BETWEEN ORIENTALISM AND NORMALIZATION:
Cross-Cultural Lessons From Japan for a Critical History of Psychology

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Cross-cultural research performs a vital role within the confirmation of psychological "truths." Its differentiations work simultaneously to establish their general applicability and the superiority of Anglo-U.S. ways of living and relating. Taking three examples of how "Japan" figures within English language psychological accounts (i.e., group/individual, shame/guilt societies, and attachment styles), I indicate how the apparent stability of these truths suppressed the violent history of their generation. Moreover, I suggest how resisting the assimilation of cultural specificity into a discourse of mere variation can challenge the hegemony of Anglo-U.S. psychology and reframe the vexed question of specificity versus universality.

Keywords: culture, cultural imperialism, globalization, anthropology, psychoanalysis

In this article, I critically analyze forms of argument underlying the project of cross-cultural psychology to reflect on its role within more general claims for psychological knowledge. Cross-cultural psychology can be considered as a modern project struggling to shed its colonialist/paternalist origins. Reviewing the historical development of its project, Hogan and Sussman (2001), note:

> At its most basic level, cross-cultural research had its inception when one group, with certain folkways and language, began to observe another group, with somewhat different characteristics. When the observations became part of a record, usually with a view to promoting the superiority of one of the groups, the history of cross-cultural psychology began. (p. 16)

Significantly, this extract does not specify who typically does the observing, and what the effects of such observations might have been. After offering some rationale for my approach and focus, I take some key examples from psychological research discussed in relation to Japanese contexts to go beyond the normative approach to culture described above. The United States and Japan have historically been the focus of psychological cross-cultural comparison more than any other two countries—warranting my focus on Japan. As we shall see,

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cross-cultural research on the United States and Japan arises from some specific historical and political circumstances. Cross-disciplinary relations are also implicated in this history. Beyond intervening in the received history of psychology, my project here is to critically engage with psychology's contemporary aspirations, with particular attention to how notions of "cultural differences" and culturally situated psychologies obscure power relations. Hence, the mutual relationships between the disciplines of psychology, psychoanalysis, and anthropology—in terms of conceptual and methodological approaches—are also given some attention.

The Usual Story

To offer a crude version of the usual story: cross-cultural research plays a vital role within the confirmation of psychological "truths," albeit through the sleight of hand of "comparison." Reports of cross-cultural similarities and differences function as a key site of legitimating for the applicability and generality of psychological research. In particular, given the Anglo-U.S. cultural-historical base for modern psychology, cross-cultural comparisons typically ward off claims of cultural bias or specificity. These claims have been structured within the formulation and practice of psychology as a modern, Western discipline by supposedly demonstrating general relevance (if differential performance) in relation to the qualities or features under assessment. In so doing, "cultural differences" become expressed as variations along predetermined dimensions, with the superiority of Anglo-U.S. modes of living and relating structured into models as invisible, implicit presumptions or norms. For example, Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen (2002) discuss four levels at which Western psychological research can be ethnocentric: (1) the selection of items and stimuli; (2) the choice of instruments and procedures; (3) the definition of theoretical concepts; and (4) the choice of research topics. Berry et al. (2002) presume that ethnocentrism can be addressed through methodological and paradigmatic practices, but the drive for "scientific" quantification masks a range of conceptual problems and renders critical evaluation difficult.[1] As has been widely discussed, such normalizations allow for difference only via a discourse of deficit or deviation—that correspondingly pathologize or stigmatize all those who fail to "fit." In the West, working class and minoritized groups are typically pathologized (e.g., Phoenix, 1987).

The project of discovering more about "other cultures" has typically taken the form of detailing relative inferiority or occasional surprised superiority in relation to a Western-formulated and governed set of concepts, models, and practices. The first of these projects (of relative inferiority) traces the colonial encounter (see Pols, 2007, this volume), while the second (surprised superiority) traces its orientalist aspect. In all this, psychology treads a more recent, but still equally

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[1] An example here might be Triandis' (1994, pp. 49–50) treatment of "methodological approaches" to researching "Individualism/Collectivism," which (despite this being identified as the second part of the title) is limited to a brief paragraph citing his own (albeit co-authored) studies, making this literally a self-referential, circular problem. Gjerde (2004, p. 143) describes Triandis as "perhaps [having] done more than any other scholar to promote a pernicious dualistic view of the world and simultaneously prevented a more differentiated, fluid and open view of cultures to gain influence."

colonial, path begun by anthropology, with standardized methodological procedures forming the core basis for efficient cross-cultural research and claims of transferable knowledge.[2] The role of "method" in sustaining psychology's class and cultural productions of inferiority alongside, and via, its claims to objectivity have been extensively researched (e.g., Richards, 1997; Rose, 1985). Indeed anthropology has undergone far-reaching reflexive reevaluation of its interpretational and representational practices (e.g., Geertz, 1988; Marcus & Michael, 1986). Arguably, and notwithstanding the "discursive" turn (Parker, 1989; Nightingale & Crombie, 1999), there has been little equivalent reevaluation (at least in terms of impact) in mainstream psychology.

