

## Theoretical Issues in Cross National Studies of Worker Attachment to a Group

FUJIMOTO Tetsushi

THIS ARTICLE REVIEWS SIX ORGANIZATIONAL THEORIES to explore whether psychological group attachment among U.S. industrial workers could be enhanced by Japanese management strategies. The three overarching research questions are as follows: (a) To what extent does culture explain workers' psychological attachment to a group? (b) How could Japanese management strategies influence the ways American workers respond to their work? (c) Is there a universally effective management strategy that motivates workers in different socio-cultural settings?

Because worker integration may be one of the key determinants of employees' work morale (Likert, 1961; Worthy, 1950), the extent to which workers prefer working in groups over working alone has special significance (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1990). Previous studies have shown that the degree of psychological group attachment among American workers is significantly lower than among workers in other industrial countries, Japan for instance (see Cole, 1971; Rohlen, 1974). Observers have tried to explain that this cross national disparity in group attachment is a result of differences in cultural tendencies between societies. One common view of American society emphasizes that individualism is the dominant cultural value in the United States, whereas group values are predominant in Japanese society. This view, called the culturalist view or culturalism, makes an assumption that individual vs. group orientation is a culturally transmitted value which people internalize and by which they are motivated (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1990). Furthermore, these cultural values are considered mutually exclusive.

---

The author is assistant professor of sociology at Nanzan University. His research interests are sociology of work and organizations, particularly issues related to gender. His publications include the two co-authored articles "Housework, Paid Work, and Depression among Husbands and Wives" (*Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 35 [Jun. 1994]) and "Employer Characteristics and the Provision of Family Responsive Policies" (*Work and Occupations* 22 [Nov. 1995]).

Much prior research on American work organizations has held the assumption that American workers espouse individualism (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985). The neo-classical economic perspective or rational choice model, for instance, is one of the most influential theories constructed on this assumption (e.g., Becker, 1985; Mincer and Polachek, 1974). This theory posits that individual workers choose to behave in certain ways in order to maximize their personal profit. That is, human decision making is highly rational, and therefore workers behave in the most calculating and efficient way. An underlying assumption is that a worker is essentially individualistic and that the ultimate orientation of a worker is to the individual himself or herself. Given this assumption, the model provides a rational explanation of worker behavior and seeks to understand how workers are motivated individually.

In contrast, Japan has been viewed as a society that heavily stresses group relations (e.g., Nakane, 1970). This view has exerted significant influence on studies conducted during the 1980s about the strength and effectiveness of Japanese organizations and management techniques (see Mito, 1991). Proponents of Japanese group culture have repeatedly stressed that the Japanese workers' psychological group attachment is uniquely strong (e.g., Abegglen, 1958; Clark, 1979), underscoring that this worker attitude reflects traditional Japanese cultural values of group loyalty and devotion. With an assertion that Japan's economic success was indebted to its dedicated group-oriented work force, they argued that declines in America's economy in the 1980s were a necessary consequence of the excessive pursuit of individual self-interest on the part of both employers and workers. This view has further developed into a broader advocacy that Japanese group values are superior to American individualistic values, or more bluntly, that the Japanese are diligent while the Americans are not.

Culturalist explanations of worker motivation, regardless of whether they focus on individualism or groupism, are likely to generalize and simplify the whole process through which workers are motivated. This seems dangerous in part because almost all the alternative explanations, for example, organizational structure, are excluded in the culturalist discussion. On the one hand, one could argue that preference for independence or group affiliation is a value acquired in one's youth and already fully developed at the time of employment. Therefore, individuals bring this orientation to employment relationships from the outside. On the other hand, the worker's preference may be shaped by organizational practices (e.g., conventions, norms, c.f. Hofstede et al., 1990). If the workplace is organized in such a way that one works in isolation from others, or that his or her tasks are specifically described in a job description, worker preference for independence may become stronger. In contrast, if group work is the dominant

mode of work in the organization, preference for group affiliation may be learned through socialization in the workplace (Pascale, 1985). Because employees accommodate themselves to existing work situations and learn to value what they feel is obtainable in the workplace (Gruenberg, 1980), it may be that workers' group attachment is influenced by factors within the organization.

Thus in this article, I review six organizational theories that provide analytic guidelines for cross national studies of workers' psychological attachment to groups: the culturalist theory; the neo-institutional/cultural contingency theory; Koike's theory of skill acquisition; the multi-effect hypothesis of job training; the job structure model; and the controlled participation/Marxist bureaucratic control theory. I discuss these theories in order to compare the culturalist and non-culturalist explanations of worker motivations, and to assess the extent to which individual orientations to the group may be explained using a non-cultural framework. These theories present a wide spectrum of perspectives on the mechanisms through which individual workers in different social settings become attached to groups. By contrasting these competing theories, I try to illuminate the possibilities of different explanations of how management strategies could be adopted to enhance American workers' group attachment, and whether Americans could achieve the allegedly high level of attachment found among their Japanese counterparts.

