Mainstreaming Culture in Psychology

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Despite the “awakening” to the importance of culture in psychology, international psychology has remained on the sidelines of psychological science. The author recounts her personal and professional experience in tandem with the stages of development in international/cross-cultural psychology. Based on her research in cross-cultural personality assessment, the author discusses the inadequacies of sole reliance on either the etic or the emic approach and points out the advantages of a combined emic–etic approach in bridging global and local human experiences in psychological science and practice. With the blurring of the boundaries between North American–European psychologies and psychology in the rest of the world, there is a need to mainstream culture in psychology’s epistemological paradigm. Borrowing from the concept of gender mainstreaming that embraces both similarities and differences in promoting equal opportunities, the author discusses the parallel needs of acknowledging universals and specifics when mainstreaming culture in psychology. She calls for building a culturally informed universal knowledge base that should be incorporated in the psychology curriculum and textbooks.

Keywords: mainstreaming culture, combined emic–etic approach, cross-cultural psychology, international psychology, Chinese Personality Assessment Inventory

Cultural Awakening in American Psychology

Since the 1990s, guidelines have been promulgated to promote the incorporation of multiculturalism in American psychology, in practice, research, and training (American Psychological Association [APA], 1993, 2003). These guidelines affirm the influence of culture on psychological processes and organizations and recognize that there are both “cultural universal phenomena and culturally specific or relative constructs” (APA, 2003, p. 380) in psychology. However, the APA multicultural guidelines are narrowly focused on the “interactions between racial/ethnic groups in the United States” (APA, 2003, p. 380). Recognizing this, the APA Committee on International Relations in Psychology acknowledged that American psychology “needs to more fully consider the ramifications of national and cultural perspectives and indigenous psychologies” and passed a resolution in 2004 that, inter alia, advocates for the incorporation of international perspectives in APA activities in view of the impact of globalization of psychology (APA, 2004, para. 4).
Notwithstanding these institutional efforts, the knowledge base in psychology lags behind in its cultural awareness. Arnett (2008) challenged American psychology for having neglected 95% of the world’s population whose living conditions differ vastly from those of the Americans on which most psychological studies published in major APA journals have been based. Mainstream psychological studies have been criticized for being biased toward a view of human nature dominated by the “WEIRD” (“people from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic … societies”; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010, p. 61; Jones, 2010). Based on Henrich et al.’s (2010) review of the comparative behavioral science database, which included a wide spectrum of topics in experimental, cognitive, developmental, and social psychology, it was found that “there is substantial variability in experimental results across populations and that WEIRD subjects are particularly unusual compared with the rest of the species—frequent outliers” (p. 61).

I appreciate these efforts in raising the awareness of the cultural gap in the source and subject matter in the knowledge base of contemporary psychology and understand that this gap reflects the historical course of evolution of the psychology discipline as a modern science. However, I do not subscribe to the use of the acronym WEIRD as a label, irrespective of its humorous intent. There could be a disrespectful connotation that parallels other racial stereotypes. In promoting equal opportunities, discrediting the privileged group may be perceived as a form of reverse discrimination and is contrary to the spirit of respect for cultural diversity. Instead, we may trace the development of modern psychology as a scientific discipline, which began with Wundt’s experimental laboratory in Leipzig, Germany, in 1879, followed by the currents of thoughts that progressed through behaviorism, cognitive science, and neuroscience in the United States. Until the last part of the 20th century, activities in scientific psychology were centered in Europe and the United States (Brock, 2007). In other parts of the world, human nature, behavior, and relationship were examined traditionally in the domains of ethics, philosophy, and religion. Although the discipline of psychology or national psychological associations have been established in different countries across the world since the early 20th century, often by psychologists trained in Western countries upon their return to their home countries, the voice of psychology was predominantly under the Euro-American influence. We must acknowledge that the empirical approach adopted in psychology has advanced the epistemology of the discipline, and the works of psychologists trained in the Western scientific tradition have contributed to the solid foundation of its knowledge base and its scientific status. The major channel of dissemination is in English-language journals, as English is currently the most common international language in scientific communication.

