

Legacy Prof. James H. Liu Untuk Psikologi Sosial Indonesia: Sebuah Obituari

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Saya baru menyelesaikan studi sarjana di Fakultas Psikologi UGM ketika Bu Bo (Prof Kwartarini W. Yuniarti) mengajak saya mengikuti *The 9th Binneal Conference of Asian Association of Social Psychology* di New Delhi, India, September 2009. Saat itu untuk pertama kalinya saya mendengarkan keynote speech James Liu tentang social representations of world history, salah satu pilar program risetnya tentang kesadaran global. Pada titik itu, tumbuh keinginan dan tekad dalam hati kecil saya untuk belajar dari sosok itu. Yang terjadi selanjutnya adalah rangkaian kesempatan kolaborasi – serta banyak kebetulan – yang menghubungkan kami, sampai ketika ia wafat karena kecelakaan di sebuah pantai di Kawasan Labuan Bajo dua minggu lalu (tgl 11 Agustus 2024).

Awal kolaborasi kami terjadi ketika James, Mark Woodward (Antropolog – Arizona State University), dan Nora Fisher Onar (Ilmuwan Politik – University of San Fransisco) mengajak saya – waktu itu masih mahasiswa S2 Sains Psikologi – untuk membantu penelitian multidisipliner lintas budaya mereka. Saat itu mereka sedang mengkaji *critical juncture* – bagaimana sebuah peristiwa dalam lorong sejarah membentuk arah sebuah bangsa atau masyarakat (Liu, Onar, & Woodward, 2014). Sebuah pengalaman sangat mendalam untuk saya pribadi. Tidak hanya karena temanya yang *thought provoking*, tetapi juga dari sini lah untuk pertama kalinya saya melihat langsung dan belajar bagaimana ilmu psikologi yang lahir dari hal-hal mikro (pikiran dan perilaku manusia) dapat berbicara tentang hal-hal yang kompleks dan luas (makro) seperti terbentuknya bangsa-bangsa. Di kemudian hari, saya menyadari bahwa ini lah hal yang menjadi kelebihan dan karakter James sebagai seorang sarjana (*scholar*); ia mampu mengawinkan teori dan metode psikologi dengan berbagai macam bidang ilmu dan membangun kolaborasi dengan banyak ilmuwan dari berbagai latar keilmuan dan negara/budaya. Dari kolaborasi riset ini, dan atas dorongan dan supervisi James, saya berhasil mempublikasikan artikel ilmiah pertama di AJSP

tentang watak politik masyarakat Yogyakarta dan Surakarta (Hakim, et al., 2015).

Setelah proyek riset *Critical Juncture*, saya meneruskan keinginan studi lanjut doctoral di bawah bimbingan James di Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). Atas dukungan pendanaan LPDP, akhirnya saya berangkat ke New Zealand, tetapi bukan ke VUW sebagaimana tujuan awal, melainkan ke Massey University di Auckland. Menjelang keberangkatan saya, James memutuskan menerima pinangan Massey University sebagai *Head of School* di sana. Setelah mengenal dan berkolaborasi dengan James selama 2 tahun – meskipun dari jarak jauh – atas keputusannya ini, muncul rasa penasaran di benak saya: apa lagi yang ingin ia lakukan? Iya, James adalah sosok yang selalu penasaran dan cepat bosan. Pada pertemuan pertama kami setelah saya sampai di New Zealand, ia bercerita panjang lebar tentang teori social representations of history (SRH) yang sudah lama ia kembangkan bersama kolega-koleganya (Liu & Hilton, 2005), berbagai kelemahannya, dan bagaimana ia tak ingin menghabiskan hidupnya untuk mempertahankan SRH atau mendoktrin murid-muridnya untuk setia pada teori itu. James selalu menginginkan murid-muridnya mengeksplorasi dan menemukan hal-hal baru. Tetapi ternyata bukan sekedar rasa bosan yang mendorong James pindah ke Massey; ia ingin merealisasikan visi akademik barunya.