### **Theories of Worker Attachment to the Group**

#### **1. CULTURALIST THEORY**

The dominant explanation for Japanese industrial relations comes from what is known as the culturalist paradigm (also referred to as the consensus perspective, c.f. Cortese, 1990). The central argument is that the traditional values of duty, loyalty, and devotion have been preserved intact from Tokugawa feudalism through the Meiji era to shape modern worker attitudes, management styles, and the organizational structure in Japan (Nakane, 1970; Vogel, 1963). Nakane (1970, 1978) has argued that while in Western societies an individual constitutes the indivisible sociological unit, in Japan, the group forms the equivalent basic unit. Contextualism (Murakami et al., 1979; Hamaguchi, 1982, 1988), a variant of culturalism, asserts that the Japanese, who seemingly lack autonomy, emphasize interpersonal contexts for instrumental reasons. This means that "Japanese groupism" is not necessarily an individual's blind dedication to the group, but rather reflects the utilitarian attitude that the costs involved in coordinating with other members will eventually be reimbursed individually (Hamaguchi, 1982). Japanese groupism, for contextualists, is "corporativism" where individuals seek

symbiosis between members and the group (Hamaguchi, 1982). Hamaguchi maintains that a majority of Japanese attempt to assert the self at the group level, a propensity which he calls "heteronomy."

Generally, culture is considered to provide the actors with "repertoires," or a fixed set of responses to environments. The key point is that culture is viewed as tacit knowledge that fuels these non-rationally constructed repertoires. The repertoires are not only difficult to copy but also give a distinctive competitive advantage to organizations that possess them (Lincoln, 1990).

The culturalist theory ultimately argues that the elements of the Japanese enterprise community—a strong sense of duty and mutual dependency—are natural reflections of the embeddedness of Japanese organizations in the pervasive culture of Japanese society. Thus, group orientation is conceived as an exceptional cultural tendency of the Japanese nation. It is implied that group orientation is a given and diffuse trait of the Japanese as a whole, thus it would hardly be determined by any occupational or organizational conditions.

The culturalist theory involves several problems. First, the argument is maintained without adequate empirical evidence and explicit international comparisons (Cortese, 1990; Koike, 1988). There is no clear justification for the assumption that group-orientation is unique to Japanese workers. The base of the culturalist argument is a generally accepted dichotomy between Japanese collectivism and Western individualism (see Hamaguchi, 1982). Second, if groupism is embedded in Japanese culture, strong group orientation should be expressed by every Japanese worker, regardless of such determinants as gender. Similarly, the group dimension of work would then be the most crucial motivating factor for all Japanese workers. Culturalists have commonly assumed men as the main social actors, generalizing the argument to women, yet failing to collect data to reinforce this view.

## 2. NEO-INSTITUTIONAL THEORY AND CULTURAL CONTINGENCY MODEL

Neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) suggests that organizational environments, both normative and historical, place legitimacy constraints on macro- and micro-organizational structures. Therefore, existing organizational forms and dominant value orientations among workers are in part a function of factors in the surrounding normative and historical environments. On the surface, the institutionalist arguments resemble those of culturalist theory. The institutionalist approach, however, must be distinguished from the culturalist stand. On the one hand, the culturalists maintain that certain organizational designs are embedded in the culture of the organization, that is, cultural values are seen as inherent in the organizational constituents. On the other hand, the institutionalists claim that the organizational form exists to "sig-

nal” (Meyer, 1979) to external audiences its conformity to the dominant normative rules, that is, culture constrains and legitimates the organizational forms and the intra-social structures.

Cole (1979) stresses the importance of historical interplay of managerial schemes and cultural currents in explaining how the present forms of Japanese management and organizations have emerged. Cole suggests that the distinctive features of Japanese management practices emerged as a response to the historical shock of industrialization. Because Japanese employers in late 1920s had to deal with the problem of labor supply, they undertook paternalistic management strategies in order to secure skilled workers. This paternalism was reinforced by the relative lack of governmental welfare services in Japan, enhancing as a result workers’ dependency on the employer-provided welfare programs (c.f. Lincoln, 1990). In this process, specific Japanese cultural values, as well as historical currents, served as the important resources with which the implementation of the new management tools was successfully carried out.

Institutional theory suggests that social structural/normative factors differ from one society to another, presenting different legitimacy constraints on organizations and the participants’ reactions. One important implication for a U.S.–Japan comparison is that the normative environments may not only differ at the country level, but may be differentiated by gender as well. That is, gender norms may have impacts on organizational structuring. In this regard, there is a possibility that when a certain structure is legitimate for men, the same structure is illegitimate for women, thus in effect causing different social psychological reactions in women and men.

The cultural contingency model of worker attitudes and behaviors (Lincoln, Hanada, & Olson, 1981; Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985) is a micro-level theory consonant with the macro-institutional thesis. This model’s argument has a strong culturalist nuance, for it maintains that “patterns of workplace organization are direct reflections of cultural tendencies—for example, propensities toward groupism vs. individualism or hierarchy vs. egalitarianism” (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1990). According to Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990), workers exhibit positive social psychological reactions to the workplace structures when their “socio-cultural habits, values, and expectations are not perturbed by the routines of organizational life.” It is suggested that organizational traits that are congruent with general cultural values should positively affect the psychological job outcomes of the majority of workers. But incongruent traits should have little influence, or even negatively affect workers’ reactions to their jobs. A key assumption is that cultural values and work expectations are widespread in each social setting. In this regard, both women and men in a country, theoretically, should show similar reactions to the same organizational and job attributes.