At the same time, given its roots in Western philosophy of science, modern psychology has adopted an analytic and positivistic approach that separates body from mind and object from field (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). Having established its scientific status, the discipline has now evolved to a stage whereby the wealth of accumulated data on cultural similarities and differences demands more inclusive integration of multiple dimensions and diverse methodologies. In researching how people navigate complex social environments, such as studies in social psychology, the external validity of laboratory studies may be questioned when compared with results from field studies (Mitchell, 2012). Similar criticisms may apply to other areas of study, such as learning models, memory, and decision making in everyday contexts.

Allik, Massoudi, Realo, and Rossier (2012) advocated the need for incorporating environmental and cultural variables when studying psychological phenomena. Cultural variables constitute important components of the human environment. The importance of cultural perspectives in psychology has been advocated by a growing community of cross-cultural psychologists since the 1970s. Yet cross-cultural psychology has remained on the sideline of mainstream psychology. Cahan and White (1992) commented that cultural psychology played the role of “second psychology.” Similar to other variables in multiculturalism, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and class status, important demographic dimensions are usually sidelined in psychology’s search for human universals (Arnett, 2008) in spite of their critical roles in forming an individual’s identity. While more cross-cultural research and studies from non-Western cultures have been published in mainstream journals, these studies are primarily found in journals devoted to culture. In the teaching of psychology, Keith (2012) recently warned about the frog-in-the-well mentality and reminded teachers to adopt a meta-cultural awareness in the contents of their curricula. On a more optimistic note, Matsumoto (2001, para. 1) envisaged that “cross-cultural psychology as we know it today will cease to exist in the 21st century” as it becomes integrated.
into mainstream psychology. With its cultural awakening, psychology is ready to move on to a truly international stage.

**Development of International Psychology**

Shortly following its Euro-American origins, modern psychology spread beyond national boundaries. The first international congress of psychology was held in 1889 and repeated at regular intervals (Rosenzweig, Holtzman, Sabourin, & Bélanger, 2000). This meeting was organized by an international committee that later was incorporated as the International Union of Scientific Psychology in 1951, now renamed the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsS), a union consisting of national organizations of scientific psychology. As early as 1920, an international organization consisting of membership, the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), was established to promote contact and communication among individual psychologists on an international scale. The IUPsS International Congress of Psychology and the IAAP International Congress of Applied Psychology are held every 4 years, with a synchronized gap of 2 years in between the two. With membership from 80 countries, IAAP set up task forces in 2007 to promote the participation of psychologists from Africa, Asia, and Latin America in its activities and congresses. Although there has been a greater participation of non-Western psychologists in these international arenas in the last 15 years, with some leaders taking officer positions in the two organizations as early as in the 1960s, Cole (2006) noted that leadership of these organizations “remained firmly in Euro-American hands” (p. 905). American and European perspectives dominate in these international arenas, and the views of psychologists from non-Western cultures still lack visibility. The dominant discourse in psychology has been led by an epistemology grounded in Western philosophy of science (Nisbett et al., 2001), and the research topics are guided by Western psychology.

For psychologists from non-Western cultures, the quest for cultural relevance may be more obvious. Most international psychologists are trained in Western countries or in Western psychology. They aspire to learn the state-of-the-art knowledge in modern psychology, as this discipline is generally less developed in their home countries. When they return to their home countries, they try to apply what they have learned to their local context. In the early days, psychological measures grounded and normed in Western cultures were adopted for assessment and research without consideration of cross-cultural equivalence. Some of the theories, methods, and practices that were learned as givens may not have worked as stipulated in the local setting, but these variations would often be brushed off as errors and noise in research or practice. As I reflect upon my personal experience of becoming a psychologist, I find a parallel development in the stages of development in cross-cultural/international psychology, both of which may be informed by cultural heritage, the social context, and the Zeitgeist in academic psychology at the time.

**My Quest for Cultural Relevance**

Growing up in a British colony in which an imported government system and local customs coexisted, I have been sensitive to the imposition of foreign rule. Use of English, the only official language since Hong Kong became a crown colony in 1843, was accorded a higher social status, and the vernacular Chinese language was not recognized as a co-official language until 1974. In primary school, we were asked by the British teachers who could not remember the Chinese names of 40 school children in the classroom to pick an English name for ourselves. At the same time, the local Chinese teachers conveyed traditional Chinese values to us when delivering the colonial syllabi. While adopting the British system of administration and the rule of law, Hong Kong society also preserved local customs and operated according to the Confucian values of harmony and human connectedness. These apparent contradictions are accepted as practical normality of daily life in the Chinese mind (Nisbett et al., 2001). The dialectical resolution of many apparent contradictions via the Confucian middle way prevailed in my professional life.

