

My Tale of 2 Cultures

Sent: Thursday, October 01, 2020 4:48 PM

From: John

Hi Louise,

Ilene thought I should send this to you for posting. I wasn't sure, thinking it was just banter, although very real – “real” meaning “practiced” by me, personally. Hence “My Tale of Two Cultures.”

I emailed this to Ilene right after the Presidential debates. I did not watch the debate but understand it was a fiasco for many. Afterwards, I read and responded to a few comments from acquaintances about “winner s and losers” – their impressions. My reactions were different for different people. But generally they were different based on culture and language. This inconsistency is not surprising to me because that's the way it's been for most of my life.

I did text to my neighborhood Peet's “ coffee buddies” - none of whom were of Asian descent and all seven who watched the Presidential debate

“I'm glad I missed the debacle. I have no taste for gladiatorial battles. Moreover:, my political discussions with Americans, born & raised in Chinese societies, tend to be different than towards others. Body language, demeanor, tone of voice, etc. , prompting me to post this on FB. For me, this is how it is. Americans in general love the contest between strong and weak. Asians know that winning cannot come at a loss of face for your opponent cuz it triggers MAD, mutual assured destruction.

My reply to Ilene about emailing you the photo for posting, Louise, was “ too iconoclastic, you think”? Ilene, more intrepid than I, intellectually, suggested “go ahead,” so here I am!

"CQ" - Cultural Intelligence Quotient: Practicing CQ during the Presidential Elections 2020

Please
vote for our
"Candidate of
Choice 2020"
拜托! 拜托!
感謝!



To Chinese American - "Isei's"



"Candidate
of Choice" 2020
"Mother#^@%*&"

"Born in the USA"

My Tale of Two Cultures

Cheers!

John

From: Rosemarie Anderson

Sent: Friday, October 02, 2020 11:42 AM

Thanks, John. Your insights are helpful to me personally and professionally

I was born in the USA but most of my ancestors are from Finland. My Finnish parents and grandparents taught me these values, too. I did not watch the Presidential debates either. Nor do I watch/enjoy American gladiatorial sports.

Know, too, that as a child and teenager I spent many hours in what are called Finn Halls in the US. Many of the old folks sitting on the long benches around the dance floor looked Chinese **except for their skin color**. Of course, genes controlling skin color mutate quickly over the generations in response to environmental changes than other genes.

Warm regards,
Rosemarie

From: John
Sent: Friday, October 02, 2020 2:56 PM

You're welcome, Rosemarie.

Thank you for your note – in my mind's eye, I can almost capture a view of the dance hall with long benches and people sitting around.

Very nice!

From: Rosemarie Anderson
Sent: Friday, October 02, 2020 3:39 PM

Thanks, John.

Of course, debate and competition is the gladiatorial "sport" of Western academia. In my case, I offer no defense but just move forward in another direction as successful military commanders do.

I would like to use the term MAD, mutual assured destruction, in a forthcoming article. I found the term on Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_assured_destruction#:~:text=Mutually%20assured%20destruction%20\(MAD\)%20is,nuclear%20strike%20and%20second%20strike](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_assured_destruction#:~:text=Mutually%20assured%20destruction%20(MAD)%20is,nuclear%20strike%20and%20second%20strike). Is there anything else you would like to say about the term?

Warmly,
Rosemarie

From: John
Sent: Friday, October 02, 2020 5:36 PM

Rosemarie,

I think Wikipedia pretty much covers it. An arms race makes no sense when even a small number of detonations will destroy everyone.

Before the nuclear age, it was “an eye for an eye until everyone is blind” – remember?

I guess, as civilizations go, we’re slow learners.

Best wishes on your article!

John

From: Harris Friedman

Sent: Friday, October 02, 2020 9:31 PM

There is a "gaming" technique sometimes known as "spit in the soup." Someone makes the soup distasteful by this maneuver, and then can claim it for their own as everyone else is disgusted by the spit.

This is what Trump did during the debates. Biden defended himself as Trump broke the agreed-upon rules by not letting Biden talk, mischaracterized his position and otherwise lied, and in general was a bully. It was not the debate that was unsavory but, rather, one of the debaters who was horrible. For those who dismiss the whole debate and walk away in disgust, the bully wins by chasing away the good people, while his base still supports him regardless of him having spit in the soup. Don't fall for that ploy.

I remember many times while in grade school being disciplined for fighting. The fact is that antisemitic Christians would often try to bully me for being Jewish and, when I fought back, all of those fighting got in trouble, even though I was attacked and simply fought back. I resent this injustice to this day, and argue we must stand up to bullies or they will get all the soup and the rest will starve.

Last, regarding "Americans in general love the contest between strong and weak. Asians know that winning cannot come at a loss of face for your opponent cuz it triggers MAD, mutual assured destruction." I could not disagree more with this over-generalization. The history of violence in Asia is no less than with any other human group, as only a casual read of

Asian history will amply reveal. For example, I am deeply involved in several Asian martial arts, and I know their histories quite well, and I assure you that they did not evolve in a context of peace and harmony. Us humans are a quarrelsome group of primates, across all cultures and times. My own view is that conflict is unavoidable -- and the question for me is not how to avoid it or, especially, by running away from it so the bullies get the soup, but how to harness it for good, such as using science as the pitting of ideas against each other to see which are best.

