

Psychology in the Three Worlds

As Reflected by the Crisis in Social Psychology and the Move Toward Indigenous Third-World Psychology

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ABSTRACT: *The three worlds in which psychologists research and practice are distinguished. The first consists of the United States, the second comprises the other developed nations, and the third is made up of the developing countries. The three worlds have unequal capacities for producing and disseminating psychological knowledge and for shaping psychology; the dominant power is the first world. The crisis in western social psychology is reviewed and is interpreted as partly arising from an attempt by the second world to establish a distinct social psychology, independent of that of the United States. The movement toward a third-world psychology indicates a possible challenge to the domination of first- and second-world psychologies in third-world societies.*

The domain of psychology can be categorized in a number of different ways. A highly useful system for differentiating between orientations in psychology was recently outlined by Kimble (1984), which demonstrated fundamental rifts between scientific and humanistic concerns in psychology. A second approach to categorizing psychology is to do so in terms of "power groups," identifying an elite who enjoy considerable influence and a nonelite who have less power to shape the domain of psychology. Examples of such approaches are those taken by Lubek (1974) and Morawski (1979) in their analyses of power structures in the field of social psychology. An essentially unexplored third way of categorizing psychology is to look beyond the personal characteristics or scope of influence of groups, and to consider the power structure of psychology communities at the global level. From this perspective, it is useful to distinguish between three worlds in which psychologists research and practice. The first world consists of the United States. The second world comprises the other industrialized nations, such as the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and Canada. The third world is made up of the developing nations, such as Bangladesh, Cuba, and Nigeria.

Although from a military point of view, the Soviet Union and the United States are both superpowers, this is not true in the field of psychology. Soviet psychology cannot compare quantitatively with U.S. psychology, nor can it match U.S. psychology in terms of influence on psychology around the globe. Consequently, Soviet psychology is considered here as part of the second world. In the first section of this article, I review the main characteristics of the three worlds.

The dominant position of the first world has not been allowed to go unchallenged. In particular, this challenge has been raised in those areas of psychology that are most directly concerned with sociocultural issues. Although in the areas of psychology that are closer to the natural or life sciences, such as physiological psychology, the possibility of psychological universals is more readily accepted and the validity of transferring psychological knowledge between the three worlds is less likely to be questioned, the situation is different in the realm of social psychology. Mainstream social psychology came under attack partly because it was seen to be grounded in the culture of the United States (Moscovici, 1972). In addition, it is the second world, which is closer to the first world in terms of power and resources, that has raised the main challenge. In the second section of this article, I review the "crisis" in western social psychology and interpret this as being partly the outcome of a rebellion on the part of second-world countries against a "U.S. social psychology."

Finally, I review the move toward an indigenous third-world psychology. Although the exportation of psychological knowledge from the first and second worlds to the third world is increasing, there have recently been serious efforts to evolve a psychology in and of the third world. I wish to share with other researchers my sense of excitement about the prospects of an indigenous third-world psychology, which, I believe, will lead to a genuine extension of psychological knowledge.

The Three Worlds

Although there is little doubt that U.S. psychology is an offshoot and development of western psychology, it is also true that U.S. psychology has expanded to dominate the psychological scene today. There are few important ideas of contemporary psychology that are North American in origin; most originated elsewhere, though they were brought to fruition in the United States. For example, behaviorism, often regarded as being peculiarly North American, has its roots in European sources—Sechenov and his great pupil Pavlov in Russia; Loeb and the "German objectivists"; Lloyd Morgan in England; and on the philosophical side, the logical positivist philosophers of Austria (see Boakes, 1984). Morgan was probably the first to define psychology in terms of behavior (Morgan, 1900). However, although U.S. psychology in general owes a great deal to European sources, it has developed along new lines

monwealth countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, are only the equivalent of 19.7% of the academic psychologists in the United States. The total number of psychological personnel in the United States is estimated to be 102,101, a veritable "army" supported by the world's most extensive research infrastructure (Eichorn & VandenBos, 1985; Stapp et al., 1985). Despite the steady growth of psychology across the globe (Jacobson & Reinert, 1980; Rosenzweig, 1982, 1984; Sexton & Misiak, 1976), the gap between the first and third worlds in terms of the capacity to produce and disseminate psychological knowledge is still considerable.