The cross-cultural experience of being a foreign student in America primed my cultural sensitivity. My first culture shock, however, came more from my experience of boarding in an all-girls Catholic high school in California in 1966. The phenomenon of my schoolmates lining up near the telephone booth on Friday nights, anticipating boys to call them up for a date, seemed absurd to me. When asked how I would be able to get married if I stayed in the dorms to study rather than going out on dates in the weekend, I conveniently cited the outdated custom of arranged marriages in ancient China to fend off further questions. Culture shock is usually described as the disorientation felt by people when moving to a foreign country. I now realize that the culture of gender, too, is indeed an important cultural variable (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Gender norms in each culture prescribe roles and behaviors that differentiate the experiences of women and men.

When I graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, my California friends could not understand why I had chosen Minnesota, a place so cold, for my postgraduate studies. At that time, I had not yet learned about the rich vocabulary that differentiates snow among the indigenous circumpolar group of Nordic Sami people. Coming from a subtropical region, I thought cold was cold, not realizing there were vastly different shades of bitter coldness below the freezing point. Weather aside, the first academic term I learned at my graduate school orientation was dustbowl empiricism. My formal training in the Psychology Department at the University of Minnesota (UM) has trained me well on
the importance of empirical evidence. Like most psychology curricula at the time, there was little exposure to cultural perspectives. Working with Paul Pedersen, the 2010 recipient of this award, at the International Student Advisor’s Office provided me the opportunity to interact with students from many different countries and to exchange cultural experiences. I also played one of the problem or anticounselor roles in Pedersen’s (2000) triad model of cross-cultural counselor training, which highlighted the neglected cultural dimensions that might interfere with the counseling process.

Many people may associate the fame of the UM Psychology Department with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), which they learn about in their introductory psychology course. Some of my associates thought that my work on the Chinese MMPI was a natural continuation of my studies in Minnesota. Actually, when I first returned home after receiving my doctoral degree in 1975, I thought I would not be using the MMPI in Hong Kong at all given its English language, length, and the obscure meaning of some of its items. I later discovered that local psychologists were administering the MMPI to their patients while translating the items into their own Chinese versions on the spot. Mindful of the standards of translation, adaptation, and standardization expected in psychological testing, I thought I could contribute to a better translation. Thus, I embarked on a lifelong career of cross-cultural personality assessment research (Cheung, 2009).

When China resumed psychology in the late 1970s after the discipline had been suspended during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the Institute of Psychology at the Chinese Academy of Science was interested in finding a scientific tool for personality assessment, and the MMPI was identified as the best candidate. Psychologists at the institute learned about my work on the Chinese MMPI at The Chinese University of Hong Kong from Raymond Fowler when he led the first APA delegation to visit the Institute of Psychology in Beijing. Colleagues at the institute worked together with me to develop a standardized version of the Chinese MMPI and later the MMPI-2, receiving helpful input from James Butcher on the interpretation of the cultural meaning of the discrepant items. We tested large samples to establish representative norms that would be applicable to China and Hong Kong. When we tried out the Chinese versions with normal and clinical samples in Hong Kong and mainland China, elevations were noted in the average scores of several clinical scales among normal participants. We investigated the meaning of these cultural differences, which might not be attributed to psychopathology. Empirical studies showed that some of the items scored on these clinical scales reflected socially acceptable or preferred behaviors and beliefs in the Chinese context. Notwithstanding these differences, validation studies on Chinese patients showed that the MMPI was useful for clinical assessment after adjustments were made using the standardized Chinese norms (Cheung, 2009). Similar elevations were found in other Asian samples (Butcher, Cheung, & Lim, 2003). Exchanges among researchers at the international MMPI conferences on these cultural perspectives have advanced the knowledge of test adaptation and cross-cultural test equivalence (Butcher, 1996; Cheung, 2009). Psychologists in developing economies where the profession is at its fledging stage often have to rely on imported Western tests (Cheung, 2004). This situation is still prevalent, although the standards of test translation and adaptation have improved tremendously.

