

## **ETHNIC STUDIES THROUGH SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY LENSES: A COMMENTARY ON PLAUSIBLE PERSPECTIVES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The current report present a review on some assumptions related to the theoretical lenses of a social psychology framework on ethnic and minority studies. The major implications of selected previous studies are reviewed, as well as some conceptual ambiguities related to the role of social cognition, social interaction and executive functioning of sociocultural planes of analyses in explaining ethnic and minority studies. The constructual validity of a proposed sociocultural framework on a study upon minority Orang Asli children, as well as the limitations of major social psychology theories, is discussed. Discussion is also given to: (a) identifying pertinent denominations in social cognition, (b) incorporating implicit cognition data, and (c) collaborative sociocultural lenses theories into future research practice in ethnic and minorities studies in Malaysia.

*Key terms: ethnic studies, social psychology, Orang Asli, social cognition*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Significant trends of ethnic related studies had been constantly available within social psychology (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011), as compared to sociological reflections on ethnicity in statistical analysis, which deemed to be less frequent (Rughinis, 2011). However, it is acknowledged that studies on ethnic relations and identities within the East-West dichotomy of theoretical models and bifurcation of race-ethnic conceptual, are relatively problematic (Miller, 2001; Lieberman, 1997; Brennan, 2001). Furthermore, a perusal of literature suggests differences exist between one's perception of the word 'ethnic' and 'racial' as part of a 'modus vivendi' of making sense of society (Marranci, 2011). In light of the many problems engendered in the ethnic-racial bipolar configuration (Miller, 2011), perhaps exist the imperatives on the need to examine the particularity of the link between intergroup behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991) and perceived group variability, attitudes and intergroup contacts (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). As noted by several commentators, Rughinis (2011) argued that a great deal of research in minority studies is generated out of an approach from sociologically focused epidemiological and public health researches, such as studies by Singh (1997); Smith (2000), Fenton and Charsley (2000), Mays et al. (2003), Bhopal (2006) and Lee (2009). Theoretically-driven models of social psychology had been plagued by enormous conceptual problems derived from sociologically-theoretical concerns (Aspinall, 2007). Thus, in considering the myriad studies published in the

area of ethnic and minority studies, some consideration must be given toward unifying the diversity of isolated research of social psychology in order to provide a theoretical framework that helps us determine which studies are important and which ones are trivial.

Augoustinos, Walker and Donaghue (2006) had categorically, and controversially emphasised that current systematic understandings of social psychology had persistently derived from flawed definitions of the individual and the social as separate, antinomical, and to a certain extent, antithetical. The authors further stipulated that even Gordon Allport's definition on social psychology had suffered similar phenomenological fallacies, which disallow a plausible conceptualization in which the individual and the social are inextricably inseparable, in which the individual constitutes and is simultaneously constituted by the social. Thus, social psychology ought to constitute the unique, interstitial position which warrants the process of unifying the individualism of psychology and the 'institutionalism' of sociology (Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue, 2006; see Higgins, 2000, for more in-depth review on social cognition).

Social cognition is not just part of social psychology, nor is it a distinctively separable social component of cognition (Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Forgas, 1981; Heider, 1958; Schneider, Hastorf, & Ellsworth, 1979; Tagiuri, 1969; Zajonc, 1980). Higgins (2000) had relatively succeeded in distinguishing between the dichotomies of comprehensions among the basis of understandings of either cognition of social psychology and the social psychology of cognition. Moreover, as suggested by current brain studies, there has been much recent interest in the links between social cognition and brain function, particularly as neuropsychological studies have shown that brain injury (particularly to the frontal lobes) can adversely affect social judgments and interaction (Birkett & Newton-Fisher, 2011). Nonetheless, ethnic and minority studies does not only reside within these realms of human cognitions, but extends it to a broader trajectories of the multiple facets of ethnic affiliation, conceptualised as dimensions of ethnicity (Rughinis, 2011). As Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue (2006) had identified four foundational theoretical orientations of social cognition, i.e. social cognitive, social identity, social representations, and discursive psychology, however, there still exist the imperatives of need to address the assumptions of detecting the processes of anchoring and objectification of the core and peripheral elements in the shared understandings being constructed via the empirical researches in ethnic and minority studies. It is particularly acknowledged that each perspectives is, in its own way, limited but attempts had been made to integrate all four perspectives in producing social change by ascertaining a more thorough and adequate analysis of 'truth' and 'reality'.