Given the enormity of the U.S. psychology industry, it is perhaps not surprising that the major publication outlets for psychologists are dominated by the United States. Such a domination is present even in the realm of cross-cultural psychology, in which it might have been assumed that the demands of the discipline would create more room for psychologists attuned to the cultures of second- and third-world societies. Although first-world psychologists clearly recognize the limitations of a monocultural science of psychology (Scheirer & Rogers, 1984), the problem of overcoming this shortcoming remains a major challenge. In addition, the consequences of the monolingual nature of first-world psychology have not received serious attention.

For example, Triandis (1980-1981), the general editor of the *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, claimed in the preface to the handbook, "One of the key factors about psychology is that most of the psychologists who have ever lived and who are now living can be found in the United States" (p. ix). He went on to point out some of the dangers of the present situation: "Cross-cultural psychologists try to discover laws that will be stable over time and across cultures, but the data base excludes the great majority of mankind who live in Asia and the Southern Hemisphere" (p. ix). Having shown an awareness of this problem, Triandis (1980-1981) explained that the editors of the handbook were committed to producing a work with authors from every continent. However, it would have been very fruitful to know more about the challenges faced by the editors, because it proved impossible for them to fulfill this commitment. Out of a total 51 chapters in the six volumes of the handbook, 33 were authored by psychologists from the United States, 17 were authored by psychologists from seven second-world countries, and only 1 was authored by psychologists from a third-world country.

I selected the *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology* for relatively detailed discussion not because it shows the respective influence of the three worlds in an extreme sense. On the contrary, the hierarchy of the three worlds in terms of control over psychological publication outlets could probably be demonstrated more dramatically using another example, such as prestigious journals (e.g., see Morawski, 1979, pp. 40-44). I chose the handbook because the cross-cultural psychologists who participated in its production showed a keen awareness of the relative power of the three worlds and its influence on their field,

yet seemed to face major challenges when attempting to overcome this power differential.

In summary, the three worlds in which psychologists research and practice have markedly different capacities for producing and disseminating psychological knowledge, and for shaping modern psychology. The United States has grown to become the dominant "psychological superpower," although many ideas brought to fruition in the United States originated in the second and third worlds. The domination of the first world seems to extend even to the domain of cross-cultural psychology.

The "Crisis" in Social Psychology

There seems to be general agreement that social psychology has been in a state of crisis during the past 15 years (Armistead, 1974; Elms, 1975; Israel & Tajfel, 1972; Strickland, Aboud, & Gergen, 1974). In an empirical investigation of the crisis, Nederhof and Zwier (1983) found that about one third (34%) of active and influential social psychologists believe that the field should still be regarded as being in a state of crisis. More recently, Steiner (1986) has postulated the disappearance of social psychology. At one level, the factors leading to this crisis might be identified through the points raised by critics of mainstream social psychology. Thus, ideological biases in mainstream social psychology (Armistead, 1974; Billig, 1976, 1982; Sampson, 1981), the dominance of the logical-positivistic approach (Gergen, 1973; Harré & Secord, 1972), and weaknesses in the experimental methods of social psychology (Miller, 1972; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1969) might all be conceived as causes of discontent leading to the crisis.

However, a neglected but important factor influencing the crisis in social psychology has been the attempt by an influential segment of the second world to overcome the domination of the first world and to establish its own distinct social psychology. From this perspective, the movement toward a European social psychology contributed in important ways to the crisis in social psychology, because the "U.S.-dominated" social psychology against which the Europeans were reacting was nothing more or less than the mainstream social psychology coming under attack in the crisis literature. However, I do not wish to imply that U.S. psychologists were not among the critics of mainstream social psychology (e.g., see Gergen, 1973) or that all European social psychologists were critical of mainstream social psychology.

In order to demonstrate that the crisis in social psychology was at least in part the result of power struggles between the first and second worlds, it is necessary to briefly review the history of European social psychology and its links to the crisis in social psychology. However, a note of caution is required, because at times the distinction between the two movements becomes blurred. Indeed, it is often difficult to determine whether European critics were attacking mainstream social psychology or the United States. As Moscovici (1972) has noted, "in much of the European writing there is a tendency to attribute to the Americans most of the responsibility for

Jaspers, 1986, p. 6). Although there has now been considerable progress in evolving a distinct European social psychology (Tajfel, 1984), it is probably true that in terms of influence, the impact of this movement has been mainly limited to the second world.

Despite making some inroads into the first world (e.g., see Brown, 1986, pp. 541-634), European social psychology still has a fairly limited impact on U.S. social psychology. For example, after completing a survey of members of the Society of Experimental Social Psychology (SESP) in the United States, Lewicki (1982) concluded that "SESP members do not know much about European social psychology. 33% have never read *European Journal of Social Psychology* and 43% have never read *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*" (p. 413).