### 3. KOIKE'S THEORY OF SKILL ACQUISITION

Koike (1988) argues that intellectual skill acquisition on the shop floor is the crucial foundation of Japanese workers' high work morale. Koike maintains that Japanese blue-collar workers form wide-ranging intellectual skills on the shop floor that are similar to the skills of white-collar technicians and engineers. This blue-collar experience is what he terms "white-collarization" of shop floor workers. Alluding to the highly technical nature of QC circles, Koike questions the probability that blue-collar workers without technical understanding develop high work morale just out willingness and irrational human sentiments, without the promise of benefits and rewards. Hence, Koike focuses his attention particularly on on-the-job training (OJT) and the incentive structure.

Koike (1987) claims that the integration of OJT with wide-range transfers is the source of the workers' "knowledge of the structure and function of production facilities and products." He argues that, though workers are generally reluctant to move to other positions or workshops, in order to reduce this worker reluctance Japanese management "encourages moves by promoting to sub-foreman or foreman those who have experienced the most positions in one workshop or similar workshop" (305). Thus, prospects for promotion enhance workers' willingness to accept mobility and eagerness to learn a variety of skills.

Personnel management is another important aspect of white-collarization. Koike (1986) points out several key features of worker performance evaluations in Japanese firms. The first is that there is a long-term evaluation period before a critical decision is made on the worker. According to Koike, it takes approximately ten to fifteen years after one's entry into the company before obvious differences in promotions/salaries between workers begin to stand out (see also Ishida, 1985). Secondly, multiple raters tend to be involved in the performance evaluation of a worker. Because of frequent moves within Japanese firms, a worker is evaluated by at least several supervisors during the above mentioned rating period.<sup>1</sup>

Although Koike's theory is explicitly designed to explain skill formation in Japanese factories from the human capital perspective, and how skill acquisition relates to the workers' high morale, the theory implicitly contains expectations about the formation of group-oriented attitudes. Clarifying this point requires social psychological assessment of workers' OJT experiences and performance evaluations. First, consider the OJT dimension. The three pillars of OJT and their social psychological consequences are: (a) a senior worker assists a novice worker in learning a new skill, through which close interpersonal relations develop between them; (b) during OJT, a worker moves in and between workshops, through which the workers' social networks expand, and (c) OJT deepens the knowledge of products and production mechanisms on the shop floor, which

causes personal familiarity with the products/production process, and this familiarity leads to the workers' psychological attachment to the workplace. Second, consider the evaluation and promotion process dimension. In Japanese workplaces, the workers who have experienced the most positions on the shop floor tend to be promoted. This suggests two things. First, promotions presume not only skill mastery but also familiarity with other workers. Second, the workers who expect promotions tend to exhibit willingness to acquire wide-range skill areas; thereby their attachment to the workshop increases.

Thus, Koike's theory implies that OJT, skill acquisition, and promotion prospects may be the key sources of Japanese workers' group-oriented attitudes. Then, how would workers who experience little OJT and fewer rotations form their attitudes? A logical answer is that such workers are less likely to exhibit group orientation and that their work morale tends to be low. Thus, if women exhibit low morale in their jobs and work groups, this may be caused by the lack of systematic training like OJT for them. One problem with Koike's theory is that he fails to see the processes of skill formation and career development as a means of labor control. He fails to acknowledge how little pure discretion workers truly exercise within the system. When the management has the crucial decision-making power over the deployment of such a system, the actual impact of technical suggestions raised by QC circles may be limited by the management's interests. This reminds us of Friedman's (1977) notion of "responsible autonomy." Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) state that "the goal of responsible autonomy is to have workers behave as though they were participating in a process which reflected their own needs, abilities, and wills, rather than one aimed exclusively at accumulation and profits" (9). (See also Cole [1979] for the view of QC circles as a management tool to elicit worker obedience.)

#### **4. MULTI-EFFECT HYPOTHESIS OF JOB TRAINING**

The human capital approach to worker training almost exclusively assumes that worker training is designed to maximize individual abilities and productivity. Nagano (1984), however, questions whether job training only affects the recipient of the training. He proposes three potential effects of in-company job training: (a) the direct effect on the recipient's productivity; (b) the effect on organizational productivity; and (c) the effect on non-recipients' productivity. The effect on organizational productivity, according to Nagano, has three components: (a) increased levels of information sharing in the organization; (b) enhancement of worker commitment to the organization; and (c) smoothing of human relations in the organization. The effect on non-recipients of training consists of spillover of training contents through interpersonal job interactions and increased opportunities for informal training through support for another worker

in a higher level job. Nagano demonstrated in his study of Japanese workers that the effect of job training on organizational productivity and on non-recipients was stronger than the direct effect on the recipient's productivity. Thus, Nagano suggests that at least in Japanese firms job training improves not only individual abilities to perform the job, but also increases organizational effectiveness and cohesiveness. It may be that Japanese companies emphasize the effectiveness of an organization as a whole, more than individual capability, and thus enhancement of the individuals' positive attitude towards the organization becomes more important than improving individual abilities (Sano, 1989).

Sano (1978; c.f. Sano, 1989) similarly suggests five potential effects of job training: (a) direct investment effect (improvement of individual abilities); (b) morale effect (enhancement of individual job commitment); (c) internal competition effect (enhancement of organization-level morale); (d) justification effect (rationale for rotations/relocations and promotions); and (e) information effect (expansion of networks). In her comparative study of Japanese companies and foreign capital corporations in Japan (1978), Sano found that the management of Japanese corporations tends to put a stronger emphasis on the morale effect of job training than foreign corporations.

