

An Outsider's View of the Challenges Facing Indonesian Counseling Psychologists

Bart Begalka, M.A., M.Ed., R.C.C.

Trinity Western University, Canada

bart.begalka@twu.ca

Indonesian society is changing. From my visits I am see two major changes. The first change is that the Indonesian public is beginning to seek out psychologists for counseling; the second is that Indonesian young people are exploring individuality more. To begin with, the people of Indonesia are beginning to come to psychologists wanting counseling for their children, for their marriages, and for themselves. It used to be, for thousands of years, that the Indonesian way was to deal with problems privately. What people could not deal with by themselves, they took to their family. If their family couldn't help them, they took their problems to their community. In the past sixty years, if their community could not help, they would take their problems first to a doctor, and then to a psychiatrist.

On the other hand, the Western way of dealing with problems is first to try to take care of it themselves. If they are unable to help themselves, they go to a professional – a psychiatrist, a psychologist or a clinical counselor. Rarely is the family or community involved.

Here is where I believe Indonesian society is changing. The people are recognizing another

resource in that process between taking care of the problem themselves and going to a psychiatrist—the counseling psychologist. The problem is that they are not quite sure where the counseling psychologist fits into the system. The psychologist is not a doctor. The psychologist talks to the people, gives them emotional support, and helps them solve their problems, so maybe the psychologist fits into the category of community; but the psychologist is still a professional, not a family member or a community member.

The second change I believe that I am seeing is that the younger Indonesian generation is becoming more and more individualistic. Everybody seems to know that the West is individualistic and Asia is collectivist. This current Indonesian generation is trying to be both. This is a trend that is not only affecting Indonesia, but is being seen throughout Asia. At Trinity Western University I have students who are from India, Korea, Sri Lanka and Japan. I have the same conversations with them that I have with my young Indonesian friends. They value family and collectivism, but they feel that their cultures have taken it too far and that they need to learn from the West. They want to value individuality more, but still hold on to traditional values. They want to focus on their own individual identities and potentials, but they still look at themselves through the lens of their families and communities. Meanwhile Westerners are doing the opposite. They feel the need to become more connected to community, but they are seeking

this through the lens of their individuality. The East and the West are learning from each other. The West is learning from the East how to value community, and the East is learning from the West how to value the individual.

If you have studied post colonialism you may recognize this as Bhabha's concept of hybridization. Bhabha said that it is foolish to think that any culture is pure. Cultures are always changing. And changing cultures interact with other changing cultures. For example, through Bhabha's lens there is no essential Javanese culture. Through the centuries Indonesian culture has adapted and accommodated to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, as well as cultural influences from China, Arabia, and The Dutch. When I come to Indonesia I interact with one generation of Javanese who have experienced Dutch and Japanese occupation in their formative years, with another generation which has lived through the fall of Soekarno in 1965-1966, with another generation who in their formative years witnessed the financial crisis and the downfall of Soeharto, and I interact with the current Indonesian generation whose reality is shaped by Facebook, text messaging and having experienced the recent devastating tsunamis and earthquakes through media, if not directly. These generations have all learned what it means to be Indonesian in different ways. Each generation has its own reality and where these realities meet and interact, Bhabha calls the "third space", a fluid reality that belongs to no generation, but on the other hand belongs to all generations.

I, as a Canadian scholar, enter into this constantly shifting cultural reality. But I also have my cultural identity that is shifting. My parents were the son and daughter of farmers, homesteaders, growing up in the Great Depression and World War II, with my father living in a German-speaking community and my mother a second-generation Oregon Trail pioneer. I grew up during the Vietnam era in a small college town in the Western United States, where there was a strong divide between the conservative cowboys and the liberal university. I moved to Canada where I obtained dual citizenship and my wife and our children grew up as dual citizens in the time of 9/11, ecological disasters and booming cyber technology. My children, my parents and I all have different cultural understandings or being North American. I agree with Bhabha. To view myself as a Canadian working with Indonesians is overly simplistic and marginally helpful.

It is in this ever-shifting encounter with globalization that Indonesian counseling psychologists are finding themselves responding to the needs of their society. There are three basic ways of doing this: through indigenization, through homogenization and through anti-colonialism. The definition of indigenization I am using here is the process of one culture absorbing some of the constructs of another culture into their way of thinking and doing things. Homogenization is the process of one culture being dominant to the point of subsuming another culture. An example of this would be

“McDonaldization” in which certain cultural artifacts become universal. There are those who make the argument that homogenization is a myth. Not only does it not stand up to Bhabha’s theory of hybridization, but it doesn’t stand up to experience. Anyone who has been in a McDonald’s in another part of the world can attest to the fact that they are seeing indigenization rather than homogenization. The concept of anti-colonialism is the rejection of all things outside of one’s culture, seeking to find pure cultural values and practices. The Taiwanese psychologist Hwang challenges the notion an anti-colonial form of psychology on the grounds that it is irresponsible to disregard the accumulated wisdom of the West. Not only is it hazardous to develop a psychology that may be based on reactionary anger and resentment, but there is a strong position in postcolonial thought is that it is impossible to return to an idealized past, especially in a world that is rapidly changing through the influence of globalization.