Although its impact on first-world psychology remains modest, European social psychology has become in important ways unique, at least in terms of content. For example, as compared with first-world psychology, European social psychology places greater emphasis on cooperation and conflict, conformity, social psychology of the psychology experiment, philosophy of science and criticisms of science, and racial and ethnic issues (Fisch & Daniel, 1982). Most important, European social psychology ascribes considerable importance to the study of intergroup relations, a topic traditionally neglected by U.S. psychologists (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987). Similarly, issues of ideological significance receive fuller treatment by European researchers. Thus, of the 33 chapters in the European version of the handbook of social psychology, no less than 8 directly concern intergroup relations. In addition, there are major contributions on ideologically significant issues from Billig (1984) on political ideology, Mugny (1984) on minority group influence, Ng (1984) on social psychology and political economy, Kelvin (1984) on unemployment, and Deconchy (1984) on social control and ideological orthodoxy.

Although the content of European social psychology differs in important ways from that of first-world social psychology, the methodology adopted tends to be fundamentally the same. For example, much of the European research on intergroup relations is conducted in the methodological traditions of mainstream experimental social psychology (Tajfel, 1978) and would fit well in the U.S. laboratories. Few attempts have been made to test the findings of this research with real rather than experimentally created groups (Moghaddam & Stringer, 1986). Thus, the claim that "social psychology in Europe is today much more *social* than it was twenty years ago" (Tajfel, Jaspers, & Fraser, 1984, p. 1) is probably more true in terms of content than in terms of methods, although work in the area of social representations promises to become an important exception (Deconchy, 1984; Farr & Moscovici, 1984).

Thus, mainly through the distinct topics that it covers, the *European Journal of Social Psychology* has become the mouthpiece for many second-world countries, including some that might be culturally closer to the

United States than to Europe, such as Canada. Jaspers (1980) has noted that "Canadians for some unknown reason like to publish in the *European Journal*" (p. 425). This liking on the part of Canadian psychologists seems puzzling from one perspective, because many Canadian psychology departments and much of social psychology in Canada appear to be indistinguishable from the social psychology found in the first world. The strong influence of first-world psychology is reflected, for example, in the large numbers of U.S.-trained psychologists in Canada: Of the 25 "stars" of contemporary Canadian psychology, 17 received their PhDs from U.S. universities (Endler & Edwards, 1987).

From another perspective, however, this liking on the part of Canadian psychologists to publish in the *European Journal* is understandable because, in terms of power structures in the three worlds, Canada is closer to Europe than it is to the United States. Consequently, Canadian psychologists have made serious efforts to develop a psychology that is in key respects distinct from that of the United States (Earn & Towson, 1986). Probably the most important examples of these developments are two that have evolved in harmony with Canada's official policy of "bilingualism within a multicultural framework." The first is research on language variations, including psychological aspects of acquisition and retention of languages as well as dilution and abandonment of languages (witness the seminal work of Lambert, as in the collection of Lambert's studies edited by Dil, 1972; also see Genesee, 1987). The second example is social psychological studies of multiculturalism (Berry, 1984; Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977; Lambert, Mermegis, & Taylor, 1985; Moghaddam & Taylor, 1987; Moghaddam, Taylor, & Lalonde, in press; Samuda, Berry, & Laferrière, 1984).

In summary, an important factor leading to the crisis in social psychology has been the movement toward a distinct European social psychology. Dissatisfaction with what was seen as a "U.S.-dominated" mainstream social psychology led some second-world social psychologists to try to evolve an alternative approach. An outcome of this movement has been the establishment of an infrastructure for a European social psychology, as well as the strengthening of "indigenous" social psychology in a number of other second-world countries, such as Canada.

Voices From the Third World

During the last two decades there have been indications that the domination of first- and second-world psychologies in the third world might face a challenge, although it seems too early to determine the seriousness of this challenge. At the root of this movement are an increased awareness and concern among psychologists of all three worlds about the role of psychology in development. At a first level, there has been an exchange of knowledge about the development of psychology in different third-world countries, such as China (Ching, 1980), Turkey (LeCompte, 1980), the Philippines (Lagmay, 1984), Arab Gulf oil-producing states (Melikian, 1984), and Mexico (Diaz-Guerrero, 1984). This exchange of information has

chology in Istanbul in 1986. For example, Kâğıtçıbaşı (1986), a Turkish psychologist, criticized the pitting of the individual against the group as reflecting the world view of western individualistic psychology. However, this dichotomy of individualism and collectivism is just as much a feature of the collectivist ideology of communist societies. Thus, criticisms raised by Kâğıtçıbaşı (1986) are probably equally relevant to the psychologies of both capitalist and communist blocks.

