Indigenisation of Psychology:  
The Concept and its Practical Implementation

John G. Adair  
University of Manitoba, Canada

Le concept, souvent mal compris, de psychologie indigène est examiné dans une perspective de méta-discipline, qu’autorise une étude de psychologie sociale interculturelle. On discutera de l’accent mis sur un aspect comme étant inexact dans les faits, théoriquement trompeur et politiquement dangereux.

The often misunderstood concept of indigenous psychologies is examined from the meta-discipline perspective afforded by a social-psychological study of the science. Motivation underlying the indigenisation movement, semantic difficulties with the concept, and models for indigenisation of the discipline are examined. The commonly accepted building-block approach is of increasing numbers of indigenous contributions leading to an emerging indigenous psychology. An alternative, but often overlooked approach, is of autochthonous discipline development leading to increasing numbers of seasoned researchers creatively pursuing culturally relevant research. Both approaches are intertwined and necessary for a more encompassing definition and understanding of the indigenisation process. An overview of the required elements for this broader definition indicate the need for simultaneous pursuit of research in the local culture and autochthonous discipline development, demands that can place the researcher in an essential tension.

INTRODUCTION

An objective of international psychology is to encourage the spread and development of the discipline of psychology into as many countries as
possible around the world. We believe that psychology can be of use in solving social problems within each country and in promoting an understanding of local thought and behaviour. It is believed that this research may, in turn, feed insights back into mainstream (world) psychology. Although we would like to be able to quickly make psychology truly international, developing the discipline across cultures and languages is not without problems.

Psychology had its origins in Europe, but it is the contemporary discipline developed in the United States that has been imported into countries around the world. This imported discipline is acultural in content and positivistic in methodology. Research findings are assumed to apply universally, and a quantitative, hypothesis-testing research approach predominates. By contrast, researchers in developing countries feel there is an ill fit of method and the need for a science that is culture- or context-specific. Methods that are holistic, qualitative, and phenomenological, are felt to be more appropriate and compatible to their cultures. This has led to numerous calls for the development of what are called indigenous psychologies. Indeed, these calls have been so numerous that there is occasional reference to an “indigenous psychology movement” (Sinha, 1997).

The indigenisation movement began about two decades ago. It received an early impetus from the Edinburgh Symposium held in 1982 and published as a special issue in the *International Journal of Psychology* two years later (Sinha & Holtzman, 1984). Since then, researchers in developing countries have called for the pursuit of indigenous contributions in the form of concepts or applied research on national problems. This movement has evolved into a recognised research topic area within cross-cultural psychology. Durganand Sinha’s (1997) chapter in the *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology* and Kim and Berry’s (1993) book *Indigenous psychologies* reflect the considerable identity and visibility this research has achieved.

**DEFINITIONS: INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGIES; INDIGENISATION**

Although reified in this way, the meaning of indigenous psychology and how it is to be achieved is vaguely conceptualised and not well understood, even by those who call for indigenous psychologies within various countries. “Indigenous psychology” is an unusual term as it is used here. How can something imported (psychology) be indigenous? Presumably the
meaning is that the process of indigenisation or modifying the imported discipline fits the culture so well that it is made to appear *as if* it were indigenous.

Sinha (1997) agreed that there was confusion about meaning, and attempted to sort this out by analysing a number of the definitions that had been proposed. He identified four “threads” underlying the set of definitions he considered: psychological knowledge should (a) arise from within the culture, (b) reflect local behaviours, (c) be interpreted within a local frame of reference, and (d) yield results that are locally relevant. In preparation for a content analysis of indigenous progress in Indian psychology (Adair, Puhan, & Vohra, 1993), I defined indigenous research as work that emanates from, adequately represents, and reflects back upon the cultural context in which the behaviour is observed. In short, an indigenous psychology is defined as a discipline that is “culturally appropriate” (Azuma, 1984; Moghaddam & Taylor, 1986). An indigenous psychology is not a psychology of aboriginals, nor is it limited to native peoples or other groups of people. It is also not a psychology of lay persons, although Sinha (1997, p.132) argues that it should address “the daily, mundane activities of people”, and Kim, Park, and Park (this issue) argue for the need early in research to capture the thinking and expressions of the people.

