



Symposium/Other Proposal

2018 APA Annual Convention

Proposal ID: sym18159

Collaborative Justification: With topics ranging from critical thinking to wisdoms of healing, this international panel brings a diversity of disciplines together to demonstrate the mutual synergy of spirituality and knowledge production, science and practice.

1. Type of program: Symposium

2. Title of program: Varieties of Spirituality as Indigenous Ways of Knowing

 First index term: 58 Religion and Spirituality

 Second index term: 54 Philosophical/Theoretical

3. Brief Content Description: A variety of indigenous spirituality around the globe is presented to hold up a mirror for psychology to critically reflect on its own ways of knowing, and to inform psychology of the multiple alternative ways of knowing the world and the mind.

4. Division to submit this proposal: 36 - Psychology of Religion and Spirituality

Other division(s) appropriate for submission

- 17 - Counseling
- 24 - Theoretical and Philosophical
- 29 - Society for the Advancement of Psychotherapy
- 32 - Humanistic
- 39 - Psychoanalysis
- 52 - International Psychology

5. Length of time requested on program: 1 hr. 50 min.

6. Chair(s) of the session:

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Membership status: Non-Member
Title of presentation: Indigenous Healing Psychology: Honoring the Wisdom of the First Peoples
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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Membership status: Non-Member
Title of presentation: Spirituality and Resilience of the Yi ethnic minority group in Southwest China
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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Title of presentation: Islamic spirituality: a psychological and ontological analysis of human revitalization

Electronic Archiving: Yes

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Title of presentation: Christianity as Diverse Spirituality: Pentecostalism in the Southern Hemisphere

Electronic Archiving: Yes

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Membership status: APA Fellow
Title of presentation: Taoist mysticism: A way of knowing that has anti-meme properties
Electronic Archiving: Yes
Coauthor :

8. Discussant(s):

9. Accommodation request: None

10. Submit for CE: True

To be able to identify the indigenous ways of knowing from religious traditions around the globe.

To be able to reflect critically on the canonical ways of knowing in psychology.

Received: 10/10/2017 11:49:21 PM

Varieties of Spirituality as Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Rosch (2002) says it all when she writes, “modern psychology, like modern politicians, seems able only to talk at religions rather than to listen to them” (p. 37, emphasis in the original). Lamenting the one way flow of knowledge, Rosch (2002) wonders whether science can afford to continue to allow:

. . . the understanding of the human mind to be left solely to the pre-existing conceptualizations and latest fashions of our incipient psychology, with no contribution from the thousands of years of worldwide religious practice and observation? (p. 38)

Redressing this imbalance in psychological knowledge, an international panel will present a variety of indigenous spirituality from around the globe. The first speaker will present the healing wisdom of Indigenous people he has worked with over the past 50 years -- including the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari Desert, Fijians of the Fiji Islands, Lakota people of the Rosebud Reservation, and Cree and Anishnabe First Nations people from Saskatchewan; the second speaker will present a state notion of resilience among the Yi—an ethnic minority group in southwest China---that challenges the conventional trait notion of the same in psychology; the third speaker will present Islamic spirituality that challenges certain key concepts in mainstream psychology; the fourth speaker will show how indigenous spirituality contributes importantly to Christian Pentecostalism in the Southern Hemisphere; the fifth speaker will present the Taoist way of knowing that privileges silence over knowledge representation. Together these spiritual ways of knowing can serve two functions: First, they hold up a mirror for psychological science to critically reflect on its own ways of knowing; second, they open up a window through which psychology may expand its horizons by catching a glimpse of so many alternative ways of knowing the world and the mind.

(1) Indigenous Healing Psychology: Honoring the Wisdom of the First Peoples

Wherever the first inhabitants of the world gathered together, they engaged in the human concerns of community building, interpersonal relations, and spiritual understanding. As such these earliest people became our “first psychologists.” Their wisdom lives on through the teachings of contemporary Indigenous elders and healers, offering unique insights and practices to help us revision the self-limiting approaches of modern psychology and enhance the processes of healing and social justice.

At the request of their elders, Richard Katz shares the healing wisdom of Indigenous people he has worked with over the past 50 years -- including the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari Desert, Fijians of the Fiji Islands, Lakota people of the Rosebud Reservation, and Cree and Anishnabe First Nations people from Saskatchewan -- a wisdom that can enhance Western psychology. Through stories about his experiences with Indigenous spiritual commitments and everyday practices, he seeks to fulfill the responsibility he was given: build a foundation of reciprocity so Indigenous teachings can create a path toward healing psychology. In particular, these Indigenous teachings explore the vital role of spirituality in psychology and the shift of emphasis that occurs when one understands that all beings are interconnected.

But there must be an ability to listen so I can hear, and hear so I can apply; as well an appreciation of the challenges of applying that wisdom within a Western context, including what is not meant to be applied. And there must be a respectful and equitable exchange -- in order to hear and apply those teachings we must give something of value in return. The history of "stealing" from Indigenous peoples can never be ignored. Only after this dedicated hearing and exchange, can we begin to see how Indigenous perspectives can help create a more effective model of best practices in psychology.