Harris L. Friedman, PhD

Visiting Scholar, History of Science, Harvard University

Research Professor (retired), Counseling Psychology Program, University of Florida, USA

From: John

Sent: Friday, October 02, 2020 10:00 PM

I take your point, Harris. But this is precisely why I posted "My" Tale of Two Cultures, not "The Tale" or even "A Tale."

Based on my own experience, and coterie, and when speaking in Chinese, I ingratiate myself much more than in English. "Ingratiate" is not a good word, maybe, but just trying to be respectful and courteous, based on the way I was taught in Chinese. It is, admittedly, coterie specific. In English, I never act in the same manner. I suppose because I assimilated different cultural values in New York as a school boy.

In fact, several years in a row, when I canvassed for votes in Taiwan, I often travelled to distant villages where given lack of fluency in the Taiwanese dialect, I found myself performing the rigorous 90 degree kowtow and was surprised at how many people came by to tell me although my Taiwanese was very poor, they were impressed with my sincerity.

In America, I've never ever had to do that. Kowtow, I mean.

It is neither good or bad. Not sure if anyone else goes through this, but like I said it's real for me. Hence "my tale." No implication that it represents anyone else's views or experiences, or the "truth,"

Still, appreciate, your views!

John

Sent: Saturday, October 03, 2020 1:00 AM

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan

Sent: Saturday, October 03, 2020 1:00 AM

Thanks for sharing your cultural experiences, John. Your observations remind me of what the anthropologist Richard Shweder says about “mutual yuk” between cultures. You find the use of profanity to get votes objectionable; many people in the West might feel the same way about towtow to get votes. To help people to go beyond mutual yuk, I think my kind of research may be helpful. I do research on rationalities behind cultural practices. The question I ask is whether people from different cultures are talking about the same animal when they compare their observations. This question reminds people not to look at the culturally different other through one’s own cultural lens, but to look at a cultural practice through its own framework or logic, which I call rationality. Take for instance, debate. I have the feeling that debate in the West is not the same animal that you see. You look at debate through a relational, dyadic lens, but the debate that goes all the way back to Socrates and Cicero involves a third element—truth or knowledge. In Western debate, it is not relationship so much as the third element that is the reason to be for the whole thing. Thus through your dyadic lens, your concern about the disastrous presidential debate is that the parties are hurting each other. In contrast, due to their triadic lens, many people bemoan the fact that important issues did not get addressed in this debate, and many would not even consider that a real debate for that reason. The logic of a cultural practice is not always obvious even to the culture-insiders. This is where cultural psychology is useful.

Hope this helps,
Louise

From: Rosemarie Anderson

Sent: Saturday, October 03, 2020 10:08 AM

Thank you, Louise. I could not agree with you more! Now is the time to acknowledge our cultural differences and move beyond them to wider perspectives

As some of on this listserv know, I left my tenured faculty position in 1977 to depart for Asia and learn from Asian cultures. I learned a great deal from the cultures, people, and often the gardens -- which seem across cultures worldwide to distill the essence of a culture empathically to me. I was not always treated well but understood that I was **the** anomaly.

All the best to all, warmly,
Rosemarie

From: John
Sent: Sunday, October 04, 2020 9:47 PM

Quite right, Louise! Plus, I'd like to add, style, form and content of writing is relevant. My writing is anecdotal. What I say about my experiences when using one language versus another, in a different linguistic and culture context, I know is a data point. It is, however, my data point. I do not go further, like asking if that point is an outlier or falls within the median or somewhere.

Others have their own observations – data points – and that is perfectly fine.

Finally, when writing about one's own experiences, the real dividend often is discovering a “Zhi Yin 知音” reader, someone who “resonates” or understands where you are coming from. “Zhi Yin 知音” (recognizing or simpatico to the sound) is a bit like folks participating in a music jam session.

From: Ron Boyer
Sent: Sunday, October 04, 2020 9:59 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: IP--My tale of 2 cultures

Hey All,
I've been following this political thread and just want to express my thorough enjoyment reading all viewpoints being shared here by active participants in the conversation.

Marc Pilusik: My friend, would you mind my sharing your advice to the Biden campaign *with* the Biden campaign? I have good contacts on the inside who would be receptive to our excellent suggestions on how Joe should express his public position on key issues for us progressives. I agree wholeheartedly with what you said! And I can access his top campaign staff.

Ron

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan

Sent: Wednesday, October 07, 2020 1:17 AM

Hi John,

Since Ilene wants to talk about culture, I'll continue this thread. Everything you said below fits my theory of strong ties rationality, which posits that people from cultures with deep roots in kinship-based communities have certain unique cognitive habits, such as gravitating toward similarity instead of difference. Note how Ilene (with her weak ties rationality) was intrigued by the differences between people, whereas you expressed a particular interest in resonance (similarity). In the West, which is a weak ties society, the strong ties culture's interest in resonance is sometimes maligned as "tribalism" or "in-group favoritism." But as you pointed out, the key is the music one plays. Networking based on resonance can result in either the White-supremacists or the followers of Martin Luther King—it's the music that makes the difference, not the group dynamics. Keep playing your music, and those who know the sound will come.

