

CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the paper is to look at the cross-cultural psychology approach in Malaysia. The paper looks at the problems involved and shows how the problems can be minimized. A number of examples of cross-cultural research was given – achievement motivation, Piaget's cognitive development, socialization and use of tests such as Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, the Rothwell-Miller Interest Blank, the repertory grid and its variations. Practical examples of the emic-etic distinction in the form of the "open house" and other traditions are given to show the process of finding equivalence in the Malaysian context. Indigenization of psychology in the Malay context is underway.

ABSTRAK

Objektif kajian ini ialah untuk melihat pendekatan psikologi silang budaya di Malaysia. Kajian ini meneliti masalah-masalah yang terlibat dan mengemukakan cara mengatasinya. Beberapa contoh kajian silang budaya dikemukakan – motivasi pencapaian, perkembangan kognitif Piaget, sosialisasi dan penggunaan ujian seperti "Eysenck Personality Questionnaire", "Rothwell-Miller Interest Blank", "Repertory Grid" dan beberapa variasi teknik itu. Contoh perbezaan emik-etik seperti rumah terbuka, dan contoh-contoh amalan tradisi lain ditunjukkan dalam proses mencari persamaan dalam konteks Malaysia. Penpribumian psikologi dalam konteks budaya Melayu sudah dimulakan.

INTRODUCTION

As psychology becomes more developed in the developing countries, the local psychologists are questioning some of the assumptions of the mainstream psychology as introduced by the West. There is now a

move to look at psychology in its local context, the indigenous psychology (Bond, 1986; Kim, 1990) and also to look at the similarities and differences between cultures, i.e. , the cross-cultural psychology (Brislin, Lonner & Thorndike, 1973; Frijda & Jahoda, 1966; Keats, 1989; Matsumoto & Juang, 2004; Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1994). Three approaches are in evidence in psychology: the universal or mainstream psychology, the indigenous psychology and the cross-cultural psychology (Keats, 1989).

The emphasis in this chapter is on the cross-cultural research in psychology, but research work in Malaysia using the other two approaches will also be presented. Psychologists who subscribe to the cross-cultural approach do not support the mainstream psychology approach nor do they think the indigenous approach is a viable alternative. To them the compromise approach is the cross-cultural approach, looking at similarities and differences between cultures. According to Triandis (1980) cross-cultural psychology looks at behaviour and experience in differing cultures systematically. It is a methodological strategy to test hypotheses relating to biological/genetic, environmental and socio cultural factors to man. While Matsumoto and Juang (2004) define cross-cultural approach in its broadest sense. It is concerned with understanding truth and psychological principles as either universal (true for all people of all cultures) or culture-specific (true for some people of some cultures). Following Matsumoto and Juang (2004), the article will primarily focus on the cross-cultural research in Malaysia. However, the culture-specific or indigenous approach will also be presented.

It is important to use the cross-cultural approach in Malaysia as most of the theories or instruments used originated from the developed countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. These theories and instruments were developed based on the Western cultural context. Malaysia has different cultural values. Malaysia is also a plural society; there are differences in values, beliefs, and attitudes between the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. For these two reasons the cross-cultural approach is more appropriate to use in Malaysia.

Even within each ethnic group differences in the meaning of concepts occur, for instance within the Malay community in different geographical locations, as shown in Table 1. From Table 1 it can be seen the same term can have a different meaning in another geographical location within the same ethnic group.

Table 1
Words and Meaning

Word	Standard Meaning	Meaning in Other Geographical Location
kawan	friend	spouse (Negeri Sembilan)
selalu	frequent	now (Kelantan)
sejan	shy	lazy (Kedah)
teriak	calling	crying (Kedah)
buang	throw	take-off (Kedah)
kita	we	you (Sabah)

Since the establishment of the psychology section in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, research in cross-cultural psychology increased with the offer of a course in cross-cultural psychology : Research work by students in the Department of Psychology reflected the amount of cross-cultural research done in Malaysia. In the period of 1974-1992 cross-cultural research by Honours students ranged from 27% in 1976 to 68% in 1989 (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1994). Cross-cultural research work by Diploma in Counseling students in the same department ranged from 28.1% in 1986 to 52% in 1988 in the period of 1981-1992 (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1994).

It can be said that since psychology was offered in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia cross-cultural research has become an important feature in Malaysian research. This can be attributed to the contribution of formal teaching of the cross-cultural research method and the plural nature of the society in Malaysia.

THE CROSS-CULTURAL METHOD

In cross-cultural studies, Frijda and Jahoda (1966) suggested four problems must be overcome:

1. Adequacy and comparability of descriptive categories.
2. Functional equivalence of phenomena under study.
3. Comparability of investigation procedures.
4. Adequacy, representativeness and comparability of samples.