From this (admittedly crudely characterized) story, psychology seems to be locked into a dismal debate composed of fixed binaries and determinisms. Cultural specificity is pitted against universalism, with discourses of cultural authenticity sometimes mobilized as resources to ward off the cultural imperialism of the West, of whose globalization psychology is a key agent. Moves toward "indigenous psychologies" have often provided useful correctives, but they paradoxically run the same risks of reifying and homogenizing the very culture they seek to animate by presuming their priority and separability and by overestimating intercultural differences (Poortinga, 1996). Such work as Paul Gilroy's (1993) on the vast and longstanding cultural links between Africa and Europe has illustrated the impossibility (and undesirability) of presuming cross-national autonomy of cultural development. Feminist and cultural critiques have highlighted how the error of equating culture with "nation" bolsters politically conservative representations (including self-representations) of cultures and traditions (e.g., Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Burman, Smailes, & Chantler, 2004; Gjerde, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Moreover, the privileging of "culture" occludes other dimensions of political and psychological significance, such as gender, class, and sexuality. Not only do such dimensions both intersect with and challenge cultural formations, but they also generate resources for elaborating more complex and nuanced analytical frameworks for exploring commonalities across culture (Burman, 2005). Moreover questions of power get passed over within the dominant discourse of "culture," especially in analyses of minority cultures living within majority contexts, where cultural units such as "communities" are posited as unitary and unchanging. Hence, discourses of "culture" function potently inside and outside psychology as a constitutive part of the contested history and status of psychology.

Why "Japan"?

I am going to take three examples of psychological research about Japan as specific, but indicative, sites for the elaboration of these debates. A great deal of

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[2] It should be noted that quantification is not the only research approach acknowledged by cross-cultural psychology, given the longstanding connections between psychology and anthropology, with the latter's focus on cultural immersion and ethnographic observation. Nevertheless, debate on the relations between the two traditions often comment on psychology's contribution as importing more standardized assessment tools, whereas Berry et al. (1992, p. 340) offer a rather circular (cross-cultural psychological) definition of "culture" as "a set of antecedent conditions most appropriately analysed by (quasi) experimental methods. To the extent that there are no constraining antecedent conditions, the rules and conventions that have emerged in a certain group lend themselves to description and interpretive analysis, but escape 'lawful' description."

psychological and anthropological research has focused on Japan (as I will discuss later), and Japanese scholars have responded by elaborating equivalent debates addressing claims to specificity or uniqueness. My argument is not concerned with whether such claims are generated by Japanese or non-Japanese researchers (although the *nihonjinron* debates about the distinctive features of Japanese culture are clearly "ethnographically significant" as Hendry (1998, p. 8) puts it). Rather I will be addressing some features of the *representation of* Japan, rather than making any claims to have analyzed or come to "know" Japan itself. Like Barthes (1982), I take the example of "Japan" as a provocation for thinking beyond the limits of Western culturally saturated horizons—as a kind of cultural analysis of the conditions of, and for, certain forms of psychological theorizing and practice. In other words, I draw on "Japan" as a critical methodological tool. "Japan" has been an intensely (self and other) represented limit case structured into cross-cultural studies. I use "Japan" to develop a variety of what has been termed a "derived 'etic'" analysis, "wherein Western developmental theories are reexamined as cultural products from the perspective of behavior and ethnotheories of other cultures" (Harkness, 1992, p. 111).[3]

So why Japan? I suggest the example of Japan is particularly useful on (at least) four counts.

1. Japan is generally portrayed as having a distinct and separate set of cultural traditions and as being a place of radical otherness. This portrayal often cites the centuries of Japan's isolation from the West in the pre-Meiji era (i.e., before 1868). This impression is also sustained by the ways Japan has adopted and incorporated cultural practices from elsewhere in Asia and made them uniquely Japanese, from forms of Buddhism to the tea ceremony.[4]

2. Alongside the classic orientalist motif of cultural inscrutability/separability (Said, 1979) is Japan's position in advanced capitalism. It is "Westernized" and (even) leads the West. Japan's postwar "economic miracle" simultaneously marks both its recovery and symbolic entry to the West and—given its spectacular speed—Japan's unintelligible (or even "unnatural") difference.

To clarify so far, "Japan" therefore offers both images of the past (of distinct fishing and farming-based[5] cultures and traditions) and the future (as an advanced technological society), with "Japan" "achieving a radical modernization without renouncing its authenticity" (Laidi, 1998, p. 124) as "the largest exporter of modernity" (p. 133). From these two points we can note Japan's position as

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[3] Berry et al. (2002, p. 324) classify this position as "universalist" within their tripartite scheme that distinguishes between absolutist, universalist, and relativist. In their account, "the universalist position places emphasis on the identity of shared basic psychological processes that are the legacy of human phylogenetic history" (p. 326), but allows for significant variation. Indeed, they go on to identify four kinds of conceptual levels of universalism—conceptual, strong, weak, and strict (p. 327).

[4] As Laidi (1998, p. 126) writes, in a chapter significantly titled "Can Japan Provide Meaning," "Japan. . . is the very example of a society which, for more than a century, has had a considerable ability to absorb, digest and filter external influence."

[5] As well as traditionally relying on fish, Japan grows its own rice—although the amounts allowed by the government are restricted to cater only (and only just) for the domestic market—hence, most of the "Japanese" rice available outside Japan is grown in California.

offering a perspective on the West[6] that—unlike most other places in Asia or Africa—is not perceived (by the West) as a place of cultural or economic inferiority. Such a position offers resistance to what used to be called "modernization theory" (now also discussed as globalization) or the idea that "whatever is different from the western prototype is bound to change through socioeconomic development" (Kagitcibasi, 1996, p. 43). Laidi's (1998, p. 123) analysis exemplifies such representations: "Through its ability to become westernized without denying its own self, a triumphant Japan in a way symbolizes the end of the westernization of the world." Yet, there are still other axes of constitutive similarity and difference.