The literature on indigenous psychology from a variety of perspectives, consistently suggests that indigenisation, the process by which an indigenous psychology develops, evolves through a characteristic series of stages (Atal, 1981; Azuma, 1984; D. Sinha, 1986; J.B.P. Sinha, 1984). I have described this evolution (Adair, 1996) as growing acknowledgement of the limitations of Western models, an increasing acceptance of calls for problem-oriented research on national concerns, and a deepening sensitivity to the rich potential that exists in local customs and behaviours peculiarly driven by indigenous traditions.

Most definitions of indigenous psychology focus on the content of the discipline. What need to be changed are the methods, tests, concepts, and theories, to make the discipline more relevant or applicable to the culture. Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen (1992), for example, identify four elements within Western psychology that make the discipline ethnocentric: (a) the items or stimuli in tests, (b) the methods and instruments used, (c) the theoretical concepts, and (d) the topics selected for investigation. In his article in this special issue, Poortinga suggests that these four elements could be modified to make any indigenous psychology just as ethnocentric. Sinha (1997) describes these as “levels” of indigenisation. He calls the first two indigenisation of methods; the latter two are a form of conceptual indigenisation. For him, the goal was to make the indigenous discipline “culturally sensitive”. For most researchers in developing countries, this is
the goal of indigenisation of the discipline: Alter the content of the psychology to make it “culturally sensitive”.

**INDIGENOUS CONTRIBUTIONS VS. INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGIES**

This imprecise definition of indigenous psychology is evident in calls for indigenisation of the discipline. Calls for indigenisation are usually accompanied by descriptions or anecdotal examples of culture-specific research: Díaz-Guerrero’s (1977) historic-socio-cultural premises of the Mexican’s *filosofía de vida*; J.B.P. Sinha’s (1984) nurturant task leader; Pande and Naidu’s (1992) concept of detachment as an adaptive behavioural response of Indians; and Salazar’s (Salazar & Salazar, 1998) observation of the unique relationship of national and regional identities among Latin Americans, illustrate indigenous contributions. Such contributions are indigenous because they are claimed to be culture-specific. They may or may not be universal or cross-indigenous (Enriquez, 1993); that has not been tested yet. However, they are invariably pointed to with pride as examples of what could be achieved within an indigenous psychology. They are taken by many as models for how to conduct indigenous research, and it is commonly (though mistakenly) assumed that merely increasing the number of such indigenous contributions will, like building blocks, ultimately lead to an emerging indigenous psychology. The error is in equating indigenous contributions with an indigenous psychology.

Large numbers of researchers from developing countries have taken up the banner of indigenous psychology, yet because there is confusion and uncertainty over how to go about indigenising the discipline, some may be misled into engaging in inadequate attempts called “cosmetic indigenisation” (Sinha, 1988). Indigenous contributions define for them the meaning of indigenous and become the model for their “culturally appropriate” research. As a result, some have been led to equate indigenous research with either (a) a narrow search for uniquely native traits or concepts, (b) early religious or philosophical writings, (c) linguistically defined constructs, or, less imaginatively, (d) mere identification of differences from Western research findings.

This model confuses indigenisation as a goal with its function as a process to develop an “appropriate” psychology for the culture. An investigator, accepting the need to indigenise psychological research by one of these models, may research culturally unique traits or concepts without regard to how commonly they occur, how they integrate conceptually, or how behaviourally meaningful they are to contemporary society.
MODELS FOR INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGIES

Because more has been written about the inadequacies of Western psychology than about how to develop an indigenous psychology, researchers must look to previously published examples for guidance. What has been written reveals a diversity of approaches. Many of these were brought together in a book entitled *Indigenous psychologies* by Kim and Berry (1993). The collection of chapters were not organised in any particular manner, however, in a review of that book (Adair, 1994), I observed that the chapters conveyed more than the 15 individual contributions. Although there was not an indigenous psychology approach, several of the approaches could be grouped together by their common emphases. I categorised several of these into four alternative indigenous psychology approaches or strategies: linguistic, empirical, applied, and meta-discipline or pragmatic. The first two represent what I would call culture-based indigenisation. The latter two are discipline-based strategies.

**Linguistic Approaches**

The linguistic approach was exemplified by the works of Enriquez (1993) and Ho (1993). Primary attention is paid to concepts within the native language that capture the essence of thought, values, or behaviours within the culture. Rather than an emphasis on their empirical validity, identification of key indigenous concepts within the language is followed by their “semantic elaboration” and emphasis on their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness. Such an approach is often accompanied by a more visible rejection of Western research—its terms and models, its philosophy and methods, its etic possibilities, and of the English language in which its research is promulgated.