Another group of researchers, Brislin, Lonner and Thorndike (1973) enumerated seven problems that must be considered in doing a cross-cultural research. The problems are :

1. Meaning or research.
2. Choosing the appropriate topic.
3. Discovering the problems specific to a given investigation.
4. Effect of researcher and curiosity by respondents.
5. Rival hypothesis.
6. Choice of respondents.
7. Problem of emic-etic.

There is considerable overlap between the problems suggested by Frijda and Jahoda (1966) and those by Brislin *et al.* (1973).

In order to carry out research using the cross-cultural approach the four problems suggested by Frijda and Jahoda (1966) must be overcome or minimized. To overcome these problems, Berry (1969) suggests an approach involving three steps. The first step is to show that the behaviour to be tested must be functionally equivalent. Berry claims that this is a prerequisite for cross-cultural comparison of behaviour. Similar activities may have different functions in different societies.

Comparability of descriptive categories or framework must be considered. This involves an 'emic-etic' distinction. Emic refers to the study of behaviour within the system and examines only one culture; thus criteria are relative to internal characteristics of the culture. On the other hand, etic refers to the study of behaviour from a position outside the system and examines many cultures, comparing them; thus criteria are considered absolute or universal. The emic approach is best exemplified by studies in Anthropology.

Example of the etic approach are studies in which attempts are made to devise tests free of cultural, or at least verbal influences (Raven, 1960; Porteus, 1950; 1965).

In his second step Berry suggests that the descriptive categories and concepts be applied in a tentative way (i.e., imposed etic) to the non-Western culture or population. These categories and concepts can then be modified to the extent that they become an adequate description from within the non-Western culture (i.e., emic): The shared categories can then be used to build up new categories for both the Western and non-Western culture.

The third step is only taken once the first two steps have successfully been completed. It involves the application of the instruments that have been shown to be conceptually equivalent to measure the relevant

behaviour in the two cultures. Brislin (1970) has shown that the problem of functional equivalence and concepts can be minimized by the method of back translation. For example, Brislin (1970) made a successful translation from English into Chamorro, Kusaian, and Palauan. The original version is :

“ I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off”.

The back translated version is:

“I have never felt like scolding someone”.

Incorporating the Qualitative Emic Approach in Cross-Cultural Psychology Research

Niblo and Jackson (2004) reported that most cross-cultural research is of the imposed etic variety (93% of the research studied), followed by emic variety (6%) and less than 1%, the derived etic. Although Berry (1969) has suggested the derived etic solution, very few researchers have followed the procedure.

Niblo and Jackson (2004) attempted to refine Berry's (1969) three-steps procedure to cross-cultural research to include the qualitative emic approach. They suggested a 9-step procedure to improve cross-cultural psychology research so that research can tap the indigenous concepts rather than concepts from outside imposed by the researchers.

MINIMIZING THE CROSS-CULTURAL PROBLEMS IN MALAYSIA

In order to use the cross-cultural approach in Malaysia, Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1980) showed how the four problems suggested by Frijda and Jahoda (1966) can be overcome. This is shown in the study comparing achievement motivation of male school children from Malaysia (Malays, Chinese and Indians) with those of the United Kingdom (England and Wales). In this study, Western theories and tests were applied to Malaysia; thus the question arises of the appropriateness of applying the emic descriptive categories and concepts in one culture etically in another. In the literature on cross-cultural problems, emphasis has been placed on the vast dissimilarities between the cultures studied. In the context of this study, Malaysia and the United Kingdom are chosen as too different countries with different cultures.

In the context of the comparison between United Kingdom and Malaysia the question of functional equivalence of the behaviour under study and of the adequacy and comparability of descriptive categories have been shown to be no longer serious problems, for example by Keats (1969) on Asian students; Kadri (1970) on Singapore students and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1974) on Malay students. Malaysia has had a long history of association with the United Kingdom and it is unlikely for Malaysians not to be influenced by the Western culture. Starr (1972) observes that from the earliest contact the Malays, Chinese and Indians, rather than develop a homogeneous way of life or learn the language and culture of the others, placed a greater premium on learning English and acquiring the English culture. Instead of the Malaysian ethnic group learning more about each other, those who were capable tried to learn more about a nation and a culture halfway around the world.

Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1974) has carried out a study on high school students in Australia and Malaysia using Western-developed tests such as the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). He found that the Australians have higher achievement motivation than the Malays from Malaysia indicating a support for the validity of McClelland's (1961) theory. It also means that the TAT may be valid for use in Malaysia and that there may be functional equivalence of the behaviour under study, and adequacy and comparability of descriptive categories.