3. Like the United States and Europe, Japan has been a major colonial power within Asia in relation to China, Korea and Vietnam. Japan's colonial legacies live on in the discussions of "comfort women" (the Korean women forced into sexual slavery to service Japanese soldiers), and the continuing controversy over the Yasukuni shrine (the Shinto site of pilgrimage and national symbol that also houses the graves of Japanese generals now acknowledged as war criminals but visited in previous years by the prime minister Koizumi).

4. However, Japan was also occupied by the United States in the post-World War II (WWII) period for nearly a decade after Japan's unconditional surrender following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Hence, a reading of Japanese history prompts the deconstruction of two key binaries: East/West and the colonizer/colonized, transcending each but not confined to either pole. As such, Japan offers a particularly fruitful kind of postcolonial encounter to the Western analyst, because both intimately acquainted and involved (with us) and as not (seemingly) the same. Indeed as Johnson (1993, pp. 9, 273–274) notes, the universal/particular debate—as addressed through the relations between anthropology and psychoanalysis—has even been characterized as the "Japanese problem":

> Stated concretely, the "Japanese problem" consists of attempts to account for the manifest differences in socialization, normative standards, interaction rules, and the quality of subjective awareness among Japanese when compared with other cultural groups. Metaphorically, the "Japanese problem" signifies a more general challenge to psychoanalytic universalism through behavioral and subjective evidence testifying to diversity in content, timing and significance among various human groups. (Johnson, 1993, p. 273).

But the emergence of the debate goes beyond the psychoanalytic context. As Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, and Morelli (2001, p. 828) note: "Japan is an important case to consider, because it is matched with the United States with regard to technological and educational achievements, and because *more research compares*

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[6] Indeed, Gjerde (2004, p. 143) comments on the absence of a discourse of north/south within cultural psychology, noting that "This latter distinction would provide, on the one hand a more radical asymmetry grounded in the vast imparity of wealth, but also one of supposed political functionality versus dysfunctionality. Yet one does not hear much of an essential 'Southernness' as a cultural mode of being. The 'South' is clearly locked in an incapacitating, structural relation with the 'North', which, for its part, does not seem to stand for any particular set of values. Adding to the confusion is also the fact that what counts as 'East' in cultural psychology in many cases counts as 'South' in economics and political science."

Japan and the United States than any two countries" (my emphasis). While this corpus of supposedly comparative research itself speaks to this colonial "equal-but-different" history, it also contributes to particular reciprocal polarizations.

There is no consensus within Japan whether it belongs to Asia, the "West," the "East," or represents a unique "in-between" phenomenon. Japan is nonetheless often viewed as the prototypical "East" in the American psychological imagination. The "West," whatever it represents, is often reduced to North America, and the United States in particular (Gjerde & Onishi, 2000, p. 223, fn. 7). Specific claims could (and, I would claim, should) be made for the study of psychology in relation to any cultural context. As a key exemplar though, we might note that psychology emerged in Japan as a replication of U.S. models "using the same research materials but with different subjects, namely Japanese people" (Igarashi, in press, p. 3). The colonial relationship between the United States and Japan has bred longstanding intellectual as well as business ties, and Japan's founding moment as a modern industrial power under the rubric of armed conflict and occupation has left traces in its psychologies.

So I will now move to three examples to illuminate this problematic: group-individual, shame-guilt, and attachment. Each has been historically important in the way Western researchers have represented "Japan," and each has spawned a specific literature and set of debates. Each has been a key contribution to discourses on culturally constituted psychological differences.

Group/Individual #1

It is widely proposed that psychology is the discipline *par excellence* of the individual, arising in Western contexts as a direct response to state demands for instruments to assess mental abilities and mental health. Beyond this—owing to the place accorded the nurture and expression of individualism—psychology has been closely linked with liberal democracy. Indeed the notion of the "psy complex" (Rose, 1985) as a mode of subjectivity structured into modern liberal democracies relies upon the constitution of a sense of being an individual, of having an interior, private, enduring self. This "self" can then choose to adhere to social rules and norms rather than be coerced via direct modes of power and authority, as in feudal states. Hence, we regulate ourselves even in the absence of external authority. Such forms of *governmentality* (e.g., Rose, 1990) have been understood as securing liberal democracy, and have formed the focus of much academic research into conformity, moral development, patterns of parenting, and so forth. In such contexts, notions of relational selves, associated with non-Western and "traditional" societies either come in for bad press, or else cultural explanations come to "stand in" for sociopolitical analysis (as in Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi, and Yoon's (1994) discussion of Confucianism vs. liberalism as structuring East/West relations). Hence, it is not surprising that contests over understandings of individual-group relations have significantly structured U.S.-Japanese engagements in both psychology and psychoanalysis.

In these days of romantic nostalgia for the lost sense of community and group-affiliation in the West, it is sometimes hard to recall just how negative psychological representations of group identifications have been. Le Bon's (1896) analysis of crowd behavior invoked "beings belonging to inferior forms of

evolution. . . women, savages and children, for instance" (quoted in Parker, 1989, p. 36) and was drawn upon by later psychologists such as Allport. Freud (1921) also explicitly drew on Le Bon in his treatment of group behavior and described regression, disinhibition, and loss of individual identity in groups.[7] Until quite recently, across Anglo-U.S. contexts in the post-WWII period, child rearing and educational practices were scrutinized for their democratic (or antidemocratic) tendencies (see Burman, 1994; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989)—and these remain the convenient sites for intervention around public order and health.[8] Adorno, Frenek-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford's (1950) classic study on the authoritarian personality marked the newly emerging alliance between psychoanalysis and psychology. Shaped in particular by the move across the Atlantic (see Jacoby, 1983), this work sought to analyze cultural practices and to intervene practically to shape democratic citizens who would not fall prey to fascism.

