

# Psychology in the “Backyards of the World”: Experiences From India

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## Abstract

The mind has been the subject of fascination since ancient times, and every cultural tradition has folk theories related to meaning-making, attributions, and explanations about being human. In this sense, the subject of Psychology is as old as humanity, although its rise as a global, scientific discipline is relatively recent, emerging from 20th-century Europe and America. Theoretical ideas and methods generated during the growth of the discipline were aligned with beliefs about human nature and scientific methods specific to Euro-American cultures. Although “preached” and practiced universally as a science, this culturally circumscribed and ideologically bound history of the discipline needs further examination. Rather than “thinking globally” and “acting locally,” the agenda of Psychology has been the reverse; “think locally and act globally,” as critics of mainstream Psychology have pointed out. The predominance of individual, intra-mental, laboratory-tested, quantifiable dimensions of human conduct are based subliminally on Western ideology. The alternative methods of approaching real-life experiences, literature, art, inter-mental phenomena, and other qualitative dimensions of human interactions remain relatively under-explored. The dominant mainstream Psychology is seen as an objective, measurable, and universal science that has had far-reaching consequences for ordinary people around the world. This somewhat sinister side of conventional Psychology is the subject of this article, where we argue that despite significant exceptions and scholarly dissent, the popularity and prevalence of experimental Psychology has marginalized “others” at the expense of its own progress. We use illustrations primarily from teaching, research and practice in Psychology in Indian Universities.

## Keywords

Mainstream Psychology, Indian Psychology, methodology, critique

*The ethnographic mind, at once dependent upon its functioning for extrinsic models, and opportunistically creative in producing those models, is an essential feature of a culture-bearing and meaning-making primate.*

(Shore, 1998, p. 380)

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## **Introduction: The Advance of Science**

The history of science and its applications in society have long been riding on the success of modernism. These success stories have had many consequences, not the least of which has been the unmitigated and unquestioning reliance on modernism and the attached belief that science is the preserve of the civilized West. We need to address the person–environment interface with humility, and in doing so, we need to understand that fundamentally, there can be many ways of living life. If that is so, then we should also accept that science must be inclusive, plural, and ecologically valid, and we need to make the process of discovery, the origin of ideas, and explanations more transparent (Gigerenzer, 1991). This also holds true for psychology, if it has to retain a meaningful place in the lives of people around the world. To accomplish this acceptance, Psychology, like other disciplines, has to engage with its own branches and find a way of including the diverse streams of cultural, social, developmental, and other fields that are lying like pieces of broken china. Furthermore, there is a great need for engagement with other disciplines—cultural anthropology, sociology, history, economics, or literature among others.

## **Fractured Epistemologies**

As the dynamics played out, it appeared as if the West practices “Psychology” and others have culture! In psychology, there was little attention to the fact that

Alternative social sciences are potentially available in the materials of many non-western cultures, and their development is essential to serve in the many places now either left to ad hoc descriptions or badly monopolized by social sciences borrowed from the West. (Marriott, 1992, p. 269)

Further trouble arose by the increase in specializations within the discipline. Although the establishment of branches within the discipline facilitated greater focus on specific domains of study, it also had unprecedented consequences on the area as a whole. The sanctity of mainstream Psychology as the leader of the pack was protected, untainted by smaller issues, thereby keeping dissent and debate at bay. Every time a strong criticism for mainstream Psychology arose, it was neutralized by the establishment of a new “branch.” Let us look at the formation of “cultural psychology” as an instance. Establishing a separate sub-discipline removed the obligation of mainstream psychology to address the phenomenon of culture. For a distant outsider, there appeared to be a clear hierarchy between Psychology (the use of the capital is deliberate) and its many branches, and the American Psychological Association (APA) was the most important decision-making authority that defined the discipline, its principles, and practice. The APA publication manual and ethical principles for psychologists and practitioners have made important world-wide contributions to the discipline. The further a scholar was from this exclusive club, the more remote your work was considered to be. With the proliferation of conferences and journals, specializations have become even more separated and isolated from each other, with only a very few being able to cross the barriers, geographically, culturally, and disciplinarily. But walls that keep others away also insulate ideas, and the absence of crosstalk must have had its consequences.

Except for a few branches like cross-cultural, cultural, and social psychology, the position has largely been that it is the individual, inside-the-head, measurable phenomena that lie within the domain of mainstream psychology. This “international model,” where it is claimed that whatever is discovered in Western research is applicable universally, is easy to teach; everyone, everywhere is in some sense the same, without any reflection on where this model was initiated and how it doesn’t work for everyone. But undergraduate texts need to be easily consumed, and this version has been developed enough to provide simple information regarding domains, stages,

norms, and standards. In that sense, Psychology aspires to be most like the neurosciences, a trend that is clearly evident in the recent popularity of citations, department divisions, and job applications. Despite the parallel development of cultural psychology as a robust discipline, most mainstream psychologists chose to focus exclusively on individual, intra-mental, observable, hypothetical behavior under controlled conditions.

## **Psychology's International Model**

Let us revisit some critical dimensions of mainstream Psychology for clarity of the objective in this article. Here, we refer to the global enterprise of Psychology and not indigenous versions. Despite the fact that there have been important contributions to indigenous perspectives (Misra & Paranje, 2012), the experience has been that scholars still bank heavily on the textbook version of psychology which flourishes through low-cost editions available for use outside the West. Although indigenous psychology has developed several important publications, teaching at the undergraduate level remains largely wedded to the global version and Western textbooks. Most Indian versions of textbooks are often copy and paste jobs, with space given to Indian authors to put a few boxes for examples that “indigenize” the material. Many publishers commission Indian scholars with requests to indigenize popular textbooks for sale in South Asia. Many of the scholarly writings make critical statements about this gap, but very few basic, independent texts have been written.

Unlike the West, psychology in India did not grow as an integral part of social progress. Indian psychologists were trained in British or American schools that, along with the colonial influence, resulted in a strong tendency to pursue a “culturally-blind psychology” that we were quite comfortable with, believing that we were contributing to an expanding internationally recognized discipline. Deviations emerging from local beliefs and practices were treated as errors and conveniently ignored for the greater cause of science (Nandy, 1974).