(2) Spirituality and Resilience of the Yi ethnic minority group in Southwest China

Yi people are the 7th largest ethnic group in China who reside mainly in the Southwest mountain ranges of China. This presentation will focus on the unique spirituality (indigenous Bimo tradition) that shapes the notions of resilience among them. The Yi term for resilience is “jian qiang” (being strong). One of the wives of an AIDS patient told a corn metaphor:

“Jian qiang for our Yi people is like planting the corn. Before the corn seeds sprout from the earth, we have to clear the weeds, to let the seed grow, bit by bit. It’s like growing a child, very tough. We have to work in the farm from awakening in the morning till noon time. . . . When you plant the corn, you have to bury the seeds under the soil, then turn the soil over carefully, especially the soil on top of the seed. After turning the soil, you have to pluck out the weeds. You need to do this two times. If you found the bugs in your plant, you have to spray pesticide. Then your whole day become restless.”

I will present our research results, based on mixed methods analyses of data collected in the span of two years, to show how the Yi’s notion of “jian qiang” consists of both trait-like and state-like attributes. In contrast to the Western notion of resilience which is mainly defined by internal traits as an ability to “bounce back” in time of adversity, the Yi’s language of resilience, as evidenced by the metaphor, seems to be externally oriented to track changes in the environment. Through uncovering the indigenous understanding of resilience, we hope to offer a more contextualized HIV counseling program that uses the local lens of the world to foster resilience among the high-risk population.

(3) Islamic spirituality: a psychological and ontological analysis of human revitalization

On the strength of presenting a substantially different and ontologically unique perspective on human existence, Islamic spirituality goes beyond the mainstream discursive taxonomy of knowledge, science and even wisdom in humanities and social sciences and introduces a novel standpoint on heart and Marefat (special type of knowledge in Islamic spirituality) with both the former and the latter being essentially different from the physiological heart and the paramount meaning of knowledge. The dialectics of heart and Marefat in Islamic spirituality would espouse equanimity, tranquility, imperturbability, and an all -encompassing command (albeit different from the sense of mastery within the Western discourse of knowledge). This talk will clarify how understanding these two components of Islamic spirituality would espouse a conspicuously distinct quiddity in the realm of understanding human interactions without which the indigenous psychology would fail to reach the rigorous layers of sensibility at least for a wide variety of people in the world. Enumerating four types of heart within Islamic spirituality, the talk would elaborate how concepts such as development, actualization, malfunction, well-being, health, sickness, knowing, understanding, therapy, life and meaning, self and soul would unfold themselves within an entirely conceptual and practical paradigmatic analysis. The talk would then present the implications of understanding Islamic spirituality for psychology in general and for indigenous psychology in particular.

(4) Christianity as Diverse Spirituality: Pentecostalism in the Southern Hemisphere

Christianity is still the most common religion in the world, though Islam may pass it in the near future. Christians are called to have a “worldview” that is spiritual and that transcends the increasing physicalism of the West. This may account for the decline in Christianity in Europe and North America as more secular thought predominates and infiltrates the inherent spirituality of Christianity. Because of its long history and worldwide spread, Christianity has spawned a variety of spiritualities, some which are more palatable in some cultural situations than others. Such is the case with Pentecostalism/Charismatic Christianity.

Traced in the West back to Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906, the Pentecostal renewal spread during the 20th Century faster than any form of Christianity. It embraces an “immanent supernaturalism” that is more experiential, personal, and potentially meaningful than most other forms of Christianity. In so doing, it connects more naturally to people groups who have a higher view of spirituality and its reality. Thus, Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity has reshaped Christianity in South America and Africa in particular.

This session reviews the ways Pentecostal forms of Christianity has prospered in the Southern Hemisphere in recent years by virtue of its connecting with indigenous attitudes about spirituality and belief in extra-scientific ways of knowing. Psychologically, Pentecostal Christianity offers meaning, identity, and connection with the spiritual dimension of life that often are overlooked by more doctrinally focused Western forms of Christianity. In so doing, it has particularly challenged Catholicism in these areas and in some case merged with it. This presentation will stress how this thriving has been through Pentecostalism’s integration into indigenous beliefs to produce an iteration of Christianity that may be alien to Westerners. Similarities and differences in how this has manifested in these two continents will be noted.

(5) Taoist mysticism: A way of knowing that has anti-meme properties

A man named Nan-jung Chu went to see Lao Tzu for advice. Lao Tzu said to him, “Why did you come with all this crowd of people?” The man whirled around in astonishment to see if there was someone standing behind him. Needless to say, there was not; the “crowd of people” that he came with was the baggage of old ideas, the conventional concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, life and death, that he lugged about with him wherever he went. (Watson, 1964, p. 4)

The crowd that Lao Tzu, the Taoist mystic, wanted us to be free of reside in our heads and take us hostage more so now than ever before. In Susan Blackmore’s (1999) terminology, these crowds are memes. Memes may be understood as a kind of virus of the mind that, as information or knowledge representations, spreads through the brains. In the globalizing era, the meme infection is becoming an epidemic, due to the technological advancement that speeds up the flow of information, and that converts everything into data for easy transmission (hence more potent infection) of memes.

In this context, we may render a contemporary translation of the Taoist dictum--“The Tao that can be put in words is not the real Tao”—as follows: “Verbal representation of the Tao is at risk of meme infection, hence is not the real Tao.” Might it not be for this reason that Quakers and Trappists, for instance, put emphatic stress on silence as essential to their spirituality? In this paper, I examine the Taoist way of knowing to identify some anti-meme strategies that can be of particular relevance to this meme-driven age of ours.