### **Interstitial nature of social psychology and the understanding of 'sociality'**

Social psychologists throughout the discipline had adamantly construed the notion that the individual cannot be properly and fully understood in abstract isolation from the social. As Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue (2006) assert:

*'...Writ at large, psychology focuses its theoretical attention on the individual qua individual, abstracted from any social context...superficial sense of the social and of society...sociology writ large focuses its theoretical attention on society and its institutions, and has only a superficial sense of the individual'. (Page 302).*

Thus, the sense of *social* in social psychology is indeed a challenge in the process of deepening our appreciation of understanding the dynamics of ethnicity and minority

group social interactions. Kurt Lewin, as one of the most influential figure in social psychology, views that social scientists ought to tackle social problems as defined by community members, using social scientific knowledge, in a collaborative manner, designed to engineer desired social change, and with theoretical and practical gain (Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue, 2000). In line with the premise of collaboration, Barbara Rogoff further proposed the ideas of 'cognition is a collaborative process' which is guided by a sociocultural perspective. Central to this perspective is the notion that human cognition, and their preceding actions, are constructed and constantly evolving as a result of social interaction in particular environment or culture (Berk, 1994; Rogoff, 1994). Edwards (2000) postulates that the sociocultural perspectives emphasises relationships between people, actions, contexts, meanings, communities and cultural histories. Furthermore, the sociocultural perspective seeks to describe the appropriate integration by examining how the phenomenon is experienced and exhibited through the human's collaborative interactions. It is hoped that by enabling the researcher to build a model of interaction pattern as it relates to social integration, it will also be possible to construct an image of how these interactions, and the nature of the community itself, are linked to the larger sociocultural context of the participants of a particular ethnic groups of minority communities. Moreover, central to the sociocultural perspective is the notion that the final result is a context bound construction, or story, of the phenomenon under investigation, rather than the ultimate truth (Vygotsky, 1962; Berk, 1994).

### **Premise of collaboration within the sociocultural lenses**

Vygotsky's cultural historical method of research, in which attention is paid to the history of individual and group activity and the sociocultural context in which it occurs, provides a possible source of insight about the patterns of social interactions (Smagorinsky, 1995). One of Vygotsky's (1934/1962, 1930-1935/1978, 1960/1981) widely cited observations was that young children use language not only for social communication but also to plan, guide, and monitor their behaviour in a self-regulatory manner (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Furthermore, over the past twenty to twenty-five years, the work of Vygotsky has had considerable influence on research into development in general and language development in particular (Rogoff, 1990; Barton, 1994). At the heart of Vygotsky's theory of learning and development lies the concept of the "Zone of Proximal Development". According to Vygotsky:

*"the zone of proximal development ... is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p86)*

However, Wertsch (1985) extended Vygotsky's work and emphasized the notion of activity as the basic unit of human psychological functioning. Wertsch (1991) states that 'human beings are viewed as coming in contact with, and creating their surroundings as well as themselves, through the actions in which they engage. Thus, action, rather than human beings or the environment considered in isolation, provides the entry point into the analysis' (p.8). Smagorinsky (1995) further postulates that central to the activity setting approach is Vygotsky's notion that human development unfolds from experience in socially structured activities through the internalization of processes and practices provided by society and its members. Moreover, it is argued that Vygotsky proposed that all uniquely human and higher forms of mental activity are jointly constructed and transferred to children through interaction and shared activities with other people (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Thus, also central to Vygotsky's

view of development is the concept of 'intersubjectivity'. Vygotsky suggested that learning occurs when the child and social partner take on shared understanding, which acts to support the learner in achieving a higher level of problem solving, or cognitive functioning (Wertsch, 1985; Berk & Winsler, 1995). The role that social interaction plays in development, therefore, is crucial, since any cognitive function is encountered first on the interpersonal level, then on the intrapersonal (or individual) level (Vygotsky, 1978). However, Vygotsky's theory did not specify the process (or processes) which enable a child to move through the zone of proximal development (Smagorinsky, 1995). This process, which occurs within the zone of proximal development, enables the child to use partially mastered skills with the assistance and supervision of more skilled and experienced members of the culture (Wertsch, 1985; Berk & Winsler, 1995). Thus, Rogoff and Gardner (1984) view collaborative activities with people who are more expert in the use of a culture's material and conceptual tool, as cultural amplifiers that scaffold children's learning and thereby drive and shape development.