So if homogenization is a myth and anti-colonialism is irresponsible, that leaves Indonesian psychologists with indigenization. From what I have seen of counseling in Indonesia there are two main tasks of indigenization: the indigenization of counseling psychology theories

and the indigenization of counseling service delivery.

I have seen evidence that there is much work taking place in Indonesia to indigenize counseling psychology theory, and there is much work happening throughout Asia, which may be a valuable resource to Indonesian psychologists, or at least an inspiration. As well, I have been with Indonesian colleagues as they have struggled to indigenize service delivery. As I have already mentioned, the Indonesian public wants the services you have to offer, but does not really understand how to receive them. I have no answers. I leave these struggles in your capable hands, but what I can offer is to share with you how Canadian counseling psychology is dealing with this problem.

Canada is dealing with this problem? Surprisingly, yes. In the city of Vancouver, where I come from, more than half of the population does not speak English as their first language. Canada has a large indigenous population. In many cases traditional counseling does not work for many Canadians. One Canadian psychologist, Richard Young, has come up with the following schemata to help us think about how we think and what we do so that we can be flexible. I share it here: (See figure 1.)

	CONSTRUCTIVIST/FREE WILL	DETERMINISTIC
OVERT FOCUS Thoughts, feelings, behaviors	Symbolic Interaction Example: Rogers	Positivism/Post-positivism Example: Skinner
COVERT FOCUS Unconscious	Existentialism Example: Frankl	Structural Determinism Example: Freud

Figure 1. Richard Young's Schemata

He maintains that there are two main philosophical stances that inform professional counselling, constructivism and determinism. As well, there are two primary foci for healing, or change. There is the overt focus, which is basically an emphasis on the conscious (thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and the covert focus, which is basically an emphasis on the unconscious.

While it is very rare to find any professional strictly in one quadrant, the thrust of

counselling psychology would be in the upper left quadrant (See Figure 2), clinical psychology lodge primarily in the upper right quadrant (See Figure 3), and psychotherapy would occupy the lower quadrants, their location depending on whether they use existential models (lower left quadrant) or psychodynamic models (lower right quadrant) (See Figure 4).

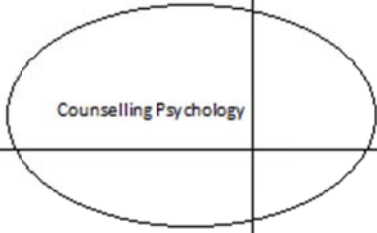
	CONSTRUCTIVIST/FREE WILL	DETERMINISTIC
OVERT FOCUS Thoughts, feelings, behaviors	 Counselling Psychology	
COVERT FOCUS Unconscious		

Figure 2. Counseling Psychology

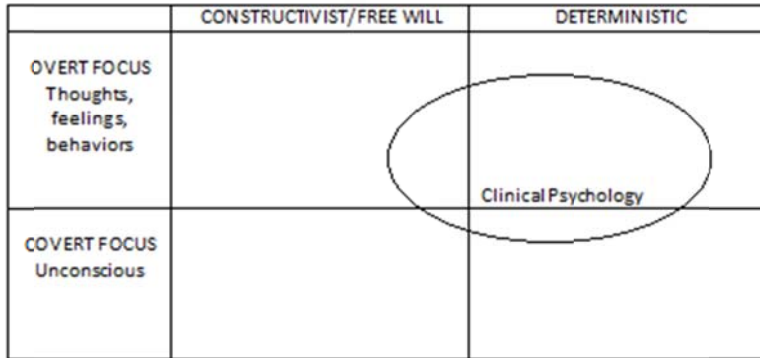


Figure 3. Clinical Psychology

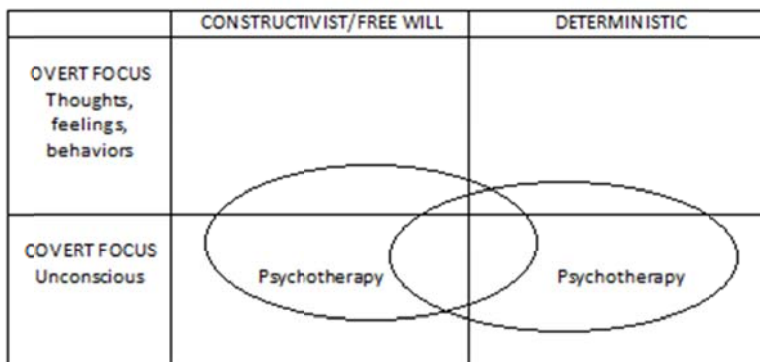


Figure 4. Psychotherapy

Counseling psychology acknowledges, and often uses, the insights of deterministic understandings of mental health to address personal wellness, and clinical psychologist often use constructivist insights and techniques to address mental health issues. And here the confusion immediately arises. Clinical psychology concerns itself with mental health and is constantly trying to operationalize and quantify this concept – a positivist notion. Counselling psychology, on the other hand, concerns itself with wellness, and is constantly seeking how this

is defined and promoted – a constructivist notion. To a counselling psychologist, wellness is how you define it, or more accurately, how the therapist and the client define it together.