## **Groups, Variables, and Industries**

Did the creation of separate branches of cultural and cross-cultural prove counter-productive? The branches of cross-cultural, cultural, and indigenous psychologies were created to focus on cultural differences and to provide platforms for the discussion of diversity. Once the branches were created, it was followed with forming associations, setting up journals, and including scholars from different countries. However, it could also be argued that this was a double-edged sword, so to speak. This separation of culture from psychology was, we believe, seriously detrimental for both the parent discipline and the offspring because “culture” came under central focus, but only in a separate branch. Furthermore, a hierarchy was evident among the different fields regarding grants, faculty positions, and research projects. A class system was created, and the borders between these were impermeable. The separations within the discipline were also reflective of the distance between psychology and other subjects, anthropology, literature, politics, and environmental studies. Psychology has struggled to keep up with its reputation as a physical science. The core questions that characterized humanity's interest in itself became gradually obscured and potentially productive collaborations were lost (Lehrer, 2007; Spivak, 2005).

At the 2019 conference of the Society for Research in Child Development, Prof. Robert Sternberg presented a keynote address about the concept of Intelligence and its place in Psychology. He argued that despite that fact that the term has failed to find adequate endorsement from research, we persist in following ideas like Intelligence as if they were real. He listed several reasons for this perseverance, among them are entrenchment, ideas become industries, fear of the unknown, academic laziness, persistence of socioeconomic hierarchy, quantitative

precision fallacy, and financial benefits (Sternberg, 2019). Once in place, ideas become so entrenched in our vocabulary that they become reified (Danziger, 1997) perhaps even deified. In a 1997 publication in collaboration with Dzinis, Danziger writes that the term “variable” became increasingly popular around 1950s, especially in Social Psychology and Personality Studies. There was, the authors argued, “a growing tendency to describe psychological research in terms of the manipulation of variables. However, there was also a transposition of the term from the description of procedure to the description of that which was being investigated” (p. 43). A process by which the terms became reified! The research community collaborated in this non-reflective creation of ideas through repeated research studies.

Gradually, ideas became transformed into industries, as in the case of Intelligence testing, leading to greater entrenchment, the reluctance to break away, and the desire to gain entry. Despite strong criticisms leveled from so many different sources, the enterprise of psychology “‘neurotically’ defends its status as an ‘empirical science’” (Valsiner, 2019, p. 430). It had become too large to dismantle or change course. The critical mass had been attained and one could either join or remain unrecognized.

### **Intra-Mental Phenomena and the Embryonic Fallacy**

Conventionally, the focus of psychology has been on inside-the-mind phenomena, to the exclusion of distributed, collaborative, or cooperative processes. The idea of an individual as autonomous and independent, self-contained and self-determined, and therefore, the only player, the sacred unit of study, is a predominant theme. Furthermore, the assumption that everything that happens to us is an outcome of individual life-experience is an *embryonic fallacy* that has characterized the study of psychological processes (Moghaddam, 2010). These principles greatly restrict possibilities in theorizing and research beyond the prescribed range of phenomena imagined in the Western tradition.

### **Experimentation Is Sacred**

Psychology’s international model is strong and enduring. The enterprise has found full support in publication houses and psychometric testing. Furthermore, the difficulty faced with laboratory experimentation and Random Control Trials (RCTs) in field settings can be hard to achieve practically, requiring large amount of funding to maintain a protocol for the research, and even then, studies require support from smaller qualitative observations, as recent debate about RCTs in the field of economics have argued regarding poverty, schooling, and health.<sup>1</sup> Such studies also tend to objectify human subjects and assume a seamless transfer of findings from controlled conditions to everyday behavior. RCTs are also advanced with the belief that Psychology is universal and culture is a problem or a detail that needs to be controlled. We have had considerable problems in trying to explain how hard it is to achieve enrollment in laboratory studies leading to wasted hours, frustrated field-staff, and unimpressed collaborators. The social context of availability, accessibility, and affordability is dramatically different from the West, where one can be certain that an agreement to arrive for a research appointment is a fairly high guarantee of participation. In the West, people are far more willing to accept home-based studies, especially those involving young children.

Psychology is claimed to be a revered science, dealing with empirically verifiable facts, objectively gathered and experimentally tested. These “gold standards” are exclusive to the community who fiercely protects its borders by placing others outside of its sacred spaces. The ways in which psychological theories are developed is often opaque, and there is a whole range of theories in cognitive science that have emerged from the use of methods and instruments that emerged from and generated new metaphors which, if unexamined or unexplained, can obscure

the linkages from a different cultural perspective because metaphors are steeped in cultural reality, particularly language use.

## The Problem of Cultural Variation

Mainstream Psychology has always had problems with cultural variation because psychic unity and universality are significant assumptions. The artificial separation of “culture” from “psychology” has been a problem for the advancement of the discipline, as reality repeatedly demonstrates that the two processes are characterized by “inclusive separation” (Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000). However, cultural differences and their outcomes are significant for norms and standards (Aptekar & Stöcklin, 1997; Burman, 1994) as well as for expectations and developmental pathways. Culture compels us to question popular proposals like Attachment Theory that fail to explain experiences of non-Western child care arrangements (Keller, 2013). Coming to terms with the dichotomy between cultural relativism and universalism

. . . is one central problem (and task) of cross-cultural researchers working with children in particularly difficult circumstances. This is no easy task, as it is both difficult to accept universalism without being considered culturally imperialistic, and difficult to accept relativism without being considered culturally naïve. (Aptekar & Stöcklin, 1997, p. 399)

Mainstream Psychology has not dealt very well with the issue of cultural differences, despite the large number of excellent research studies and scholarly articles about development and culture.

## Vertical Rather Than Horizontal Collaborations

Internationally, psychology was characterized by vertical collaborations rather than horizontal ones (Sinha, 1990). This holds true even today. Research projects were usually initiated by Psychologists in the West and scholars from other countries were usually collaborators; other countries were sites where Western theories were tested. However, involving non-Western colleagues or locations was considered necessary only when an idea needed collaboration or validation. For the dominant areas of Psychology, no such affirmation was even sought. Sinha recommended that there should be more horizontal collaborations, projects where scholars were equal partners in identifying areas of study and collaborating on an equal footing. Three decades later, the scene is pretty much the same, except that now management schools and corporate houses have entered the fray. Non-Western Psychology departments still remain largely underfunded and under-recognized and opportunities for horizontal collaborations have yet to be fully realized. Despite this, local-level research is being done, both reflective and reflexive, but this rarely feeds into the mainstream. For example, there are sincere attempts being made for a culturally relevant approach to understanding psychological processes like identity, selfhood, intelligence, and emotions, to name a few, but these have failed to reach attention of the mainstream, Western version of Psychology.