The study by Keats, Keats and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1976) on Piagetian concepts involving Malaysian children showed that there is support for the validity of the method used in a variety of cultural settings.

Comparability of investigation procedures includes equivalence of instruments and test situation. The equivalence of test materials back translation as suggested by Brislin (1970) was used.

Back translation is a four step translation procedure.



All the tests and questionnaires used in the study were back translated into Bahasa Malaysia. The original English versions were translated into Bahasa Malaysia (target language) and then the translated versions were translated into English blindly, that is, without reference to the original 'English' versions. The target check involved the checking of

the linguistic and contents aspects of the translated versions by referring to the original English versions, the translated versions and the translation of the translated versions into the English Language.

Six bilingual translators were used. Three of them translated the original English versions into Bahasa Malaysia. The Bahasa Malaysia versions were then translated into English by another three translators blindly. The target check was made by the writer and a graduate teacher who had done some work on back translation. Several changes were made to effect functional equivalence.

The Bahasa Malaysia versions of the tests were pretested on Malaysian children in the top class of a primary school in a rural area in Malaysia, aged about 11-12 years. School children were administered by all the instruments to be used in the study. The results of the pilot study showed that the children could understand the instructions well, and were able to do all the tests in about two hours.

The equivalence of the test situation was accomplished by having school children as subjects, as they are familiar with pencil and paper tests and tests were conducted in a neutral classroom situation. To offset any problem incurred by unfamiliarity of the testers, testers to Malaysian subjects were qualified local Malay teachers who were given training for the purpose of the testing.

As this study is cross-cultural in nature, sampling was done so that equivalence of samples in the two countries could be obtained. Following the example by Berry (1969) and the suggestion by Brislin, Lonner and Thorndike (1973) that to study the differential incidence of a certain trait samples from cultures that are high, medium and low in that trait must be used. Samples were chosen that differed in their degree of economic progress. In this example, two samples were taken, one more advanced economically than the other. Two samples were first obtained in the United Kingdom. Equivalent samples were then chosen for Malaysia (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1980).

To minimize the problems of the adequacy, representativeness and comparability of samples (Frijda & Jahoda, 1966), school children were used as subjects. Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1974) has shown that school children are appropriate to use in comparing Malaysia with Australia, a more technologically advanced country. School children have common function in any country. They go to school to study and as Malaysia adopts the same education system as the United Kingdom, Malaysian and British students do study the same types of subject matter.

Since the development of achievement motivation was an important variable in the study (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1980), school children from a range of ages were used. The age group chosen were 11, 13 and 15. The choice of 11 years on the youngest group was because achievement motivation was shown to be stable about that age (McClelland, 1958; Kagan & Moss, 1962). The other important reason was practical in nature, i.e., as pencil and paper tests were used, the subjects of the study must be able to read and write. In Malaysia, children start schooling at the age of 6-7 years; by the time they are 11 years they are able to read and write.

There are some similarities between the cross-cultural problems put forward by Frijda and Jahoda (1966) and those by Brislin *et al.* (1973). For instance the problem of the comparability and adequacy and representativeness of descriptive (Frijda & Jahoda, 1966) is similar to the problem of emic-etic (Brislin *et al.*, 1973). The question of rival hypothesis and choice of respondents is overcome by having equivalent sample and instruments. The use of school children as subjects in Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1980) study overcome the problem of meaning of research as school children understand that research means collection of data for some purpose. The topic investigated, achievement motivation is specific and understood by the subjects the school children. The school teachers were asked to help in the administration of the questionnaires. This is consistent with the suggestion Brislin *et al.*, (1973) to discover the problem specific to a given investigation. The effect of researcher and curiosity by respondents was overcome by having trained researchers and research assistants.

EXAMPLES OF CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES IN MALAYSIA

The studies by Honours students in the Department of Psychology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia show that the most number of cross-cultural research was done in industrial and organizational psychology, followed by social psychology, developmental psychology, counseling and perception. The number of research in tests and measurements is few, but the percentage in cross-cultural research is high.

One of the earliest cross-cultural study on achievement motivation involving Malaysia was carried out by Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1974). The study investigated the difference in achievement motivation, locus of control of reinforcement and vocational choice between Australian and Malaysian secondary school students from the English medium and the Malay medium. The study used the

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) and the Mehrabian Achievement Scale (MAS) to measure achievement motivation; the I-E scale to measure locus of control and the Rothwell-Miller Interest Blank and The Malaysian Vocational Interest inventory to measure realism in vocational choice.

