Bridges or Walls:
Crossing the Cultural Terrain
in Intercultural Studies

Scott Ree

Introduction

No one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white or Black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival in fact is about the connections between things.... It is rewarding—and more—difficult to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about "us." But this also means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how "our" culture or country is number one (or *not* number one, for that matter). For the intellectual there is quite enough of value to do without *that*.[1]

I begin this paper with a long quote from the last page of Edward Said's book, *Culture and Imperialism,* because of its relevance to the discussion below about the conceptual approach to culture taken up by teachers of courses in intercultural or cross-cultural studies[2]. This is an area of study that has grown in popularity in the language and communication departments of

Japanese colleges and universities, particularly over the past five to ten years[3]. That broader aspects of communication, including the important realm of culture, are now taught in addition to basic language training is a positive step towards increasing human understanding and reducing human conflict. Yet if we pay attention to Said's words, we need to take a closer look at what role these courses and what role educator-academics play in either helping to build the bridges that connect people or the walls that keep us *separated*.

Clearly, culture is a complex concept and practice and has been describe by Raymond Williams as 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.'[4] With the increased global flow of media, commodities and people in the twenty years since publishing *Keywords* , and the prevalence today of the word culture in humanities and social science literature and research, Williams might agree that *culture* and its equivalent in most other languages has become an even more complicated term and terrain.

For teachers of intercultural studies there is a basic belief that culture is integral to processes of communication, understanding, and the formation of self. People think, believe, value and behave because of their cultural upbringing. Subsequently, there is an assumption that the study of culture and cultures will increase students' cultural awareness and facilitate better intercultural understanding, communication and relationships.[5] Though this is only an assumption, it provides a light in the distance to aim for. The problem is in navigating the complex cultural terrain that lies ahead, a terrain pot-marked by the weight of history and power, as Said reminds us.

Such complexity makes choosing a particular approach to culture difficult and contentious. It is all the more so because of our advantageous social position in the construction of meaning and knowledge. As educators and academics we are granted an

authoritative voice and a captive audience. We control cultural capital, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would suggest; thus we need to be especially sensitive to our use and investment in ideas about culture. Educators formulate and pass on conceptualizations and representations of culture and cultures as do textbook writers, and their choices potentially influence how students will view the concept and practice of culture. These choices are the culmination of their own negotiation between personal experiences and academic and popular discourse, so while teachers (and students) can contest authorized and popularized conceptualizations and representations, they are not free of historically and socially constructed meanings and knowledge. Bourdieu argues further about the use of language by academics:

> the social sciences must take as their object of study the social operations of *naming* and the rites of institution through which they are accomplished. But on a deeper level, they must examine the part played by words in the construction of social reality and the contribution which the struggle over classifications... makes to the constitution of classes—classes defined in terms of age, sex or social position, but also clans, tribes, ethnic groups or nations.[6]

Academics and educators in intercultural studies have examined and written about many aspects of culture that can cause miscommunication, misunderstanding and even conflict in intercultural relationships. The strength of this research is that it has contributed to a much better appreciation of how in a particular social situation people from different cultural backgrounds will display differences in, for example, thought, perception, action, behaviour, and communication style. It helps make us aware that not everyone shares our version of reality so we must be open to other possible interpretations of life and presentations of self.

The weakness of this research is that is has accepted and

reinforced popularized conceptions and representations of culture. These were born and nurtured during European expansionism mainly in the nascent discipline of anthropology, as I will discuss in part one below, and they also received nourishment from the fields of sociology, geography, social psychology, linguistics, and literature—disciplines that have greatly informed academics and educators in intercultural studies.[7] Here and in the mass media, culture has been popularized as ethnically, geographically and linguistically bounded, homogeneous, ahistorical, abstract, reified, and deterministic.[8]

By accepting such notions of culture, much research and fieldwork is often poorly formulated. Since culture is tied to race, place and language, people are mainly defined as Americans and Japanese, Asians and Westerners, Blacks and Hispanics, Spanish speaker and English speakers, and the complexity of an individual's changing social roles and identity is ignored. Since a cultural pattern is assumed to exists among members of a reified culture, only discrete aspects of culture are examined. This is different from anthropological research, where whole patterns of life are studied. Since culture is persistent and continuous, time can be eliminated as a variable and historical processes bypassed. Since culture is deterministic and socialization hence a functional process, social power and social control can also be ignored. Finally, since culture is seen as whole and distinct, cultural patterns are examined mainly to show these differences and not to show the connections between people.