Thanks for your contribution,

Louise

From: Ilene Serlin

Sent: Wednesday, October 07, 2020 3:00 AM

Hi Louise,

O dear—I don't believe I am interested in differences...what I am interested in is finding ways to connect VIA those differences...attuning to each other, often non-verbally. That is what I do when I folk-dance, which is what I understand you to be describing with your music. Or John with his music jam. That is exactly what we do with movement....for example, if I go to a place where the culture is quite different from the US, such as Jordan or China.the differences are apparent, what you have to do is discover the underlying energy connects, adjust fast/slow, etc....so you are "waltzing" together in a non-verbal dialogue. It is an exciting discovery process that has to be felt/uncovered..a fluid process of merging/separating/mirroring/dialoguing...

More clear??

All best,

Ilene

From: Rosemarie Anderson
Sent: Wednesday, October 07, 2020 9:30 AM

Dear Louise,

I am suspicious of applying one theory, however sophisticated, to too many things. Life experience has taught me again and again not to over-simplify differences and similarities between peoples. Indeed, the comings and goings of cultures, peoples, and militaries is far too complex for this sort of general application of theory.

Thanks,
Rosemarie

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan
Sent: Wednesday, October 07, 2020 9:28 PM

Dear Rosemary,

Theories necessarily explain too many things. That is a given. You don't need to be suspicious, just refuse to have anything to do with theory will do. The fun thing about research is that it allows various levels of analysis, some fine grained, and some coarse grained to suit the needs of different types of intellectual pursuit. Let's celebrate diversity.

Cheers,
Louise

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan
Sent: Wednesday, October 07, 2020 10:07 PM

There is no contradiction between our statements, Ilene. This is what you wrote:

“what I enjoy most is the experience of different cultures”

Your further elaboration of what you meant is about what you think personally. My statement “Note how Ilene (with her weak ties rationality) was intrigued by the differences between people” was not about what you personally. My statement is about culture, which according to my theory is a sediment of cognitive habits of a group. To study cognitive habits, you note the first thing people mention (a sign of unconscious attention)—in your case the word “difference”, in contrast to John’s “resonance.” According to my

theory, weak ties mentality (which means logic and is not to be confused with the reason vs emotion dichotomy) gravitates toward differences in contrast to strong ties mentality that focuses on similarity. What I am saying is that you have just made my data point on the cognitive habit of weak ties mentality/logic. This analysis is all about culture, and not about you as a person.

More clear??

Louise

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan

Sent: Wednesday, October 07, 2020 10:07 PM

There is no contradiction between our statements, Ilene. This is what you wrote:

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More clear??

Louise

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan

Sent: Thursday, October 08, 2020 8:56 PM

Dear Rosemarie,

My apologies for inattention to the spelling of your name.

>First, as a statistician, I know that psychological theories account for only a small percentage of variance in human conduct.

If this is a concern, your expectation for theory is too high. Maybe in your mind theory is this big bad wolf that should live up to its image?

>Second, as a historian, I know that the broad swaths of historical/economic events, such as military conquests, the flooding of the Yellow River, and the current Covid-19 pandemic are much more important in determining human conduct than mere psychological theories.

Theories do not determine behavior. You must have read too many behaviorist books, the behavior-mod stuff. After the cognitive turn, the talk about theory tends to revolve around building models to explain the phenomenon—at least this is the school of thought I follow. Yes, one does construct theory to predict responses in order to understand, rather than to control, people, culture, whatnot. There is a lot of concern over the prediction-control claim of theory. I laugh at the control claim in psychology. What a joke, we can't even control the humble virus, and we are talking about controlling people! But not all theorists make that claim.

Hope this answers your concerns,
Louise

From: Ilene Serlin
Sent: Friday, October 09, 2020 2:18 AM

Hi Louise,

I've been pondering how to respond to this, and must say I also feel misunderstood.

When I thought more deeply about it, it is perhaps my reaction to what feels like a binary theory. I don't think "differences" are separate from "resonances" As I said, I notice differences in order to better resonate; like in any relationship, we must both differentiate in order to make conscious and not merged relationships. It is a question of finding the similarities within the differences and I don't think it is possible to overlook the initial differences—it is not that they come "first." It is not at all a linear or even 2-step process.

For example, can I overlook these differences?





From: Rosemarie Anderson

Sent: Friday, October 09, 2020 10:48 PM

Dear Louise and all,

Obvious to me is that you have no background or knowledge of statistics. Otherwise, you would have understood my comment below regarding accountable statistical variance.

FYI, I have been a quantitative and qualitative researcher for over 50 years. Therefore, I am at least your peer -- and you are not *my* elder. You only understand my comments from your narrow set of lenses.

Nonetheless, I wish you and all on this listserv well. Having survived the recent firestorms in Oregon, USA, I returned to a home still intact and have only gratitude in my heart.

Goodbye,
Rosemarie

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan
Sent: Friday, October 09, 2020 11:59 PM

Dear Ilene,

Misunderstanding goes both ways. You felt misunderstood because I did not talk about difference the way you meant. The other way around would be true isn't it? Did you ever ask "What you mean by difference? What you mean by what comes first?" As you explained, that's your theory about difference and resonance. I respect all theories, no argument here, except that our theories are not on the same level of analysis, hence our use of the same terms do not mean the same thing. A more serious question is that misunderstanding is widespread in the pluralistic world of ours, especially in psychology. I think the problem comes from our habits as specialists. We all earn our rice bowls being specialists. But if the mind is wider than the sky, as Emily Dickinson says, the expert's brain is a narrow ditch, as Rosemarie just told me about my brain. When the two ditch diggers come across each other, misunderstanding is likely to fly unless each stops assuming that a term can mean the same thing across the ditch. What do you think?