Nagano's multi-effect hypothesis is limited by its failure to explicate the linkage between training and vertical career mobility. He fails to explain clearly why worker commitment to the organization may increase as a result of job training. Sano's hypothesis, on the other hand, explicitly suggests that increased levels of promotional competition in the company are an expected outcome of job training. Sano's argument, however, is obscure as to whether the morale-enhancing effect and the promotional competition effect interact with each other. Sano fails to clarify whether workers' commitment is a direct consequence of experiencing job training, or a consequence of promotional opportunities increased by job training. If training independently enhances worker's esteem, participation in a certain training program itself should increase worker effectiveness, regardless of promotional provisions.

One intriguing implication of these multi-effect arguments of job training is that the multiplicity of training effects may not only be in the nature of the effects, but also in their relative magnitude. According to Nagano's hypothesis, the magnitude of the three training effects may be different for individuals. Therefore, it is plausible that a smaller magnitude of one effect may be offset by a larger magnitude of another. For example, even when it is unrealistic for a person to expect promotion as an outcome of training, still the person's work morale may be maintained due to the shared information in the organization and good human relations at work.

This multi-effect hypothesis of job training clarifies what remains ambiguous in Koike's theory of skill formation. While Koike suggests that the existence

of vertical career span encourages employees to attain multiple job skills through training, he fails to acknowledge the case in which one has no prospect for promotions, like in the case of women in dead-end jobs. According to Koike's logic, job training does no good for such individuals. If the multi-effect hypothesis holds, however, the net effect of job training may be the same for workers who have different levels of promotional prospects.

##### **5. JOB STRUCTURE MODEL**

The job structure model argues that individual differences in work attitudes are principally caused by the disparities in working conditions among workers (Kanter, 1977). According to this model, the characteristics of jobs themselves are more important than the personal characteristics of workers in determining individual work attitudes (Kohn et al., 1983). Kanter (1977) argues that organizational roles carry certain images of the types of persons that should occupy them, encouraging incumbents of the job positions/roles to turn into those types of persons. That is, positions in an organization carry with them different sets of constraints on the possibilities for incumbents to behave in certain ways and to expect certain job outcomes. This model has been frequently used to explain gender differences in work attitudes (e.g., Loscocco, 1990). Based on the assumption that the only source of gender differences is the work itself, this model predicts that if women and men are exposed to the same job characteristics, they should show similar attitudinal responses to them (Miller, 1980; Moore, 1985). Evidence supports the argument that women, as well as men, derive satisfaction from intrinsic job rewards, for example (Loscocco, 1990; Mansfield et al., 1988). Similarly, one could argue that cross-national disparities in worker attitudes can be reduced to the fact that structural features of work settings are different across countries.

##### **6. CONTROLLED PARTICIPATION MODEL**

Robert Cole (1979) suggests that management of Japanese companies often plays a behind-the-scenes role in the allegedly democratic employee involvement in job design. The management controls workers by taking the lead, formally and informally, in initiating policies that workers are guided to accept. This is called "controlled participation." Taking quality-control circles as an example, he suggests that work is organized in such a way as to achieve employees' consent to policies which management wants to pursue. Cole argues that increased worker responsibility in Japanese firms takes place in a work situation where management controls the training procedures, frequency of job rotation, and career patterns. This way, management has leverage to prevent the rise of worker privilege. Similarly, management cultivates the ideology of the enter-

prise community to limit self-oriented efforts on the part of workers to enhance their rights and privileges.

Cole (1979: 202) suggests that Japanese management generally retains control over three aspects of work: (a) the speed of production; (b) number of items to be produced; and (c) the size of the workgroup. Cole states:

It is the responsibility of the section chief and lower-level supervisors to set the workplace for the workgroup or individuals where appropriate. Workers and unions have *no direct input* into the determination of workplace, amount of production, and size of workgroup. ...Company representatives set the production goals for each workgroup; QC circles act to implement these goals whenever there is a gap between the goal and actual performance. In short, QC circles act in the framework of decisions determined by management. (1979: 202-03, emphasis mine)

Thus, Cole emphasizes that the consensus in Japanese organizations is coupled with the strong exercise of management power and authority over processes of work. Cole's argument implies that group orientation of Japanese workers may be an artifact, which is strategically induced by management attempts to so organize workers. By implementing an ideological apparatus that encourages cooperation and personal sacrifice but discourages self-orientation, Japanese corporations tactically manipulate employees to make the taming of the whole organization easier. The key notion in the controlled participation model is management retention of control over critical work processes. Thus, even when a worker is allowed some job-related discretion, the management always has a stronger authority over core decision making in the workplace.

The controlled participation thesis is closely tied to the Marxist paradigm of organizational analysis. The core notion of the Marxist analysis rests on bureaucratic control (Edwards, 1979). It is a system of labor control that aims to dissolve workers' class solidarity, de-skill them, and to maximize their commitment to the employer, by normative and symbolic incentives. Rather than rewarding the performance of specific job tasks, bureaucratic control motivates workers by rewarding their total commitment to the firm. Workers are lured to become good corporate citizens by incentives such as promotions, pay, and employment security. Worker participation in the decision-making process is considered a strategy to elicit commitment, by allowing workers to act as if they can reflect their own needs and abilities in work (Friedman, 1977). According to Lincoln (1990), there are striking parallels between the control structure suggested by the Marxist model and Japanese management practices. For instance, the Marxist model suggests that teamwork, finely-graded job ladders, and a strong corporate culture are some of the most sophisticated strategies of labor control. Thus, the Marxist theory de-emphasizes the relationship between the Japanese enterprise community and the uniqueness of Japanese cul-

tural values. Instead, it stresses that Japanese distinctiveness stems from the highly advanced and sophisticated modes of labor control undertaken by Japanese employers.