It was in this postwar context that James Clark Moloney published his 1953 article, "Understanding the paradox of psychoanalysis." Here he reviewed Japanese psychoanalytic treatments and other accounts of "the Japanese character" to claim that the project of psychoanalysis in Japan could only be one of adaptation rather than emancipation of the individual. Rather than question the emphasis of Western psychoanalysis on "adult stability, maturity and especially individualism" (p. 301) in the light of contrary cultural precepts, he chose to interpret claims to group loyalties and the "syncretization" of Western and indigenous notions in Japan as evidence for the impossibility of psychoanalysis there (or, worse, its political distortion into an instrument of conformity).[9] In other words, psychoanalysis was promulgated as a culture-free emancipatory instrument, with "groupishness" counterposed to individuality, and then subsumed within the specter of the nationalist (for which read proto-fascist), all-consuming state.

Yet crucially Moloney's own description performs the very horrifying move he depicted in obliterating, dehumanizing and rendering the individual-group relationship as destructive, consuming and almost automaton or insect-like:

> [E]ighty million Japanese citizens are 80 million living cells which constitute the single body that is the person of Japan. (Moloney, 1953, p. 303)

It is tempting to read Moloney's characterization of Japan as an unconscious or displaced rendering of the saturation of psychoanalytic and psychological precepts with U.S. culture. Indeed Doi Takeo's[10] (1973, 1986) analysis of the psychodynamics of dependency relations through the Japanese concept of amae[11]—was in part generated as a response to Moloney's dismissive treatment

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[7] That other readings of Freud and group psychology are possible is attested to by the development of group analysis as a mode of psychoanalytic group therapy (Foulkes, 1975).

[8] The new discipline of health psychology has now emerged with a focus on intervening with individuals and families rather than on state or environmental factors.

[9] Here we might note the gendered connotations of group-affiliation that also underlie the feminized representation of the "oriental" (Ueno, 1997).

[10] Where I use both personal and family names, I cite Japanese family names first in accordance with Japanese convention; the full bibliographic references are, however, listed according to Euro-U.S. conventions.

[11] A Japanese term describing a relation dynamic structured around the child(like) expectation of (parental—especially maternal) indulgence.

(T. Doi, personal communication, October 2004). Significantly, subsequent group-oriented psychoanalytic approaches have moved in the direction of high-lighting widespread, but usually unacknowledged, ways that groups influence and produce specific forms of individual affect and action. Once again, "Japan" features Agazarian's (1989) analysis of a Japanese group, where she makes claims for the *generality* of group process, turning a deficit theory of specificity into an assimilationist theory of universal application.

Gjerde (2001, 2004) makes considerable play with the fact that psychoanal-ysis is a Western-derived practice. Indeed, although there is now a Japanese psychoanalytic training accredited by the International Psychoanalytic Associa-tion, all of the founding figures within the Japanese psychoanalytic movement sought out training in Europe and the United States in the early 1950s (Kitayama, 2004). Doi's psychoanalytic training was undertaken and completed in the United States, within that paean to U.S. culture: ego psychology, as also was that of another influential figure, Nakakuki Masafumi. In their writings, which address Japanese cultural qualities, they are both careful to frame their analyses in terms of cultural heightenedness, rather than either absolute specificity or spurious universality (Doi, 1993; Nakakuki, 1994).

Moreover, this example offers some insight into the dynamic of marginaliza-tion/incorporation that structures the psychoanalysis–psychology relation in other sites (see also Burman, 1998). For although Anglophone psychology discussions of *amae* are eager to focus on its cultural specificities (e.g., Harre, 1986), they seem to have forgotten its origins within psychoanalysis. Indeed, one feature of this selective reading is that subsequent discussions of *amae* in relation to attachment (discussed below) appear to treat *amae* as a culturally normative trait, rather than as a potentially pathological or problematic condition of subjectivity. This is also indicative of the ways in which psychoanalytic notions are typically appropriated by psychology.

Group/Individual #2: *Nihonjinron* and Responses

I have argued that Doi's discussion of *amae* can be understood as generated through interaction with Western scholars and practices rather than as a preexis-tent, integral "culturally specific" feature. Accounts of Japanese subjectivities such as Doi's can be read as *antiessentialist in production* even if ideologically claiming otherwise; they are produced in cross-cultural encounters but assert the separateness of cultures. Indeed, historical analysis of forms and philosophies structuring childcare provision in early 20th century Japan, highlight the influence of U.S. and European ideas even as Japan entered its prewar nationalist period (Uno, 1999).

Discourses around "groupism" occupied a key role in conflating and essen-tializing "Japan's" culture, tradition and nation. Polarities such as "collectivism/individualism," invented by cross-cultural psychologists (e.g., Triandis, 1994), homogenize and reify groups into static and separate national entities. Other commentators have noted the theoretical slippage between "group model" and the psychological quality of "groupism." In particular, the anthropologist Harumi Befu (1980) questions the prevalence and logical structure of such claims and, beyond this, criticizes the failure to distinguish between a group model as a

cultural norm (or prescription) versus a proposition about actual behavior. More recently, Takano and Osaka (1999), in a critical review of studies investigating purported individualism versus collectivism, highlight how this literature has ignored examples that would counter the cultural polarization thesis. Insofar as cross-cultural differences do exist, Takano and Osaka see them as situational responses to the interactional and politico-economic situation of Japan in the postwar period, which would be expected to be temporary.