While we found the Chinese MMPI to be a useful tool in clinical assessment, we considered it timely to develop an indigenous comprehensive personality assessment inventory relevant to the Chinese people, who constitute one fifth of the world population, without having to adapt items and adjust for norm differences with an imported test. We also found important cultural concepts in personality to be missing in Western personality theories and measures. Our research team at The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Institute of Psychology began to develop the Chinese Personality Assessment Inventory (CPAI; Cheung et al., 1996) in the early 1990s.

**Stages in Cross-Cultural Psychology**

I have described the stages of development in cross-cultural personality research and assessment in a number of publications (Cheung, 2004, 2009; Cheung, Cheung, Wada, & Zhang, 2003; Cheung, van de Vijver, & Leong, 2011). The first transport and test stage (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002) was not restricted to cross-cultural assessment, but was common in the field of cross-cultural psychology in general. International psychologists often borrowed the knowledge they gained from their overseas education and extended it after they returned home. The etic approach (Pike, 1967; Sue, 1983), derived from the linguistic term phonetic, assumed the universality and cross-cultural invariance of established Western constructs and models. In the early stages of cross-cultural research, it was common to find research that simply replicated Western studies in the home country. The culture-blind exportation of psychological theories and tools could be considered an imposed etic approach in which Western constructs and theories were generalized to the local culture. The assessment tools, research questionnaires, or experimental method were translated and used directly without consideration of their cultural appropriateness. We now know much more about cross-cultural biases at the item, scale, and construct levels; sophisticated methodology has been developed to ascertain cross-cultural equivalence (Byrne et al., 2009). International standards are in place to promote best practices in test translation and adaptation (e.g. International Test Commission, 2010).

Notwithstanding these advances in methodology, the etic approach forges cross-cultural similarities at the expense of important indigenous knowledge (Cheung et al., 2011). One
of the most widely researched universal theories in personality is the Five-Factor Model which has been replicated across over 50 cultures (McCrae & Terracciano, 2005). Among the five personality factors of the NEO Personality Inventory—Revised (NEO-PI–R), the universality of the Openness to Experience has been the most controversial. Although the Openness factor has been replicated in different cultures, the construct validity of this factor varies across cultures. In Ashton and Lee’s (2001) review of the cross-cultural replications of the Big Five structure of personality in European lexical studies, a sixth personality factor, Honesty, was identified. The Openness factor, which better fit the label of Intellect/Imagination, was found to be less robust in terms of its fidelity and/or frequency. Recent cross-cultural studies of lexical taxonomies of personality also concurred that the Openness factor did not replicate well across cultures, which led De Raad and his associates (2010) to conclude that the Big Five model’s “cross-cultural replicability has not matched its cross-cultural popularity” (p. 168). Cheung and her associates (2008) showed that there were similarities and differences in the configuration of Openness in the nomological network of personality constructs in the Chinese culture. Although a distinct dimension of Openness was not found in the indigenous taxonomy of personality traits in studies of Chinese personality, a weak Openness factor could be extracted when the NEO-PI–R was used. Their study on Openness in the Chinese culture found that the construct of Openness combined some of the NEO-PI–R facets with other interpersonal dimensions to reflect the characteristics of social potency or expansiveness in one’s personality. By forging the universal structure of the Five-Factor Model, indigenous constructs salient in the local folk concepts and taxonomy of person descriptions that could enrich our understanding of the cultural meaning of personality patterns and increase the prediction of outcomes in the local contexts would be missed.