### **Conceptualizations of ethnic socialization among minority children**

Social psychology incorporates social interaction as one of the major topics in understanding human behaviour and their reactionary in their consequences of actions (Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue, 2006). One view of the process through which social interaction facilitates development is often explained in terms of Bruner's (1985, 1990) metaphor of 'scaffolding'. Although scaffolding has been defined in a number of ways, it usually refers to the process through which an adult provides support that enables a learner to assume progressively more responsibility for completing a task or achieving a goal (Berk & Winsler, 1995). A body of literature argues that the term 'scaffolding' is a useful metaphor for describing the assistance provided to learners in specific situations (Cazden, 1983; Boyle & Peregoy, 1990; Trousdale, 1990). However, Forman and Larreamendy-Joerns (1995) assert that the zone of proximal development may also provide a framework for understanding the structuring of environments that extend beyond "the traditional Vygotskian dyad". Moreover, Lave and Wenger (1991) point out two more interpretations of scaffolding in relation to 'cultural' interpretation and 'collectivist' or 'societal' perspective. According to the authors, 'cultural' interpretation "construes the zone of proximal development as the distance between the cultural knowledge provided by the sociohistorical context, usually made accessible through instruction, and the everyday experience of individuals" (p.48). Furthermore, the 'collectivist' or 'societal' perspective defines the zone of proximal development as the "distance of between the everyday actions of individuals and the historically new form of societal activity" (Engestrom, 1987, cited in Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.49). Thus, an important part of Vygotsky's contribution to the understanding of human development is his recognition of the central role of language and social interaction in reproducing and recreating culture (Pontecorvo, 1993). In his view, the processes involved in the development of the individual mirror the processes of human development in the broader cultural context (Berk & Winsler, 1995). As Pontecorvo (1993) asserts: "In a Vygotskian-enriched view, the individual functioning of the mind is part of a larger social functioning that is situated in a cultural environment" (p.191). The paradigmatic shift in the understanding of the processes of sociocultural transmission, which is part of Vygotsky's legacy, is explained by Cook-Gumperz (1986):

*"Placing human agency in such a central position makes the transmission of socio-cultural knowledge, not simply an instrumental matter, but a creative process. Children's efforts to make sense of the communicative environment that surrounds them from the initial stages of life, involve both learning to*

*understand interpersonal relations and a growing realization of the inescapable normativeness of language as a system of shared meanings ... The more traditional approach to the problem of the transmission of sociocultural knowledge, by contrast, viewed the child's acquisition of an adult socio-normative system as a gradual process of adaptation to the 'correct' forms of adult practices ( p.38)".*

### **Vygotskian cultural transmission and Rogoff's guided participation**

Cook-Gumperz (1986) further postulates the notion of the traditional view of cultural transmission is one in which children learn the norms and practices of their culture through imitating others or conforming to the correct forms of adult practices. Thus, in the Vygotskian view, cultural transmission is a creative process in which members of the culture create shared norms and practices through interacting in culturally appropriate ways (Pontecorvo, 1993). Moreover, since language is one of the major means through which shared norms and practices are created and reproduced, language and social interaction are key elements in cultural transmission (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). However, much of the research into language and learning that is built on a Vygotskian view of cognitive development adopts the concept of 'scaffolding' to explain how social partners mediate learning (Cazden, 1983; Boyle & Peregoy, 1990; Trousdale, 1990), thus resulted in an emphasis (in research literature) on adults as effective partners in learning (Cairney, 1990). Scaffolding is not restricted to adults and can equally apply to interaction between peers and/or among children. Furthermore, the concept of scaffolding alone may not adequately explain the processes involved in learning (Pontecorvo, 1993). While it may describe what adults or more capable peers do in certain types of interactions with learners, it fails to describe the role of the learner in such interactions, and does not apply universally to learning situations across cultures (Cairney, 1990).