The results on TAT showed that McClelland's theory of achievement motivation could be applicable across cultures. On MAS the results indicated that the Malay medium students had higher scores than the English medium Malay students and the Australian students. On locus of control of reinforcement the Australians were shown to be more externally controlled than the Malays. Generally the results showed no significant correlation between achievement motivation and locus of control of reinforcement. On the relationship between achievement motivation and realism in vocational choice the overall results did not support the Morris extension of the Atkinson (1957) theory of achievement motivation. The results also showed more similarities than dissimilarities between Australians and Malaysian Malays. The two Malay groups appeared to be similar in almost all aspects under study.

Studies on achievement motivation in Malaysia also looked at its relationship to entrepreneurship, training and academic achievement. Studies by Maznah Abdul Hamid (1975), Zaineah Lisut (1981) and Chan Kok Seng (1986) looked at the relationship of achievement motivation and entrepreneurship. Another cross-cultural study on achievement motivation was carried in Malaysia and the United Kingdom by Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1980).

In the study by Maznah Abdul Hamid (1975), it was shown that the Malay entrepreneurs have higher achievement motivation than their non-Malay entrepreneurs. In another study on Malay entrepreneurs by Zaineah Lisut (1981), it was found that there was no difference in achievement motivation between Malay entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. But it was revealed that the non-Malay entrepreneurs have higher fear of failure than the Malay counterparts. The study by Chan Kok Seng (1986) on Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs discovered that the Malay entrepreneurs have lower achievement motivation than Malay students and Chinese entrepreneurs. The Malay entrepreneurs are more externally controlled than the Chinese entrepreneurs. The Malay entrepreneurs attributed their success more to external factors than internal factors such as effort and ability. The results of the studies by Maznah Abdul Hamid (1975), Zaineah Lisut (1981) and Chan Kok Seng (1986) are not consistent and it is not clear if achievement motivation has a role in entrepreneurship in Malaysia.

Another cross-cultural study involving Malaysia and the United Kingdom was carried out by Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1980). The study investigated differences in achievement motivation of male school children from Malaysia with those from the United Kingdom. The study also examined the development of achievement motivation from age 11 years to 15 years. The affective approach by McClelland as well as the cognitive approach by Weiner were used to predict differences in achievement motivation and to obtain valid cross-cultural comparison, the cross-cultural method was followed.

The same battery of tests was administered to each group of subjects. The battery consisted of two measures of achievement motivation, two measures of attribution of responsibility for outcomes, two measures of cognitive maturity, one measure of perceived child rearing behaviour and one personal data questionnaire.

The results supported the McClelland theory in that school children in the United Kingdom have higher achievement motivation than their counterparts in Malaysia. On the Thematic Apperception Test, the Malaysian Chinese were shown to have higher motivation than the Malaysian Malays and Indians. The results also supported Weiner's approach in that school children high in achievement motivation attributed success more to ability than effort whereas those low in achievement motivation attributed success more to task difficulty and luck. It was also shown that child rearing practices, locus of control and cognitive maturity variables were important in the development of achievement motivation.

The study by Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1980) also showed that achievement motivation as measured by the Thematic Apperception Test was fully developed at the age of 13. However, on the Smith scale there was no similarity in development between the British and Malaysian subjects. In terms of determinants of success, there was no differences between the age groups. Both British and Malaysian subjects viewed trying hard as most important followed by the competence of the actor, and the outcome of the act.

The study by Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1980) revealed that when the cross-cultural requirements are met, tests developed in the West could be used in a developing country such as Malaysia.

Achievement motivation training has been shown to enhance achievement thinking (McClelland, 1961). McClelland (1961) and Alschuler, Tabor and McIntyre (1970) have shown that attitude could

be made more positive and performance enhanced in school through the enhancement of achievement motivation striving. It was also found out that achievement motivation can be increased by training (McClelland, 1965; Durand, 1983). Such a study was reported by Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1991) and Habibah Elias and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1992).

The objective of the study reported by Habibah Elias and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1992) was to study the effects of achievement motivation training on a group of local university students. Achievement motivation training was based on McClelland affective theory of achievement motivation in thoughts and actions, self-study, admiration ladder and several inputs to enhance group morale and cooperation such as games and problem solving activities. Subjects were local university students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. It was an experimental study with pretest-posttest control group design. The subjects were randomly assigned to three groups. The first experimental group received achievement motivation training whereas the second experimental group (discussion group) was given an alternative treatment to study the Hawthorne effects. The control group was not given any treatment.

The achievement motivation training was conducted in six sessions over a period of three weeks with each session taking 90 minutes, for the experimental group. The second experimental group was given some problem solving tasks to do. The three groups were given pretest and posttest which consisted of instruments to measure achievement motivation, locus of control, study habits and attitude.