Warmly,
Louise

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan
Sent: Saturday, October 10, 2020 12:18 AM

Dear Rosemarie,

Apologies again, if I offended you because I did not share your concerns. Psychological theories are not that powerful, and I don't expect them to be.

Rest well,
Louise

From: Rosemarie Anderson
Sent: Saturday, October 10, 2020 4:22 AM

PS

I will not be reading or responding to this thread anymore. Rm

From: Lutz Eckensberger - lutzeckensberger at googlemail.com (via iptaskforce list)

Sent: Saturday, October 10, 2020 6:12 AM

Dear Louise (I hope, I do not misspell your name)

It is a long time ago that I did contact you. I apologize, I suffered from a ten month bronchitis, which exhausted me to an extent new to me during my 80 years. As you know already, I was slow during my whole life, but this time I simply missed all my deadlines, and I can only hope that my colleagues accept my apologies. But I (superficially) followed some discussion within the IP taskforce. But I like to congratulate you for your patience and consensus orientation.

Although I seem to recover slowly, I do not feel strong enough to participate in the last discourse on differences and their meaning directly or explicitly. But I will take the chance to attach a paper I published some time ago, dealing exactly with the topic the meaning of differences in cross-cultural research and theorizing, edited by Fons and others, methodically sophisticated colleagues. Since I take a metaperspective (as usual) the paper may trigger some general ideas and thereby may help to "solve" the "misunderstandings" in the mentioned debate.

I thank you for your efforts and attitude.

Cordially

Lutz

[cross-cultural meaning\(4\).pdf](#)

Am Sa., 10. Okt. 2020 um 06:00 Uhr schrieb Dr. Louise Sundararajan <louiselu@frontiernet.net>:

From: Harris Friedman

Sent: Saturday, October 10, 2020 1:49 PM

Dear Louise,

I am having trouble following what you're writing. It seems you are proposing "a theory of strong ties" while, at the same time, eschewing the usefulness of all theory by suggesting one should "just refuse to have anything to do with theory." Am I misunderstanding something obvious?

In my approach to psychological science, theory is crucial for organizing data, allowing up to leap from merely accumulating findings (i.e., knowledge) to explaining/understanding (i.e., knowing). However, theory can sometimes enable us to go even further by predicting and, also with varying degrees of success, to controlling things applicable to humans. After all, all applied interventions in psychology are ultimately aimed to control an outcome of some sort, and I don't see attempts at improving lives and the world as being a joke but, rather, something that can be extremely worthwhile (or scary when applied against the values I hold dear).

The very reason I chose psychology as my profession was to make the world a better place and help alleviate suffering. I surely hope I did not go into a field in which any attempt to make changes are only a humorous fantasy.

Harris L. Friedman, PhD
Visiting Scholar, History of Science, Harvard University

From: iptaskforce@simplelists.com <iptaskforce@simplelists.com> on behalf of Dr. Louise Sundararajan <louiselu@frontiernet.net>
Sent: Thursday, October 8, 2020 8:56 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com <iptaskforce@simplelists.com>
Subject: Re: IP--My tale of 2 cultures

Dear Rosemarie,

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Hope this answers your concerns,
Louise

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan
Sent: Saturday, October 10, 2020 9:28 PM

Dear Harris,

Sorry to confuse you. What you said about theory is the standard claims, about which Rosemarie had some concerns. I did not share her concerns because my practice in theory is less lofty. My goal for the construction of a theory of culture based on strong vs weak ties is simply: a. I just want to have some fun; and b. I want to be able to understand and explain better the cultural differences I see. I will never get a grant with such humble reasons, but I did manage to come up with a highfaluting save-the-world rationale for a project to collect data on this theory. And my collaborator got the grant!

As for my “wash your hands with theory” line, it is a long story that I will tell in my response to Lutz. Stay tuned.

Good luck with your worthwhile pursuit of theory,
Louise

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan
Sent: Saturday, October 10, 2020 11:57 PM

Dear Lutz,

So good to hear from you. Thanks so much for the paper which I devoured in no time. Your paper makes it amply clear to me that misunderstanding is unavoidable in psychology, which is a Tower of Babel with so many perspectives. Your solution of a common language (action theory) is nice, but may be difficult to implement, since you are in effect asking the hard working experts to learn another language, which is a task near impossible. I think evolutionarily speaking, the human brain is quite limited in dealing with differences. For most of the time in human history, our ancestors honed their resonance skills through group living much more than dealing with the culturally different other. But here we are in psychology, besieged with so many incommensurable perspectives. To avoid misunderstanding in psychology, there are two possible responses to difference which I highly recommend:

1. Curiosity: This looks interesting, how can I learn more about it?
2. Indifference: This is not something I do, and I am not interested in this stuff. In case this is theory that turns you off, just refuse to have anything to do with it. A favorite line that I borrow from Rick Shweder is "This is not the only game in town." It is perfectly safe (no possibility of misunderstanding) to say this just about anyone's theory including that of your own.