In terms of more recent anthropological discussions of Japanese notions of personhood, Bachnik (1995) argues that qualities that are presumed to be polar opposites are in fact indexically defined; that is, they rely on situational and relational particularities for their specification belying their antithetical status. She wryly points out that models of the subject and group relationship all too often preclude the very issue under investigation:

> . . .the Japanese perspective on social life focuses on the relationship between what we in the West have most often perceived as dichotomies. But this significance will be lost if we try to perceive the Japanese through dichotomous lenses. (Bachnik, 1998, p. 112).

Prevailing descriptions of rules of Japanese culture are therefore vacuous because they foreclose precisely what they claim to identify:

> . . .terms such as "situational ethic," "social relativism," and "interactional relativism" are very commonly used to describe Japanese society. These terms specify merely that situations are crucial in defining interaction, ethics and social organization. But since they require the very situation which they are supposed to explain, in order to explain it, they are not only empty but also circular. (Bachnik, 1998, p. 111)

Doi is sometimes associated with an intellectual movement of Japanese researchers embracing a discourse of cultural specificity and uniqueness or *nihonjinron.* In its neutral formulation, *nihonjinron* is discussed as "Japanese theories about what makes them uniquely Japanese" (Hendry, 1998, p. 6). But *nihonjinron* theories have attracted criticism on a number of counts; they ignore *whose* theories they are, and *how* they are manufactured and regulated. Gjerde and Onishi (2000, p. 223) recommend that ". . .research on Japanese needs to be more sensitive to the historical manner in which the Japanese bureaucrats, state-sponsored intellectuals, and business elite try to control how Japan is represented abroad," while Gjerde (2004, p. 146) defines *nihonjinron* as ". . . a special kind of cultural nationalism that emphasizes cultural exceptionalism and broad generalisations about Japan and the Japanese." Johnson (1993) goes further to comment:

> What is implied by this term, however, is an uncritical and culturally chauvinistic description that inflates the significance of Japanese culture and ethos, and uses self-serving explanations of national identity. Such descriptions of Japanese life either implicitly or explicitly suggest superiority and "uniqueness" in comparison to other societies and cultures. (p. 96)

In a more explanatory move, the feminist sociologist and activist Ueno has dubbed *nihonjinron* "reverse orientalism": ". . . a process of devaluation followed by a process of reevaluation, in which an Orientalist perspective is taken up to

define a positive national identity. The idea of *nihonjinron* both fits the existing dominant paradigm for the East, and is appealing for its ability to express a fundamental weakness of Orientalism, namely, Western ambiguity toward the non-Western world" (Ueno, 1997, p. 295). More specifically this "reverse orientalism" involves "the rejection of the Western model in the search for a Japan-specific one that serves politically conservative purposes" (p. 297).

In attempting to evaluate the relational qualities associated with *nihonjinron,* Japanese society is claimed to be characterized by "skillfully maintained face-to-face groups within the complex, industrialised nation it has become" (Hendry, 1998, p. 9). Insofar as they exist, these characteristics have a cultural-political basis rather than a psychological basis and are deemed responsible for the group-related orientations toward consensus decision-making that have been noted within Japanese culture. But these generalizations about "Japan" are outcomes of research on particular populations in very specific contexts. For example, Nakane (1970) investigated features of work relationships between Japanese businessmen in the post-WWII boom period. As many commentators now emphasize, such analyses cannot be sustained at a more general level without engaging in cultural stereotyping and homogenization of culture that ignores gender and class positionings and cultural contests:

> To understand regularities we must proceed from the assumption that cultural discourse reflects struggles over meanings rather than revelations of consensual truths. Hence shared cultural forms disguise an abundance of substantive discrepancies. The link between cultural practices and personal meanings is both highly problematic and constantly changing. (Gjerde, 2004, p.147)

Hence, we cannot ignore how the Japanese—like every other cultural-national group—are major consumers of their own self-representations, so that cultural analysis must address the contemporary social-political interests that promote certain images over others. Befu (2001) claims that *nihonjinron* has acquired the status of a civil religion in Japan, filling the symbolic vacuum in postwar Japan for viable claims to cultural-national identity (i.e., those that are "unblemished by past symbols" (Befu, 2001, p. 101). As well as being explicit in its definitions and its claims on national pride, *nihonjinron*'s advantage is its flexibility:

> The convenience of *Nihonjinron* as a discourse is that its contents can be readily altered: the *Nihonjinron* of the war years is not the same as that of the postwar era. Flexibility of discourse allows different contents to be emphasized according to the needs of the age. (Befu, 2001, p. 101)

Shame/Guilt

The homogenization of Japanese people through the group model is clearly inappropriate for any (urbanized, "developed") society. Sugimoto and Moeur (1981, p. 5) claim that this orientation to "Japan" was initiated by Ruth Benedict, who, before her work on Japan, analyzed small-scale societies that had formed the more traditional subject-matter of cultural anthropology (see Hendry, 1998, p. 7). Benedict's classic text *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese culture* (first published in 1946) was the outcome of what her first chapter calls "Assignment: Japan." However, the book was written without ever setting foot in

Japan. As Befu (2001, p. 51) points out, it remains the most widely read and constitutive source for the *nihonjinron* literature; "One is tempted to claim that the postwar anthropology of Japan is in large part made up of footnotes to Benedict's classic."[12] The sources for Benedict's interpretations included literary accounts,[13] but she relied especially on accounts from Japanese people in the United States, including Japanese Americans who at that time were subject to internment and discrimination as "enemy aliens," and whose accounts would, therefore, have been subject to particular pressures, as well as interpretational difficulties that Benedict elided.