James adalah seorang sarjana dengan kontribusi yang luas di bidang psikologi sosial, psikologi politik, dan psikologi lintas budaya. Selama karirnya, ia telah menerbitkan 217 artikel, hasil kolaborasi dengan 388 akademisi dan praktisi dari berbagai negara, disunting sebanyak 5.249 kali mencakup sebanyak 32 topik (Scopus Database, diakses tgl 26 Agustus 2024), ditambah satu buku karya penulis tunggal yang diterbitkan oleh Cambridge University Press (Liu, 2022). Tentu masih banyak lagi karya yang pernah ia buat di luar catatan tersebut, seperti tulisan di media massa (misalnya di *The Conversation*; Liu, 2019), wawancara TV dan radio, dan Podcast yang ia rintis bersama Dr.

Itesh Sachdev (pensiunan Professor dari SOAS, Inggris).

Meskipun kerja-kerja akademiknya sedemikian prolific, James menyimpan pertanyaan yang selalu menggelisahnya: bagaimana kerja-kerja ilmiahnya dapat berdampak pada kehidupan masyarakat? Pada fase perjalanan akademiknya ini, James bertemu dengan Prof Stuart Carr (Massey University) dan Prof Darrin Hodgetts (waktu itu masih di Waikato University). Mereka bertiga sepakat merintis dan mengajarkan paradigma riset baru di Massey; riset yang robust secara ilmiah, mengusung etik dan tanggungjawab relasional, membebaskan diri dari jebakan methodolatri (penghambaan pada metode tertentu), dan berorientasi pada menciptakan kehidupan yang lebih baik. Paradigma inilah yang menginspirasi James bersama kolega-koleganya di Massey untuk merumuskan etika dan epistemologi relasional (Hopner & Liu, 2021; Liu & King, 2021), dan terlibat dalam berbagai riset kolaboratif bersama aktivis dan NGO untuk mengatasi berbagai problem sosial di New Zealand (Carr, et al., 2023). Visi ilmiahnya ini terefleksikan secara gamblang dalam salah satu karya terakhir yang ia “wariskan” kepada komunitas psikologi sosial Indonesia dengan berjudul *Innovating Community-Based Change in the Area of Weight Loss and Lifestyle Change: The Power of Ethical Relationships and Leadership* (Liu, 2024; diterbitkan posthumous oleh Jurnal Psikologi Sosial).

Tetapi James bukanlah sosok yang dogmatis. Ia tetap terlibat dalam berbagai riset teoritis bersama kolega dan murid-murid doktoralnya. Terlepas dari keterbukaan James terhadap banyak hal, ada satu prinsip yang selalu ia pegang dan menjadi pijakan atas kerja-kerja kesajarannya; ia yakin betul akan pentingnya membangun dan menjaga etika relasional, dan menumbuhkan kesadaran sosial dan politik dalam diri murid-muridnya.

James sangat peduli dengan perkembangan para peneliti muda, khususnya di negara-negara berkembang termasuk Indonesia. Ia ingin membangun tradisi riset yang pada satu sisi berkontribusi dalam knowledge building, dan di sisi lain mengusung tanggungjawab politik dan sosial di masyarakat dimana para peneliti ini hidup dan berkarya. Di Indonesia, James dengan penuh kesadaran membangun relasi dengan banyak akademisi psikologi seperti Prof Hamdi Muluk (UI), Prof Bagus Takwin (UI), Prof Faturrochman (UGM) dan Prof Kwartarini W. Yuniarti (UGM). Tidak hanya itu, James aktif memotivasi, berdiskusi, memberikan pelatihan dan melakukan mentoring kepada para peneliti muda Indonesia dari berbagai perguruan tinggi,