My concerns with accepting and reinforcing these notions of culture are threefold. First, I wonder if overemphasizing the distinctiveness, uniqueness, and homogeneity of a people, does not bring about the opposite result of that intended by intercultural studies. How are we to empathize and connect with other people if we always point out, reproduce or construct descriptions of their Otherness.

Second, I worry that the use of popularized notions uncritically will help cover over the historical struggle over meaning and the production of knowledge and reality that shapes the social landscape for the betterment of some people and the detriment of others. Fixing the fuzzy concept of culture in time and space and naturalizing it only assists people who prefer to create or maintain group solidarity and uniformity, who would erect tribal, ethnic and racial boundaries, who would 'invent tradition',[9] less out of a desire for community and identity than the privilege and power of a dominant and dominating social position.[10]

Third, within the context of Japan, the study of culture and cultures if not academically rigorous can easily lapse into what is commonly termed *nihonjinron* or *nihonbunkaron*: a genre of popular writing on the subject of *Japaneseness* that purports how Japanese in language, racial distinctiveness and purity, geographic isolation, and cultural traditions are a unique and homogeneous people with an ancient, continuous and enduring history.[11] In Japan, too many of the textbooks used in intercultural studies fall into this genre and many of the comparisons between Japanese culture and other cultures seem intent on showing how Japanese are different, thereby reinforcing Japanese identity and, potentially, prejudices against *non-Japanese*.[12]

Part One : The Concept of Culture : Naturalized Terrain

As mentioned above, the term culture has a complex history, reflecting the complexity in the social landscape of its cultivation and use. As Williams pointed out in 1976, the term culture in English has three usages apart from its biological use. The first use is as an 'independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development.'[13] We can see this usage in the sentence, *He is a man of culture*. In this sense, one either has culture or doesn't, or in a colonial sense, one either displays European culture—the sophisti-

cated and progressive ways of Europeans—or is primitive. In an associated meaning, if one is cultured, one is civilized, as opposed to barbarian, though the latter term was often used to describe a whole society as orderly and educated, as Enlightened.[14]

A second and related use to the first is as an 'independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.' This latter use refers to the music, theatre, literature, painting, sculpture, film and other representative works, including sometimes scholarship, that result from the process of the former use, according to Williams.[15] The sentence, *Her painting is a great work of culture,* captures this meaning. Today, we have terms like high culture, mass culture and popular culture to distinguish between different conceptions of cultural works and cultural production.[16]

A third usage noted by Williams is as an "independent noun . . . which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, or a group. As we shall see, this third usage was popularized in early anthropological and sociological writings and is the one most readily found in the literature on intercultural studies. The anthropological usage seems to have developed from Herder and the German Romantics, who in rejecting the idea of culture as a historical process 'leading to the high and dominant point of eighteenth century European culture' referred to 'the specific and variable *cultures* of different nations and periods . . . and of different social groups within a nation.'[17] Herder's notion of culture, though attributable to all people, was of spiritual or human development, as opposed to the material development and rationality of industrial society.[18]

Tylor (1870) is identified as the first to introduce the term culture in its anthropological sense into English, though it didn't gain greater currency until into the first half of the twentieth century.[19] He defined it as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabil-

ities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society.'[20] In this early usage we see the beginning idea of what would become the dominant science of the other, a science that studied, conceptualized, categorized and represented others in an objective system of constructed knowledge based on a European perception of the world with itself at the centre.[21] This is not to suggest that conceptualizations and representations of other peoples did not occur in earlier history.[22] Rather, they did not occur under the rubric of scientific method and scientific truth.[23] Nor were they couched in modern discourse.[24] Also, they did not occur within a universalizing view of the world that the imperial powers were busy framing, while they were extending colonial control over vast parts of the globe. Writes Said about the complicity of other disciplines in French expansionism:

> Sociology (inspired by Le Bon), psychology (inaugurated by Leopold de Saussure), history, and of course anthropology flourished in the decades after 1880, many of them culminating at International Colonial Congresses (1889, 1894, etc.).... Whole regions of the world were made the objects of learned colonial attention....[25]

It is in the early use of the term culture in anthropology that we find a critical point of departure in the development of the concept of culture. In objectifying the whole way of life of a people, groups of people and whole societies—which were seen to share similar cultural codes, such as a language, similar patterns of behaviour and thought, and be of a similar race or bloodline—came to be labled cultures. It is from this association that we can talk about people belonging to a culture instead of belonging to a group with a long, complex and dynamic cultural history. Culture moves from a concept to a reified thing with defined borders. People don't live with and through culture, they are a culture. In the minds of imperialists, they would become primitive or backward cultures that needed help to progress. This is not to suggest

that most anthropologist were willing compliers in such a classifi-cation, rather they promoted cultural relativism to counter Eur-opean ethnocentrism.

Still, their formulation of culture helped shape perception. In their objectification of other peoples and their practices, early cultural anthropologists and social anthropologists came to view these peoples as extraordinarily diverse yet culturally insulated, distinct, coherent and homogeneous. Wrote Ruth Benedict in her still popular book, *Patterns of Culture*, a culture 'like an individ-ual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action'.[26] Indeed so cohesive and homogeneous were these peoples viewed, Margaret Mead could suggests, 'If we realize each human culture, like each language, is a whole, . . . then we can see that if individ-uals or groups of people have to change . . . then it is most impor-tant that they should change from one whole pattern to another.'[27]

There is clearly no idea here of cultural slippage over time, cultural borrowing, infiltration, interaction or exchange. Social and cultural change is not seen as a dynamic, contentious and disruptive historical process but if anything a revolution; one whole pattern gives way to another—from the primitive to the modern. Yet as Wolf stresses, these bounded and 'apparently isolated . . . groups of people were in fact already deeply entwined in a growing world system of commerce, colonization and the exercise of imperial power. . . .'[28] They were already in the midst of change and already negotiating different cultural practices when the anthropologists arrived to classify them. Also, while it is true that people living together over long periods of time can be seen to share similar cultural codes, overemphasizing the coheren-cy and consistency of a people denies the historical struggle involved in the reproduction of meaning, knowledge and social life. Suggests Burtonwood, 'the problem with drawing rigid cul-tural boundaries is that not only does this deny intercultural contact and understanding, but it also suggests a higher degree of

cultural homogeneity within boundaries than is ever likely to exist.'[29] Such an overemphasis also plays into the hands of cultural nationalist and ethnic nationalists who would have us believe in the essence and purity of their people.[30]

In objectifying and categorizing the cultural practices of *primitive* and *tribal* societies, the idea of culture was also endowed with geographical dimensions and boundaries. This, of course, was a landscape in transition, being then remapped, remade, and re-presented by European powers.[31] Burtonwood notes the growing trend of this kind of social-science discourse and practice: 'In 1905 Graebner spoke of the Kulturkreise (culture area) of Oceania. At the University of North Carolina Howard Odum was developing a school of regional sociology. Boas, the father figure of American anthropology, was classifying cultural artifacts by region.'[32]

While cultural practice does arise from the social processes of a group in and through space, geographical and social boundaries are ever transgressed or altered by the migration of people and their ideas. For example, Clifford notes that few of the 'informants' of ethnography were homebodies, themselves having interesting histories of travel as workers, pilgrims, explorers, religious converts.[33] Colonization was a great force in this transmigration as is global capitalism today and both in their wake have left little landscape, ethnoscape or ideoscape untouched.[34] It is therefore odd that we can imagine and talk in fixed terms about space and nations when these are every day being remade and re-produced. Or perhaps because of the foreign within, after Anderson, we can only *imagine communities*.[35]