## Ruling From Within

Shifting focus to view psychology from the African subcontinent, Oppong (2019) writes that the way the subject is taught, researched, and practiced locally

. . . contributes to epistemic injustice and epistemological violence while depriving Africans of epistemic agency. This is largely because psychology has remained and continues to remain

Eurocentric. However, the continual Eurocentric hegemony is not entirely imposed but internalised. This has made this Eurocentric hegemony self-perpetuating with African involvement. (p. 292)

Repeatedly, local scholars themselves contribute to the perpetuation of these entanglements, creating a self-perpetuating dynamic that interferes with the task of making “accurate and innovative contributions to the global understanding of human nature” (Oppong, 2019, p. 292). Furthermore, Serpell (2019) argues that because psychology is a reflexive discipline, its application in Africa (and therefore in any cultural setting) requires the accordance of priority to the local cultural heritage and the social circumstances in which children are raised. The connections with colonialism are so strong that even in present times, the discipline remains shackled by the hegemony of Eurocentric ideas resulting in a somewhat paradoxical tendency to deny African cultural beliefs to interpret African behavior (Oppong, 2019). The story resonates very well with our experiences even though the indigenizing trends in Indian psychology have been quite influential.

## **Psychology’s International Experience: The Indian Case?**

### *Respect for Psychology*

On account of the path through which psychology entered India, there has been a great deal of respect for Western Psychology, despite its many limitations. Subaltern positioning in educational training is an important factor. With the changing world order and the seamless spread of information among countries, older gatekeepers no longer carry the influence they once did, but we now face the entry of corporate forces and management gurus.

### *Culture in Textbooks and Testing Material*

References to culture still remain largely limited to textboxes in textbooks. The aggressive marketing by publishers of costly psychological tests are persistently advertised and sold to Indian Universities that spend precious (dwindling) funds in a foreign currency in the name of keeping updated with the field. University departments find it easier to sanction tens of thousands of rupees for purchasing “equipment” like intelligence tests than spending reasonable amounts on other field-based projects that may require funds for transport, for instance. Books and test materials are the most legitimate expenses for University departments and research projects that follow a similar protocol to the natural sciences.

Regarding psychometric measures, in India, the Differential Aptitude Test, still widely used to measure aptitude, uses the norms developed by Ojha in 1965. Another example of a widely used test is the Malin’s Intelligence Scale for Indian Children (MISIC), which is the adaptation of the original Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) in 1969. The WISC-V published in 2014 does not have Indian norms. The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS IV) has Indian norms and is a popular test for recruitment in corporate companies for hiring candidates, but many continue to use the Wechsler Adult Performance Intelligence Scale (WAPIS), which was last normed in the year 1974 (Basu, 2016) and is thus outdated (Satpathy, 2009).

Many of the clinical tests widely used in India like the Rorschach, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), and Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI) are believed to be valid across cultures. This belief comes from the observation of psychiatrists that psychiatric disorders manifest in similar ways across cultural boundaries despite abundant examples of cultural differences in the emergence and handling of psychological disorders (Butcher, 2005; Butcher et al., 2003). Most scholars use tests and batteries without adaptation, depending on loose translations. Translation is another issue that is not really happening effectively for

non-English speakers, and it proves to be a clear disadvantage.<sup>2</sup> When tests in English are used, there are assumptions made about English proficiency, potentially causing misunderstanding and problems with scoring and interpretation.

### *Local Beliefs as Pseudo-Science*

Local beliefs and practices are often treated as exotic and placed in textboxes as mentioned above. Let's look at the example of "collectivism," a popular label used for the tendency of Indians to relate closely to people around them. Observations related to this phenomenon draw from trends in responses to singular items on scales and conclude that Indians tend to be group-oriented, placing the needs of the group above their own. This is an erroneous conclusion because group affiliation and individual positioning among Indians is a highly complex phenomenon that is sensitive to who one is interacting with and under what circumstances. If methods permitted, the most fitting response would be, "It depends." Furthermore, in its teleological construction, the Indian psyche is ideologically oriented toward the individual and its journey toward increasing solitude and isolation, rather than on relationships that are believed to be the matter of a single lifetime. Beliefs that transcend individual life spans are hard to compress into an alien framework. Labeling Indians as collectivistic as opposed to Western individualistic was an outcome of orientalist attributions. Anyone who has driven on streets in India would have a vivid example of how individualistic people can be in public spaces. The conflation of "familism" (Roland, 1988) to collectivism has been one of the most significant errors of judgment about the Indian psyche (Sinha & Tripathi, 2002).

Knowledge and belief-systems that conflict with the science of human behavior are rendered irrelevant and distracting for the enterprise of higher education. With the recent establishment of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and Ethics Committees, greater value is placed on values, ethics, and morality emerging from modernism, human rights, and international protocols. This is further exaggerated by the trend to use the pure sciences and medical practice as the gold standards for conducting research. This has led to the further backward movement of depending on published norms and standards in the desire to gain respectability.

### **Experiences of Indian Psychologists With Global Psychology**

Psychology is a well-respected discipline, with many countries adopting international (read Western) curricula, textbooks, and testing materials in the advancement of higher education. Its rise as an academic discipline in the early 20th century in India was kick-started by a select group of foreign-trained scholars who returned to establish Psychology Departments in institutions of higher learning. The practice of psychology primarily followed a Western "brand" of the discipline prevailing at that time (Dalal, 2002). However, in post-independence India, there was a

. . . growing disillusionment with applicability of Western theories and their mindless testing in India. Their failure to resolve inner conflicts of cherishing Indian cultural values at the personal level and maintaining western orientation at professional level was reflected in their methodologically sophisticated but socially irrelevant research. Western psychological theories and research were not effective in understanding the Indian social reality. As a result, Indian psychologists became increasingly marginalised. (Dalal, 2002, p. 95)

This disillusionment led to the rise of scholarship that was rooted in local knowledge and cultural meanings with significant contributions from scholars like Durganand Sinha, Ashis Nandy, Anand Paranjpe, Janak Pandey, Girishwar Misra, Ram Charan Tripathi, Amar Kumar Dalal, S. Anandalakshmy, and T. S. Saraswathi, to name a few. Despite this wealth of knowledge

and erudite leadership, indigenous knowledge systems and local cultural practices have failed to make an impact on the way psychology is taught in schools, colleges, and universities. Why is this so? Why have these scholarly articles failed to impress local departments enough to make a nation-wide difference to teaching, research, and application of Psychology?

For Indian psychologists, as perhaps for others too, pursuing mainstream Psychology comes with some consequences. The need to consider Indian psychology is not as important as the requirement to study the global version (Western, and largely culture-blind psychology). Considering the large discrepancy between ideological, social, economic, and political climate, scholars were often required to make a choice about how to understand personal experiences and cultural patterns. These discrepancies illustrate how deep and enduring these differences were, and the cost one had to bear in making choices. People deal with these in different ways.