The underlying assumptions of the labor control theory are twofold. First, provision of promotional prospects is a universally effective incentive to elicit workers' commitment. Secondly, in most industrialized nations the dominant organizational actors subject to the system of control are men. In fact, these assumptions reflect the theory's weakness. The theory appears to assume that men by default are the major internal labor market actors, who value and seek the rewards of promotions. Yet, women are precluded from the discussions, assuming that they are outside the system of internal career development. The theory fails to carefully examine how women, with low expectations of work incentives, might deviate from men's patterns of job reactions.

Then, how might the labor control thesis predict gender differences in Japanese group orientations? From the Marxist point of view, the Japanese group orientation is a reflection of the workers' submissiveness as good corporate citizens expressed in exchange for the promised rewards of promotions and job security. Given the fact that a majority of Japanese women are segregated into low status work in organizations (Clark, 1979; Cole, 1979; Rohlen, 1974), resulting in poor working conditions (Cook & Hayashi, 1980), we can infer that Japanese management tactics are ultimately not designed to maximize the women's group commitment. Although Japanese organizations have been known for their lifetime employment system, generally Japanese women have been structurally excluded from the system, in order to sustain the male-oriented system (Carney & O'Kelly, 1990; Steven, 1983). This suggests that Japanese women may be well aware, prior to their employment relationships, that even if they make cooperative efforts on behalf of the group, they are hardly ever remunerated with the same rewards as those for the men. Thus, given the institutionalized differential incentive structures for women and men in Japanese organizations, the Marxist paradigm implies that there is a possibility that the group orientation is indeed a male-specific phenomenon, while Japanese women's work attitudes and behaviors may be more self-oriented.

### **Research Implications**

Given these differing theoretical approaches, I will discuss some of their research implications for a study of the determinants of American workers' psychological attachment to the group.

*Culturalist theory:*

The most fundamental, and perhaps the most important, culturalist assertion is that individualism is a fixed and culturally diffuse national characteristic of Americans. This has the rather radical implication that the degree of self-orientations must be constant between groups with different attributes within each country: demographic (e.g., gender, marital status, job rank); job (e.g., skill requirements, promotion chances, team participation); organizational (e.g., firm size, height of organizational hierarchy, presence of worker evaluation); and industrial (i.e., type of industry). More succinctly, culturalism implies all Americans are equally self-oriented. The culturalists assume that job structures do not influence American group orientation; groupism can not be implemented among American workers by management strategies.

*Cultural contingency model:*

In contrast to the culturalist theory, the cultural contingency model asserts that, in order to increase worker effectiveness, a match is necessary between socio-cultural values and how jobs are structured. Thus, the model clearly suggests that if individualism or personal autonomy is the dominant cultural value in the U.S., an organizational apparatus like quality control circles should interfere with the individualistic value. The cultural contingency model has a strong culturalist flavor, and the model acknowledges little variation in the group and individual tendencies within each country across differing social subcategories, for example, gender and job ranks. Similarly, the model assumes that the positive influence exerted by the match between a value and job structures is not contingent upon availability of certain rewards, such as promotions.

*Koike's skill formation theory:*

Koike implies two things: group orientation could be stronger, first, among the workers whose jobs require OJT, and, second, among those who expect to be promoted. Koike, however, fails to discuss how workers who are off the promotion track and those with jobs that require little OJT may react to work. A key implication that flows from his reasoning is that American workers involved in intellectual skill formation processes like OJT, with proper promotional incentives, should exhibit work motivation and group consciousness as strong as those of their Japanese counterparts. While Koike himself believes that it is necessary to provide workers with opportunities for career advancement in order to stimulate their motivation towards multi-skill learning, we still do not know how much independent psychological impact OJT may have on workers. Koike

appears only to suggest that the effect of OJT is pronounced for those who expect promotions.

*Multi-effect hypothesis of job training:*

Nagano and Sano suggest that job training improves both worker productivity and individual attitudes towards work activities and the organization. The bottom line of this argument is that job training has multiple facets, and that they exert different influences on workers. Furthermore, the magnitude of the effects of different training facets may vary across individuals. To illustrate the strength of the multi-effect hypothesis, consider once again Koike's claim on skill formation.

While Koike argues that on-the-job training in Japanese firms is interwoven with job rotations and promotions, only a limited number of workers will be promoted to higher job positions subsequent to training and rotations. Koike believes Japanese workers' high morale can be completely explained by their positive attitude towards competition in the vertical mobility race. For him, the relative lack of such motivational structures in U.S. firms is the critical drawback in American management strategy to induce worker motivation. Thus, Koike's argument implies that the provision of promotion opportunities is a necessary and sufficient condition to implement OJT effectively.

The multi-effect hypothesis implicitly suggests that promotion may not necessarily be the only catalyst for the effective operation of OJT, and that the absence of promotional prospects may be offset by the presence of other potential benefits obtained from OJT. Thus, this argument suggests that to explore the multiple effects of OJT in the U.S., one must first elucidate how promotional opportunities are distributed among workers in America. Although gender differences in the promotion trajectories would be smaller in the U.S. compared with other industrial countries, the principle of the survival of the fittest heavily applies to American industrial workers of either gender (Koike, 1987). Co-worker training seems to be the key OJT strategy in the U.S. firms, yet horizontal and vertical career spans associated with OJT are narrow in the U.S.