While misunderstanding between experts is unfortunate, a worse scenario is when this takes place in the peer review process. As a peer reviewer, the expert's sometimes inappropriate approach to differences can result in miss-use of power. To the extent that this is a serious issue for the profession, I make some observations in the hope of generating a discussion to improve the peer review process:

- a. The expert imposes her framework on the manuscript, instead of taking the time to figure out the author's own framework.
- b. The expert uses her own yardstick to measure a work that is done within a completely different framework.
- c. The expert considers her definition of things canonical, and will not consider any different perspective on the phenomenon.

Any idea how we can improve the peer reviewers' approach to differences?

Cheers,
Louise

From: Lutz Eckensberger - lutzeckensberger at gmail.com (via iptaskforce list)

Sent: Saturday, October 10, 2020 6:12 AM

To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com

Subject: Re: IP--My tale of 2 cultures

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I thank you for your efforts and attitude.

Cordially

Lutz

From: ykh01

Dear Loiuise,

I learned a lot from the discussion. As far as I know, any theory has its focus and scope. Except its applicable focus and scope, the theory may not necessarily be useful or correct. Even Newton's theory or Einstein's theory is the same. Therefore, researchers should aim at building their own theories on a topic, but they do not need to have high ideals for their theories to explain everything. Sometimes you need to abandon your original theory and build a new theory to enrich your point of view and scope

Best regards,

Kuang-Hui

Kuang-Hui Yeh, Ph.D.

Research Fellow & Professor
Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica
& Department of Psychology, National Taiwan University
Taipei, Taiwan 115, R.O.C.
TEL: +886-2-2652-3409

From: Bond, Michael [MM]
Sent: Sunday, October 11, 2020 4:37 AM

Dear colleagues,

As I recall, the clinician-personologist George Kelley referred to a theory's "range of convenience". [In therapy, Kelley worked with a client to expand the range of convenience of that client's personal construct theory. This was not easy to accomplish!] When theories are proposed in your discipline, do their authors include a section on its range of convenience? This might be a useful requirement, especially if we allow that theories emerging from one cultural system may have "adjustment difficulties" in other cultures. remember Kohlberg's theory and its subsequent academic storms?

Just as Louise avers, reviewers are sometimes not open to alternative theories underpinning the work that is being reviewed, and reject the submission accordingly. Ouch! Presumably the reviewer provides some rationale for her rejection. In this case, we submitters of mss can only hope that the acting editor of our submission reviews the reviews and factors into her decision her assessment of the rejecting review's quality. Here is where the professional integrity of the editor comes into play.

Of course, if an empirical study based on some theory is being considered, it may also be rejected for methodological reasons. A rejecting review is then easier to evaluate for its professionalism, again assuming watchful, competent oversight by the action editor.

In both cases, much turns on the professionalism of editors. Hopefully the process of selecting an editor ensures such professionalism, but that assurance cannot be presumed with the glut of new journals these days. The tsunami of submissions to the "better" journals also presents a huge burden for even the most conscientious and competent of editors to contend with. So, in some cases, standards may slide during their period of tenure. Also, beleaguered editors have difficulty finding reviewers these days

[how many requests have you accepted this year?]. so, editorial decisions often are made on the basis of a single review, making the editor's decision less balanced [let's assume the editor made time to read the submission herself, of course, though occasionally I wonder!]

Zen and the art of journal maintenance?

Any ways forward in this darkening night? 1. Most journals have publication committees to which grievances can be submitted by disgruntled submitters. 2. Submit the rejected submission to a different journal, after extracting whatever value possible from the rejection letter and its reviews. 3. Ask for critical feedback from a trusted colleague [and of course from one's coauthors!] on a ms before [re]submitting it to a journal. Slowing down our submitting and having a collegial network is more difficult for junior faculty, so we more senior faculty might be more proactively helpful, as Adam Grant would encourage.

My two cents worth...

With regards, michael

Michael Harris Bond, PhD

Visiting Chair Professor (OB and HRM)

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Hung Hong, Kowloon

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Link to Department website and current c.v.: <http://www.polyu.edu.hk/mm/bond>

From: Lutz Eckensberger - lutzeckensberger at gmail.com (via iptaskforce list)

Sent: Sunday, October 11, 2020 8:15 AM

Dear Louise,

You are so admirable fast. But believe me, I know exactly what you are talking about - the issues you elaborate are quite known to me in interacting with main stream since the middle of the 70ties, in writing and discussing i conferences. And of course the arguments I develop do not get wrong just because most Psychologists have problems with flexibility. This becomes even worse, when you realise that also the methods are "dependent" upon a perspective. So I know colleagues who try to accept different paradigms (e.e. Poortinga) but try to stick to nomotheic methods. But this would be quite unproductive or even in consequent. But if you start thinking in paradigms or perspectives, you deal with the adequacy of methods for certain approaches.

You are quite right to point to the implication of peer reviews in my agument. This is true however to all Psychologists also normal scientists. I wrote a lengthy (somewhat too complicated, "oversystematized") paper on the issue, arguing that you need **respect** for new paradigms implying that there is an interesting **moral dimension** in science development.