The results of the Habibah Elias and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1992) study showed that achievement motivation group was significantly different from the discussion group and the control group in terms of improvement in the following variables namely achievement motivation, locus of control, examination performance and study habits. The achievement motivation group showed an improvement in attitudes compared to the control group. It could be said that the achievement motivation training module which emphasized such elements as competition, challenges, excellence, responsibility, effort and success was suitable for university students as it could increase the level of achievement motivation, study habits and attitudes and locus of control towards internal locus of control. The increase in these variables increased the examination performance of qualitative and creative courses.

In the field of developmental psychology, a number of studies have been carried in Malaysia by Keats, Keats and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1976; 1977), Omar Ibrahim and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1986) and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1982).

The study by Keats, Keats and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1976) was on the acquisition of the concept of conservation in bilingual children. The subjects were kindergarten children, who can speak Bahasa Malaysia and English and Chinese and English. The children had not achieved the conservation of weight. The results showed that language plays a minor role in the concept acquisition. Children performed slightly better if tested in their mother tongue, but this effect could be the effect of the tester or some other effects.

In another study, Keats, Keats and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1977) looked at the performance of Malay and Chinese children on some Piagetian Tasks. The subjects were kindergarten children of about 5 from the Kuala Lumpur area. The instruments used the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and Piagetian Tasks on conservation of number, quantity, weight and volume. The results showed that the sequence of conservation was number, volume, weight and quantity which is not the same as the sequence for the European children.

Another research work on Piagetian Tasks was reported by Omar Ibrahim and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1986). The objective of the study was to study the development of the Piagetian concept of horizontality among the 10, 11 and 12 years old primary school Malay children. The children were given the square and round bottle tasks individually. Five categories of developmental behaviours were identified from their responses as well as the last two main stages of development (II and III) and their sub-stages. The results confirmed the existence of the developmental behaviours and the invariant sequence of the stages of development as stated by Piaget and Inhelder. None of the three age groups had acquired the horizontal concept using 75% criterion of success. The results also did not support the finding of Piaget and Inhelder in terms of age of acquisition of the concept and tasks difficulty. However, the study supported their findings that for each task the horizontal position 90% of the bottle was easier than the oblique positions (45° and 135°). The results indicated that the two oblique positions were of equal difficulty.

In a study on perceived socialization practices (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1982) in Malay, Chinese and Indian school children it was

shown that the three ethnic groups perceived two dimensions as important in child rearing, that is, 'encouraging' and 'punitive'. Other similarities are :

- a) Parents are most encouraging, friends are least encouraging.
- b) Teachers are most punitive, grandfather is the least punitive.
- c) Two clusters are evident: the parents and the relatives (brother, uncle and grandfather).

In terms of dissimilarities, the Chinese respect their relatives like they respect their teachers; the Indians perceive their relatives as friends; whereas the Malays have a different category of respect for their parents, not like they respect their teachers nor their relatives.

In using tests developed from another culture Lonner (1981) discussed the problems involved: the meaning of construct/criterion, use of outside norm, response set, problem of interpretation and appropriateness and motive for taking the tests. These problems have to be minimized when tests developed elsewhere are to be used in Malaysia.

The 'Lie' scale in the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire is a good example of the problem in using tests developed in the West. It involves some of the problems listed by Lonner such as meaning of the construct/criterion, use of outside norm and problem of interpretation. The 'Lie' scale is used to screen those not honest or not giving full attention to the test. In the West if a respondent has a 'Lie' score of more than 4, he is excluded from the study. He is deemed to have 'lied'. But from a number of studies carried out in Malaysia and Asia the range of scores for this scale is 11-13. If the standard Western norm is to be used, all the respondents are deemed to have 'lied' and no data are obtained for the study.

This can be construed as a problem of interpretation. May be in Malaysia and Asia this 'Lie' scale can be considered as another characteristic unique to Malaysians and Asians. Based on the questions for the scale, the 'Lie' scale can be renamed as 'conformity scale'.

A number of Western-developed tests have been found to be appropriate for use in Malaysia, for example, the Rothwell-Miller Interest Blank (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1974; 1988) and the repertory grid (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1982).

The Rothwell-Miller Interest Blank was developed by J.W Rothwell in Australia in 1947 and was named the Rothwell-Miller Interest Blank. The form was designed as a short method to identify the vocational interest of an individual. The form consists of titles of occupation such as architect, mathematics teacher from categories such as scientific, medical or persuasive. The respondents are required to rank their preference.