In that last sentence the differences again emerge. Counselling psychologists tend to have clients. Clinical psychologists tend to have patients. This is not simply a matter of semantic preference; it is rooted in core philosophies. Taking a wellness, humanistic stance, the counselling psychologist would tend to see him- or herself as a guide, an informed companion

walking along the side of the person seeking help. The clinical psychologist would tend to see him- or herself as an expert, proscribing corrective measures to the condition of the person seeking help.

The distinctions between counselling psychology and psychotherapy lie primarily in the emphasis between conscious and unconscious material. Basically a counselor supports an immediate conflict or crisis, providing relief with the discussions of potential solutions, and psychotherapy geared to those who are looking for an in-depth exploration of their inner world.

Confusions can arise because there is a great deal of overlap. Many counseling psychologists, while focusing on conscious material, acknowledge that there are deep unconscious elements that determine conscious thoughts and actions. And many psychotherapists will address the issues of daily living. The counselling psychologist, however, will tend to seek conscious means to impact the unconscious, whereas a psychotherapist will tend to seek unconscious means to impact the conscious, the psychodynamic psychotherapist will do this through a deterministic understanding of the unconscious, whereas the existential psychotherapist will do this through a humanistic understanding of the unconscious.

Bear in mind that these are generalizations meant to anchor the distinctions, and that there are large areas of overlap and many caveats. So we in Canada have been looking at these distinctions and this is giving us the

freedom to embrace our goal of helping people achieve wellness in creative ways, not just in a counselling office, but in many different settings and with communities as well as with individuals.

And so, in closing I would like to point out what I believe are the challenges before you—a view from an outsider:

The first challenge is that of indigenization, taking from the West, and from other non-Western cultures, what may be helpful in terms of both theory and service delivery. Take what is helpful, and leave

behind what is not helpful. The West has discovered some universals, but we have also discovered things that only make sense in our own cultures. And there are valuable insights coming out of counseling psychology in the East, from Hong Kong, China, The Philippines and others.

The second challenge is that of hybridization. Learn from others, but also teach. Network with each other in Indonesia, and conduct research. But I also urge you to network within the “Pacific Rim” and ASEAN nations, and also network worldwide and share your research findings with the world. Take care of your people, but share with the rest of the world how you are doing this so that we may learn from you.

References

- (Asian Professional Counselling Association [APCA], 2011). Programs and Presenters. Retrieved July 18, 2011 from <http://www.asiapacificrimcounselling.com/en/html/presenters/presenters.htm>
- Begalka, B. and McDonald, M. (2010). *International collaboration for hybridized strategies for professional education in psychotherapy: Indonesia, Canada, and competency based curricular development in higher education*. Unpublished paper presented at the International Network for Technology and Educational Development Conference, Valencia, Spain, March 8 – 10, 2010.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1995). Cultural diversity and cultural differences. In *The post-colonial reader*, B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin (Eds.) pp. 155-157. London: Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. (1996). The other question. In P. Mongia (Ed.), *Contemporary postcolonial theory: A reader* (37-54). London, UK: Arnold.
- Canadian Psychological Association: Counselling Psychology Section (2011) *Definition of counselling psychology*. Retrieved July 19, 2011 from <http://www.cpa.ca/cpsite/userfiles/Docum>
[ents/sections/counselling/Definition%20of%20Counselling%20Psychology.pdf](http://www.cpa.ca/cpsite/userfiles/Docum/ents/sections/counselling/Definition%20of%20Counselling%20Psychology.pdf).
- Huddart, D. (2006). *Homi K. Bhabha*. London: Routledge.
- Hwang, K. (2005). From anticolonialism to postcolonialism: The emergence of Chinese indigenous psychology in Taiwan. *International Journal of Psychology* 40(4), 228-238. doi: 10.1080/00207590444000177
- International Association for Counselling (2009). *International Association for Counselling*. Retrieved July 18, 2011 from <http://www.iac.coe.uga.edu/aboutIAC.html>
- International Association for Counselling (n.d.). Retrieved July 18, 2011 from <http://www.iac-irtac.org/Publications.html>.
- Young, R.A. (2010). *Recollections of our past: The future is yours*. Keynote address presented at the Inagural Canadian Counselling Psychology Conference, Canadian Psychological Association, Counselling Psychology Section, Montreal, Canada, November 20, 2010.