The conceptualizations of children's development as a process of socialization into cultural activity has been acknowledged only recently (Rogoff, 1998). Among contemporary psychological theorists who draw from this perspective and place activity of children at the centre of their arguments are Rogoff (1990) and Lave and Wenger (1992). These authors argue that one should not study individuals as independent units alone but always as individuals engaged in activity in context (Rogoff, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1992). Central to the sociocultural approach is the emphasis on social interaction as a primary focus of cognitive development (Rogoff, 1990). The notion 'guided participation' was extended by Rogoff (1990), in which caregivers arrange and structure children's participation in activities in order to support and lead cognitive development. Rogoff (1990) further argues that by participating in culturally valued activities under the tutelage of more experienced cultural members, children appropriate the understanding and practices necessary for meeting the intellectual challenges of their community. In a seminal sociocultural research, Rogoff, Ministry, Goncu and Mosier (1993) investigated young children's experiences in guided participation in four cultural communities: San Pedro, a Mayan Indian town in Guatemala; Salt Lake City, Utah, a middle-class urban community in the United States of America; Dhol-Ki-Patti, a tribal village in India; and Kecioren, a middle-class urban neighbourhood in Turkey. Studying 14 toddlers and their families in each community, Rogoff et al combined ethnographic description of everyday activities and more conventional procedures taken into everyday contexts—for example, presenting a novel toy and videotaping in the homes and later coding and comparing across groups. Commonalities across the four communities emerged in that adults structured teaching,

but in Salt Lake City and Kecioren, toddlers were more segregated from adult activities, and in Dhol-Ki-Patti and San Pedro, how toddlers learned by watching and participating in adult activities with caregivers' support. According to the authors, the communities were chosen to represent varied social and economic characteristics that were expected to be associated with differing child-rearing arrangements. Rogoff et alia examined the underlying sociocultural perspective that "children's development occurs through active participation in cultural systems of practice in which children, together with their caregivers and other companions, learn and extend the skills, values, and knowledge of their community". These concepts are defined as a process, in which Rogoff (1990) termed "guided participation", Heath (1989) referred to as "learner as cultural member", and Lave and Wenger (1991) called "legitimate peripheral participation" (Rogoff, et al., 1993). In relation to the term "guided participation", initially drawing on Vygotsky's work, Rogoff defines intersubjectivity as "shared understanding based on a common focus of attention and some shared presuppositions that form the ground for communication" (1990, p. 71). Intersubjectivity is seen as a critical to learning since it forms the basis of communication between social partners and provided support for children to extend their understanding of concepts or ideas, and to relate new information to existing knowledge (Rogoff, 2003). Thus, Rogoff developed the view of learning into a theory of "guided participation" which emphasises involving children in tasks or activities that are meaningful within their own culture (Rogoff, 1990, 2003). Moreover, this theory assumes that children have opportunities to observe and take part in these activities, and that adults support children's increasingly independent involvement in them by modeling the activity, 'coaching' the child, and gradually fading all forms of support (Rogoff, 1990). However, Tudge and Rogoff (1989) warn against assuming that social interaction will lead to learning in all circumstances:

*"We consider that social interaction does not carry blanket benefits, as is often assumed, but that social interaction facilitates development under certain circumstances that need more specification. One of the most important of these appears to be the possibility for participants to understand another perspective or participate in a more advanced skill, either through active observation or through joint involvement in problem solving (p. 17)".*

Importantly for the study described in the current proposal, is Rogoff's work had recognised the important role that peer social interaction may play in children's development. Unlike researchers and educators who have assumed that peers are less effective than adults in facilitating children's development, Rogoff explores similarities and differences between adult-child and child-child interactions. She suggests that:

*"Shared problem solving, in which children can participate in collaborative thinking processes, appears central to the utility of social interaction for children's development. Peers may be less skilled partners than adults in some activities, but may offer unique possibilities for discussion and collaboration when they consider each other's perspective in a balanced fashion. Peers also serve as highly available and active companions, providing each other with motivation, imagination, and opportunities for creative elaboration of the activities of their community (1990, p. ix)".*