Most often, one would keep the categories of home and work separate, accept that there are irreconcilable differences, and carry on. Psychology was for the workplace, and home was different. For a country with pluralism at its core, this was not particularly difficult. However, for scholars who looked deeper into issues they were studying, the discrepancies become more glaring. Methods for which training has been received do not work, and textbooks rarely refer to phenomena that are experienced. Local knowledge systems, family practices, and social phenomena just do not seem to fit well with the neat categories we study. For such situations, alienation was the only option, a separation of personal experience from academic study. Either one had to mute one's own cultural practices and adopt the ways of the West as best for academic pursuits, or abandon Psychology as inadequate and shift careers. A few brave scholars had the courage to stay in the field and speak up about cultural ideology, meaning, and significance, and some even provided corrections for the ways in which Psychology was being taught locally. Psychology in India has been reluctant to deal with social issues such as caste, poverty, and deprivation, which is another important way of distancing academic understanding from real life, despite some important exceptions. In present times, much of the study of psychological phenomena has been annexed by behavioral economics, and psychology has been left behind. In the realm of social policy in India, sociology is the dominant partner, not psychology. Social scientists in India have regarded psychology with skepticism. In an institution like the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), for instance, it is only over the last decade that psychology has come into its own, consciously embraced culture, and community in the ecological model, a departure from mainstream psychology.

For Indian Psychology, despite the strong cultural traditions and scholarship about psychological and social dimensions, there was a strong push-back from certain quarters that espouse principles of liberalism, secularism (separation of science from faith) as well as from policies of pluralism. As Misra and Paranjpe (2012) describe,

. . . indigenous thought systems remained neglected because there was a strong aversion toward them owing to doubts regarding their scientific status, contemporaneous relevance, and ontological suppositions . . . Psychological theories and constructs were taken as intrinsically biological, materialistic/objective in content, and quantitative in methodological approach. Therefore psychology, like other natural and physical sciences, was thought to be culture-blind and psychological processes as distributed/shared uniformly across diverse cultures and sub-cultures. (p. 13)

This kept the spread of indigenous views of psychology largely restricted to local movements.

Progressive Indians who were eager to dissociate themselves from being bound by the practices of orthodox Hinduism, found it was easier to ally with Western theory and practice than to look "backwards," associations that were deeply ingrained in the people during colonial times. Another problem arose when the plurality of India's ethnic, religious, and linguistic landscape was approached. Using the example of English as the official language in schools, universities,



and the corporate world, the politics of regional differences has permitted the use of English as the binding language rather than Hindi that is specific to the Northern region (and Bollywood cinema). This is a debate that keeps emerging in the public domain periodically. Disagreement with any of the hundreds of local languages allows English to flourish, in addition to the recognition of its value as an international lingua franca, as well as a local language.

Yet another opposition for indigenizing Psychology teaching comes from another political orientation, India's left-leaning academics, who resist any insertion of Hindu ideology into higher study on account of its association with orthodoxy. A recent inclusion of ideas from Hindu scriptures in Psychology curricula came under a storm of criticism from this group. What they have failed to see is that scientific psychology also has ideological affiliations and origins; it's just that these are more opaque. The gap between these views is serious, and the spaces are mostly filled by a safer, outsider option, like the use of the English language.

For scholars stuck between these political debates, the alignment with one or the other side creates fractures. Aligning with the dominant scientific perspectives creates distance between personal experiences and academic psychology. On the contrary, following indigenous perspectives limits one's influence and outreach to national conferences and local debates, especially until recognition is received and the person gains enough confidence to take a bold stand. Honestly, there is little interest, if any, on the part of the mainstream Psychology, in what goes on within Indian institutions.

Another important issue relates to the applications of Psychology theories and practice. Most international projects, for assessments, evaluations, interventions or therapy, have an impact on policy and practice through institutional services like schools, aid agencies, and hospitals. The practical applications of Psychological theory and research need a major review to promote a more socially just application of its research. Examples of this in the fields of education, therapy, and international aid can be used to illustrate the point. For instance, if we take the example of education, a learning system that fails to acknowledge, accept, and incorporate multilingualism, which characterizes Indian social life, would fail to reach the depths of understanding that are intended. Therapies who fail to recognize the important place that others have in a person's life (not collectivism, but interpersonal closeness) are unable to cross personal barriers to accomplish change. And finally, intervention practices that attempt to make changes in children's care that are not adapted to ecological conditions can result in unfavorable outcomes that are unintended but inevitable. One of these is the promotion of parents as primary and exclusive caregivers rather than the larger family network. Thus, we need a greater attention to and audit of the practical applications of psychological principles before venturing into new territories.

## **Regard for a Foreign Education**

There is a great deal of respect for education offered in the West, particularly North America (the United States and Canada) and the United Kingdom, and more recently, Australia. Many students travel to Universities abroad, paying the fees if their families can afford it, and they supplement this with scholarships and loans to cover costs. Once there, few can return to the homeland as the kind of Psychology they learn as well as the academic environment keeps them engaged in the West. Although several return due to family reasons or nationalistic sentiments, the numbers that stay are far more than those who return home. As travel and technology have improved, a trend of returning "home" for data collection has emerged, initiated by supervisors wanting to experiment with new regions. When such projects were genuinely interested in the local culture and people, and not just driven by the desire to cover new ground, several innovative ideas have developed. This was true of the social sciences and the humanities.

Interactions with Indian students in foreign universities since the 1990s indicated that some of them felt lost and exploited. Many of these scholars become absorbed in the

mainstream, sometimes finding it hard to reconcile cultural meanings with psychology experiments. The attractions of joining the majority are many, and as immigrants, they were often unable to take a stand on issues of culture except if their views found local support from their supervisors and colleagues. Some have made a difference and have made award-winning contributions to the field.

In a private conversation at a recent conference, an Indian doctoral student studying at a U.S. university described the difficulties she was having. Her advisor had fully supported her travel to India for data collection, a place where she (the student) had grown up and lived before traveling to study abroad. Troubles began to arise when the supervisor, who was not familiar with Indian culture, insisted on making Western interpretations of the findings. The student considered these explanations to be inauthentic, but she felt that disagreeing with the advisor would result in the delay of project completion. The competing cultural pressures had become hard for her to handle, she declared in confidence.

