ABSTRACT
         The main purpose of this paper on a study of
Indonesian concepts of human nature is to demonstrate practical
instances of cooperation between Western and Third World researchers.
It is asserted that Western researchers must understand the general
views of human nature held by individuals in Third World countries
before they can apply theories in these countries. Preliminary
studies of individuals' concepts of human nature were conducted in
Germany and the United States. Then the concepts of human nature held
by 110 young adults in West Java, Indonesia, were assessed using
three procedures: (1) an interview concerning values, behaviors, and
goals appropriate to adulthood; (2) a presentation of a story
involving a character facing a dilemma with moral and social
consequences; and (3) a task in which the subject sorted statements
corresponding to different developmental levels in the understanding
of human nature. Because the first interview procedure involved
interactions inappropriate to the culture, the Indonesian coworkers
in the research modified the procedure. They also constructed stories
that were culturally appropriate to Indonesia and that would
correspond to the stories used in Germany and the United States. The
sorting procedure was also modified. Eight references are cited.
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Open Forum

Perspectives of cooperation in research on

human development in Third World countries

ED335535

Subject's conception of human nature in Indonesia:

Experiences in research cooperation

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A precondition for using psychological concepts and theories in

a Third World country as well as for intervention programs is

the knowledge about how development and education are conceived

in a specific culture. One should know parents' and teachers'

view of development and education first before entering into

activities be it research or be it programs of enhancing learning

and development. Besides these more specific aspects, we need

knowledge about the very general view of human nature in the

given culture.

Those views and representations are often labeled as

ethnotheories. Ethnotheories are world views bearing belief

systems of the individual (Sigel, 1985). They are given as mental

representations of life experiences containing the acquisition

of social knowledge provided by the culture.

According to Sigel (1991) the term "theory" is justified since

ethnotheories are self-conscious and explain outcomes of human

behavior. Ethnotheories provide knowledge about physical,

intrapsychological, social and contextual aspects of personality development. Facts which do not fit the individual's ethnotheory are not accepted as facts. Furthermore, behavior - as learning strategy - that cannot be ordered into the system of one's theory will not be performed. From this perspective, it seems reasonable to investigate ethnotheories more profoundly in Third World countries.

In my own research I am interested in an ethnotheory which can be seen as paramount for all more specific theories a person might have. This paramount ethnotheory is the concept of human being which comprises the view of the development and existence of humans in the world. Of course, this very general "world view" is not as elaborated as a philosophical system. Some segments of the theory might contain more details and might be structured more clearly, while other segments are underdeveloped or even not represented at all. However, it is assumed that everybody in any culture will develop such kind of a world view.

For the global concept of human being is specially true what Sigel (1991) claims about ethnotheories: First of all, they are categories and concepts created by the investigator. The investigator's approach to individual ethnontheories is necessarily determined by concepts and methods he or she has to choose in order to measure ethnotheories. This aspect is very important if one does cross-cultural research. While the concepts of the investigator about ethnotheories might mirror quite appropriately the structure and content of ethnotheories of members of his/her own culture, those concepts cannot be used for other cultures, especially when they differ remarkably from

Western societies.

The main purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate how cooperation between a psychologist of a Western country and a psychologist of a Third World country occurs. Thus, the focus is more on problem solving strategies of cooperation than on results. I shall present the theoretical background and empirical results at the symposiun "Personality development in culture". A brief overview of the approach, however, is necessary to understand the problems of cooperation.

Theoretical background

The ethnotheory of the concept of human nature is conceived as composed of universal (etic) and culture-specific (emic) categories. Furthermore, it is assumed that the concept of human nature shows different developmental levels ranging from simple descriptions of surface-characteristics to more complex descriptions showing elements of à deep-structure.

The universal characteristics are assumed to form structures in the meaning of Piaget and Kohlberg that are constructed by the individual similarly in each culture, since all humans may have the same basic social and personal experience. The universal structures are - also in accordance with Piaget and Kohlberg - assumed to follow in a developmental sequence one after another with increasing complexity.