### **Social cognition and apprenticeship of social interaction**

Tudge and Rogoff argue that Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development entails the view that only adults or more capable peers can be effective learning partners. They explain:

*"Vygotsky's emphasis on interaction with more skilled partners is necessary to his theory, as such interaction is conceived as the means by which children become enculturated in the intellectual tools of their society. The agent of socialization must thus be someone who knows more than the child about those tools ... The concept of the "zone of proximal development" requires not only a difference in level of expertise but an understanding on the part of the more advanced partner of the requirements of the less advanced child, for information presented at a level too far in advance of the child would not be helpful (1989, p. 24)".*

In her argument against Bruner's concept of scaffolding, Rogoff prefers to adopt the metaphor of apprenticeship to describe the role of social interaction in cognitive development. She argues that this metaphor is more appropriate since it recognises that peers of equal expertise may facilitate learning for each other:

*"... the apprenticeship system often involves a group of novices (peers) who serve as resources for one another in exploring the new domain and aiding and challenging one another. Among themselves, the novices are likely to differ usefully in expertise as well (1990, p. 39)".*

Critical to the understanding of learning and cognitive development, and the importance of the role of social interaction in cognitive development, in which the processes involve social interaction mediates learning, Tudge and Rogoff (1989) concludes that:

*"Peers can have a profound impact on children's cognitive development. There is support for both Piaget's notion that peer interaction may benefit an individual cognitive development, and for more advanced partners the Vygotskian position, which stresses the benefits of interactions for more partners providing assistance within the zone of proximal development (1989, p. 34)".*

### **Proposed study on cognition as a collaborative process**

The following section is the explanation of the first of two models which present the analytical approach of a proposed study on implicit social cognition and social interaction of indigenous Orang Asli children in Malaysia. Each section focused on the analytic tools and assumption systems which were addressed by Rogoff and Angelillo (2002) and Rogoff (1998, 2003). Importantly to the nature of analysis of the current study, Rogoff and Angelillo (2002) argues that cultural analyses which focuses on coordinated, multifaceted practices may provide a better understanding of human development in the context of people's participation in pervasive cultural institutions such as schooling and societal changes such as industrialization. The authors further their arguments by stating that "... researchers need to consider cultural processes as dynamically integrated constellations of cultural practices-even (or especially) when analyses may be served by identifying some aspects as 'variables' " (2002, p. 213). The analytic tool of the first model of the proposed study is premised on the notion that sociocultural approach may lead to a further understanding of the assumption on cognition as a collaborative process (Rogoff, 1998). In the study of cognition as a collaborative process, central themes to Rogoff's theoretical, research and methodological approach are stated as:

*"... goes beyond regarding the individual as a separate entity that is the base unit of analysis to examine sociocultural activity as the unit of analysis, with examination of the contributions of individual, interpersonal, and community processes. Thus, analysis goes beyond the individual and the dyad to examine*

*the structured relations among people in groups and in communities, across time" (1998, p. 729)".*

Rogoff (1998) further postulate that the analytical approach needs to emphasise the purposes and dynamically changing nature of events. She believes that the focus of examination is grounded in the notion that the analysis of cognition as a collaborative process need to examine the changing and meaningful constellations of aspects of events, not variables that attempt to be independent of the purpose of the activity. Also central to the analysis is that:

*" ... cognition as a collaborative process is a focus on shared meaning in endeavours in which people engage in common. Cognition is not conceptualized as separate from social, motivational, emotional, and identity processes-people's thinking and development is conceived as involved in social relations, with purpose and feeling central to their involvement in activities, and transformation of their roles as a function to participation" (Rogoff, 1998, p.729).*

Rogoff and Angelillo (2002) assert that methodological choices should be recognised as a convenience for analysis, not a reflection of the organization of the world or the only appropriate way to focus research on complex processes. The authors stipulate that these methodological choices and their respective portfolios need to include work that focuses directly on investigating configurations of cultural processes. However, the authors also warn the limitations that may inhibit experimentally or statistically based research, in which they point out that:

*"Researchers can use analytic tools such as statistics that apply analysts' distinctions to phenomena (creating separate variables for the analyses) without assuming that phenomena are actually mechanically produced by deterministic freestanding factors that can be toggled on and off, or turned to higher or lower levels. If dominant methods of analysis are assumed to reflect 'reality' or to be the only appropriate way to investigate cultural phenomena, this would unduly limit understanding of cultural processes" (Rogoff & Angellilo, 2002, p. 213).*

Rogoff and Angelillo (2002) and Rogoff, Ministry, Goncu and Mosier (1993) acknowledge that both quantitative and qualitative tools are important towards understanding the nature of cultural processes. Rogoff and Angelillo (2002) argue that "close analysis of small numbers of cases can be used to compare larger numbers of cases while retaining the meaningful relations among interrelated aspects of the functioning of each case or each community studied" (p. 221). The authors stress that the analysis tools should be tailored to questions, rather than allowing customary tools to limit research questions or allowing the assumptions on which they are based to organise our own conceptions of how the phenomena themselves function. Furthermore, Rogoff (1998) points out the need to articulate the assumptions of a particular metaphor that is widely used but usually unexplained, as she assert:

*"We make use of tools such as ANOVA, graphs, two-dimensional diagrams, or analysis of transcripts to organize our ideas about the human phenomena we seek to understand. The tools (and metaphors of communication as well) are essential for our work, but the limitations of the tools should not become limitations in our understandings" (Rogoff, 1998, p. 687).*

Therefore, it is critical not to contemplate mechanistic assumptions, which prioritise control of freestanding variables, to exclude the study of dynamic, multifaceted cultural configurations (Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002). On the other hand, it is also noted that



variables can be regarded as providing a shorthand reference for the sake of temporary focus on a limited set of features of cultural phenomena, in which variables as analytic tools in holistic analyses require interpretation in the light of other aspects of cultural processes (Rogoff & Angellilo, 2002). However, Rogoff and Angellilo (2002) stress the imperative of maintaining the particular analytic tool not to be freestanding, but in greater focus than the other aspects of the phenomena under study.

## DISCUSSION

Thus, significantly important for the proposed study, the employment of categories like ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds and peer relationships are seen as helpful efforts to understand the cultural processes of the Malaysian Orang Asli contexts, in which to be interpreted from the perspective that they are historically and culturally situated concepts that fit a certain time and place, and not to be regarded as freestanding measures of the phenomena under study, which is the patterns of social interactions in a pre-determined ethnic environment. Therefore, it is acknowledging that the basis of the first analytical model of the current study is partially premised on the functional pattern analysis, as suggested by Rogoff and Gauvain (1989), which were applied in the study of Rogoff, Ministry, Goncu and Mosier (1993). According to Rogoff, et al. (1998), functional pattern analysis examines generalities or patterns in a variety of similar cases (for example, individuals, dyads, events) while attempting to maintain the meaning of individual actions in their (see Mehan, 1979; Wellman & Sim, 1990, as cited in Rogoff, Ministry, Goncu & Mosier, 1993). The summaries of the analyses are as follows (Rogoff, Ministry, Goncu and Mosier, 1993):

1. The focus of functional pattern analysis is to unfold development of purposive acts within ongoing events. In relation to the categories involved, in which are functionally defined, the purposes of the event are viewed as a whole, and no steps are taken to define any superficial behaviours independently and separated from their context.
2. The nature of examinations involve the contributions of participants in the context of those of other individuals, in which the evidence for constructing an account of participants' goals is available in the communication of participants.
3. Statistical methods are employed to analyse existing patterns, and employment of the examination of graphical arrays that allow tracking across multiple variables to examine patterns of interrelations and to account for anomalous or similar cases.