For locally trained psychologists, teaching and research provided the few available jobs, and some went into private companies, schools, research organizations, and hospitals. With some exceptions, salaries were not commensurate with the opportunities available as in other fields, which were more job-oriented, like technology and management. When the diversification of Psychology was initiated (clinical, counseling, social, industrial, and developmental), clinical psychology became more prized and jobs developed there, as it was the most closely linked to medicine. Counseling became more important with stress-related issues coming to the forefront. Social and industrial psychology in India never really extended beyond academia and research, although Industrial Psychology blossomed because of the growth of applied disciplines in fields like Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management. Although Developmental Psychology from a cultural perspective is extremely relevant for developing countries like India, the field has remained somewhat isolated, not extending into the wider areas of application, such as education and welfare.

For Indian Psychologists trained in India, there was a constant struggle to be included in the global community of Psychologists, and the entry into mainstream Psychology was mostly unavailable because the path was very well-controlled. A person had to be trained in the West. For all those who did not either agree with or failed to join this path, the only way of collaborating with scholars from different countries came through associations like International Association of Psychology, International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology, and International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development, associations that permitted and encouraged the cross-fertilization that international conferences offered. However, these entries too have had their gatekeepers. By keeping registration and other costs low, and moving to other parts of the world to have international and regional conferences, these associations played a very significant role in promoting horizontal collaborations. In essence, either one resigned oneself to a local field of influence or one searched for a suitable “branch” of psychology that was supportive of discourse about culture. Meanwhile, discussions about culture in psychology have been muted and even in some versions of cross-cultural psychology, especially large projects, the concern has been much more to advancing a single idea rather than developing indigenous theories, models, or methods.

## **The Development of Developmental Psychologists in India: Personal Reflections**

The experiences of Indian psychologists have been mentioned in several instances above, but let us consolidate them for the sake of argument. India is a favorable “site” for its geo-political, demographic, and cultural significance. However, there is rarely an interest from mainstream psychology in local beliefs and knowledge systems, except as a testing ground for existing

beliefs, where an “exotic” location, assumed to be identifiably different and homogeneous, is imagined. As Indian psychologists have begun to assert themselves, Western psychologists try to find more docile partners, for example, Nepal, Thailand, or Malaysia.

Simple labels of “collectivism” or “interdependent” as contrasted with the West are examples. Inter-cultural heterogeneity of Westernized Indians are not necessarily interesting enough because they do not fit the imagination, and the mythology that has been developed about the impoverished India, as peddled in films such as *Slumdog Millionaire* and more recently *Gully Boy*.

## Self and Others

Let us look at the study of the Self, a popular core area in contemporary versions of psychological study. Religions of India have some of the oldest essays on Self-knowledge known to mankind. Except for a few references, these discourses on the nature of the self, although now widely available from Indian philosophy, Sanskrit scholarship, history, and cultural anthropology, remain outside the main discourse about the Self. Paranjpe (in Misra & Paranjpe, 2012) has asserted repeatedly that psychology and philosophy have largely relegated Indian thought to minor references. He has highlighted some key differences between Eastern and Western notions of Self and identity. He argues that the project of Self and identity in the West from Aristotle to Maslow emphasized Self-Actualization whereas Indian Vedanta philosophy focused on the task of Self-Realization. Scholarship in the field of yoga has significance for the study of the Self by training the mind and recommends several breathing exercises that control the flow of thought through the management of breathing. This aspect of yogic thinking has never really been accepted as a legitimate form of psychological phenomena. There are few academic articles available on yoga related to therapeutic benefits of yoga. Although yoga may have reached every street corner in U.S. cities, the knowledge base of yoga and its discourses on theories of the self largely remain outside of academic study. The West has been very careful in only accepting certain versions. Meditation and yoga became transformed into mindfulness, which draws closely from, but without references to, Eastern philosophy. There is a systematic cherry-picking of knowledge emerging from the East.

Still vertical collaborations sustain, and local scholars are needed for specific inputs: language and cost, especially for large-scale studies. They are rarely invited to collaborate in the core construction of research studies. A search of the topic of yoga on the APA website finds about 300 articles that primarily discuss the fitness, medical, and psychological benefits of yoga, while the core ideas of yoga and self-realization are largely ignored.

In addition, research done locally, within Indian universities, is seen as unscientific, lacking in procedural precision, scientific rigor, and unfit for publication in international journals. With minimal adaptations in design permitted to retain purity of purpose, despite unfamiliarity, research is dependent largely on meanings and methods generated outside, because methods and interpretations focus more on reliability rather than on meaning and ecological validity. Local procedural problems are muted like sample selection, field setting, and unfamiliarity with method. Findings are forced into pre-conceived ideas: collectivistic, interdependent, incomprehensible ideas are commonplace, whereas more nuanced studies of self-expression (Chaudhary, 2012) are few and far-between. Another feature of international research projects is the relative silencing of within-country differences. Furthermore, local meanings are transformed, muted, or ignored, even “seductive,” as our findings about “elective interdependence,” highlighting the mediation of relational closeness and distancing depending on the intentions of the caregiver (Tuli & Chaudhary, 2010), were once labeled. For instance, mothers would actively encourage their children to align with their natal family members like their sister, mother, and father, while actively remaining aloof from the paternal family that they may even have been residing with.

The common pattern is that foreign collaborators bring funds and locals follow, for which co-authorship, international travel, and conference presentations are rewards that they must be satisfied with.

## **Why Applications in Psychology Lag Behind**

Applications in the field of Psychology search for universal standards so that applications can be seamlessly transferred across the globe. In the case of Developmental Psychology, it has been argued that the notion of childhood, its sequence and setting described in textbooks, draws from a specific ideology as several articles have noted (Henrich et al., 2010; Nielsen et al., 2017). The world's people are described by using repeated investigations from a small group of people. As a reflexive discipline where scientists attempt to understand themselves, this is a luxury Psychology cannot afford.

So, whereas academic Psychology in India may have developed some indigenous trends, applications still rely on a certain kind of mainstream Psychology that persists without critical examination about cultural relevance or ecological validity. Applications in education, welfare, and theory are the main examples here. There are several reasons for this. The market economy and corporate world is firmly aligned toward selling products, and simple, measurable, packaged ideas are far more accessible than doubts and debates. Furthermore, applications like standardized tests and intervention programs require large amounts of funding that international agencies can afford, whether these are publishing houses or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Psychological counseling and therapy draw heavily from Western theories and models that are available.