dengan harapan mereka dapat melahirkan riset dan publikasi yang berdampak luas dan bisa berkontribusi dalam diskursus psikologi global. Dari kolaborasi ini lahirlah edisi khusus Asian Journal of Social Psychology tentang isu terorisme di Indonesia (Liu & Woodward, 2013), yang melahirkan berbagai gagasan dan temuan yang kemudian dilirik dunia internasional (misal, Hakim & Mujahidah, 2013, Milla, et al, 2013; Putra & Sukabdi, 2013). Inisiatif Ikatan Psikologi Sosial (IPS) untuk menerbitkan buku-buku teks yang berbasis pada riset dan praksis di Indonesia (Psikologi Sosial, editor Pitaloka, Abidin, dan Milla, 2018; dan Psikologi Politik, editor Yustisia, Ardi, dan Hakim, 2021) juga terinspirasi secara langsung atau tidak langsung dari diskusi-diskusi dengan James tentang pentingnya pengajaran psikologi sosial yang kontekstual.

James sangat percaya dan menaruh harapan besar kepada para peneliti muda Indonesia, dan percaya betul bahwa psikologi sosial Indonesia bisa berbicara banyak di masa depan. Pada harihari terakhirnya, selama kegiatan IACCP Congress 2024 di Bali, James dan saya menghabiskan banyak waktu berdiskusi tentang berbagai strategi untuk mengembangkan kapasitas para peneliti muda di Indonesia. Email terakhir James kepada saya – dua hari sebelum ia wafat – masih membicarakan tentang Mentorship Program yang rencananya akan dimulai akhir tahun ini. Ia berkomitmen untuk terlibat langsung sebagai salah satu mentor, dan berjanji kembali mengunjungi Indonesia tahun depan untuk bertemu langsung dengan para mentenya. Sekarang James tidak mungkin lagi kembali ke Indonesia, tapi spirit dan legacy-nya akan selalu bersama kita.

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The Legacy of Prof. James H. Liu for Indonesian Social Psychology: An Obituary

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I had just completed my undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Psychology, Gadjah Mada University, when Bu Bo (Prof. Kwartarini W. Yuniarti) invited me to attend the 9th Biennial Conference of the Asian Association of Social Psychology in New Delhi, India, in September 2009. It was there that I first heard James Liu's keynote speech on social representations of world history, one of the pillars of his research program on global consciousness. At that point, a desire and determination grew within me to learn from this professor. What followed was a series of collaborative opportunities – and many coincidences – that connected us, until his untimely death due to an accident on a beach in the Labuan Bajo area two weeks ago (August 11, 2024).

Our collaboration began when James, Mark Woodward (Anthropologist – Arizona State University), and Nora Fisher Onar (Political Scientist – University of San Francisco) invited me – then still a master's student in Psychology – to assist in their cross-cultural, multidisciplinary research. At that time, they were studying critical junctures – how an event in the corridor of history shapes the direction of a nation or society (Liu, Onar, & Woodward, 2014). It was a profound experience for me personally. Not only because of its thought-provoking theme, but also because it was here that I first directly observed and learned how psychology, which mainly concerns micro phenomena (human thoughts and behaviors), can speak about complex and broad (macro) issues such as nation buildings. Later, I realized that this was James's strength and unique character as a scholar; he was able to marry psychological theories and methods with various fields of study and build collaborations with many scientists from diverse academic backgrounds and countries/cultures. From this research collaboration, and with James's encouragement and supervision, I learned to write academic article and published it in an international journal (Hakim, et al., 2015).

After the Critical Juncture research project, I continued my desire to pursue doctoral

studies under James's guidance at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). With LPDP funding support, I finally left for New Zealand, but not to VUW as initially planned, but to Massey University in Auckland. As my departure approached, James decided to accept an offer from Massey University as Head of School there. After knowing and collaborating with James for 2 years – albeit from a distance – this decision sparked curiosity in me: what else did he want to do? Yes, James was a figure who was always curious and quickly bored. At our first meeting after I arrived in New Zealand, he spoke at length about the theory of social representations of history (SRH) that he had long developed with his colleagues (Liu & Hilton, 2005), its various weaknesses, and how he didn't want to spend his life defending SRH or indoctrinating his students to be loyal to that theory. James always wanted his students to explore and discover new things. But it turned out that it wasn't just boredom that drove James to move to Massey; he wanted to realize his new academic vision.