The form was standardized by K. M. Miller between 1954, 1958 and 1963. As a results, the categories of occupations was increased from nine to twelve. This form has also been adapted by the Ministry of Education for use by schools. The first attempt to validate the form was done by Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1974). The study looked at the consistency of the ranking made using the coefficient of concordance, Kendall (W). In this study W was shown to be significant, indicating that classification of occupational titles was consistent in both the Malaysian and Australian students. It means that interest blank is valid for both groups of students. In this study occupational title of 'Wool Classer' was changed to 'rubber grader'.

In another study in Malaysia six of nine categories correlated with similar categories in Preference Record indicating validity of the six categories (Abdul Halim Othman & Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1980).

The study by Chan (1985) on students from four institutions of higher education also showed the Interest Blank was reliable and valid. Some other adjustments were made such as 'music record librarian' was changed to 'director of music'; 'male nurse', was changed to 'medical assistant'.

As a result of a discussion in a counselling workshop, more changes were made such as 'Town Clerk' was changed to 'Secretary of Town Council' (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1988).

The repertory grid was first introduced in Malaysia by the writer in 1978 (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1978). Kelly (1955) developed the repertory grid based on his Personal Construct Theory. He developed this technique as a method to capture the construct system. It is an attempt to see how a person perceives his world.

Repertory grid consists of elements and constructs. The elements can be the objects of perception. They can be people or situations. Constructs represents their understanding (right or wrong) of their perception. The grid is like a matrix as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Repertory Grid

Elements Construct	A	B	C	D	..	..	..
1							
2							
3							
⋮							
⋮							
⋮							

The task of the respondent is to rate the elements on the constructs. Kelly (1955) developed this technique for use with the mental patients, to find out which doctors the patients like to be treated by.

From studies using the personal construct theory, the repertory grid has now been used just as a technique without the accompanying personal construct theory. Among the cross-cultural studies that have used this technique are studies by Isaza (1974) on university students from America and Columbia; Orley (1975) on mental patients in Buganda; Simons (1976) on family planning in Central Java and Harding (1978) on Chinese Eurasian students in Hong Kong.

To show the appropriateness of the repertory grid Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1982) carried out the study on vocational choice of Bumiputera and non- Bumiputera students. Elements and constructs elicited from the two groups of students are as shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Following Smith, Hartley and Stewart (1978) 'real self' and 'ideal self' were included as additional element. From Table 3 and 4, there is not much difference between Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera on the elements and constructs.

The subjects were asked to rate the elements on the constructs on 0-10 scale with 10 being the highest score. The grids from the groups are put together as consensus grid and analysed by using the INGRID programme from the Grid Analysis Package.

Table 3
Elements by Subjects

Bumiputera	Non-Bumiputera
1. Administrator	1. Lawyer
2. Police Officer	2. Account Clerk
3. Lawyer	3. Public Relation Officer
4. Politician	4. Advertising Agent
5. Manager	5. Welfare Officer
6. Librarian	6. Administrator
7. Designer	7. Journalist
8. Teacher	8. Psychiatrist
9. Businessman	9. Politician
10. Farmer	10. Research Officer
11. Counsellor	11. Salesman
12. Journalist	12. Army Officer
13. Surveyor	13. Manager

Table 4
Constructs by Subjects

Bumiputera	Non-Bumiputera
1. Not attached	1. Spokesman
2. Fix salary	2. Administrative
3. Work outside office	3. Involved at national level
4. Helps society	4. Involved with healthy people
5. Academic	5. Work outside office
6. High status	6. Persuasive
7. Security	7. Creative
8. Creative	8. High status
9. Administrative	9. Work in office
10. Skilled	10. Involves counting
11. Specific service	11. Scientific
12. Work in office	
13. Depends on situation	
14. Work for money	

Table 5
Dimensions and % Variance

Dimension	Bumiputera	Non-Bumiputera
1	38.1	36.9
2	21.7	23.0
Total	59.8	59.9

The Ingrid analysis showed that Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera perceived work in two main dimension as shown in Table 5.

For the Bumiputera the dimension were called ‘work with the Government’ (Dimension 1) and ‘work as entrepreneur’ (Dimension 2). For the non-Bumiputera Dimension 1 was named as ‘work as entrepreneurs’ while Dimension 2 was named as ‘work with the Government’.

