particular ways and in some respects come to co-create one another. As such, the West is in the East and the East is in the West, albeit to varying degrees today. That is, of course, not to propose that this co-creation has been some kind of democratic exchange among equals. In reality, the discipline of psychology in its dominant form was developed in Europe and North America and then exported with varying degrees of success to other countries and cultural contexts. Psychology has been implicated in processes of symbolic colonisation in contexts such as India (Sinha, 1994) and the Philippines (Pe-Pua & Perfecto-Ramos, 2012). This has led to some efforts to adapt international theories and methods to diverse settings as well as the emergence of alternative indigenous psychologies that are unique to these contexts.

Today, the rapidly evolving domain of intercultural psychology is being driven by multiple imperatives both within and outside the discipline. Primary driving forces for the evolution of this area of scholarship are scientific curiosity and broader theoretical and methodological trends in the discipline. This has led to the development of core orientations towards cross-cultural (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002), cultural (Bhabha, 1994; Cole, 1996), and indigenous psychologies (Hodgetts et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2006). A key driver in efforts to indigenise psychology has been the issue of relevance. Many imported approaches that work somewhat better in advanced capitalist societies such as the United States are less relevant for addressing pressing issues of inequality and hardship in contexts such as India and Latin America (Hodgetts et al., 2019). What continues to emerge is an array of approaches that enable psychologists to engage with local needs as well as respond to larger global trends.

Generally speaking, there are three overlapping approaches to the psychology of culture: cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous psychologies. Cross-cultural psychology is the dominant approach globally and is defined as the study of similarities and differences in individual psychological and social functioning across various cultures and ethnic groups. The methodological orientation of this approach is towards quantitative cross-cultural comparisons. Scholars often engage in research procedures that have been established in one culture (often the United States) to then make comparisons with another culture or cultures such as the Philippines or India. Such efforts have produced some interesting insights into cultural differences and the extent to which specific values are shared across cultures. A key criticism of such work is that it treats North American theoretical ideas and methods as normative and seeks to test these with diverse cultural groups through psychometric comparisons.

In contrast to cross-cultural psychology, cultural psychology places less emphasis on cross-cultural comparisons. Culture is often approached qualitatively as a way of knowing and being in the world. Cultural psychologists consider issues arising from the histories of contact between particular groups (indigenous people and members of settler societies) as well as the contemporary everyday activities of particular cultures more on their own terms rather than those of outsiders.

In many respects, indigenous psychologies can be seen as variations of cultural psychology with a core focus on indigenous cosmologies, world views, and understandings of human relations that extend to those involving inequitable power differentials between colonising and colonised groups. These psychologies have been developed in colonial contexts and often involve local indigenous peoples working to retain and develop their own distinct psychological knowledge, theory, and methods of inquiry and practice. Scholarship involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods as well as a strong emphasis on practice and ensuring the cultural competence of psychologist, regardless of background, to work constructively with indigenous peoples.

While the unique contributions made by scholars engaged in cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous psychologies are worth acknowledging, it is apparent

that one of the consequences of the distinct orientations of these approaches is a fragmentation of knowledge of the psychology of culture as a whole. Distinctions between these approaches that have become more pronounced in recent years include epistemological divides between positivist and constructionist stances; methodological divides between quantitative and qualitative strategies; and the separation of scholarly outputs into different journals, edited collections, and conferences. It is recognised that engaging in specialised scholarly enclaves can be useful for those involved. However, the development of an intercultural psychology that is informed by all three traditions constitutes an attempt to bring the cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous psychologies back into dialogue. This book is offered in an effort to showcase insights from all three traditions and tries to bring some coherence to work on culture in psychology in the global south.

Despite considerable advances in the understanding of intercultural relationships and the world views and practices of indigenous peoples, there is surprisingly little scholarly work that provides an overview of the field. There are few collections that attempt to draw together key issues of investigation and the corresponding diversity of approaches across different cultural contexts into a single edited collection. It is timely that the innovative and evolving approaches to the psychology of culture from across countries in the Asian-Pacific region are brought together into an edited collection. A core purpose of this edited collection is to showcase some of the diversity within intercultural psychology across the Asian-Pacific region. Contributors have been asked to reflect upon the influence of various culturally informed theories on how culturally informed psychological research is conducted in their respective countries of origin. The collection is also designed to foreground insights from across cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous psychologies. In doing so, the authors fully acknowledge the theoretical and methodological divides that often distinguish these approaches. Each approach does comprise a domain of scholarly conversation. While it is important to acknowledge the unique contributions made by scholars engaged in cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous psychologies, this collection is designed to move beyond the fragmentation of knowledge that is apparent in the de-compartmentalising of these approaches into specific areas. This book manifests an attempt to bring the cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous psychologies back into dialogue without trying to squeeze these contributions into an overly tidy 'approach' to culture in psychology. Differences remain between cross-cultural and indigenous psychologies, as should be the case.