James was a scholar with broad contributions in the fields of social psychology, political psychology, and cross-cultural psychology. Throughout his career, he published 217 articles, the result of collaborations with 388 academics and practitioners from various countries, cited 5,249 times covering 32 topics (Scopus Database, accessed August 26, 2024), plus one single-authored book published by Cambridge University Press (Liu, 2022). There were certainly many more works he created outside of these records, such as writings in mass media (for example in *The Conversation*; Liu, 2019), TV and radio interviews, and a Podcast he pioneered with Dr. Itesh Sachdev (retired Professor from SOAS, UK).

Despite his prolific academic work, James harbored a question that always troubled him: how could his scientific work impact society? At this phase of his academic journey, James met Prof Stuart Carr (Massey University) and Prof Darrin Hodgetts (then still at Waikato University). The three of them agreed to pioneer

and teach a new research paradigm at Massey; research that is scientifically robust, upholds relational ethics and responsibility, frees itself from the trap of methodolatry (adherence to a particular method), and is oriented towards creating a better life. This paradigm inspired James and his colleagues at Massey to formulate relational ethics and epistemology (Hopner & Liu, 2021; Liu & King, 2021), and to engage in various collaborative research with activists and NGOs to address various social problems in New Zealand (Carr, et al., 2023). This scientific vision is clearly reflected in one of the last works he “bequeathed” to the Indonesian social psychology community entitled *Innovating Community-Based Change in the Area of Weight Loss and Lifestyle Change: The Power of Ethical Relationships and Leadership* (Liu, 2024; published posthumously by the Indonesian Journal of Social Psychology).

But James was not a dogmatic figure. He remained involved in various theoretical research with colleagues and doctoral students. Despite James's openness to many things, there was one principle he always held, and which became the foundation for his scholarly work; he firmly believed in the importance of building and maintaining relational ethics, and fostering social and political awareness in his students.

James cared deeply about the development of young researchers, especially in developing countries including Indonesia. He wanted to build a research tradition that on one hand contributes to knowledge building, and on the other hand carries political and social responsibility in the society where these researchers live and work. In Indonesia, James deliberately built and maintain friendships with many Indonesian psychology academics such as Prof Hamdi Muluk (UI), Prof Bagus Takwin (UI), Prof Faturrochman (UGM) and Prof Kwartarini W. Yuniarti (UGM). Not only that, James actively motivated, discussed, provided training and mentoring to young Indonesian researchers from various universities, hoping they could produce research and publications that have a wide impact and can contribute to global psychology discourse. From this collaboration, a special edition of the Asian Journal of Social Psychology on terrorism issues in Indonesia was born (Liu & Woodward, 2013), which gave rise to various ideas and findings that later attracted international attention (e.g., Hakim & Mujahidah, 2013, Milla, et al, 2013; Putra & Sukabdi, 2013). The initiative of the Indonesian Social Psychology Association (IPS) to publish textbooks based on research and praxis in Indonesia (Psikologi Sosial, editors Pitaloka, Abidin, and Milla, 2018; and Psikologi Politik, editors Yustisia, Ardi, and

Hakim, 2021) was also inspired directly or indirectly by discussions with James about the importance of contextual social psychology teaching.

James firmly believed in and placed great hope on young Indonesian researchers, and was convinced that Indonesian social psychology could have much to say in the future. In his final days, during the IACCP Congress 2024 in Bali, James and I spent a lot of time discussing various strategies to develop the capacity of young researchers in Indonesia. James's last email to me - two days before he passed away - was still discussing the Mentorship Program planned to start at the end of this year. He was committed to being directly involved as one of the mentors and promised to visit Indonesia again next year to meet with his mentees in person. Now James can no longer return to Indonesia, but his spirit and legacy will always be with us.

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