**Empirical Approaches**

Empirical approaches, documenting the cultural distinctiveness of indigenous values, concepts, and behaviours, contrast sharply with the linguistic approach. Although differing language may be involved, the emphasis is on empirical testing and demonstrating a concept’s cultural distinctiveness. This approach is exemplified by Díaz-Guerrero’s (1977, 1993) ethnopsychology and his empirical search for “verbal affirmations” (called historic-sociocultural premises) that typify the *filosofía de vida* of persons within Mexico. In a second example, Choi, Kim, and Choi (1993) assessed the differential connotation of the words *woori* (Korean) and *we* (English) to determine the indigenous meanings of social relationships in Korean society. Documented differences in meaning by persons from the native and Western cultures underscore their cultural uniqueness.
Applied Approach

Research that contributes to the resolution of national social problems is indigenous in the sense that it focuses the discipline on the local context. Although indigenisation may be thought to be an incidental consequence of applied research, problem-focused research has been urged as an intentional strategy (Ardila, 1993; Berry, 1993). For example, Berry (1993) advocated a research focus on Canadian social problems: on multiculturalism, immigrant adaptation, aboriginal issues, second-language learning, or Canadian identity. The greater similarity of Canadian culture and language to that of the US may preclude the need to search for indigenous concepts, and channel calls for indigenisation onto research addressing national social problems.

Similar emphases are found in Latin America (Ardila, 1993), but for different reasons. Although linguistically different from the US, the historically substantial Western influence on the Latin American culture (Balan, 1983) may somewhat narrow the scope for indigenous developments. Promoting a substantial focus on the local culture through social problem solution is readily seen as an appropriate indigenisation strategy.

Meta-discipline or Pragmatic Approaches

A meta-discipline approach pragmatically considers the factors influencing the focus of the national discipline on culturally relevant rather than on universal variables. For example, Moghaddam’s (1993) account of Iranian psychology from 1978–1981 emphasised the importance of numbers of psychologists with a nationalistic focus and of the role played by indigenous graduate research training, teaching materials, and research tools. My own research (Adair et al., 1993) assumes that as a discipline becomes more indigenous, an ever-widening circle of researchers become increasingly sensitive to their own culture and more sophisticated in their mastery of an indigenous approach. Such changes may be observed in the published record of its accomplishments.

ANOTHER WAY OF LOOKING AT INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGIES

Social Psychology of Science Perspective

In the remainder of this article I propose to explore the concept of the indigenisation of psychology from the perspective of my empirical study of the social psychology of the science, specifically that aspect of the science that leads to indigenous psychologies. My approach offers a different perspective on the indigenisation process. The focus of the social psychology of science approach is on the behavioural (rather than the
content) elements through which the indigenisation process takes place. From this perspective it is important to focus on the researcher as the agent for change. What does the researcher need to do to make his or her research more culturally appropriate? What about the researcher’s abilities, background, colleagues, and resources that make it easy or difficult for him or her to conduct research that is both culturally sensitive and useful to society? How does the researcher become aware of the need for an indigenous approach? Who makes the call for indigenisation and who answers the call? These elements are my concerns within a social psychology of science analysis of indigenous psychology and of the indigenisation process. I have employed empirical methods: interviews, mail surveys, bibliometric and content analyses to study how a basically North American discipline gets imported, implanted, indigenised, and developed to make a useful contribution within quite different societies and cultures (Adair, 1992; Adair et al., 1993; Adair et al., 1995). As we shall see, this perspective leads me to look at quite different variables and processes than would a cross-cultural psychologist or one who is attempting to advance an indigenous psychology within their culture.

Why the Need for Indigenous Psychologies?

To begin with, it might help to understand from this perspective the source of the appeals for indigenous psychologies. Although it is generally assumed that the need for indigenous psychologies is due to the ill fit of the theory, content, and method of mainstream psychology, the unique character of the newly created discipline, special features of the society to which psychology has been imported, and the researcher as the agent of indigenous or non-indigenous research, all should be examined as potential contributors.

**Individual Researchers.** Within a newly imported discipline, the vast majority of researchers are either newly graduated psychologists or young researchers still in training. Most are just beginning to establish themselves as independent investigators. To these scholars, previous research serves as a model for how research should be conducted, and topics to research are readily selected from the journals. To become established as a psychologist, conducting a replication of a Western study applied to their own culture ensures a demonstration of their abilities as researchers and yields some knowledge about the replicability of the phenomena within the culture. However, it does not chart new ground for indigenous development.