I thank you very much for your response, which I really like. May be, I am courageos and strong enough to turn to your issues Please keep your fingers crossed that I can start working again. But I also think, that doing that from a "meta level" of psychology and its "organization" (organization of "gate keepers" organizing conferences, cutting the lengh od papers etc.) helps a lot. This should be accepted also by reviewers. Among others there is the insight of Rick Shweder that "culturl psychology is inherently heretic", which should be accepted. This is not necessarily dangerous but can be productive. Also Luther did not intend to found a "second/alternave" Organisation of Christianity.

Very cordially
Lutz

From: Fathali Moghaddam

Sent: Sunday, October 11, 2020 9:08 AM

Dear Michael,

Thank you - as always you show us the path to follow.

Hope you and your family are all well.

In the USA, we face enormous political and cultural challenges. Very difficult time for democracy, around the world.

Warm Regards,
Ali

From: shilpa pandit

Sent: Sunday, October 11, 2020 3:25 PM

What a delight! Prof. Paranjpe's stories are teaching stories. So specific and unforgettable. I am never going to forget Mannheim now. Or the cracks between cultures. Or the travails of bi cultural experience
Also, this implication of pratyaksha on falsification. I am forwarding this trail to our Indic networks with permission from all actors.

Warm regards,
Shilpa Pandit

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From: krp@iitk.ac.in

Sent: Monday, October 12, 2020 12:01 AM

I agree Shilpa, what a delight! The way Professor Paranjpe outlined the History - modern and ancient - of Psychology, I become more and more convinced that it should be compulsory for every teaching and research program in Psychology. Otherwise, Psychology loses its relevance miserably in its pseudo-pursuit of a universal psychology for the sake of it.

With best wishes,

Ravi.

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From: Ilene Serlin
Sent: Monday, October 12, 2020 1:41 AM
To: Louise Sundarajan
Subject: Re: IP--My tale of 2 cultures

Hi Louise,

What do you mean by difference? What do you mean what comes first?

:-)

Shall we continue offline?

Warmly,

Ilene

On Oct 9, 2020, at 8:59 PM, Dr. Louise Sundararajan <louiselu@frontiernet.net> wrote:

Dear Ilene,

Misunderstanding goes both ways. You felt misunderstood because I did not talk about difference the way you meant. The other way around would be true isn't it? Did you ever ask "What you mean by difference? What you mean by what comes first?" As

you explained, that's your theory about difference and resonance. I respect all theories, no argument here, except that our theories are not on the same level of analysis, hence our use of the same terms do not mean the same thing. A more serious question is that misunderstanding is widespread in the pluralistic world of ours, especially in psychology. I think the problem comes from our habits as specialists. We all earn our rice bowls being specialists. But if the mind is wider than the sky, as Emily Dickinson says, the expert's brain is a narrow ditch, as Rosemarie just told me about my brain. When the two ditch diggers come across each other, misunderstanding is likely to fly unless each stops assuming that a term can mean the same thing across the ditch. What do you think?

Warmly,
Louise

From: Kiran Kumar Salagame
Sent: Monday, October 12, 2020 9:23 PM

Hello Ilene,

This is an interesting conversation. It would be better if this is continued here instead of 'offline.' Otherwise, I feel, the original intention of this group will not be served.

Kiran

From: Ilene Serlin
Sent: Monday, October 12, 2020 10:04 PM
To: Louise Sundarajan
Subject: Re: IP--My tale of 2 cultures

Thanks, Kiran—I am sensitive to not wanting to take up too much time on any thread....

Hope you are well,

Best,

Ilene

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan

Sent: Monday, October 12, 2020 10:05 PM

Hi Ilene,

I was going to go offline, but since Kiran wants it online, here is my response. My theory of culture compares traditional Chinese thinking with Western thinking. For instance:

Detection of similarity is something the Chinese seem to be preoccupied with. Hall and Ames (1987) point out that the term comparison (*p'i*) in the *Confucian Analects* "is always a 'comparison' of likenesses, not differences" (p. 287). So when you compare two things, what do you notice? If you automatically (which is what I mean by "what comes first in your mind") look for difference, you are not behaving like the ancient Chinese. Along the same line, the Chinese notion of harmony is different from the Western notion of dialogue. Dialogue presupposes difference, and requires the other to retain his or her difference, as Friedman, reiterating Martin Buber's philosophy, points out, "We can enter into relationship only with being that has been set at a distance from us and thereby has become an independent opposite" (1965, p. 11). But harmony capitalizes not on difference so much as on similarity/affinity. These are subtle cultural differences reflected in the language, completely independent of what the individual thinks and feels consciously.

Hope this helps,

Louise

From: Kiran Kumar Salagame

Sent: Monday, October 12, 2020 10:45 PM

Hi Ilene,

Now I understand your reason for suggesting to go offline. That is fine. I am doing well.

Thanks,
Kiran

From: Kiran Kumar Salagame

Sent: Monday, October 12, 2020 11:38 PM

Thanks Louise for honoring my suggestion and for your post online.

I think there are two issues in this discussion thread, as I understand. First, is the differences in cultural ways of thinking as you have pointed out between Chinese and Western. Second, attempting to develop a Universal psychology keeping physics as a role model.