Benedict was enlisted as a cultural anthropologist by the U.S. Office of War Information in 1944 to inform U.S. war policy on "how the enemy looks at life through his own eyes" (Benedict, 1967, p. 3), and to offer predictions on how Japanese people would react under conditions of attack and invasion. In this, she was one of many social scientists applying their skills in support of "the war effort."[14] Significantly, images of radical alterity structure her account even in the book's opening sentence: "The Japanese were the most alien enemy the United States had ever fought in an all-out struggle" (Benedict, 1967, p. 1). It is worth attending to the chain of reasoning that moves from propaganda strategies to occupation to mass extermination (and this not long preceding Hiroshima and Nagasaki):

> Crises were facing us in quick succession. What would the Japanese do? Was capitulation possible without invasion? Should we bomb the Emperor's palace? What could we expect of Japanese prisoners of war? What should we say in our propaganda to Japanese troops and to the Japanese homeland which could save the lives of Americans and lessen Japanese determination to fight to the last man?. . . were the Japanese a people who would require perpetual martial law to keep them in order? Would our army have to prepare to fight desperate bitter-enders in every mountain fastness of Japan? Would there have to be a revolution in Japan after the order of the French revolution or the Russian revolution before international peace was possible? Who would lead it? Was the alternative the eradication of the Japanese? (Benedict, 1967, p. 2)

In this text, Benedict returns to a distinction between shame cultures and guilt cultures that she had formulated earlier (see Benedict, 1935). In her words: "True shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behavior, not as true guilt cultures do, on an internalized conviction of sin" (Benedict, 1967, p. 157). This

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[12] "Translations [into Japanese] have seen ten different editions, and altogether the ten editions produced a minimum of 147 printings as of 1989. According to an article reviewing postwar *Nihonjinron* literature by foreigners in the Japanese editions of *Newsweek* (January 31, 1996), 2.3 million copies of this classic have been sold [in Japan], surpassing its closest rival, the Japanese translation of Ezra Vogel's *Japan as Number One* (1979), by a factor of almost four" (Befu, 2001, p. 51).

[13] Similarly the "political psychiatry" movement (to which Benedict contributed) had to be equivalently creative during the Cold War: "During the fifties American psychoanalysts had difficulty finding any Russians to interview and evaluated the Soviet basic personality by analysing the chess play of Russian grandmasters" (Littlewood & Lipsedge, 1982, p. 158).

[14] At least in Benedict's case, this was explicit. As early as 1919, Franz Boas published a letter of protest exposing and denouncing anthropologists as U.S. spies "prostitut[ing] science" (Boas, 1919/1998).

distinction structures contemporary discussions of cross-cultural psychology and psychotherapy, which draw on the notion that "loss of face" is especially potent in Asian cultures.[15] The key point is that whereas guilt is supposedly relieved by confession (hence the relevance of many psychotherapies), shame relies on exposure alone:

> Where shame is the major sanction, a man does not experience relief when he makes his fault public even to a confessor. So long as his bad behavior does not "get out into the world" he need not be troubled and confession appears to him merely a way of courting trouble. Shame cultures therefore do not provide for confessions, even to the gods. They have ceremonies for good luck rather than for expiation. (Benedict, 1967, p. 156).[16]

Here, we see prefigured much of the rationale for classed and racialized understandings of "psychological-mindedness" that now structures access to psychological therapies in the West (e.g., Feasey, 1998; Hannon, Ritchie, & Rye, 2001). This is alongside the attribution of a sense of superficiality or lack of commitment arising from the contextual or relational character of shame.[17] This issue has exercised psychoanalytic anthropology ever since, through discussions of a possibly more uniform Japanese ego ideal. Summarizing his critical, cross-disciplinary review, Johnson (1993) comments:

> . . .. Although both shame and guilt are felt to characterize Japanese reactions to failure, shame is unquestionably more conspicuous insofar as individual Japanese tend to conceptualise their behaviors in specific interpersonal terms rather than in abstractions of cosmic transgression and ambiguous mortification. This does not make Japanese less susceptible to guilt, but rather makes the manifestations of failure more publicly observable, and hence attributable to shame. (p. 313)

Similarly Rack (1982, p. 109), a key figure within the early transcultural psychiatry movement in the United Kingdom, subscribed to the notion of guilt as culture-bound, but used such cultural variations to prompt relativist reevaluation rather than prescription or exclusion:

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[15] In United Kingdom contexts at least, a key contributor and expression of this discourse is the way in which the notion of *izzat* attaches specifically to Asian (primarily Muslim) women as bearers of family "honour" and reputation (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Alongside, and by virtue of, its gendered allocation I want to draw attention to its socially distributed, rather than individualized, attribution.