Research training, whether experienced abroad or locally, focuses on methodological rigour and research design. How to look for regularities
and patterns of behaviour in order to identify researchable problems is seldom, if ever, taught. This training, plus their recent independence as investigators, leads new researchers to a greater emphasis on "method-fit" rather than on a problem-centred approach to research.

Indigenous research is better suited to, or almost requires, a problem-centred approach, where the investigator's attention is on the aspects of behaviour within the culture and how it can be studied and explained. The method to use is a secondary, or at least a later, consideration. As researchers mature, or become more experienced or "seasoned", they may progressively adopt problem-centred approaches. Moreover, many psychologists who have received their research training abroad may no longer be sensitive to problems within their own culture. Trained in Western models with Western methods for research they will be poised to identify research problems within the research literature rather than turn to problems and behaviours within their native milieu.

The lack of models for culturally sensitive research within their native country may also be a problem. Leading scholars from developing countries often find that their research that contains culturally unique elements is readily publishable in foreign or international journals, so they publish their indigenous research there rather than in their own country. Researchers within the country are thereby denied access to this research and the leadership function it may serve in the indigenisation process. This problem is common across countries; but a single example is provided by Öngel and Smith (this issue).

**Discipline and Societal Considerations.** The newness of the discipline also lends greater appeal to research method indigenisation. Within a newly imported discipline, there is no theoretical base from which to deduce hypotheses to test. Qualitative and descriptive methods to identify patterns and regularities in thoughts and behaviours are needed. The search should be for the meanings of behaviours at this early stage of discipline development. An inductive rather than a deductive approach is called for. Beyond these considerations, there may be culture-based reasons for the rejection of Western-based methods and their replacement by more holistic methodologies. The scientific study of thought and behaviour may not fit the values and temperament of some cultures (Adair, 1999) where emotions and feelings are favoured as explanations of behaviour over scientific analyses and dissections of behaviour.

**"Front" vs. Mass of Discipline**

As part of this reconsideration of indigenous psychology a useful distinction can be made between the scholarly leaders of the discipline
who develop the theories and set the trends that others follow, and all the others; the majority of psychologists within the country who will produce the incremental research that forms the basic character of the discipline. J.B.P. Sinha (1993), in making this distinction, referred to the former as the "front" of psychology; the latter he called the "bulk". I find this to be a useful conceptualisation for understanding the indigenisation process, although I prefer more descriptive labels.

As a rule it is the cutting-edge researchers who search for indigenous conceptualisation, and whose work promises to contribute to the advancement of the discipline, both at the national and at the international levels. The contributions of the late Durganand Sinha of India, Rogelio Díaz-Guerrero of Mexico, and Michael Bond in Hong Kong, exemplify the "front" of psychology in their respective countries. They assessed the deficiencies of the discipline applied to their culture, and perceptively devised and promoted indigenous concepts and approaches. Although slow to develop, these pioneering efforts are leading to an indigenous psychology movement in developing countries. More than calls for indigenous psychologies are required. For the task of insightful cultural analysis, and conceptual and theoretical development, "cutting-edge researchers" must pursue certain indigenisation strategies.

More members of the discipline, the contributors to normal science, need to be involved in the indigenisation process. The seeds for theoretical and conceptual development are generally sown by the "front", however, for the discipline to develop, it is necessary that these seeds fall on fertile ground; that the "mass", or contributors to normal science, be both receptive and capable of researching and applying these concepts to develop a broad base of indigenous knowledge. For the fertile soil and development of an appropriate psychology, the "mass" needs strategies that are adequately engaging and promote their growth and development.

**Applied Research.** An applied approach may be the most effective way to promote the development of a culturally appropriate discipline, even though it may not be best for the development of the discipline as a whole. Such research focuses investigators on their own culture, has a higher probability of success, builds investigator confidence, and generates new research problems within the culture to address (Ziman, 1971). Ziman, writing about natural science discipline development, argues that through this approach scholars in developing countries gain international reputations on unique topics of relevance to their local context, thereby further strengthening the status of the local discipline. In particular, an applied approach would engage the mass of psychologists within the country in indigenous activities. Contrasted with method-oriented research to demonstrate competence as a researcher, problem-oriented research,
whether guided by theory or not, can still be a useful direction to pursue. It encourages researchers to solve a problem; not to demonstrate their methodological rigour. It frees researchers from the shackles of methodology (which is Western) to focus on that which can solve a problem (which is indigenous).