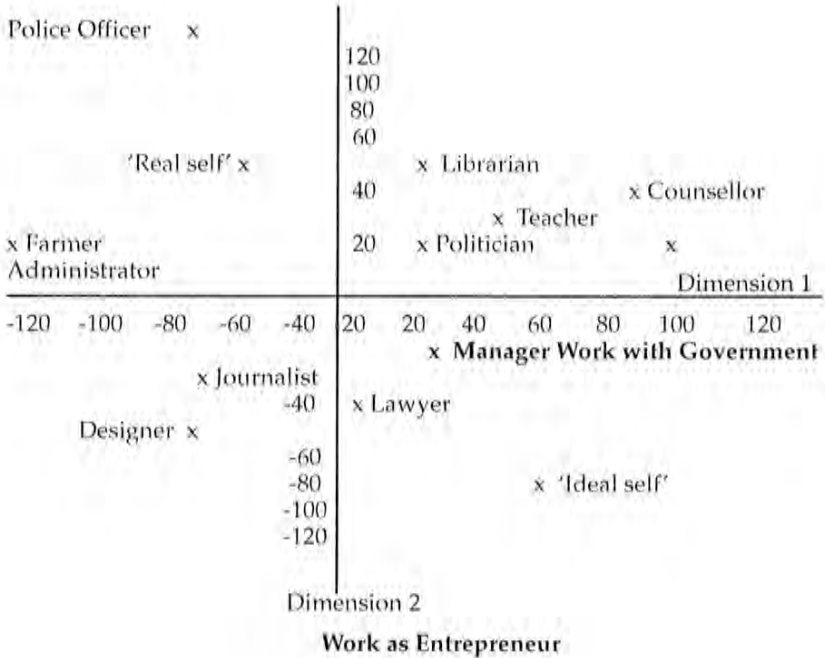


Figure 1
Bumiputera vocational choice

The perception of work by Bumiputera and non- Bumiputera was as shown in Figure 1 and 2. The students perceived the world of work in two main dimensions. The difference between them was that while the Bumiputera perceived ‘work with the Government’ as the main dimension and ‘work as entrepreneurs’ as the second dimension whereas for the non-Bumiputera it was the reverse. This was reflective of the situation in the Malaysia society, that is the Bumiputera perceives work more as ‘work with the Government’ whereas the non-Bumiputera perceives ‘work as entrepreneurs’ as more important.

The results indicated that the repertory grid is a valid measure of the perception of vocational choice in Malaysia as the results depict the situation in Malaysia.

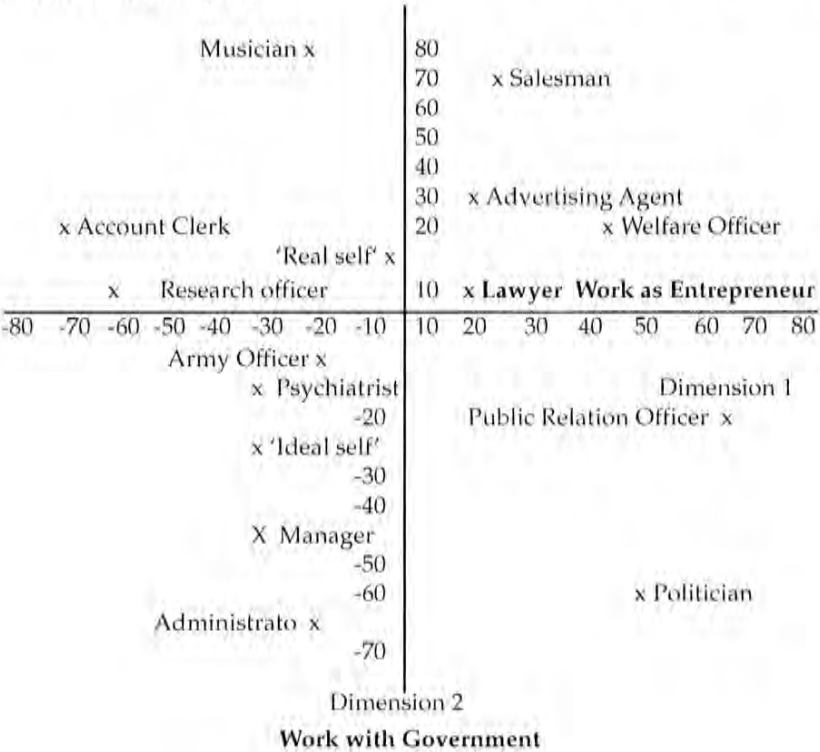


Figure 2
Non-bumiputera vocational choice

The appropriateness of the repertory grid has also been shown by other studies in the context of socialization (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1978; Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman 1982a); vocational choice (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1981a, 1982b); supervision and management (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1981a; 1982b) and in abnormal behaviour (Lily Mastura Harun & Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman 1985).