[16] Benedict's shame versus guilt distinction lives on in more complex forms, arguably within, but not only within, the *nihonjinron* literature through the veritable liturgy of terms describing structures of and for interpersonal intimacy, distance, loyalty and respect, such as *hone/tatamae, nihon/giri,* and so on that form the major material discussed in, for example, Nakane (1970) and Doi (1986). Interestingly, Doi's extensive analysis of iconic (Anglo-U.S. as well as Japanese) cultural texts is especially useful in offering alternatives to some received western moral positions—in making the case for the importance of acknowledging convention over individualism, for example, in relation to material from Shakespeare's *King Lear.*

[17] Both shame and psychological-mindedness are also gendered, and indeed we might note that—unlike the United States and United Kingdom—Japanese feminists have made little intervention within orthodox psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapies, preferring to set up therapy centers more closely linked to humanist and feminist activist models (Kawano, 1990; Matsuyuki, 1998).

> We are almost bound to feel that a person who does something wrong, *but only starts to feel bad about it when he is found out,* is displaying a lower standard of morality. Even if this feeling is inescapable, we can at least try to counteract any moralizing tendency in ourselves by realizing that there is a cultural difference, and some people are brought up to be more other-directed and less inner-directed, so this is not a simple moral issue. A practical consequence is that guilt is not a reliable indicator of depressive illness in every culture, and we should not expect to encounter it everywhere. (Rack, 1982, p. 109, emphasis in original)

Even if we accept the binary between shame and guilt,[18] Benedict herself implicitly challenged this image of simplicity or uncommitted reasoning because it is the *fantasized* anticipation of, rather than an actual encounter with, humiliation that works as the prompt for shame:

> Shame is a reaction to other people's criticism. A man is shamed either by being openly ridiculed and rejected or by fantasying to himself that he has been made ridiculous. In either case it's a potent sanction. But it requires an audience or at least a man's fantasy of an audience. Guilt does not. (p. 157)

This is more a landscape of panopticon nightmares than of redemption through interpersonal connection. Surely, rather than dismissing a group or category of people as unsuitable for therapy, we might be better off trying to understanding why supposedly confessional approaches might not bring the relief we presume they should.

The shame/guilt discourse involves close connections between representations of individual and cultural moral accountability and state military agendas via representations of "culture" and "personality." Indeed, there are now various accounts emerging that highlight how the willingness of U.S. social scientists to "do their bit" for the war effort during WWII paved the way for a more enduring and active involvement of the social sciences in the conduct of the Cold War (particularly in thinly veiled "counter insurgency" activities in Latin America and South East Asia).[19] Once more, psychology and war were close bedfellows (Wexler, 1983).

Attachment Styles

My final example is more contemporary, although it arises from a ground-swell of work that also has major links with wartime ontologies and familial

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[18] Significantly, Price Tangney and Dearing's (2002) extensive and authoritative treatment of this issue in terms of developmental and therapeutic implications accords the anthropological material very little weight, arguing for shame and guilt as distinct emotions (and, therefore, by-passing the question of cultural distributions).

[19] Although anthropologists were certainly involved and distorted as a discipline (Nader, 1997) (and Area Studies created through the Cold War, Wallerstein, 1998), between 1945 and the mid 1960s, the U.S. military was the primary funder of psychological research. Project Camelot was designed to research and manipulate psychological vulnerabilities in the service of U.S. military and political interests, that is "to promote and influence politically significant aspects of social change in the developing nations of the world" (quoted in Wallerstein, 1997, p. 220). The exposure of this proposed project was remarkable in two respects: firstly, that psychology if anything emerged with its disciplinary profile strengthened (and better funded) from the affair and, secondly, that the exposure and termination of this project did not prevent the commissioning and carrying out of other similar ones (Herman, 1998).

ideologies. Consider Bowlby's famous studies of temporary but forced mother–child separation through evacuation as the prototypical example (Riley, 1983). Ainsworth's (1967) studies in Uganda are also often heralded as one of the early examples of cross-cultural psychological research. Of late, attachment theory has been resurrected from the margins of psychoanalysis, psychology, and ethology, and has become a burgeoning field that also claims connections with neurology and evolutionary theory. Dramatic claims are made about the stability of attachment patternings across species, across cultures, and over time allowing speculations even about attachment's predictive and forensic importance (see, e.g., Cassidy & Shaver, 1999).

For example, Susan Goldberg's (2000) *Attachment and Development* reviewed recent assessment technologies such as "Q sorts" and "the adult attachment interview," which supplement the "strange situation"[20] marking a further shift from psychoanalytic to psychological assessment. In a chapter entitled "Beyond the family," Japan figures as one of three contexts—alongside the Kibbutz system in Israel (represented as a collective system of child rearing—despite the limited ways in which this actually has occurred) and northern Germany (represented as an urban, Western industrialized context)—for the assessment of cultural variation in caregiving roles and attachment styles. The Japanese data prompt the most discussion, due to the need to interpret anomalous findings. After detailed discussion of these anomalies, Goldberg rather sensibly concludes that the problem may be the tool rather than the findings; the strange situation appears to be so strange and distressing that it generates a blanket response and fails to offer any useful discriminations:

These cultural differences, and in particular the Japanese data, which not only failed to confirm the predictions but also failed to detect relationships between maternal care and attachment, gave rise to prolonged discussion regarding the cross-cultural validity of the strange situation. Just as some proponents argued that experiences of regular alternative care might render separations in the strange situation insufficiently stressful to activate attachment behavior, it was suggested that the absence of separations between Japanese mothers and infants renders the separations of the strange situation excessively stressful (i.e., well beyond the moderate stress assumed by the classification scheme). (Goldberg, 2000, p.111)