Anthropologists also emphasized the timelessness of the societies they were observing and commonly represented cultures in the present tense. Suggests Carrithers, 'it sometimes seems that the present tense means something more, that for many anthropologists the society in question was in fact unchanging and

traditional'.[36] This nostalgic trend can be likened to the German Romantics' call for an 'alternative idea of human development' which opposed the inhuman 'progress' of industrialization, of a 'mechanical' society based on the principle of reason, and 'emphasized national and traditional cultures' and 'folk-culture'.[37] It can, too, be linked to one trend in modernism in which, writes Harvey, 'inventing tradition became of great significance in the late nineteenth century precisely because this was an era when transformations in spatial and temporal practices implied a loss of identity with place and repeated radical breaks with any sense of historical continuity.'[38] Anthropologists were perhaps as much trying to comment on the woes of their own changing societies in representing others in nostalgic terms.

But why should we believe 'ancient' and 'traditional' societies are spared upheavals and 'breaks in historical continuity' unless this history is itself invented or ignored ? Instead, Wolf urges us to see that 'All human societies on which we have record are "secondary," indeed often tertiary, quaternary, or centenary. Cultural change or cultural evolution does not operate on isolated societies but always on interconnected systems in which societies are variously linked within wider "social fields."'[39]

Linguistic relativism has further blocked roads to understanding others. The noted linguists Whorf and Sapir in particular contributed to this concept by strongly tying a person's understanding of the world to his or her language. Writes Whorf :

> every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyses nature, notices or neglects types of relationships and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.[40]

No one should deny the importance of language in influencing how we perceive reality, but it is clearly only one form of material

in the construction of our 'house of consciousness' and being. Non
-verbal patterns of communication and other cultural codes
operating within and through human relationships are constantly
read, interpreted and acted on by the whole of our senses. Nor, I
would argue, are these codes, language included, as culturally
bounded as Sapir and Whorf would suggest. Languages and other
codes have long commingled in human history and are from the
beginning mutable.[41] If we pay more attention to how symbols and
codes operate in and through human relations over time, and the
way people construct and use these codes to re-present experi-
ence and reality, communicate their needs, and control others, we
might see that our 'house of consciousness' has more open win-
dows than closed doors. Researchers then, as Leeds-Hurwitz
urges, must stop abstracting and analyzing one code and start
examining 'the connections among codes, the changes in single
codes over time and the connections among codes of different
cultures.'[42] I would add that they must also stop giving determinis-
tic powers to codes and locate them within human relationships.

Another tendency in cultural and social anthropology and in
sociology is the abstraction of culture, where culture is removed
from human relationships and endowed with its own nature. This
abstract culture takes behaviouralist, cognitive and semiotic
forms and feeds off spatially and temporally fixed notions of
culture. Cultural anthropologists, such as Benedict, in a desire to
categorize cultural practices often described them in static and
objective terms, as patterns of behaviour. This greatly enabled
culture to become an observable phenomena, separate from the
social history of a people. The influential sociologist, Emile
Durkheim too talked of 'social facts', which were 'every way of
acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the
same time existing in its own right independent of its individual
manifestations.'[43] Other anthropologists and psychologists
stressed the cognitive nature of culture, the pattern of perception

and thoughts of a people. From this point of view, culture can be seen as a computer programme installed in the minds of members of a society.[44] Sapir and Whorf also viewed culture as something apart from people, but rather than viewing it as patterns of behaviours or programmes of beliefs and values they saw it as linguistic habits and patterns, in which the reality of a language community is encoded. It is language as the receptacle of culture that stands apart from people. Extending the model of language to other aspects of social life, such as myth, art, and religion led other anthropologists, most notably Levi-Strauss, to conclude that symbols act like language in that they have an internal structure that can be mapped. But Bourdieu argues that symbolic objects as language should not be seen as autonomous from the social conditions of production, reproduction and use. To do so only bestows 'the appearance of scientificity on the naturalization of the products of history. . . .'[45]