DISCIPLINE DEVELOPMENT AND MAKING THE RESEARCH CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE

The involvement of much of the discipline in the indigenisation process suggests an underlying relationship between a developing discipline and increasingly culturally sensitive research. To consider how these two processes relate, it would be useful to begin by examining a case example of the indigenisation process at work within a country in which increasing sensitivity to its own culture was needed at the same time that it was undergoing growth and change as a discipline.

Indigenisation of Canadian Psychology

Canadian psychology provides that case example. Indigenisation of psychology is not exclusive to developing countries. Indeed, in every country in the world outside the United States, the psychology developed in the US is imported, has to take root, be tailored to the local culture, and developed to become a useful discipline for that country. The indigenisation of Canadian psychology illustrates the processes that many countries must eventually follow. The contexts will not be identical, but there are sufficient similarities to provide a basis for discussion.

Although on friendly terms, Canada has been overwhelmed by the greater influence of the United States, in academia and psychology as well as in economic matters. There is much to be admired and emulated in American psychology. In the beginning, Canadian psychology and US psychology were one and the same. Indeed, the two countries even shared granting agencies for some years (at least the US shared its resources with our researchers). We adopted their Code of Ethics as our own, and our departments sought APA clinical programme accreditation. However, Canada is an independent country. Canadian psychology had to develop and take on its own identity. This was not an easy process, and we contributed to some of our own difficulties.

Just as psychology was about to take off in our country, Canadian higher education virtually exploded. From the mid-1960s to about the late 1970s, the government invested considerable resources in our universities. Enrolments and faculty expanded. New universities and new departments of psychology were opened. Unfortunately, there were insufficient Canadian-trained faculty to fill these new positions. Few universities had
doctrinal training programmes that were sufficiently established to produce the quantities of new PhDs that were required. As in developing countries the pattern had been for Canadians to go abroad (to the US) for their higher education. These US-trained Canadians were now insufficient to staff the faculty positions that had been newly created. As a consequence, Canada imported large numbers of new faculty, some from Europe, but primarily from the US.

These US-born and certainly US-trained psychologists began teaching a universalistic (mostly US-based) psychology to Canadian students. Prejudice and discrimination against Blacks, the effects of “Head Start” programmes in the States, bystander apathy in metropolitan New York were commonly taught and were the examples found in US-authored and -published textbooks. There was a dearth of Canadian research examples for use in the classroom, and no help from supplementary teaching materials because there were none. US-trained faculty typically did not know what were “Canadian issues”, and there was relatively little research on topics of national interest to Canadians. The excellent Canadian research that was conducted (e.g. Lambert’s work on bilingualism) was not widely known among many faculty who read exclusively US journals and belonged to the APA rather than becoming members of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA). Bain (1996) gives an impassioned account of this period in Canadian psychology.

Although calls for “Canadianisation” of the social sciences became common, in psychology primarily from John Berry (1974), it was difficult for many of us to know how to respond. It was comparable in many ways to the situation that prevails in many developing countries; and in many respects the resolution or indigenisation of Canadian psychology could be regarded as an analogue of the indigenisation process in developing countries.

The resolution was gradual; it did not occur overnight. Indeed, it took about 20 years in spite of great financial resources made available to Canadian universities and to Canadian psychology. Several developments and policies were helpful in bringing about change. The first step was to close the door to any more imported faculty. “Canadian First” was the instruction to all hiring committees, and was mandated by the government and by universities to be included in announcements of academic positions. The task of hiring Canadians was made possible in part by the graduation of increasing numbers of new PhDs trained within newly established graduate programmes.

As large numbers of new faculty, imported as well as Canadian-trained, established their research programmes and became more seasoned scholars, the amount and quality of their research began to increase and improve. We had developed a critical mass within many areas of research
and increasingly this work began to focus and have impact on Canadian national issues—ageing, family, and women at work—and on topics that were of uniquely Canadian concern—multiculturalism, immigration, acculturation, bilingualism, stereotypes, and prejudice. This was facilitated by the national granting agency targeting funding for some of these topic areas.

As a first step in addressing the need for Canadian textbooks and supplementary teaching material, edited books of readings were produced that brought together examples of Canadian research on culturally relevant issues. Concurrent with developing research personnel, the infrastructure for the discipline developed: two new journals were added, a code of ethics was drafted and adopted (Canadian Psychological Association, 1986), CPA began to assess and accredit its own clinical training programmes, ultimately in joint site visits and accreditations with the APA (Dobson & Dobson, 1993), and a national office independent of any university was established for the Canadian Psychological Association and manned by a full-time Executive Director.