Rather than eliciting wider reflection on the ethics or cultural presumptions structuring research relationships and paradigms, Goldberg invokes a discourse of cultural specificity: "Valid interpretations require intimate knowledge of child rearing customs and goals" (p. 112). Yet her textbook treatment belies an explosion of work alternately asserting and disputing the relevance of the concepts and methodological procedures of attachment research within a Japanese context (Chau, 2001; Gjerde, 2001; Kondo-Ikemura, 2001; Onishi & Gjerde, 2002; Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000; Takahashi, 1990; van Ijzenhoorn & Sagi, 2001). Indeed, it is tempting to speculate about the broader cultural significance of the preoccupation with questions of dependence, security and nurturance within the contemporary geo-political situation. For the motif of the child is increasingly a key cultural-political index for preoccupations in an

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[20] As an experimental manipulation that takes child distress as the critical measure, the "strange situation" is strange to say the least.

increasingly unstable and uncertain world (see Duffield, 2001; Pupavac, 2001, 2005; Steedman, 1995; Burman, in press).

Goldberg's review study of attachment styles within a specific culture works to bolster claims attesting to the generalizability of Western-defined psychological models, with emerging "differences" functioning paradoxically to confirm this applicability. Japan as "an example of a highly industrialised, urbanized non-Western country" (Goldberg, 2000, p. 108) that is both legible and (through occupation/postcolonial relations) accessible is mobilized rhetorically to support the cross-cultural project. Other interpretations are possible; as an example from intelligence research, another field that has been historically central to the field of individual and cultural differences (see Hegarty, 2007). In a recent article Sato, Horoshi, Juko, and Giyoo (2004, p. 319) point out how in Japan notions of ability are not regarded as innate, and "belief-in effort" emerges as the core construct governing activity, giving rise to an "effort-dependent optimism." Here, we see emerging cultural commentary on the covert parameters structuring a western-defined concept:

> Intelligence as an ability that is domain-general and stable if not innate is thus not a popular notion in the daily life of Japanese people because the emphasis on intelligence is not compatible with their belief-in-effort. (Sato et al., 2004, p. 318)

Conclusions

The blockbuster film *Lost in Translation* (Coppola, 2003) depicts communication gaps, existential crises, and relationship troubles posed for, by, and between two Americans visiting Japan, rather than (as its title and location might suggest) between Americans and Japanese. One of the striking consequences of this is that "Japan" functions in the film as merely the setting or backdrop for the exploration of missed or potential encounter between these two compatriots. In classic orientalist style, Japanese people, culture and practices appear at best as inscrutable, and at worst as bizarre or ridiculous, whereas the American protagonists seem remarkably incurious about why or how they are as they are. Thus, while invoking prospects of cultural negotiation and eroticization, the film—via its actual preoccupations—could be said to bring its viewers face to face with anxieties and lacks that arise much closer to (the presumed or attributed) "home."

Yet even if such narrative devices have a useful reading (e.g., in interrogating what brings people together and makes them identify themselves as sharing "culture"), the plot nevertheless requires a setting that is both geographically and culturally different, yet undemanding. Such a setting distances the two protagonists from their everyday contexts and relationships and engenders a sensibility of cultural estrangement amenable to quasi-anthropological reevaluation of their everyday presumptions. "Japan" appears at a hyper-real remove, as intact and unintelligible, requiring no engagement but rather affording an imagined domain without evidence of poverty or political instability to rupture or intrude upon the protagonists' self-referential ruminations. Perhaps no other country is sufficiently "developed" (or, in researchers' terms, "matched" with the United States) to permit such a smooth and undemanding trajectory through it for these privileged visitors. The orientalist desire for the other has seemingly been transmuted into

willful ignorance and withdrawal into the presumed commonality of advanced capitalist consumption.

What is there between orientalism and normalization? Through attending to these examples focused on the representation of "this system which I call 'Japan'" (Barthes, 1982, p. 3) I have attempted to indicate how psychology—as *the* discipline of normalization—has worked both to counter and then incorporate orientalizing tendencies. Beyond this, I have illustrated how the cross-cultural moment indicates a transdisciplinary unifying project that combines psychoanalytic and anthropological as well as psychological concerns. Shifting across disciplines then, like shifting between normalization (with its corresponding pathologizations) and exoticization (with its corresponding normalizations), often recapitulates rather than resolves the problem. As Takano and Osaka (1999: 332) point out, the "unexpectedly flimsy grounds" on which claims to culturally structured differences have rested not only problematize the existence of such differences, but also put into question the very notion of individual disposition as the necessary counterpart to culture. The epistemological, methodological, and political question remains one of evaluating claims about culture (i.e., how to make sense of, and be critical and politically accountable about, one's sensemaking practices). This can, I propose, be best investigated by tracing through specific cultural-historical debates, which would, therefore, highlight diversities structured by specific axes of social positioning alongside commonalities of material conditions—along the lines begun by Hayami, Tanabe, and Tokita-Tanabe (2003). The three indicative historical examples I have offered have contemporary resonances in theory and practice. They not only speak to the broader military-political agendas that have called forth and continue to structure (Western and non-Western) psychology,[21] but also offer some resources for a resistant reading of the dominant history of psychology and its relations with other disciplines. This is not a matter of discovering some authentic form of cultural specificity that is as yet untainted by Western psychological practices, but rather of attending to close and missed encounters structured by the history of colonialism, which is also the history of psychology.

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[21] Gjerde (2004) extends equivalent arguments to these to the project of cultural psychology and its reworking of the project of indigenous psychology that have brought new life to such essentialized notions.

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