Though abstraction allowed academics to write and theorize about something as complex as social relations and cultural practice, it helped reify notions of culture. Once reified, it was all too easy to attribute deterministic, even omnipotent power to culture. We find this in the words of Clifford Geertz : 'man's nervous system does not merely enable him to acquire culture, *it positively demands* that he do so if it is going to function at all'.[46] In this statement Geertz implies that culture is the essential energy source for the nervous system. Sapir goes even further in suggesting 'Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much *at the mercy* of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society'.[47] These are strong words indeed. For Porter and Samovar, culture becomes a powerful computer : 'As we program computers to do what they do, our culture to a great extent programs us to do what we do and to be what we are.'[48] Writes Carrithers on

Benedict's and others anthropologists' deterministic notion of culture, it 'was not only ahistorical, it was in effect anti-historical. Each culture had its own causal and conservative power, stamping of each generation, on each plastic human individual, it own distinctive character. The consequence was... that in such a theory 'social and cultural patterns have a determining character with little place for will, accident, change, or the commingling of circumstances.'[49]

Part Two : High Walls Across the Intercultural Landscape

We can now see how these various conceptualizations about culture are reproduced in the literature and teaching material of intercultural studies. To begin, we will look at the discourse of several of the most influential and most referenced theorists in the field of intercultural communication, which clearly reflect the popularized notions of culture discussed above.

Edward Hall, an early theorist in the area of non-verbal communication and intercultural communication noted in the preface to his best seller, *The Silent Language,*[50] the influence of Benedict's ideas on his thinking and his bibliography reads like a who's-who list of famous anthropologists. Like Benedict, Mead and others, he employed us to appreciate the variation of cultures. Yet in theorizing about culture he, too, falls into the trap of simplifying and naturalizing cultural processes and inevitably his discourse helps limit our appreciation for cultural variation and change. Societies as reified cultures are cut up mainly along national or regional borders and people within these borders are presented as homogeneous. Since he presents examples in the present tense and omits discussions of historical change, culture is given a timeless essence. To take one example of how he conceives of and represents culture, he suggests, 'The Germans tend to be more technical in the restrictions they place upon themselves than the Austrians, who are more formal.... Americans, on the other hand, have

comparatively few technical and formal restrictions."[51]

In this and other explanations and examples of different cultural patterns, we get the impression that for Hall people are passive lumps of clay that are molded by their culture, especially through language, into one shape and consistency. Or to expand on his own analogy, they are programmed by culture, which is likened 'to a giant, extraordinary complex, subtle computer' whose 'programs guide the actions and responses of human beings in every walk of life.'[52] They don't make and remake themselves with and through culture. No, when persistent patterns do change, it is without notice. Reflecting Mead's idea, say Hall, 'a cultural pattern just collapses and gives way to another.'[53] Who are the agents of change ? Hall doesn't exactly tell us as he prefers to use passive verbs to describe social processes, though he does suggest that core behaviour patterns are supported by a series of technical props, which when removed bring about change, apparently without any social struggle worth mentioning.

Dean C. Barnlund, who has written much about the differences in Japanese and American communication patterns and culture, was also influenced by the anthropological work of Benedict and Mead. He noted as 'among the greatest insights of this modern age' their postulation about the 'existence of a "cultural unconscious."'[54] He also reflected their ideas when he wrote of how each society developed 'a coherent set of rules of behavior.'[55] But Barnlund, like too many other theorists in intercultural studies, does not examine by which cultural means, actors and institutions such 'norms of behavior' become norms or the sites of struggle in the reproduction of normalized behaviour and dominant meanings.[56] Rather, these norms of thought and behaviour of a people are just there to be observed as a phenomenon, to be categorized and then compared.