In the area of schooling, India has always been a popular location for setting up missionary schools and they remain quite popular. On the road between Raipur and Kanha in the State of Chhattisgarh in Eastern India, one encounters scores of obscure missions from different parts of the world that have schools set up in villages and small towns. Education, rather than being seen as an enhancement of opportunity to develop children's capacity for learning and creativity, is seen in many of these sorts of schools as a place to "clean-up" children's minds and teach them properly. Attitudes toward local cultures border on contempt. There is little or no regard for cultural differences within these schools, and the reference to culture remains token . . . with "culture as nationality" being the most prevalent pattern. Unfortunately, the necessity for schools set up by private players, missionaries, and NGOs is because the Government has not accepted its responsibility to citizens for education. Many parts of North-East India have benefited from schools set up by Christian missionaries, who may have proselytized and "civilized" the natives. The use of the Roman script for the local languages in Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram has been due to "Western" influences. Examples of shifts in parenting practices by intervention programs can have serious conflict with local child care practices with unexpected consequences (Morelli et al., 2017).

In application, even more so than in academic psychology, complexity is eschewed and findings that fit an agenda are given precedence. As mentioned at a recent conference<sup>3</sup> by a UNICEF representative Raghavan (2019), "We have to provide the same message to 300 odd countries, and that challenge itself requires a simplification of the message."

## **The Inscrutable Indians: Why We Fail to Fit Into Psychology's Neo-Colonial Model**

Foucault's (1969/1989) premise about systems of knowledge argues that every set of ideas is based on rules that are not evident, thereby defining the boundaries of thought and language for that specific time-place coordinate. Discourse about knowledge is far more complex than our

understanding of it. Determined by institutional and discursive relationships rather than continuities, ideas are far more entrenched in their emerging circumstances than just meaning, they depend on a set of meanings, and cannot be understood adequately without taking the whole system of meaning into account. Using this position, ideas about self, identity, psychology, emotions, and human existence all relate to local meaning systems. By the same argument, we cannot assume that academic psychology is timeless and universal. It is a map of sorts that is based on hidden assumptions, as is every other idea. Making that landscape obvious is one task of developing a more culturally relevant psychology.

Besides differences in ideology, developmental domains and processes are understood differently, some associated with Hinduism, and some shared across other ethnicities. Some examples of these ideas are as follows:

### *Family Life Cycle*

Hindu theory has a clearly defined social calendar for family life. Guided by principles of *karma* and *dharma*, the *Ashrama* theory of family life proposes stages of activity-based roles and relationships believed to be appropriate. Starting from the complete dependence of an infant, the older child's preoccupation with learning is believed to be followed by intense social engagement with household responsibilities. Gradually, as children grow up and have their own offspring, it is appropriate to detach oneself from worldly relationships and emotions toward isolation and solitude to prepare for separation by death. Without going into any further detail about the theory, it is important to note that any attempt to classify Hindu relationships as collective and interdependent would be misleading because every act is evaluated from at least three perspectives: *kal*, *des*, and *patra*: time, place, and person. It would be developmentally inappropriate for an older person to express too much attachment or for a young one to insist on autonomy. Unless the complexity of the ideas in *Ashrama* theory are known, it is impossible to grasp the true nature of the ideal life course, punctuated by numerous time- and task-based requirements. Despite the wide variation in practices, one can see that the ambient ideas of *Ashrama* theory are pervasive (Chaudhary, 2004; Krishnan, 1998; Saraswathi, 1999).

Within a multiple caregiver situation, there is a possibility for the child to experience several different forms of care. Deriving from the models of care (Chaudhary, 2018), children growing up in such contexts experience all four possibilities: individual one-on-one care, care by many, care along with many other children by one adult, and many by many. Early child care experiences are dramatically different, even among nuclear families, because the periodic and temporary inclusion of others in caring for the child is socially valued and situationally constructed. Repeatedly, research has shown that there are very few children in India who experience care only of their parents. Multiplicity and pluralism is more the norm than the exception.

### *Learning, Intelligence, and Wisdom*

Ancient Indian sources that discuss learning processes are long and detailed. For instance, in one source, learning is believed to be contextual and collaborative, and intelligence is understood as a distributed, social awareness rather than the way it is determined in intelligence testing (Srivastava & Misra, 2007). Despite a long-standing tradition of attempting to understand intelligence as a human capacity, Indian Psychology has largely borrowed from the West, making haphazard and hurried adaptations of existing measures for use with local populations, lacking both conceptual clarity and methodological rigor (Srivastava & Misra, 2007). In contrast with the Western concept of intelligence as a decontextualized ability, Indian understanding is more inclusive and context-bound, with a high premium placed on contextual knowledge.

. . . in addition to giving importance to cognitive abilities, [this view] also takes into account affective and motivational concepts in a major way. Also, the Indian concept of intelligence is more close to the . . . concept of wisdom, which includes procedural knowledge, relativism and is capable of dealing with uncertainty. . . . To a large extent, it overlaps with the characteristics of prudence, social intelligence, emotional intelligence and practical intelligence. (Srivastava & Misra, 2007, p. 213)

Srivastava and Misra are some of the few scholars who have worked on empirical and scholarly work on a local understanding of the concept of intelligence.

### **Emotional Experiences**

When we examine theories of emotions, there are extensive writings about the structure and manifestation of emotions, the most important departure being that there are no positive or negative emotions, as the context and meaning of emotional feeling and expression are considered as key factors in the study of emotional experience. The Rasa theory of emotions (Ganesh, 2006) is well-defined and further developed through the cultivation of theatrical expressions in classical drama and dance. The realization of Rasa is the result of the union of *Sthaibhavas* (stable emotions), *Vibhavas* (situations), *Anubhavas* (experiences), and *Vyabhikaribhavas* (mental states), each of which needs to be considered before an emotional state or expression can be fully understood. Situations (*Vibhavas*) facilitate the emergence of nine stable emotions (*Sthaibhavas*<sup>4</sup>). The expression of emotion results in the experience (*Anubhava*), which in turn influence the mental states of the individual (*Vyabhikaribhavas*), such as anxiety, despair, and determination (Chaudhary, 2019). For instance, if one laughs when the situation calls for sadness, the inappropriateness of the emotion would be instantly marked by looking at the discrepancy and then trying to understand a person's experience and mental state. Furthermore, there are clear distinctions between real-life experience and artistic expressions, with the latter having been cultivated in classical dance and theater, the most elaborate ways of understanding the dynamics of emotional arousal and its expression.

### **Practical Consequences of Cultural Themes**

What are some of the likely consequences of these cultural themes? We propose here that on account of these differences, there are several important consequences on the basic structure of the psyche that need to be considered while understanding local psychological phenomena and their application. Furthermore, these approaches can make important contributions to the body of work on core areas in psychology as well, and not just assist in understanding Indians.