To overcome the problem of using computer software such as the Ingrid programme a modified grid has been used following Fukuyama and Neimeyer (1985); the writer and students have carried out a number of studies using this version (Cheong & Seet, 1993; Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1993; Nadzri Abdul Ghani, Mohd Amran Mahessan, Dzulhelmi Ahmad Fauzi & Hashim Jusoh, 2000)

The simplified version uses the same matrix format; the subject needs indicate how they rate the elements on the constructs by putting positive or negative as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Polarization

Element Construct	Malay English Students	Rural Malay	Kelantan Malays	Chinese English Students	Mandarin Speaking Chinese	Cantonese/Hokken Speaking	Indian English Students	Tamil Speaking Indians	Bumiputera (Sabah/Sarawak)
Humble-superior	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
Optimistic-pessimistic	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	-
Religious-not religious	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
Fashionable-conservative	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	-
Careful in spending-spending a lot	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+
Approachable-not approachable	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	-
Cooperative-selfish	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+
Sociable-not sociable	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	-
Close-superficial	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
On talking term-not on talking term	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-

From the Table 6 it can be seen that the groups perceived to contribute to polarization were Malay students doing English and Tamil students. The construct most contributing to polarization was being close or superficial.

CROSS CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION IN MALAYSIA

Berry (1969) and Brislin *et al.* (1973) focus on the emic-etic differences in the cross-cultural method. Berry (1969) suggested three steps approach towards finding equivalence in the cross-cultural study. The change of the emic concept to derived etic as suggested by Berry (1969) has actually taken place in Malaysia even before Berry came out with the suggestion.

'Open-house' during Hari Raya is an emic Malay concept. It has been imposed on the non-Malays and now we have 'open-house' during Chinese New Year, Deepavali, and Christmas. The emic Malay concept has now become an etic concept and we now have the 'open-house' with halal food as the derived etic concept.

Similarly most Malaysians are now enjoying the "sambal belacan", "sambal petai", "nasi lemak" from the Malay community, "roti canai" and various kinds of curry from the Indian community. Many Malaysians are now adept in using the chop sticks and give "ang pow" or "duit raya" in packets of different colours, following the emic Chinese tradition.

INDIGENIZATION OF PSYCHOLOGY IN MALAYSIA

Indigenization of psychology looks at what behaviours are culture-specific. In Malaysia attempts have been made to study the Malay psychology through content analysis of literary work on the Malays as reported by Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1994). Other attempts have been made by a group of Malay psychologists as documented in the Psychology of the Malays (A. Halim Othman, 1987). Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (1999; 2004) has uncovered a theory of motivation from the Malay proverbs.

From the content analysis of Sejarah Melayu, representing the era of the Malacca Sultanate in the 16th century and Sandera, representing the period immediately after independence of Malaysia, Suhana Sulaiman (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1994) was able to compare the entrepreneurship qualities of the Malays in the two periods. It was shown that the modern Malays are more achievement motivated than their 16th century counterparts.

The papers on the psychology of the Malays discussed at a colloquium was compiled into a book edited by A. Halim Othman (1987). Among the topics presented were entrepreneurship, 'gotong-royong', leadership styles, family relationship, work ethics, virtue and abnormal behaviour in the Malay society.

Content analysis of the Malay proverbs led to the uncovering of a theoretical framework on motivation (Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, 1999; 2004), not unlike that by Vroom (1964). It would seem that the Malays knew of the variables involved in motivation long before Vroom put forward his expectancy theory of motivation.

CONCLUSION

The cross-cultural approach in research in Malaysia is more appropriate to use in finding similarities and differences in Malaysia as Malaysia is a plural society and that in most studies theories and instruments developed elsewhere are being used. When cross-cultural problems as put forward by Fridja and Jahoda (1966) and Brislin *et al.* (1973) are minimized cross-cultural comparisons can be carried out.

Although a number of cross-cultural studies has been carried out the studies are mostly of imposed etic type consistent with cross cultural studies in other countries as indicated by Niblo and Jackson (2004). To refine cross-cultural studies Berry's (1969) 3-step approach has yet to gain popularity. Niblo and Jackson's (2004) 9-step procedure would overcome the imposed etic approach but it would take some time before the procedure will be used.

A number of studies are presented as examples of cross-cultural studies that have been undertaken in Malaysia. The studies have shown some similarities and differences between the ethnic groups in Malaysia and between Malaysian, Australian and British school children. Some tests have been shown to be valid for use in Malaysia, for instance, the Rothwell-Miller Interest Blank and the repertory grid. A simple version of the repertory grid has been developed for use in Malaysia.

The paper observes that while very few cross-cultural studies followed the Berry's (1969) 3-step procedure, the 3-step procedure has been shown to be practical in producing derived etics such as the "open house", the "ang pow" and the "roti canai". The derived etic way seems to be the key to the development of more Malaysian ways of doing things. The indigeneous psychology approach has been shown to be useful to uncover the wisdom of our forefathers.

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