The question is how to identify those structures. I started with Western cultures, namely with Germany and the U.S.A. Five stages were found which share some characteristics with other

approaches, e.g Livesley and Bromley (1973), Loevinger (1976), Noam(1985), Kohlberg(1976), but are composed of of subjects' personality theory, social/environmental theory and action theory. Furthermore, processes of thought are related to each stage as a necessary condition for its construction.

Method

Three procedures were used: (1) an interview about adulthood asking for values, behaviors and goals an adult should have, (2) dilemma stories followed by a guided interview, (c) a sorting procedure which presented the subject with preformulated statements corresponding to the structural levels of the concept of human nature.

Subjects were 110 young adults from 18 to 25 years - controlled for gender, educational level and region - living in Bandung and at a tea plantation near Bandung (West Java, Indonesia).

Cooperation in theory construction

Although a preliminary theoretical approach was formulated before the research program began, the idea of developmental stages of the concept of human nature was only discussed and further developed in cooperation with staff members of the department of Psychology in Bandung. First, data were collected from subjects of age 6 to adulthood in order to examine whether structures of the concept of human nature could be found which are similar between Western and Indonesian subjects. As a result,

the description of the stages (structures) were slightly changed.
Another point of discussion was the difference between identity
in Western industrialized nations and in traditional cultures
like Indonesia. The distinction of personal, social and
collective identity (Triandis, 1989) and between independent and
interdependent identity (recently presented by Markus & Kitayama
(1991) was compared with the developmental approach of structural
levels.

Cooperation in the construction of methods

The three procedures mentioned above were critically discussed
under the perspective of appropriateness for the Javanese
culture. Since story telling and listening to stories is a quite
usual event in Indonesia, the dilemma story seemed to be a
fruitful method. On the other hand, the interview procedure
following the dilemmas raised problems. During the interview the
interviewer contradicts a choice or a statement of a subject.
For example, in the dilemma two old friends meet after a long
time telling each other about their life and their occupations.
Since they have chosen very different life-styles, they ran into
a heated discussion about who has made the better choice.

If the subject prefers one of the actor, the interviewer offers
counterarguments and tries to contradict the subject. This
behavior is unpolite in Java because one should avoid a direct
negative answer and look for harmony in social interaction.
Therefore, the question arose whether one should interact with

the subject in such a deviant way. Several versions of asking questions and giving counter-arguments were tested. It turned out that a modified procedure worked well and could be administered without abandoning the original idea of the procedure.

An even more essential contribution of the Indonesianm co-workers was of course the construction of the dilemma-stories. On the one hand, the stories should contain crucial contradictions of the culture which are experienced by the subjects as problems in which they were involved themselves. On the other hand, the stories should be comparable to the original stories used in Germany and the U.S.A. The solution of this problem is structural equivalence against contentual difference. One actor became a teacher in the village assisting his or her parents and working also for the community, while the other actor remained an employee in the bank business working hard for his or her own career.

The most difficult task was the adaptation of the sorting procedure. Two obstacles seemed to evaluate this method as inappropriate for Indonesian subjects. First, the formulation of the stages was Western (actually German) oriented and did not mirror the Indonesian (Javanese) way of thinking. Therefore, a simple translation (following the criteria of cross-cultural comparison, i.e. re-translation into English by a third person) was not meaningful. Second, low educated subjects were unfamiliar with the task of (a) comparing five statements, (b) selecting one of them and (c) bringing them into a rank order. Actually, this kind of task seemed not to be appropriate for the culture under

investigation. As a result of the discussion, a simplified version of the sorting procedure was constructed containing statements which fit the thinking of Javanese subjects.