Drawing on the multi-effect hypothesis, one could argue that promotion expectations increase the positive effect of OJT on work group orientations. Yet, even when one has slight promotional prospects, having good relations with others in the work group and/or having a sense of accomplishment and learning new things in one's job, for example, may increase the positive effect of OJT.

Thus, if Koike's argument holds true, experiences of OJT would increase employees' group attachment only when they expect promotions. On the other hand, if the multi-effect argument holds true, while promotion expectations would increase the positive OJT effect, OJT by itself should also have a positive

impact on attachment. This logic would apply not only to OJT but also to team participation. Koike would argue that employees view quality control circles instrumentally, and therefore the provision of promotion opportunities is necessary to encourage QC members to become group-oriented. In contrast, one could claim based on the multi-effect model that being a QC member has its own merit (e.g., sense of belongingness, opportunities for informal communication). While promotion expectations would buffer the positive effect of QC on group orientations, even if the member does not expect promotions, QC membership itself should enhance his or her work group orientations.

*Job structure model:*

According to the reasoning of the job structure model, no national differences should emerge in individual attachment to group when job characteristics of Japanese and American workers are the same. For instance, an employee's group attitude may be determined by the degree to which team work is required of him/her to successfully perform the job. That is, individual differences in group attachment may be caused by the fact that jobs are structured differently for employees in different locations of an organization, or for those in different social settings (c.f. Koike & Inoki, 1990). The job structure model predicts that when employees are in a setting where team work is required, for example, they all should feel equally attached to the group, irrespective of their socio-cultural backgrounds. This prediction contradicts the culturalist model, that employees bring certain values and attitudes towards work from outside the employment relationship.

Secondly, intrinsic job rewards, or benefits that employees derive from task performance (Kalleberg, 1977), are another potential determinant of individual orientation to the work group. Evidence exists that intrinsic rewards increase organizational and work commitment for both Japanese and American workers (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1990). As Seeman (1976) has argued, when one's work is not fulfilling in itself, the work tends to be viewed instrumentally, as merely a means to the fulfillment of non-work needs. Seeman called this "self-estrangement." As a result of self-estrangement, the importance of the work group as one's reference group decreases. Thus, based on the job structure model, one could predict that when employees are intrinsically rewarded to the same extent, they should be equally group-oriented, irrespective of their socio-cultural backgrounds. This prediction is, again, contradictory to the assertions of the culturalist model.

*Controlled participation model:*

What is unique about Cole's controlled participation model lies in its argument

as to the supervisory determination of critical processes of work. Cole argues that Japanese management retains decision making power over crucial aspects of work processes, such as speed of work and number of products to be produced, even though the management allows workers a token freedom of self-regulation. According to him, the immediate shop floor agent of management control in Japanese organizations is a supervisor. If labor control is more advanced and widespread in Japan than in the United States, as Lincoln and Kalleberg (1985) suggest, team work activities in Japanese organizations should be operated under much closer management/supervisory monitoring than in American organizations. Even though team work activities may have independent positive effects, supervisory control may make them even stronger. This is because management evaluation affects workers' salary increases and promotions, and it is assumed that close supervision makes workers more sensitive to the supervisory ratings of their participation in collaborative team work.

Marxist theory presents perhaps the most culture-free argument. Like Koike, the control theorists suggest that the most important commitment-inducing apparatus is the promotional ladder, that is, firm internal labor market (FILM).<sup>2</sup> Group orientation is a result of bureaucratic control structures, and therefore it is not cultural or gender-specific. Thus in the United States, any apparatus such as promotional ladders should enhance the individual's work group orientation. Regardless of nationality, workers who have little expectation of promotions would exhibit weak orientation to groups.

### **Conclusion: Culturalism vs. Non-Culturalism**

As is obvious from my review of the six theories, the pure culturalist theory emphasizes the notion of cultural relativism, while the skill formation and the labor control theories propose societal convergence, stressing the technical aspects of work organizations, and the neo-institutional theory illuminates within the contingency framework the interplay of culture and organizational structure. Thus, the above theoretical arguments can be broadly divided into two analytic categories: cultural absolutism (pure culturalist theory) vs. cultural non-absolutism (cultural contingency and cultural convergence models). Hence, the first stage of the validity assessment of the six theories should be based on this dichotomous guideline.<sup>3</sup> If, for instance, the level of individuals' psychological attachment to the group varies across different social categories in Japan (e.g., gender), this weakens the cultural absolutism argument, opening the way for non-absolutist explanations. Then, in the second stage, we must explore which of the two cultural non-absolutist models—the cultural contingency model or

the cultural convergence model—has stronger power to explain the differences in work group orientation among American and Japanese workers.