The second indigenous psychology movement stage began as a reaction to the dominance and monopoly of Western models of psychology which did not adequately represent experience in the local contexts. Adopting the emic approach, a term that was derived from phonemic in linguistics, cultural psychologists attempted to identify local realities and focus on indigenous constructs and methodologies in their own terms, rejecting the importation of Western theories or models (Kim, Yang, & Hwang, 2006). This approach focused on culture-specific meaning of psychological phenomena from the perspective of the insiders. This ethos was not dissimilar to the resistance to colonialism and hegemonic world order or to the local movements that attempted to build national pride in some developing countries. Many emic concepts were studied, and local therapies and practices were introduced. Some of these concepts, like harmony, face, or the Japanese Morita therapy that provided physical and mindfulness training for the treatment of neurotic disorders, were better known in the English literature. Other concepts were less well known. Indigenous personality measures were also constructed to assess personality characteristics that fit the taxonomy of person descriptions in the local context. The deficiency of the early indigenous movements lies in their isolationist approach that constrained a wider sharing of knowledge required for building up psychological science. Whether due to self-selection or the publication hurdle, few of these indigenous psychologists published their studies in English-language journals. With limited local expertise and resources, it was difficult to sustain these movements and substantiate their knowledge base in mainstream psychology (Cheung et al., 2003, 2011). Even for some of the more established emic concepts or personality measures, there is the challenge of demonstrating whether there is incremental validity beyond what could be subsumed under the existing universal structure or theories (Church, 2010).

Parallel to this indigenous movement is the desire among some cross-cultural psychologists to “explore in other cultures in order to discover psychological variations that are not present in one’s own limited cultural experience” (Berry et al., 2002, p. 3). Culture-specific concepts and phenomena were investigated, and their distinctiveness from Western psychological theories or practices was emphasized. The observed differences were attributed to the local culture, often as post hoc explanations based on simplistic cultural generalizations.

In the 1980s, there was an interest in studying culture-bound syndromes in cultural psychiatry that gave rise to a host of folk taxonomies from different cultures. In my early-day research on Chinese psychopathology, I endeavored to unpack the meaning underlining the tendency among Chinese patients to somatize their psychological distress (Cheung, 1998). Some cultural psychiatrists have highlighted somatization as a unique cultural feature of neurotic disorders among the Chinese people and attributed it to various aspects of Chinese culture, including the tendency to deny or suppress emotions, the lack of an adequate vocabulary to express emotions explicitly, and the concrete level of thinking among primitive cultures that led to the lack of differentiation between mind and body. Our empirical studies challenged the cultural specificity and interpretations of this phenomenon. We showed evidence that “although somatic complaints are the dominant features in Chinese patients’ symptom presentation, psychological symptoms are by no means suppressed or repressed” (Cheung, 1998, p. 42). We also now have much better understanding of the holistic way of thinking in the Chinese mind (Nisbett et al., 2001), and mind–body connections are well documented in health psychology in general, not just Chinese health psychology. The discourse on this topic at that time has led to better understanding of somatization as an illness experience, which includes the phenomenology of suffering, the communication process, coping, help seeking, and patient–doctor relationship (Cheung,
Arthur Kleinman, who originally highlighted this cultural observation in Chinese patients, later reframed somatization as an idiom of human distress contextualized in the personal, interpersonal, and cultural meanings of illness (Kleinman, 1988). This cultural discourse has expanded our understanding of what was alleged to be culture specific to a more fundamental psychological phenomenon and illustrates the value of the dialectics between the emic and the etic.

The third stage of development in cross-cultural psychology aims at the internationalization of psychology “to generate a more nearly universal psychology . . . that will be valid for a broader range of cultures” (Berry et al., 2002, p. 4). The current state of affairs in international psychology suggests we are still far from this goal. In Cheung et al. (2011), we argued for a combined emic–etic approach to “bridge the divide between mainstream and indigenous psychology” and to provide a comprehensive framework to “delineate both the universal and culturally specific aspects of psychological constructs” (p. 597). The integrative approach allows the synergy of constructs and methods to maximize cultural relevance in developing a universal psychology.

When our research team first developed the CPAI, our objective was to provide a culturally relevant comprehensive personality measure for the Chinese people (Cheung et al., 1996, 2008). By adopting a combined emic–etic approach, we incorporated both universal and indigenous personality constructs using a bottom-up approach to identify the key dimensions of person descriptions in the Chinese culture. Local voices in people’s own words were important. Besides the research literature on Chinese personality, we tapped multiple sources, including contemporary novels, street interviews on self-descriptions, and open-ended surveys of different target groups on their descriptions of other people, to identify common folk concepts of personality that were relevant to the daily experience of the Chinese people. We made reference to the results of imported personality scales that were found to be culturally valid. The preliminary scale items were selected based on their psychometric properties obtained from large samples. In the standardization study, norms were developed with representative samples of adults from different regions of China and in Hong Kong. The CPAI was first published in 1996 and later revised and restandardized in 2001. An extensive research program was pursued by the research team and other researchers that built up the validity of the CPAI (see Cheung et al., 2011, and Cheung, Fan, & Cheung, in press, for more information about the CPAI).