A logical next step after criticizing the view of individualism and collectivism as opposite poles on a single dimension might be to design tests that would treat individualism and collectivism as two independent dimensions. Such tests would yield two scores logically independent of each other: a score for individualism and a score for collectivism. This development would allow individuals to register as both highly individualistic and highly collectivistic, just as tests of androgyny have made it possible for an individual to register as both highly masculine and highly feminine. The emergence of this kind of alternative perspective is likely to be one of the outcomes of an indigenous third-world psychology.

Although indigenous third-world psychology is still in its infancy, there are some indications of the unique lines along which it might develop. Probably the most important factor shaping indigenous third-world psychology is the demand that it contribute directly to the development effort of third-world societies. Consequently, the work of psychologists concerned with indigenous third-world psychology is directed toward tackling major social problems. Examples of this work are the involvement of South American social psychologists in diverse community development projects (Marin, 1975; Varela, 1971), the intervention of social psychologists in agricultural development projects in a number of third-world countries (e.g., Gay, 1983), and research on tribalism and national identity in Africa (Segall, Doornbos, & Davis, 1976). Thus, the indications are that indigenous third-world psychology will develop to be more applied than is psychology in the first and second worlds.

The growth of indigenous third-world psychology will inevitably be accompanied by explorations with novel research methods, and all psychologists will benefit from such exciting developments. The inevitability of such developments arises from third-world populations' special needs from psychology (Moghaddam & Taylor, 1986b). For example, whereas literacy is the norm in the first and second worlds, important sections of third-world populations are illiterate. Consequently, psychologists interested in studying such phenomena as attitudes, attributions, and perceptions among third-world populations will not always be able to rely on conventional research instruments that assume literacy on the part of respondents, such as questionnaires. Although to date only tentative steps have been taken to develop research techniques that are more appropriate for work among illiterate third-world populations, such as Liggett's (1983) use of a pictorial strategy in South Asia, there will probably be some major progress in the next decade.

However, the evolution of a third-world psychology will probably not take place in the same dramatic manner as social psychology did in Europe. This is true partly because of the relatively limited material resources available to third-world psychologists. Moreover, a number of structural characteristics of third-world societies tend to hinder the development of an indigenous third-world psychology (Moghaddam & Taylor, 1985). An important example of these characteristics is the coexistence of a modern sector and a traditional sector within most Third-World societies. The population of the modern sector tends to be more affluent, urban-dwelling, literate, and influenced in important ways by western culture. By contrast, the population of the traditional sector tends to be poor, rural dwelling, illiterate, and traditional in life-style. To date, the impact of psychology has remained limited to the modern sector, and third-world psychologists have found it difficult to apply their skills in the traditional sector, partly because they have not been trained for such a task (Moghaddam & Taylor, *in press*). The future progress of indigenous third-world psychology depends in large part on the success that research and practicing psychologists have in extending psychology to the traditional sector of developing societies.

Concluding Comment

The unequal distribution of resources in the three worlds has had at least two important implications for psychology. First, the resources available for the development of psychology in the three worlds have been markedly different, and this in turn has influenced the characteristics of the psychology developed in each world. Second, the first world has enjoyed a greater capacity for producing and disseminating psychological knowledge and for shaping psychology around the globe. The rapid growth of psychology outside the United States has involved movements toward a distinct European social psychology and an indigenous third-world psychology. However, the important challenge facing such movements, particularly third-world psychology, is to achieve a significant measure of self-reliance without resorting to isolationism.

Just as interdependence between European social psychology and U.S. social psychology is ultimately highly beneficial (Jaspers, 1986), third-world psychology would be far more effective and useful to third-world societies if it developed in cooperation with first- and second-world psychologies, rather than in isolation from them. However, for such development to involve a genuine exchange of knowledge and experience between psychologists in the three worlds, there is a need for greater awareness among all psychologists about the state of psychology around the globe. In particular, U.S. psychologists should continue and extend their explorations of psychology outside the United States. Such explorations should involve a critical questioning of the relations among psychologies in the three worlds. The move toward indigenous psychology outside the first world will be a key factor in ensuring that the call for such a critical questioning does not go unheeded.

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