In conclusion, the possibility can not be ruled out that culture could play a part in shaping workers' attitudes. As the review of theories suggest, however, it is unlikely that it exerts the ultimately powerful force. It is true that Japanese management itself may be a cultural product, but more attention needs to be paid to its rational component factors, such as skill formation strategies and organizational design, and to its cross-cultural applicability. Although there may be no universally effective management strategy as such, these theories do imply that some strategies are likely to be effective among workers in industrialized nations. Future research would benefit by closely examining what works and what does not when applying Japanese management styles to industrialized and under-industrialized nations.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kumazawa (1989) states that one bright side of the Japanese merit rating system is that all workers are encouraged to expand their abilities, without applying the principle of "survival of the fittest" from the outset. Yet he argues that this system, by emphasizing the latency of one's ability, forces a stereotypical image of the fitting survivor upon workers, and that it elicits conformity from them. Kumazawa lists three major elements in worker performance rating in Japanese companies: (a) job output rating—quality and quantity of job performed, improvements in job-related procedures, and suggestions are evaluated and are likely to affect individuals' bonuses and salary raises; (b) job attitudes rating—worker's general attitudes on the job, including eagerness and personality, are evaluated and are likely to affect promotions as well as bonuses and pay raises; (c) ability rating—worker's manifest and latent abilities are evaluated, including rating of knowledge, skills, capacity relating to planning, decision-making, negotiation, and leadership, and affect promotions, relocations, and transfers.

According to Kumazawa, the emphasis on latent ability mostly stems from the flexible job structure in the Japanese workplace. For instance, factors such as one's adaptability to new technology, acquisition of multiple skills to help team colleagues, carefulness in detecting machine abnormality and defective products, and positive attitude toward participating in quality control activities to reduce waste and improve product quality are all considered to be latent abilities (Kumazawa, 1989). In general, a Japanese company expects every member of the organization to develop and extend these abilities. It is not sufficient for a successful worker only to follow standard procedure. Thus, one's future in the company depends on how much latent ability he or she can spontaneously acquire within a certain range of time. However, job training seems to play a small part in developing such ability. It rather reflects one's "motivation" toward the job, or readiness to tackle the job. Kumazawa admits that the fair expectation also provides workers with chances to improve their work processes. He concludes that provision of opportunity to devise in one's job, along with its latent positive effect on one's career future, has been the crucial incentive for a majority of Japanese blue-collar work-

ers in jobs that essentially lack intrinsic rewards.

Kumazawa's observations of the Japanese performance rating system elucidate two key features. First, making spontaneous efforts on the job is crucial. As Kumazawa implies, good job performance itself is not sufficient for a high rating. In a sense, good performance is taken for granted. Rather, how much one dares to "sacrifice" self for the job, as it were, is the crucial point in rating. A worker who stays in a narrow and comfortable job area, without showing eagerness to work in other areas, would receive a relatively low evaluation, even if he or she performs the job well. Secondly, cooperation with other members is of great importance. Cooperation seems to be strongly related to maintenance of community ties. It reflects the fact that one is not only expected to make objective work contributions to the organization but also to demonstrate good corporate citizenship in creating harmonious human relations in the workplace. It is not necessarily a reflection of the Japanese cultural value of harmony as such, but simply a safety valve for antagonism in the workplace which may threaten smooth work flow and high productivity. In this sense, a lone wolf would be viewed as uncooperative, and as a result his or her rating may be lowered.

Kumazawa argues that this system exerts an inhibitive effect on a majority of workers. By giving an implicit warning as to how a non-conformist may be treated, it inhibits deviant behavior. Therefore, activities such as overtime work and after-work socialization are not necessarily consistent with workers' true wishes, but they simply do them because they fear to be labeled non-conformists and rated low as a consequence.

<sup>2</sup> The extent to which an organization has developed FILM can be measured by the differentiation level of authority hierarchy in the organization (Kalleberg & Berg, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> In fact, the culturalist claims are inherently difficult to operationalize for in-depth empirical testing (Clegg, 1990). As Koike and Inoki (1990) argue, omission of technological variables "leaves too much to be explained by the 'dummy variable' of national culture" (5). Yet, as Lincoln and Kalleberg (1985) and Koike and Inoki (1990) argue, the explanatory power of the culturalist thesis can be weakened if one could provide firm empirical evidence that organizational and technical factors exert a non-negligible impact on workers' attitude formation. In this regard, the skill formation and the control theories contain highly promising premises that can be empirically tested.