In this collection, the scholarly diversity evident in cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous psychologies has been embraced. The intention is not to undermine the value of different approaches. Rather, the ways in which these approaches to the psychology of culture can inform knowledge of contemporary psychological issues across the countries of the Asian-Pacific region are showcased. After all, different approaches to the psychology of culture can yield different ways of thinking about, comprehending, and responding to particular cultural contexts

within which social phenomena manifest. In showcasing the different approaches used by intercultural psychologists in the Asian-Pacific region, the authors are not seeking triangulation to arrive at an optimal solution. Instead, the authors are seeking to broaden horizons, synthesise aspects of the field, and enable further developments in the psychology of culture. The authors' effort to bring distinct strands of the psychology of culture into conversation is evident in the structure of this edited collection.

## Chapter overview

In Chapter 2, Li and He offer an account of 'Intercultural Psychology in the Greater China Region'. These authors discuss intercultural psychology in China in the context of a disciplinary history that has been shaped by Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism as well as the importation of Euro-American, Japanese, and Soviet psychologies. Indigenous Chinese Psychology in the Greater China Region is reviewed in the context of an account of some of the limitations of European psychological theories and methods that originate in and dominate contexts such as the United States. The authors advocate the use of mixed methods that incorporate aspects of quantitative and qualitative approaches to inform the further development of indigenous Chinese psychology.

Chapter 3 focuses on 'The Psychology of Culture in Japan'. In this chapter Takamatsu and Takai discuss the chronological evolution of the psychology of culture and personality in Japan, again emphasising the combination of local traditions alongside imported approaches from Europe and the United States. The development of indigenous Japanese theories of *fudoron*, *amae*, *tateshakai*, *kanjinshugi* demonstrates the inadequacy of traditional reductionist research methods in tapping Japanese-ness in cross-cultural research. In also raising concerns regarding the inadequacies of imported methods for knowledge production, the chapter emphasises the need for adapting psychology to local cultural ways of being and interacting in order to ensure its relevance of local issues.

The focus shifts again in Chapter 4 to the role of collectivism in the development of indigenous psychology in South Korea. Park and Han discuss Korean collectivism from an emic perspective. These authors outline the early development of the psychology of culture in Korea, and then review cultural theories in Korean cultural and indigenous psychologies. Two aspects of Korean collectivism are illuminated. The first relates to interpersonal contexts in which Koreans tend to be highly relational, family-oriented, and affectionate. The second relates to group behaviours as collective entities in which Koreans tend to show familial group attachment and strong group dynamics, accepting social/cultural change in coherent forms. The authors advocate the integration of indigenous views with general findings in cross-cultural literature in order to extend present knowledge of the study of intercultural psychology for Korea.

Chapter 5 focuses on Singapore. In this chapter Lee and Foo discuss the initial development of Western psychology in Singapore and subsequent challenges

and opportunities for developing indigenous psychologies within the island state. The Chinese indigenous healing system is presented as the main example used to initiate the process of indigenisation in Singaporean psychology. The authors propose that cultural psychology informs the paradigms and methodologies of indigenous psychologies that draw on local resources to construct psychological knowledge.

In Chapter 6, Singh engages with the role of Indian thought in Indian Psychology. The chapter briefly maps the development of psychology in India, during and after British rule. The review on the traditional roots of Indian psychology in Indian society highlights the important features of the dominant religions of the region. Principles that are considered central in shaping the Indian mind and determining Indian work behaviour are also discussed. Drawing from these international and local influences on the discipline in India, the chapter presents a model of an Indian worker which, while being influenced by the context and material gains, is both collectivist and individualist in orientation.

Chapter 7 focuses on issues surrounding the negotiation of Filipino identities and intercultural encounters. Ong and Yacat trace the development of psychology in the Philippines, from its American-influenced beginnings to a plural endeavour that encompasses indigenous and critical dimensions. Past and present attempts in the Philippines to expand the theoretical and methodological toolbox to address questions around the nature and processes of identity and intercultural relations in a globalised world are also examined. These authors showcase the combination of insights from several cultural traditions into contemporary identity negotiation.