Growing up with many people, within an ideology of self-reflection, and a contextual understanding of emotion and learning, there is a likelihood of developing certain preferences in personal-social life. These are purely conjectural, although research studies have suggested these patterns through several studies (Kakar & Kakar, 2007; Kurtz, 1992; Menon, 2003; Roland, 1988; Trawick, 1990). These orientations and experiences permit the development of greater personal flexibility, adaptability, and ease of being with others, including the capacity to live among people who may not even like you very much. A person develops autonomy of a different sort from the kind understood in Western ideology. It is a psychic autonomy, the capacity to be oneself and on one's own even among a crowd. The concept of personal space is culturally bound and alien to most Indians. Furthermore, people develop multiple perspectives on self that permit attachment and emotional bonding with several people, often deriving different dimensions of care from different people depending on their preferences or proclivities. A rather inactive grandmother may provide supervision, comfort, and story-telling, whereas a mother may be involved more in physical care and personal hygiene. Feeding can be taken over by older siblings, uncles,

and aunts, whereas young men of the family often take children out for a ride, or visit. The shared caregiving is not just an equal spread of bits of child care, but the provision of different inputs from different people from which children can learn important lessons and also learn to cope with difference, ambiguity, contradiction, and conflict.

This permeability of spaces provides children with some protection from physical and sexual abuse because there are few spaces where a child is alone. Contrary to some writing about child care in India, it has been shown that men are always included (fathers, uncles, grandfathers) for cycle rides, morning supervision, story-telling, exposure to the outside world, and discipline. During field visits and in researchers' presence, men do tend to take a back seat as it is believed that children belong to the female domain. Similarly, due to the fact that children are rarely alone, usually accompanied by older siblings and neighbors, bullying by peers can be contained. Informal groups are always of mixed ages, and adults expect older siblings to watch out for younger ones. There is loose, informal, constant supervision by adults. Another advantage of this social pattern is that children learn from a very young age to do things "for" others and to accept being cared for. This could be seen as parentification by outsiders to the culture.

Yet, this pattern (multiple caregiving, sibling care, distributed activity, flexible spaces, and free movement of children) is not as evident in large cities. With the increase in reports of crimes against children from all parts of the country, our concern is about who watches out for children. Children from poorer homes (especially girls) are perforce made to learn for themselves, are catapulted into an adult world, and have very little experience of being cared for. Another relevant point here is the within-culture differences are not often recognized when phenomena are being viewed from a distance.

Furthermore, the ways in which learning, emotions, motivation, independence, and other key areas are constructed in the local meaning systems find little or no place in research conversations, thereby alienating the participant from her own meaning-making (Chaudhary, 2008).

## Learning and School: Fractured Experiences

During the 19th and 20th centuries, two social institutions were exported from Western Europe and the USA to the rest of the world: The factory and the school. The history of that export is heavy with political domination, economic exploitation, as well as religious proselytization. Under the guise of promoting "development" . . . the physical and social sciences are routinely deployed as key intellectual resources for the optimal design of public policies, professional practices and education to modernize the cultures of the recipients of aid. (Serpell, 2019, p. 384)

India has seen a long-standing respect for Convent education which was believed to be able to accomplish the repair and remodeling of children, teach them manners, and basically develop discipline and orderliness that may be lacking in the home. "Learning to stand and sit" is a local metaphor. However, an important trend in missionary and other schools based on the Western model of education is that ecological and social knowledge find no place in school (homogenized urban education), with a few important exceptions. Education, especially within poorer communities takes the characteristic of disjuncture from cultural moorings and with few exceptions, the child is expected to abandon familiar ways: language, food, songs, dance, and poems (Valenzuela, 1999).

The disproportionate focus on literacy and numeracy, dismissal of oral traditions, rote learning,<sup>5</sup> and other culturally familiar processes have serious consequences that are seen in the increasing problem of school refusal and drop out. Early childhood interventions are often guided by the demands of later schooling and emphasize familiarity with alphabets and numbers, ability to sit quietly, toilet training, discipline, and so on. Because the demand for "quality" education exceeds the supply, there has been a proliferation of private, unregulated schools that promise to

“prepare” children for admissions to higher classes, thereby compromising learning experiences and resulting in further alienation.

### ***Consequences for Learning and Participation***

This pattern of schooling in India has had important consequences. The middle- and upper-class children thrive, and the ones who need it most benefit the least from attending school. Rural, tribal, and poor children are marginalized. They are pulled apart by the two worlds: alienated from the familiar and lacking the social capital to enter the other because there is an undermining of values, ethics, and morality and practices emerging from community.

### **Mind the Gap: Between the Field and the Lab**

As opposed to the ease with which lab studies can be conducted in Western universities where infrastructure and equipment are available, several local conditions make lab studies hard to achieve in Indian universities, and field-based studies are more practical. Fewer spaces, long distances, ideological differences, and other issues come in the way of organizing lab studies. Especially for children and families, research has to reach the participants’ homes. Other than university students, a well-researched group, other adults, and children can be found either at their workplace or homes. Indeed, Psychology research is delimited by the use of language. Most research scholars would prefer to carry out research in English, as a dissertation must be submitted in English. Doing literal translation of words into English results in loss or misunderstanding of meaning. Students need to be constantly reminded to give the terms and phrases that are used to express phenomena in context. This is especially so when we look at research in therapy and counseling. For instance, the lexicon of available emotion words in languages other than English are rarely available for students, which increases the challenge for them to work with a non-English-speaking client or respondent.

Furthermore, conditions at home are very different from those in the lab, and face-to-face interactions are not commonplace. There are culturally familiar ways of interacting (Keller, 2007), and these can have profound impact on the ways in which interactions are structured and interpreted, often interfering with participation in research.

The field is replete with the continuity of real experiences rather than representations of which the research encounter is just a slice. Furthermore, reluctant adults, suspicious gatekeepers, uncertain transportation, health issues, family life, and fearful children make the lab a difficult arrangement. Homes are accessible and easy, but very different, not conducive to individual interactions because these are characterized by multilogues, and individual assessment/interviewing is suspect (“Why do you want others not to speak?”). For example, play with people guides play with objects, and objects belonging to others are particularly avoided for fear of spoiling and breaking. It is hard to keep children shackled to a situation, they run away, especially in rural and tribal areas which are characterized by open spaces and free movement of children.