## References

- Abegglen, J. C. 1958. *The Japanese Factory: Aspects of its Social Organization*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Becker, G. S. 1985. "Human capital, efforts and the sexual division of labor." *Journal of Labor Economics* 3: 533-58.
- Bellah, R. N., R. Madsen, W. M. Sullivan, A. Swidler, and S. M. Tipson. 1985. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Carney, L. S., and C. G. O'Kelly. 1990. "Women's work and women's place in the Japanese economic miracle." In K. Ward (ed.), *Women Workers and Global Restructuring* New York: ILR Press.
- Clark, R. 1979. *The Japanese Company*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Cole, R. E. 1979. *Work, Mobility, and Participation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cook, A. H., and H. Hayashi. 1980. *Working Women in Japan*. Ithaca, New York: New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations.
- Cortese, A. J. 1990. "Post-modern Japanese society and politics." A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-West Sociological Association.
- DiMaggio, P. J., and W. W. Powell. 1983. "The iron cage revisited: institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields." *American Sociological Review* 48: 147-60.
- Edwards, R. T. 1979. *Contested Terrain*. New York: Basic Books.
- Friedman, A. 1977. *Industry and Labour*. London: Macmillan.
- Gruenberg, B. 1980. "The happy worker: an analysis of educational and occupational differences in determinants of job satisfaction." *American Journal of Sociology* 86: 247-71.
- Hamaguchi, E. 1982. "Nipponteki shudan shugi towa nanika" (What is Japanese groupism). In E. Hamaguchi and S. Kumon (eds.), *Nipponteki Shudan Shugi*: 1-26. Tokyo: Yuhikaku Sensho.
- Hamaguchi, E. 1988. *Nippon-rashisa no saihakken* (Rediscovery of Japanese uniqueness). Tokyo: Kodansha.
- Hofstede, G. 1980. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ishida, H. 1985. *Nippon kigyō no kokusai jinji kanri* (International human resource management of Japanese firms). Tokyo: Nippon Rodo Kyokai.
- Kalleberg, A. L. 1977. "Work values and job rewards: a theory of job satisfaction." *American Sociological Review* 42: 124-43.
- Kalleberg, A. L., and I. Berg. 1987. *Work and Industry: Structures, Markets, and Processes*. New York: Plenum.
- Kanter, R. M. 1977. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kohn, M. L., and C. Schooler. 1973. *Work and Personality: An Inquiry into the Impact of Social Stratification*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Koike, K. 1986. "Naibu shoshinsei no nichibei hikaku (Japan-U.S. comparison of internal promotion system)." In M. Aoki, K. Koike, and I. Nakatani (eds.), *Nippon Kigyo no Keizaigaku*: 161-80. Tokyo: TBS Buritanika.
- Koike, K. 1987. "Human resource development and labor-management relations." In K. Yamamura and Y. Yasuba (eds.), *The Political Economy of Japan: Volume 1-The Domestic Transformation*: 289-330. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Koike, K. 1988. *Understanding Industrial Relations in Modern Japan*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Koike, K., and T. Inoki. 1990. *Skill Formation in Japan and Southeast Asia*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.
- Kumazawa, M. 1991. *Nipponteki keiei no meian* (Bright and dark sides of Japanese management). Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo.
- Likert, R. 1961. *New Patterns of Management*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Lincoln, J. R. 1990. "Japanese organization and organization theory." In B. M. Staw and L.L. Cummings (eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior*. (eds.): 255-94. Greenwich: JAI Press.
- Lincoln, J. R., M. Hanada, and J. Olson. 1981. "Cultural orientations and individual reactions to organizations: a study of employees of Japanese-owned firms." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 26: 93-115.
- Lincoln, J. R., and A. L. Kalleberg. 1985. "Work organization and workforce commitment: a study of plants and employees in the U.S. and Japan." *American Sociological Review* 50: 38-60.
- Lincoln, J. R., and A. L. Kalleberg. 1990. *Culture, Control, and Commitment: A Study of Work Organization and Work Attitudes in the United States and Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Loscocco, K. A. 1990. "Reaction to blue-collar work: a comparison of women and men." *Work and Occupations* 17: 152-77.
- Mansfield, P. K., J. R. Vicary, M. Cohn, P. B. Koch, and E. W. Young. 1988. *Job and Family Stress and Women's Work Performance*. Atlanta, GA: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.
- Meyer, M. W. 1979. "Organizational structure as signaling." *Pacific Sociological Review* 22: 481-500.
- Meyer, J. W., and B. Rowan. 1977. "Institutionalized organizations: formal structure as myth and ceremony." *American Journal of Sociology* 83: 340-63.
- Miller, J. 1980. "Individual and occupational determinants of job satisfaction." *Sociology of Work and Occupations* 9: 337-66.
- Mincer, J., and S. Polachek. 1974. "Family investments in human capital: earnings of women." *Journal of Political Economy* 82: S76-S108.
- Mito, T. 1991. *Ie no ronri* (The logic of ie). Tokyo: Bunshindo.
- Moore, H. A. 1985. "Job satisfaction and women's sphere of work." *Sex Roles* 13: 663-78.
- Murakami, Y., S. Kumon, and S. Sato. 1979. *Bunmei toshite no ie shakai* (The household society as a civilization). Tokyo: Chuo Koron Sha.
- Murray, M. A., and T. Atkinson. 1981. "Gender differences in correlates of job satisfaction." *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science* 13: 44-52.
- Nagano, H. 1984. "Kigyounai kyouiku no kouka: howaito karaa kyouiku no jirei kenkyuu" (Effects of in-company training: a case analysis of white-collar training). *Mita Shougaku Kenkyuu* 27: 89-99.
- Nakane, C. 1970. *Japanese Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nakane, C. 1978. *Tate shakai no rikigaku* (Dynamics of the vertical society). Tokyo: Kodansha.
- Naoui, M., and C. Schooler. 1990. "Psychological consequences of occupational conditions among Japanese wives." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 53: 100-16.
- Ozawa, M. N. 1989. "Introduction—American experiences." In M. N. Ozawa, S. Kimura, and H. Ibe (eds.), *Jyosei no raifusaikuru* (Women's lifecycle). Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

- Quinn, R. P., K. Staines, and M. R. McCullough. 1974. *Job Satisfaction: Is There a Trend?* Washington, DC: US Department of Labor.
- Rohlen, T. P. 1974. *For Harmony and Strength*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sano, Y. 1978. "Kigyounai kyouiku no toushi kouka" (Investment effectiveness of in-company training). *Toyota Foundation Research Report* 3.
- Sano, Y. 1989. *Kigyounai roudou shijyou* (Internal labor markets). Tokyo: Yuhikaku.
- Seeman, M. 1959. "On the meaning of alienation." *American Sociological Review* 24: 783-91.
- Steven, R. 1983. *Classes in Contemporary Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vogel, E. F. 1963. *Japan's New Middle Class*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Worthy, J. C. 1950. "Organizational structure and employee morale." *American Sociological Review* 18: 169-79.