The culmination of the Canadianisation process I mark by the publication of a Canadian-authored textbook (Alcock, Carment, & Sadava, 1988) that highlighted Canadian research as part of the world literature in social psychology. The significance of this publication is the realisation that volumes of research had accumulated; enough Canadian research to compile and distil into the core knowledge of a textbook, and for the lecture halls of Canadian universities. In Canada, the number of researchers and the quality of the research had increased greatly over the three decades. We have contributed much to the understanding of Canadian society, as well as to the universal understanding of behaviour. That there is a distinctively “Canadian” psychology to market commercially affirms the vitality and relevance of the discipline that we teach. Today we have an indigenous, autochthonous, mature, and independent psychology.

Lessons Learned from Canadianisation

The indigenisation process was much broader than merely becoming aware of Canadian issues and shifting research to culturally appropriate topics. Discipline development was as important as the cultural sensitivity of the researcher to the need for indigenisation. Although government money and other resources were available, the indigenisation process was gradual and extended over a long period of time. To many of us it was slower than we would have anticipated. But that may have reflected the complexity of the process and the many elements that had to fall into place before Canadian psychology could achieve its current status.
The Canadian discipline had to develop to the point where we had (a) a critical mass of researchers, (b) a number of whom had developed into confident scholars capable of independent problem-centred research, and (c) had become aware or sensitive to thoughts and behaviours unique to their culture. These scholars included (d) the culturally appropriate variables in their research, and/or (e) researched topics of importance to society. Over time we had (f) made a number of original research contributions to local thought and behaviour and to national social issues (as well as to universal knowledge), that (g) were then compiled and described in locally edited-authored textbooks, and (h) could be utilised in more culturally relevant curricula and classroom teaching. We had also (i) developed graduate training programmes that made the discipline self-sustaining and no longer dependent on foreign training.

In conclusion, the goal of developing a culturally appropriate psychology—a “psychology of Canada”—was achieved through the dual processes of making the research more culturally sensitive and relevant, and developing the discipline into a mature, autochthonous psychology. Both processes were essential for the indigenisation of Canadian psychology. Similar processes and stages will likely need to be followed by disciplines in countries seeking to develop indigenous psychologies.

A BROADER DEFINITION

The foregoing has implications for the definitions of indigenous psychology and of indigenisation that were discussed at the outset. The two aspects described earlier need to be included in our definitions and understanding of these concepts. The goal of an indigenous psychology remains the same: to create a psychology that is appropriate for the culture; but there are two aspects or subgoals—making the research more culturally sensitive and appropriate, and making the discipline autochthonous.¹ By autochthonous is meant a psychology of the country that is independent of its imported origins, and which stands on its own in addressing local problems and in providing its own local training and textbooks.

These processes are intertwined. Culturally sensitive contributions are necessary for stimulating investigators’ indigenous research and for providing models of what it can achieve and how to proceed. Discipline development, on the other hand, strengthens the base of researchers who will conduct this research. Within a new discipline, there are a greater

¹ I credit my Latin American collaborators (I cannot recall whether it was Rolando Díaz-Loving or José Salazar) who have translated my talks into Spanish, with suggesting this term. They proposed it to distinguish a psychology of aboriginals, psicología indígenista, from a psychology appropriate to the culture, psicología autoctona. This terminology led me to introduce the concept of an autochthonous psychology.
number of new graduates and researchers who are learning the science, i.e. developing their skills. They need feedback, and models for research to shape their work. They need the advice of seasoned researchers to guide their development. As researchers gain confidence and sophistication, they are able to see problems that require solution rather than problems that might fit textbook methods. The more developed the discipline, the more scientists of this sort will be available to focus on their own culture’s problems. Hence culture sensitivity and autochthonous development are intertwined.

This conceptualisation has important implications for the development of indigenous psychologies. There will be no short-cuts to their development. Rather than prescriptive models for action, indigenous research developments will come about primarily from hard investigative work on mature psychological explanations of behaviour that are found to be typical within each country. Formulation and testing of indigenous concepts or methods should still be encouraged. They serve useful functions as indigenous contributions. However, greater attention needs to be given to making the discipline autochthonous. An indigenous psychology then can be conceived as a mature, self-sustaining scientific discipline addressing the needs of the culture or country.

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