Needless to say that the comparability of this procedure to the one used in Western countries is questioned. Results show that some data can be related to those of Western subjects, other not. The sorting procedure revealed that one has to choose between several options. One is to renounce every sort of questionnaire because it does not fit the way persons in Java give information about their own thinking. The second one would be to reformulate the stages in terms of the Javanese culture including the present state of affairs with regard to Western influences. A third option is to follow strictly methodological constraints and to construct statements which can be translated into languages of Western cultures as well as Indonesian.

Another methodological problem concerned the Javanese usual way of answering questions. Subject tend to answer like everybody of their group or society would answer, i.e. they are inclined to give conformistic answers und to formulate stereotypes. This tendency toward social desirability cannot be eliminated by special techniques because one would eliminate also a main tendency of thinking in Java. But how, then, could one distinguish between polite statements and deeper personal beliefs?

One criterion turned out to be the ego-involvement of the subject. Subjects often related their statement toward their personal experience, particularly toward their own problems. In

those cases we could assume with some justification that the statements about the concept of human nature mirrored the personal beliefs of the subject even if he or she formulated socially stereotyped statements. A second criterion for the existence of a personal belief-system was the subject's assumption about deviant persons and about how to treat them.

At stage IV (societal identity) subjects, for exampe, not only demanded that the deviant individual has to change and to adapt to society but also that environment and society have to provide opportunities for fulfilling the individual's needs. In this case. the stereotyped proposition of the individual as a well-functioning element in the system of society - a statement which is based on Javanese social norm of harmony (rukun) - is elaborated as an understanding of mutual adaptation and influence of society and individual.

Cooperation during the training phase

Staff members of the Department of Psychology at the Padjadjaran University of Bandung were trained for conducting the study. I would like to point out that I received so much assistance that I feel very obliged to the team that cooperated in the investigation. While team members showed great interest in the study, communication was suffering first from two barriers: The barrier of status and the barrier of gender. The status barrier - on the one side a Western Professor, on the other side postgraduate students of a Third World country - first lead to

misunderstandings in communication. When the interviewers aggreed with me and signalized understanding of my intentions, this did not mean that they really agreed and understood. Rather, they show a cude, polite behavior toward a person with higher status. The gender barrier existed because most of the staff members were females. In Indonesia female interaction with males is regulated by special rules.

These problems could be - at least partially - overcome by the assistance of two persons: Prof. Setiono and my wife who had conducted the study together with me in the United States. It turned out that particularly at the beginning the team asked my wife more than me for details of the research program. When they did not understand some information brought to them they turned to her with questions. Gradually, an efficient communication could be established. The other even more important person was Prof. Setiono . Through her mediation the team contributed with own ideas to theoretical and methodological questions.

Possible gain for the Indonesian partners

The colleagues of the Psychological Institute Bandung, especially the staff members who were involved in the investigation, not only became more experienced in planning investigations and analyzing data, but also developed sensitivity toward Western psychological concepts and their possible bias. They became interested in the question how to adapt psychological research to the Indonesian situation. Several aspects derived from the investigation of the concept of human nature came into

discussion. Among others, the Indonesian side was interested in the following issues: (1) Developmental tasks in adolescence and how they differ from Western tasks (in relation to becoming adult and mature); (2) The understanding of control in Indonesian culture and the consideration of secondary control (Weisz, Rothbaum & Blackburn, 1984); (3) Ethnotheories of parents about development and education the knowledge of which is supposed to be necessary for establishing enhancing programs.

Concluding remarks

Cooperation of Psychologists from Western nations with colleagues in Third World countries should be a give and take well-balanced for both sides. In retrospect it seems to me that in spite of my endeavor to reach this aim an imbalance still remains. I am afraid that I learned more from my work and the experience with my co-workers in Indonesia than my Indonesian colleagues might have learned from me. This situation is probably true for most research initiated by Western colleagues in Third World countries. Let us hope that in future a better balance can be reached and that psychology will profit from new genuine approaches of researchers of Third World countries.

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