

### Psychology in the Developing World: An Evaluation Through the Concepts of "Dual Perception" and "Parallel Growth"

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Most psychologists in developed nations are unaware of fundamental differences in the ways their discipline is practiced in developing countries. Those with cross-cultural interests are beginning to sensitize mainstream psychologists to some of the issues through such publications as the *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology* and the *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Triandis, 1980-1981), and awareness of the "insularity" of American psychology is increasing (Kennedy, Scheirer, & Rogers, 1984). But there is still a need for more information exchange, especially in the form of theoretical concepts to help explain the state of the discipline in the developing world.

We introduce two concepts—*dual perception* and *parallel growth*. The term dualism is already well established in the social sciences through such concepts as dual society and dual economy (e.g., Jorgensen, 1967). Dualism refers to the existence of two sectors, one modern and the other tra-

ditional, that coexist in the same society. Our argument is that the modern and traditional sectors of developing countries have evolved very different perceptions of social reality.

The term parallel growth refers to the development of different institutions in the same society that have few or no concrete relations with each other but that are linked to and dependent on institutions outside that society. For example, two psychology departments at neighboring universities in a third world nation may have little impact on each other, but each may be profoundly influenced by two supporting universities from different corners of the developed world.

#### Dual Perception

The historical evolution of dualism in the developing world can be seen as an outcome of two main factors: first, the shaping of colonized nations primarily in response to the needs of Western European and North American powers; second, the unequal distribution of resources within most developing nations. The first factor has led to the growth of dual economies that are heavily dependent on the export of one or a few commodities to the developed world. In addition to the traditional economic structures for dealing with these commodities, a modern sector often exists, instigated by the developed country mainly to facilitate its own economy. Classic contemporary examples of this are the oil-rich Arab states, with technologically advanced petroleum industries that employ only a small minority of the native population and that are separate and vastly different from the traditional economic sector.

The second factor has led to the growth of politically and economically advantaged minorities within each developing nation who have stronger cultural ties with the developed world than with the traditional sector of their own societies. The Indian upper classes, who for generations have been educated at elite English public schools and Oxbridge, are historic examples; the sons of rich Arabs, who are more at home in Los Angeles, London, or Paris than in Mecca, Kuwait, or Sharjah, are a relevant contemporary example. The growth of these powerful minorities in the modern sector has been made possible in part through the introduction of modern technology. Another nec-

essary condition for this growth has been the adoption of "supportive" conceptual systems for viewing the world.

The modern and traditional sectors of the developing world are not only different in terms of material resources, but they also have distinctly different perceptions of social reality. An important influence on this dualism in perceptions has been the adoption of "developed world" social sciences by the modern sector of the third world. Social sciences serve to bind the modern sector to the developed world. For example, Western social science techniques and advisers have been used extensively to manage election campaigns in Venezuela (Salazar, 1984). This has led to new links between the "modernized" political system in Venezuela and the West. The facilities to manage election campaigns according to the developed world model are themselves supportive of modern life-styles in Venezuelan society.

This same dual perception also operates to some extent within developed nations. In North America, for example, psychology as a discipline frequently reflects a view of social reality that represents only a select segment of society, often biased toward white middle-class males. The extensive dualism of developing nations serves as a reminder to psychologists from developed nations of the subtleties of dualism that operate even within their own society.

The social sciences probably entail the most important, systematized set of values and ideas that have been imported to assist the modern sector of developing societies in achieving conceptual systems compatible with those of the developed world. There are at least four important consequences of this process. First, the social sciences reinforce cultural and intellectual links that bind the modern sector of the developing world to the developed world. Second, they are part of the modern educational system, which is also modeled on the developed world and propagated as advanced and superior to traditional systems. Third, access to the social sciences in the developing world is limited to persons educated in the modern sector. Such persons thereby gain the status that provides them with the exclusive right to hold key decision-making positions. Fourth,

the social sciences almost exclusively focus on issues that are important in developed societies.