We compared the factor structure of the CPAI with the dominant Western personality model, the Five-Factor Model, and found that the emic Interpersonal Relatedness factor of the CPAI could not be subsumed under the Big Five in joint factor analyses (Cheung et al., 2008). We published our research results in both Chinese and international journals. Research on the CPAI has received stronger support in cross-cultural psychology (Church, 2010). Mainstream psychology journals used to question the relevance of these cultural studies to their readers and only recently began to pay attention to works outside Euro-American contexts.

**Value of the Combined Emic–Etic Approach**

The international research program on the CPAI provided a platform for us to compare the cultural relevance of etic and emic constructs across cultures. By comparing the CPAI with the Five-Factor Model, we demonstrated that the indigenously derived Interpersonal Relatedness factor not only contributed incremental value to predicting a variety of outcomes in social interaction, vocational behavior, and psychopathology in Chinese societies but was found to be relevant also in non-Chinese cultures (Cheung et al., 2011). The cross-cultural relevance of the CPAI led us to rename it as the Cross-Cultural Personality Assessment Inventory. In cross-cultural studies using the CPAI, we were able to compare the relevance of the emic personality constructs to non-Chinese samples. For example, using the adult and adolescent versions of the CPAI to examine the personality correlates of vocational development of college and high school students in Chinese and American settings, we found that Family Orientation and Interpersonal Relatedness contributed to career decision-making difficulties in both cultural groups. We further extended the concept of self-efficacy to a collectivistic context and found that the emic Interpersonal Relatedness factor of the CPAI contributed additional variance beyond universal personality factors to the prediction of collective career efficacy, which represented the students’ perception of the conjoint capability of their parents, teachers, or peers to pursue their career goals (Cheung et al., in press).

Using a reversed emic–etic approach in which different language versions of the CPAI were exported to other cultural settings, we illustrated how indigenously derived constructs could expand our understanding of personality from the perspective of collectivistic cultures beyond Western models that emphasized the person as an autonomous entity. The interpersonal dimensions of the CPAI indigenous scales highlight the social-oriented personality dispositions that are more differentiated and influential for people in collectivistic cultures and are probably more salient in the taxonomy of person descriptions in these settings (Cheung et al., 2011). Church (2010) recognized that this culturally distinct interpersonal dimension received definitive evidence of its unique structure independent of the Big Five dimensions.

What we have gained by using the combined emic–etic approach in developing the CPAI lies not just in the identification of specific indigenous constructs that may contribute to better understanding of a cultural phenomenon. More importantly, it allows us to reflect on the cultural relevance of our knowledge base. Although we started with a pragmatic objective to develop a local tool, our research experience has taken us down a theoretical path to build up a balanced view of personality with cultural sensitivity and scientific rigor.
The admirable effort adopted by psychologists in South Africa to develop 11 parallel-language versions of the South African Personality Inventory (Cheung et al., 2011) illustrates the importance of this inclusive approach that respects cultural diversity and complies with nondiscriminatory legislation.

**Mainstreaming Culture in Psychology**

There may be many parallels between ethnic minority issues and cross-cultural issues. The inherent link is the multicultural dimension as both subfields of psychology are interested in understanding the interaction between cultural factors and human behavior (Leong, Leung, & Cheung, 2010). The culturally sensitive methodological approaches advanced in cross-cultural psychology would also contribute to research in racial and ethnic minority psychology. Throughout the years, I have benefited from my exchange with Stan Sue and Frederick Leong on Asian American psychology and the similarities and diversities of their research with my research in Chinese psychology. Rereading Sue’s (1983) article on ethnic minority issues in psychology, I reflected on the five conflicts he had raised at that time: emic versus etic, mainstreaming versus pluralism, equal opportunities versus equality of outcome, modal personality versus individual differences, and presence versus absence of racism today. Sue warned that the single solution to resolve the clash of values in a current problem could in turn become the future problem.