Though I have not traveled very extensively around the world, my limited experience traveling to a few countries, in different continents, and living in the USA for an extended period, and interacting with people, I am convinced that it is possible to arrive at an Universal psychology when it comes to basic understanding of mental processes but also allowing for cultural differences. I wish to share one particular experience that sheds some light on this.

Back in the year 2011 in Fall Semester, I taught a course on Positive Psychology from Western and Indian perspectives, at the University of Central Arkansas, Conway, as a Visiting Fulbright Nehru Lecturer. Before leaving the place I decided to express my gratitude to all the colleagues and others who had extended their help in making my stay comfortable. Since my food habit is vegetarian as per Indian tradition the menu was all vegetarian only, South Indian dishes with some tea, "chai". With one or two exceptions, all those whom I had invited came home. My wife and son were not with me, they were in India. My friend Kevin and his wife Ruth and daughter came early and helped me to arrange the dishes in the afternoon. All the guests walked into the kitchen, helped themselves with whatever they liked, and enjoyed the occasion. As the evening set in one by one left wishing me well. They gave me some presents also! One elderly couple past 70 years (Professor and his wife) and one more guest, a lady, from another department, stayed back. Here is the clincher! They got into a serious conversation and shared how their marriages happened, how Professor's wife was not accepted by her mother-in-law because she belonged to a different Christian denomination, and so on and on. I watched as a silent spectator, awestruck, because I couldn't believe that such thinking or practice existed even in the USA! .

Believe me, I felt as if I was back home in my place, where relatives and friends congregate for a function and as everyone leaves a few close/intimate friends/relatives still linger on, helping themselves with one more round of coffee or tea and start sharing their

personal woes and wails or little nothings! I can never forget that occasion, which speaks volumes about cross-cultural similarities/differences. It is all like the "Necker-Cube" perspective, which side you are looking at matters. So I believe in Universalism honouring cultural differences. Which level of analysis is appropriate for Universalism is what we need to determine and how to relate it with the cultural differences. It is like Eysenck's factors and Cattell's primary factors and second-order factors.

Kiran

From: Ilene Serlin

Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 2:53 AM

Hi Louise,

Thanks—this helps!

I was struck by how Western, indeed, my somewhat automatic assumption was that a relationship is built on individuation, then dialogue....I suppose it always seemed self-evident to me. This is what I think you are using Friedman and Buber to point this out as a Western assumption.

(However, I just supervised a Chinese counselor this evening who was struggling with how much divorce, conflict, domestic abuse and problems with authentic communication there is among couples in her practice...and these are pastoral care counselors and their spouses...so the layers of culture, religion, gender get even more complicated....)

Yet I'm left with the post about Indian music and for me about movement that suggest that in nonverbal experience there is not the same distinction between similarity or difference (except in cases of obvious harmony or cacophony....). It feels much more fluid in experience, the trouble I always have is in the words that try to describe such fluid experience. Again, it is not the words for differences that are problematic for me, but words like "first" or what seem like categories. They seem static.

Virginia Woolf once wrote that words flutter and often fail to meet their mark, and Van den Berg wrote that phenomenologists need to be poets....maybe that is why I dance....

Be well,

:~)

From: Ilene Serlin

Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 3:01 AM

Hi Kiran,

O well—I took the plunge and just responded online....

Also, it looks like others took up the theme and there is nothing more I really need to say here...it is becoming a new conversation...

But I'll continue to lurk and chime in when it feels important, OK?

All best wishes to you,

Ilene

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan

Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 10:44 PM

Thanks for sharing your personal experience, Kiran. The universal and the local are inter-twined. For instance, the evening star and the morning star both refer to the same planet Venus. So if your focus is on Venus, your results would be universal. But if you focus on morning star or evening star, you are studying the local meaning of a phenomenon.

Cheers,

Louise

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan

Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 11:22 PM

Hi Ilene,

>I was struck by how Western, indeed, my somewhat automatic assumption was that a relationship is built on individuation, then dialogue

Yes, the automatic assumption is that there is you and me, then we establish a relationship so we become “we”. This is taken for granted by most people in the West, until you study ancient China. Then you realize that the starting point is “us” then we figure out your role and my role so we establish a relationship as family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, etc., depending on the role we identify for each other. You may notice that Chinese kids do not “greet” adults by “hi”, they are asked to “call aunti” or “uncle”. That is to greet people by their roles, because roles, rather than the vague greeting “hi,” is what makes it possible for you and me to establish proper relations. One of the functions of my culture theory is to shed light on such subtle differences that one may not notice otherwise.

>so the layers of culture, religion, gender get even more complicated....

Someone smart (Freud?) said that culture is archeology, with layers of history and change, continuity and discontinuity. You can imagine the complex layers of meaning in modern China. If you want to know about problems of authentic communication in modern China, a scholar on this list is working furiously, as I write, on a book with interesting observations on this topic. Stay tuned.

>in nonverbal experience there is not the same distinction between similarity or difference (except in cases of obvious harmony or cacophony....). It feels much more fluid in experience

Yes, you are correct. I work with language, so my data will be very different from yours which is based on bodily, nonverbal experiences. Cultural differences based on cognition tend to get blurred in physical experiences, which may be more suitable for universal psychology.

Let me know if you have any other questions,
Louise

From: Kiran Kumar Salagame

Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2020 1:44 AM

Thanks Louise, that is a good analogy of Venus.