Dual perceptions in the developing world are enhanced by psychology's limiting its concern to the sphere of the modern sector. For example, in both Africa (Durojaiye, 1984) and the Arab Gulf States (Melikian, 1984) psychological testing in the "modern" educational system is one of the most important responsibilities ascribed to psychologists. Melikian reports that much, if not most, of the psychological research in the Arab Gulf States is carried out by expatriates (p. 71), and the most commonly used texts do not have references to studies carried out in the Arab world (p. 70). Thus, the research examples introduced to students tend to be divorced from the traditional sector. Moreover, there exists in the modern sector a fast-growing system for propagating the view of the world offered by imported psychology. The most important element in this system is an educational chain with several important links. Institutions in developing countries are modeled on those in the developed world and staffed by teachers trained in developed nations (see Altback, 1978, pp. 310-312). Staff members teach courses using methods and materials prepared mainly by and for the developed world, with students who are almost exclusively from the advantaged, modern sector. These students in turn compete to go to developed countries for postgraduate study. Upon returning, they become the final link in the chain by advancing psychological methods and concepts acquired from the developed country in their home country.

However, despite rapid increases in the numbers of institutions, teachers, and students involved, this educational chain has not resulted in fundamental advances in a psychology directly relevant to the third world; for example, see the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reports (1976a, 1976b, 1977, 1980). One reason is that such theories and methods may confront psychology with the harsh realities of life in the traditional sector and harm its fantasy-creating functions. To lessen this risk, even minimal institutional support is denied to developing-world researchers who attempt to investigate such theoretically and practically important problems as mass illiteracy,

malnutrition, extensive poverty, and widespread corruption.

### Parallel Growth

Although dualism has led the modern sector of the developing world away from the traditional sector and closer to the developed world, parallel growth has led to schisms between institutions within the modern sector of developing nations. Parallel growth arises because institutions in close physical proximity to each other in the third world are often influenced by very different models existing in the developed world. This process is clearly evident in the field of education. For example, most universities in developing countries have been established as copies of models in the developed world; this "copying" has occurred not only in organizational structure, curriculums, equipment, and methods, but also in value systems. In establishing educational institutions, the central concern has been to achieve a good copy of the "original" in the developed world.

Nor are certain features of such parallelism limited to relations between the developed and developing worlds. Even within the developed world, it is common to hear academics lament the lack of interaction among departments located in the same city or region. The reasons may have much to do with the tendency for each department in a region to adopt distant "prestige" departments as models. The result may be a subtle form of the same parallel growth so characteristic of the developing countries.

Foreign aid has also encouraged parallel growth, as in the third world. Scientists returning to the third world from developed nations have been encouraged to set up institutions in the image of those in the country where they were trained. They have been supported in these efforts by various aid-granting institutions that have a tendency to support only academic activities endorsed by the ruling regime. For example, in Pakistan almost all research is financed by the government or by "government-approved" foreign agencies, and many researchers "feel free to criticize developments under past governments, but become cautious about current policies and findings that might seem to contradict them" (Sherwani, 1976, p. 39).

Just as important is the role of grant-aiding organizations in strength-

ening links of dependence between the "copy" institutions in the developing world and their "originals" in the developed world. This takes place to the neglect of links between institutions in the developing world societies themselves. For example, although the Arab Gulf States have many libraries that are linked to information retrieval systems in the U.S. via computer terminals (Melikian, 1984, p. 73), authors of Arab psychology books have nowhere near the same amount of contact with each other.

The most important factor responsible for the lack of communication and cooperation between institutions in the developing world is the value system dominating their operation. According to this value system, activities linked to developed world academic institutions have high status, whereas those linked to developing world academic institutions have relatively low status. This value system stipulates that "important" psychological research is reported in English (or as a second-best alternative, in French or German), published in European or North American journals, and carried out through sophisticated and, necessarily, expensive techniques. The training third-world psychologists receive in the developed world and the "guidelines" that they officially or unofficially receive from authorities when they return home help to strengthen this value system. The outcome is that many psychologists in developing countries direct their energies to strengthening links with academics in the developed world. This leads to a neglect of their own colleagues in the developing world and even in their own

country, university, or department. For example, despite the formation of the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) in 1962 and the trend to "indigenize" Philippine psychology, references in the *Philippine Journal of Psychology* and "local" textbooks are mostly to American sources (Lagmay, 1984). Even in Canada, a so-called developed nation, students of psychology are more attuned to the research activities of prestige departments in the United States than to those of their own colleagues within Canada.

The concepts of dual perception and parallel growth help to highlight key structural problems that must be overcome before psychology can play a more positive role in tackling urgent issues in developing countries. Although developed world academics are to be commended for their efforts to share knowledge with their colleagues in the developing world, they should pay greater attention to the parallelism and dualism that hinder the progress of applied, indigenous psychology in developing countries.

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