The second model of the current proposed study involved the adaptation of Rogoff's (1995, 1998, 2003) three foci of analysis; personal, interpersonal, and community or contextual planes. Originally referred to as planes of analysis (Rogoff, 1997, 1998), it is argued the underpinning assumption is that within sociocultural activity, people, contexts, actions, meanings, communities and cultural histories are all mutually constituted (Rogoff, Topping, Baker-Sennett & Lacasa, 2002). Thus, using Rogoff's sociocultural perspectives delineates the analytic approach as not to examine only the child, as a single unit of analysis, nor a group of children, as if in a vacuum (Rogoff, 2003). She points out that the three foci of analysis may present a more complex and thorough view of children's understandings, where she emphasise that while one of the lenses may be in sharply defined, the others remain involved but in the background. Therefore, in order to illustrate Rogoff's ideas of the three foci of analysis and the transformation of participation perspective, a series of images from the extracts of the current proposed study are presented as follows:

In Figure 1 below, an image is shown without any research lens or focus of observation. The image depicts an example of a computer session undertaken during a pilot study in a Malaysian rural Orang Asli pre-primary classroom environment. Each child was paired in dyads, and has their own mouse device, utilising a collaborative software program. The technologies were based on the approach of Single Display Groupware (SDG), where several children interact with a single display using multiple mice input devices. As shown on the image below, one of the Orang Asli children was initially not interested with the activity, where she maintained to observe other children (two girls at the computer- on top left corner of Figure 1) for a prolonged duration of time (approximately 18 minutes of the computer session). This particular child is an Indigenous Malaysian (Orang Asli), and was reported by the classroom teacher to be a keen observer of novice activities in the class. However, in relation to the analytic model of the current proposed study, the research lens of the three foci analysis by Rogoff (1995, 1998, 2003) were adapted when the child begins to participate within the dyadic context of the computer environment, which involves the observation of her partner under the guidance of the teacher assistant, thus initiating the process of transformation of participation in her immediate context (see Figure 2).



Figure 1: An image of a pre-primary computer environment

In Figure 2 below, this image focuses on the child on the right, using a research lens to the personal focus of analysis within the activity. This image adapts the transformation of participation perspective (Rogoff, 1995, 1998). The child is appeared 'focused' (portrayed by a more distinct and 'sharper' image). It is noted that even when the focus is on the girl (a Malaysian Indigenous Orang Asli child), the interpersonal relationships and the contextual remain in the background of the image (displayed a less distinct and 'softer' image). Furthermore, Rogoff stress that the attention goes beyond simply what the child 'knows' or can do, that is to examine the process by which people transform their understanding of and responsibility for activities through their own involvement in those activities (Rogoff, 1995). Moreover, as Rogoff (2003) points out "... a general sense of interpersonal and cultural-

institutional information is necessary to understand what this child is doing, although it does not need to be attended to in the same detail as the child's efforts" (p. 56).



Figure 2: Personal focus of analysis (adapted from Rogoff, 1997, 1998, 2003)

In Figure 3, the research lens are now focussing on the child, her partner (at the computer) and the teacher assistant (depict by the hand and arm on the lower left corner of the image), which guides the children by demonstrating on how to use the mouse device. At this interpersonal plane of analysis (Rogoff, 1995, 1998, 2003), the researcher is interested in the relationships among that child, her partner and the involvement of an adult (teacher assistant), and what they are doing together. The researcher would also be interested in knowing that the Orang Asli child, had only shown interest (by holding and starting to move the mouse device), only when the adult was present and guiding the other child (and interestingly, not herself) on using the computer program. Initially, it was reported that efforts were made by the same adult (teacher assistant) to build her interest towards the computer program, but were proven to be unsuccessful. In the analysis of the interpersonal plane, the research focus involves inquiries into mutual involvement, communication and coordination of individuals and their partners, as well as the guidance and support of others, either face-to-face or more distally (Rogoff, 1995). However, Rogoff (2003) argues that at this plane of analysis, there is no attempt to analyse in detail how such an activity fits with the culture or community, even though a "general sense of individual and cultural information is important as background, to understand what the people are doing" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 58).



Figure 3: Interpersonal focus of analysis (adapted from Rogoff, 1997, 1998, 2003)

In Figure 4, the third foci of analytic lens was adapted (Rogoff, 1995, 1998, 2003). It focuses on the contextual or community information, which needs a cultural-institutional focus of analysis, “backgrounding the details regarding the particular people and their relations with each other” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 60). In the image below (where an attempt was made to foreground the settings and the cultural tools in the classroom-the computers, mouse devices, mouse pads, the existing collaborative technologies, and the fact that the children are sitting on floor rather than using the usual computer desk), researchers might be interested in studying in such cultural-institutional processes as how this particular Orang Asli rural pre-primary centre has integrated such technologies in a rural school/environment, why novices activities are more challenging for an Indigenous Orang Asli child, why the classroom teacher adopt a dyadic pairing system for the computer sessions, what are the classroom teacher’s educational beliefs and philosophies pertaining the use of computers in early childhood classrooms, or what are the national policies involve in the integration of computers in rural schools, or other urban pre-primary centres.