Kiran

From: Kiran Kumar Salagame

Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2020 1:56 AM

Yes, even in India we emphasize role relationships more than individualism. "Auntie" or "Uncle" usage is the norm in India to address elders. We have so many terms to differentiate aunts and uncles depending upon whether they are related from father's side or mother's side!

The idea of "relational self-construal" as against "individualistic self-construal" is already discussed in culture and psychology literature quite well. Both the relational and individualistic self-construal can be different aspects of one broader concept in Indian Psychology known as *ahamkara* (a Sanskrit term) which stands for self-sense. I have attached a pdf file which is the proof version of a book chapter related to this concept, which may of interest to some on this forum.

Thanks and regards,

Kiran

[Ego and Ahamkara chapter in Matthijs edited book.pdf](#)

From: Rosemarie Anderson

Sent: Saturday, October 17, 2020 11:59 AM

Dear Louise,

I have given myself a break from this listserv and especially from this thread.

However, I just read your comments to Harris below. You did not understand what I was saying to you and have misrepresented my concerns to Harris.

As before, in this tread and many other threads on this listserv, my primary concern is that you exaggerate and over-generalize your theory to too many situations and peoples. This is not responsible. I say this now not to convince you **but to forewarn others on this listserv.**

I am recovering well from the Oregon firestorms and am on a roll again professionally. More soon.

Warm regards,
Rosemarie

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan

Sent: Saturday, October 17, 2020 10:21 PM

Welcome back, Rosemarie. Good to know that you recovered well from the firestorms.

Back to the thread. Generalization is the name of the game called theory. The question is whether a theory is over-generalizing. That is why a theory needs to be tested empirically. Put another way, all theories are potentially over-generalizing until proven otherwise. Einstein's theory is not over-generalizing, since it has been held up so far. Kant's theory is shown to be over-generalizing in some cases. Criticism of this generalizing game called theory comes from narrative psychology, phenomenology, and so on, disciplines that focus on the particular. I am a fan of that paradigm also. Remember what Lutz said about the incommensurability of paradigms-- one paradigm needs not be wrong in order for the other to be right. For instance, my cognitive and language approach gravitate toward sharp distinctions of the phenomena, whereas Ilene's dance highlights the fluidity of things. We can be both right, because we are gathering data from different facets of the human phenomenon.

Have I understood and answered your concerns? I do not claim so. Because of the incommensurability of paradigms, experts do have limitations in understanding each other. I think acceptance of our limitations in understanding the other's paradigm is very important in the fragmented field of psychology. In particular, this acceptance of limitations of understanding will curb the over-reach problem in the peer review process, in which the reviewer uses his/her yardstick to judge a study that is based on a very different paradigm. In the worst scenarios, the reviewer would even reject a paradigm that he or she has little understanding of. So far as I know there is no mechanism in the peer review process to curb this type of practice.

Sorry that I misrepresented your concerns. I obviously do not understand them. This exchange gives me an idea to improve the peer review process: Every reviewer needs to give a summary of the theoretical assumptions of the study under review. This

helps the author of the study to detect the over-reach problem, and request for a different reviewer. As Lutz points out, the peer review process has a moral dimension, I hope something can be done about the over reach of the expert reviewers.

Thanks for the inspiration,
Louise

From: Harris Friedman
Sent: Sunday, October 18, 2020 1:39 PM

Dear Louise,

"In theory, there is no difference between practice and theory. In practice, there is." This quote is often misattributed to Yogi Berra, but there are earlier sources -- and debate on who first quipped it.

However, I do want to say that I disagree with your statement, "Generalization is the name of the game called theory." First, I am uncomfortable calling theory a mere "game," as that seems to diminish its importance. Second, theory can be used to generalize to larger populations (nomothetically, which is how generalizability is usually used within psychology), but it can also be used to understand how an individual person or system operates (idiographically).

I also want to address the supposed incommensurability of paradigms. My way of thinking is that all scientific paradigms are incomplete -- so none are "true," but some are more complete than others. In this regard, I have no problem seeing some as simply wrong, and others as "more right" than those that are simply wrong. Then there are the ones that are "not even wrong" (see https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Not_even_wrong#:~:text=Not%20even%20wrong%20refers%20to%20any%20statement%2C%20argument,by%20which%20correctness%20and%20in%20correctness%20are%20determined). Without cogent theory, we are stuck with not even being wrong.

Harris L. Friedman, PhD
Visiting Scholar, History of Science, Harvard University
Research Professor (retired), Counseling Psychology Program, University of Florida

From: Dr. Louise Sundararajan
Sent: Sunday, October 18, 2020 8:35 PM



Dear Harris,

I like your Yogi quote. I also like this statement: “Without cogent theory, we are stuck with not even being wrong.”

As for your measure of right and wrong theories, let me make a wild guess in rephrasing it: Not all theories are created equal, some are more right than others, and the expert’s pet theory is one of them. As for the theory based on a different paradigm, not even wrong!

As for the term “game” it is a shorthand for Wittgenstein’s “language games” which refer to all conventional human activities, including science and religion—games that people play with all seriousness. Back to the thread on misunderstanding among experts. Forget about incommensurability of paradigms, experts do not even mean the same thing with the same term, who needs any other explanation for the misunderstanding in psychology?

Cheers,
Louise