It is in Chapter 8 that Muluk, Hudiyan, and Shadiqi consider the development of the psychology of culture in Indonesia. The initial focus is on the historical development of Indonesian psychology and explorations of culture out from a predominantly European colonial perspective to more of an indigenous orientation. This development is tied strongly to religious influences. The authors propose that more theoretical and empirical work needs to be conducted in order to build a grand theory of Indonesian psychology of culture. They also propose that it will be difficult to come up with a single all-encompassing account, because Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago, has extremely diverse ethnic groups and immense cultural diversity that cannot be captured by any one model or approach.

Intercultural psychology in Sri Lanka affords the focus of Chapter 9. In this chapter, Cassim considers the unique multi-ethnic and cultural diversity of Sri Lanka and how this context shapes the world views and practices of local people. The author illustrates how Buddhist cultural practices became central to how local survivors built resilience in the face of grief and loss. It is argued that a responsive psychology is one that does not pathologise such practices and in fact works with them as a means of connecting with and helping people cope with such events. Cassim argues that disaster psychology needs to acknowledge and engage more with such culture practices in order to become more relevant and effective in such settings.



Chapter 10 explores indigenous psychology in Australia. In this chapter M. Adams, Y. Adams, and Drew consider issues of marginalisation and disenfranchisement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through colonisation. These authors recount how a distinctive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Indigenous psychology has emerged despite this oppression. The principles and practices of Australian Indigenous psychology are outlined with reference to the establishment in 2008 of the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association. A number of key theoretical and methodological frameworks to guide decolonising practice in intercultural psychology in Australia are also presented. The authors conclude with an excerpt from the Australian Psychological Society's 2016 apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

In Chapter 11, Groot, Le Grice, and Nikora consider the indigenising of psychology in New Zealand from a Maori perspective. The authors set out the relevance of Maori approaches to psychology for theory research and practice in New Zealand. They emphasise approaches that are rooted in Maori world views, which emphasise issues of balance, continuity, unity, and purpose. The authors illustrate how Maori cultural values and belief systems are applied in psychological research and practice. Particular attention is given to Kauppapa Maori methodology, which reflects the application of Maori cultural philosophies and practices in contemporary knowledge production and practice in psychology.

Chapter 12 takes us to the shores of Samoa with a focus on a Pacific-Indigenous psychology. Alefaio-Tugia notes that psychology remains underdeveloped in Samoa and offers recommendations for how the discipline might be developed not only in Samoa but also in the places, such as New Zealand, to which Samoan people have migrated. Central to this development is the importance of establishing intercultural 'dialogue' between the global discipline and the fabric of culture that Samoan people have developed and that which remains strong in the Samoan language, customs, and beliefs. A Pacific-Indigenous researcher paradigm is outlined to highlight the need for diversity in approaches to research.

The book is concluded in Chapter 13, which offers reflections on the collection and possible future directions for theory and research into issues of culture and psychology. Li, Hodgetts, and Chhabra re-emphasise the importance of bringing together evolving approaches to the psychology of culture from across the Asia-Pacific region. The chapter reflects on the breadth of work contained in the preceding chapters as well as focusing in on key issues that have emerged across the collection. Emphasis is placed on the importance of dialogue across the necessary plurality of approaches, which is showcased by contributions to this edited collection.

As well as notable differences across the different traditions that have emerged in the psychologies that now inhabit the Asia Pacific Region, there are also historical processes that are evidently shared across many nation states. For example, a common trajectory in the development of psychology in several countries

includes a colonial period where local knowledge is either ignored or suppressed in favour of imported approaches from the global north. This then leads to varying periods of adjustment and attempts to reinvigorate and integrate local traditions into psychology with varying degrees of success. The contributors to this book appear to be also engaged in a double act of making contributions to the vitality of the global discipline while also resisting losing themselves and their participants culturally through imported processes of research and practice. The authors all see the need for embracing aspects of the global tradition while striving to render psychology relevant and responsive to local needs and diversities – a difficult balancing act indeed. Finally, contributing authors showcase the possibilities for combining different traditions of inquiry into issues of culture in psychology and in doing so exemplify the complexities of contemporary work in this field.

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