### **Children’s Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

An international imposition that emerges from the field of Psychology in its application of world policy is the CRC. Examining the history of the CRC, we find that industrialization and individualization resulted in several important consequences in the West, shrinking family size, low fertility rates, and the separation of grandparents from the nuclear family about three to four centuries ago. As a consequence of these trends, children began to be seen as frail, innocent, and vulnerable and in need of protection. They were also seen as consumers, rather



than producers of the family domestic economy. This insecurity translated into global policy by the UNICEF whose agenda for emergency aid post-war was drastically reduced. They needed a new agenda. The widespread failure of Structural Adjustment Programs like International Monetary Fund and World Bank loans led to severe poverty conditions, and international aid became a channel for promoting welfare. Despite the wide disparity in the way childhood was understood around the world, *child rights* as an idea, firmly based in globalization, became an internationally accepted format for how children should be viewed and treated. The CRC was written and signed (Foucault, 1969/1989).

Although most countries signed the CRC on account of global pressure, the United States has signed but not ratified the document, whereas South Sudan has ratified but not signed. Why these double standards? The United States is the center of global aid agencies and the United Nations, yet the unwillingness to ratify the document remains an embarrassment. Apparently emerging from double standards (for their own internal policy and the rest of the world), U.S. decision makers believe that the sovereignty of the American family would be compromised if an international body would decide the standards of care for its children. However, dissent by others is considered as roguishness. Consequently, the child was globalized and separated from its context, and *development* was separated from culture (Burman, 1994). Several important outcomes of these policies have been cited in the literature (Morelli et al., 2017; Oppong, 2019; Serpell & Nsamenang, 2014). Under this, diversity is seen as a threat, and policing of childhood, especially in the case of immigrants from the Global South, has become accelerated. Any cultural practice at odds with the CRC becomes identified as abuse or exploitation (Gadda, 2008). Regarding India, there has never been a critical debate about the cultural implications of using the CRC as a standard. Because India was eager to be seen as favorable to human rights and CRC, a status quo has been maintained (Raman, 2000).

## Psychology for Social Justice and the Urgent Need to Address Applications

The earth is telling us that ideas emerging from *modernism* are not sustainable (Ghosh, 2019). To be fully aware of the consequences of our decisions and actions, we must question everything, because if it cannot be questioned, it is not science. Practices that use the results of psychological research must be regularly audited to examine the transfer of knowledge to applications: measures, methods, therapies, and interventions (Burman, 1996). We will do well, therefore, to expand the lens, view culture/context as constitutive, accept multiple solutions not singular models, and democratize the research process. International collaborations should be enforced and researchers trusted, in addition to reducing gatekeepers; reducing expenses; promoting horizontal collaborations; increasing openness; publicizing widely—formal and informal; and organizing debates and conferences around Institutional Ethics Committees and IRBs. Improving the quality of local publications and reducing the need to refer to Western research studies, and picking up topics relevant to the culture and people, are all important paths for development. As scholars, we must adopt humility in the researcher or in an expert. We are because of what we study, and respect for participants is key to ethical standards. Simply getting documents signed for ethics clearances is not enough. Participants' lives are more important than our work, and remembering that participants have a right not to engage with our projects is critical. Issues that are outcomes of global policy must be engaged with as debates. For instance, issues of child protection for immigrants are direct outcomes of simple applications of psychology research.

What is needed is, and we use Oppong's words here, "epistemic authenticity with the view to ensuring that the conceptions of reality . . . reflect authentic African socio-cultural realities but not an imposed or self-imposed contrived reality borrowed or derived from the West" (p. 298).

Engaging with “others” in all steps of practice—interdisciplinary and inter-cultural collaborations, intersectionality, social justice—is necessary as is the reexamination of positions on poverty and affluence. A renewed focus on “ecological wisdom” and people’s right to self-determination and meaning is a need of the hour and therein, developing applications (in learning, therapy, aid) that do not have “subtractive” impact on people. This can be achieved by strengthening attention to alternative meanings, methods, and discourses.

Indian psychology has traveled through three importance phases: from antiquity to the pre-British era; followed by the colonial period during which the science of psychology and its practice largely followed the Western tradition; and then the post-independence phase, where although the influence of Western psychology sustained and even dominated, there have been important breakthroughs in indigenous perspectives (Misra & Paranjpe, 2012). A lot more work needs to be done in this regard.

Between unprecedented possibilities for engagements and escalating exclusions, psychology offers reason and opportunity to foster enduring, strong, genuine, collaborative, and trusting international academic alliances. International associations and horizontal collaborations have important roles to play toward social justice in the practice of psychology. To make significant changes, perhaps we must work like “detectives to first discover key ideas behind well-referenced discourse flow of persuasive rhetoric” where theoretical arguments have become replaced with “links with literature” (Valsiner, 2019, p. 431). We must find strategies to break away from these links and join the movement toward a collaborative and comprehensive science of human psychology. Such endeavors are not merely new emergent branches of psychology, but consist of an enterprise to position research in ways that are adequate and appropriate for studying complex and changing aspects of human phenomena by breaking away from the axioms of the physical sciences (Valsiner, 2019) and the hegemony of mainstream psychology.

Among what Salman Rushdie characterizes as the backyards of the world, group and individual identities are being constantly negotiated between a longing for coherence and reality of fragmentation (Pirbhai, 2001). This is one of the many reasons why we have to find our own pathways, away from somewhere and toward somewhere else. In doing so, psychology of and for the people living in these worlds needs to be reconstructed, reorganized, and reconceptualized. Through this article, we have attempted to focus on how different institutional structures (colonies, empires, universities, lobbyists, markets) have constrained innovative explorations of culturally constructed psychological phenomena. We have repeatedly been told “how to” study or practice psychology. In framing these possibilities in this article, we adopt no allegiance outside of the pursuit of a cultural science and focus on deep psychological inquiry, not even to local traditions which provide richness and credibility to the experience of being human. In this sense, we imagine a psychology that is liberating, free, and democratic, allowing multiplicity of content, form, and approach to reach beyond suppressed meanings and flattened discourse.

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## Notes

1. <https://scroll.in/article/940587/explainer-whats-unique-about-abhijit-banerjee-and-esther-duflos-method-and-why-it-is-criticised>
2. Even on the rare occasion that translations are done, cultural appropriateness of the terms used is rarely considered. The Fertility Quality of Life tool (FERTIQoL; Boivin et al., 2011) to assess infertility quality of life is a case in point. Pejorative terms *baanjh* and *banjharpan* are used in the Hindi version of the scale that refer to being infertile. The translation does not allow one to ask about “inability to have children.”
3. IACCP Regional Conference held at University of Costa Rica, San Jose, Costa Rica, July 16–19, 2019.
4. The nine stable emotions are Love, Humor, Sorrow, Anger, Enthusiasm, Fear, Disgust, Wonder, and Passiveness. There are 49 emotions in all.
5. <https://masalachaimusings.com/2019/09/13/in-defence-of-rote-learning-conversations/>

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