The case of the Hong Kong secondary school places allocation system highlights this paradox (Cheung, 2010). The decision of the government to adopt separate gender scaling curves and gender ranking to rectify the uneven sex ratio in the allocation system was subsequently ruled to be unlawful discrimination by the court. Single solutions prescribed by the authority or experts without equal involvement of the minority voice often overlook the complex nature of the problem. With respect to the cultural dimension in ethnic minority and cross-cultural issues, even though it has long been recognized that the etic approach was inadequate in addressing cultural diversity, it is still dominant in theory, practice, and training, and the perspectives of those in minority and marginal status are sidelined.

One divergence in my current conceptualization of the conflicts that Sue raised in 1983 is with the conceptual framework of a dichotomous polarity of the perspectives that he posed in these conflicts, for example, etic versus emic, mainstreaming versus pluralism, or equal opportunities versus equality of outcome. The *versus* or *either–or* conceptualization of these issues may have contributed to the single solutions that he critiqued. Particularly when one pole in the dichotomy is dominant, the other conflicting pole is likely to be sacrificed. Nisbett et al. (2001)’s analysis of the Chinese traditional way of thinking may explain why, given my more traditional cultural heritage, I have adopted an integrative instead of a dichotomous conceptualization of these issues.

As illustrated by the combined emic–etic approach, the emic and etic methods can be compatible representatives of different perspectives to achieve a more universal understanding of personality structure.

Sue’s (1983) stipulation of the mainstreaming versus pluralism conflict and the equal opportunity versus equality of outcome conflict reminded me of the issues I addressed in promoting gender equality in Asian societies. Western feminism was characterized in a framework that pitched women against men in their critique of traditional social science epistemology or in their analysis of social injustice. This approach was not well received in Asian societies. Instead, a more integrative approach of promoting mutual respect between women and men and promoting a concerted effort by all to advance women’s development and counteract discrimination or violence against women was more effective in gaining public acceptance (Cheung, 1989, 2010). As the founding chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission in Hong Kong in 1996–1999, I often had to explain when equal treatment and gender-sensitive treatment were both required to promote equality of outcomes at different stages or in different circumstances. What constitutes equal opportunities depends on the context of the issues.

Whereas Sue (1983) pointed out the need to balance mainstreaming and pluralistic interests, he equated mainstreaming with “assimilation or Anglo-conformity of ethnic groups” (p. 584). This is not what I mean by mainstreaming culture in psychology. Here, I borrow the concept of gender mainstreaming to argue for the incorporation of cultural perspectives in mainstream psychology. The concept of gender mainstreaming was advocated as the main global strategy to address the 12 critical areas of concern in the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (1995), endorsed by over 160 governments at the United Nations Fourth Congress of Women. The Council of Europe defined gender mainstreaming as “the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making” (Council of Europe, Directorate of Human Rights, Section on Equality Between Women and Men, 2004, p. 12). The prerequisites for effective implementation of gender mainstreaming include a political will of the state, a knowledge base on gender issues, and the participation of women in decision-making bodies.

Extending this mainstreaming concept to culture and psychology, a starting point would be to build up the knowledge base on cultural psychology and the recognition of this knowledge base in mainstream psychology. In addressing gender issues, there are gender-based experiences that may require gender-specific policies and practices beyond human universals. Similarly, in addressing culture, we are dealing with complex human environments that include both universal and local contexts.
Culture is not confined to specific national or ethnic groups but may include any social group with shared heritage, norms, beliefs, and values that determine social behaviors and actions. Cultural boundaries can be plural and permeable. Chiu and Cheng (2007) illustrated how globalization has brought symbols of diverse cultures together whereby multiple cultural representations may be simultaneously activated. Even within the same country or region, people have been exposed to multiple cultures, and there is interplay between tradition and modernity. The globalization process itself involves localization, whereby global influences are internalized and localized in the process of “glocalization” (Roudometof, 2003). Similarly, at the individual level, cultural universals as well as culture-specific aspects of human behavior are intertwined. Hong, Morris, Chiu, and Benet-Martínez (2000) demonstrated how multicultural individuals switched their mental frames between cultural lenses in response to cultural priming. Across different subfields of psychology, including neuropsychology, which is often considered to be a study of biological universals, culture is still an important variable (Kenneppohl, 1999). By respecting cultural diversity and reviewing subgroup similarities and differences, cultural analysis could provide divergent cultural perspectives to enhance our knowledge base and inform when culture-sensitive approaches should be adopted in practice. Sue (2003) argued for the importance of establishing guidelines on cultural competence in psychotherapy and treatment and recommended more research to support the formulation of these guidelines. Similarly, psychological science itself should be informed by cultural knowledge in both methodology and content in order to foster cultural competence in research.