Figure 4: Community or contextual focus of analysis (adapted from Rogoff, 1997, 1998) or cultural-institutional aspects of analysis (Rogoff, 2003)

Based on these adaptations of the three foci of analysis, Rogoff (2003) stress that:

*"Together, the interpersonal, personal, and cultural-institutional aspects of the event constitute the activity. No aspect exists or can be studied in isolation from the others. An observer's relative focus on one or the other aspect can be changed, but they do not exist apart from each other" (p. 58)*

However, Rogoff (2003) also warns that failure to recognise culture together with the "equally important role of the people who constitute cultural activities" (p. 61) may pose certain limitations and analytical problems. Figure 5 portrays a problem that is common in many studies, where Rogoff argues that "it does not make sense to try to study cultural processes without considering the contributions of people involved, keeping them in the background of a focus on cultural, institutional community processes" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 61):



Figure 5: Research lens that recognise culture, but without people who constitute the cultural activities (Rogoff, 2003)

Thus, importantly to the proposed study, the author acknowledges the view that individual, social and cultural processes are interrelated (Rogoff, 1995, 1998), and adapt the proposed use of the three foci of analysis (Rogoff, 1995, 1998) as the second analytical model of the current proposed study on implicit social cognition and social interaction of Orang Asli children in Malaysia.

The sociocultural comparisons of peer implicit cognitive guidance in the proposed study may reveal any similarities and differences within a collaborative interactions of Orang Asli children. The nature of peer implicit cognitive may reflect a pattern where children and their respective adults could encourage peers to function in a cognitively comfortable zones initially, and facilitated their cognitive learning through what Rogoff (1990) has termed "cultural apprenticeship". These perspectives may provide a better understanding of the ethnic-specific interactions and social elements. The cultural similarities in the nature of collaborative interactions in the proposed study may also affirm sociocultural conceptions that the processes of internalisation originate from the social plane of functioning and that intentional/unintentional collaborative interactions is universal across cultures and ethnics, thus may also integrate inclusiveness between non-indigenous and indigenous communities.

## CONCLUSION

Discursive psychology may also enable a thorough analyses in the proposed study. According to Wertsch (1978), differential use of speech indicates distinctions in nature of cognitive regulation and division of task responsibilities. Applying the notions of Wertsch (1978) to the present proposed study, it can be hypothesized that the greater use of directives in Malaysian Orang Asli children guidance may indicate a greater amount of cognitive responsibility assumed by them, particular in the children's daily activity. Ethnicity and cognition is hypothesized to be residing collaboratively, and implicitly within every individuals. In summary, the analysis that may show cultural comparisons at the level of methods of operation within the cultural specificity and cultural universality in the patterns of collaborative interactions in respect of components of intentional assistance and guidance between Orang Asli children, is thus, proposed to be observed in the study. Although the context of the present proposed study may varied in nature of samples and subjects, the findings will be further scrutinized and compared thoroughly with the findings of Rogoff et alia (1993) who indicated similarities and differences in practices of guided participation of Guatemalan, Mayan, and Indian tribal communities in India. The current proposed study attempt to enhance the understandings of Orang Asli children from cultural communities that value development of interdependency among their children by exemplifying the aesthetic values of harmony and peaceful racial integration among larger communities. Being able to understand the cultural aspects of children's development and to develop strategies for dealing with aspects of cultural differences in meanings and values of families that can be described as 'cultural competence' is a significant attribute and niche areas for social psychologist of Malaysia to explore upon. As collaborative social interactions contexts may facilitate children's understanding of social world, and sustain their interest and may lead them into potential level of development, it is vital that researchers explore more of scaffolding and guidance approaches in various multi-ethnic settings that promote collaborative interactions between adults and children from diverse ethnicities and communities, and more importantly, children with their own peers of different racial and ancestral backgrounds.

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