Several recent initiatives at the APA have moved in this direction. For example, a joint Division 52 (International Psychology)/Division 5 (Evaluation, Measurement, & Statistics) Task Force was charged with identifying updates for the methodological aspects of cross-cultural research (Byrne et al., 2009). The Task Force sought input from experts in both cross-cultural/international psychology and quantitative psychology to review the methodological weaknesses of current practices and to recommend strategies to raise these practices to higher standards. Byrne et al. (2009) further pinpointed the need for training in cross-cultural methodology in research and assessment, which was inadequate in current academic programs. Training in multicultural research and methodology not only is essential for cross-cultural or international psychology but should constitute a core component of research methods in psychology.

In 2012, APA launched a new journal for its international division (Division 52). The journal, International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation, “promotes the use of psychological science that is contextually informed and culturally inclusive” (http://www.apa.org/journals/ipp/). It includes international psychologists from different continents on its editorial board and intends to give a voice to psychologists beyond North America and Europe. This APA journal contributes to the expansion of platforms for promoting the knowledge base in international psychology, in addition to other existing English-language international psychology journals such as Applied Psychology: An International Review, the International Journal of Psychology, the Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, and the Asian Journal of Social Psychology. The significance of this new journal within APA is its affiliation with a national association. However, readership should be promoted not only to those interested in cross-cultural or international psychology but to the general membership of APA. In addition, more international topics should be included in the topical journals.

Bullock (2012) highlighted the importance of broadening access to resources and information on international psychology as a means to build a truly global discipline. To mainstream culture in the psychological knowledge base, important advances in international psychology should also be incorporated in psychology textbooks and the psychology curriculum. This requires a conscious effort to present cultural convergence and divergence in major theories and to debate the universality of the current findings. Examples from different cultures may be added to illustrate psychological concepts. Culture-sensitive methodologies should be introduced to promote multicultural research. Reviews that cover international studies could provide better understanding of the contributions of cultural variables to basic psychological processes. The works of international psychologists should be included in building pluralistic models in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of psychology that is relevant to the world we live in.

In gender mainstreaming efforts, the United Nations Development Group has designed scorecards to rate countries on their efforts in and outcomes of promoting gender equality by using sex-disaggregated data and process analysis to ascertain that a gender-sensitive perspective is incorporated in the planning, decision making, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring of their policies and services (UNDG Task Team on Gender Equality, 2008). Similarly, regular cultural analysis and audits could be conducted by psychologists to review the extent to which cultural consideration is incorporated in the research and practice of psychology. This culture-grounded knowledge base should constitute an integral component of basic training in psychology.

**Conclusion**

It has been over 20 years since APA began recognizing individuals who have made sustained and enduring contributions to international cooperation and the advancement of knowledge in psychology through the Award for Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology. Previous recipients of this award have repeatedly called for increasing multicultural awareness (Leong,
2007; Pedersen & Pope, 2010) and incorporating the cultural context in understanding human behavior (Heppner, 2008; Torney-Purta, 2009). The geographical and temporal boundaries between international and American psychology are arbitrary and disappearing. It is not sufficient for psychology merely to pay attention to cultural perspectives that distinguish between the mainstream and the international. Cultural perspectives should become an integral part of psychology in its knowledge base, training, and curriculum. The time is ripe for psychological science and practice to bridge the global and the local, or the etic and the emic perspectives, and embrace multicultural models in an emerging paradigm of glocalization.

REFERENCES