While ethnographic study can reveal the fine details and rich social texture of a group and the connection of a group to the

larger world, when it paints over subtleties with abstractions and ahistorical generalizations it ends with a discourse like Barnlund's. Here, the world is described as a 'global village' though it conceived of more as a cultural prison, inhabited by people from many separate and distinct yet cohesive cultures, divided on the basis of country. Increasingly, they will have to communicate with each other but there is a problem. The people from these cultures are so lifeless and unconscious, 'few ever recognize the assumptions on which their lives and their sanity rest.' They are so separated, 'they rarely notice that the ways they interpret and talk about events are distinctively different from the ways people conduct their affairs in other cultures.'[57]

Following Whorf and Sapir, Barnlund sees language as a critical determinant. For example, Barnlund wonders pessimistically how someone who comes to see the world through the 'Navaho' language and becomes 'an Indian' can ever think or see beyond their culture and identity. There may be a way around this paradox, he tells us. This is 'to expose the culturally distinctive ways various peoples construe events.'[58] This would be useful if such research was well conceived. Otherwise, we would be better advised to examine the cultural discourse by which various theorists have and continue to simply define other people's identities (Indian, Oriental, Islamic, etc.) as well as their ways of doing, knowing and being.

Porter & Samovar's definition in their popular *Intercultural Communication : A Reader,* is perhaps the best example of an ahistorical, deterministic, abstract and reified idea of culture. They suggest :

> People learn to think, feel, believe, and strive for what their culture considers proper.... What people do, how they act, and how they live and communicate are both responses to and functions of their culture.... Formally defined, culture is the deposit of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion,

timing, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a large group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. . . . Culture is persistent, enduring, and omnipresent. . . . As we program computers to do what they do, our culture to a great extent programs us to do what we do and to be what we are. Our culture affects us in a deterministic manner from conception to death—and even after death in terms of funeral rites.[59]

The way they talk of this thing *culture,* its as if it has become the twentieth century's god, the new omnipotent force in the world.

In the literature on intercultural studies in Japanese we find the same notions of culture. Kanazawa, while drawing attention to the difficulty of representing a group as a uniformed culture and unified people and to the prejudice of stereotyping, falls back into talking about Japanese people as if they were one unit which showed one behaviour pattern. Subscribing to a deterministic view of culture, he suggest that people are unconscious of their cultural patterns.[60] Honna similarly mentions how the world has a complex mix of ethnic groups, cultures and language families, though he assumes these subtleties don't apply to Japan or Japanese, whom he imagines have had a homogeneous society for a long time.[61] Ishii et al. are also concerned to break down cultural prejudices that would have us rank cultures. Yet they seem unaware of the effect of reproducing and naturalizing in language simple generalizations. In one diagram they neatly split up the world into Western culture, Japanese culture and the culture of developing counties.[62]

It would be unfair to suggest that all intercultural theorists and educators conceive of culture as the above authors. On the other hand, many researchers in the area of intercultural studies never make explicit their understanding of culture and just takes up the most popularized notions, associating culture with language, race or geographical space and representing it as a country or region :

the culture of America, the culture of Britain, the culture of Japan, Western culture, Oriental culture, Arab culture are all favorite examples. What seems more at issue for these theorists is having an easily defined and stable sample populations from which to identify differences in such areas of culture as communication style, behaviour, values, perceptions, and ideas.[63] When researchers focuses on a larger culture unit, such as America, subcultural differences are investigated among, for example Black Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans. But these labels, though apparently more distinguishing than a broad label like Americans, can just as easily wash over the heterogeneity and history of a group situated in a larger social matrix.[64]

In Japan, the teaching material for courses in intercultural studies is very reflective of the popularized notions of culture found in much of the literature and seems more intent on emphasizing differences than making connections. Most of the textbook don't even deal with the concept of culture. They just describe through generalizations and simplistic examples either the mainstream cultural patterns of one or more countries or examine differences in cultural behaviours, attitudes, perceptions, communications styles, etc., using ahistorical examples from two or more countries, the favorites being Japan, the U.S. and the U.K..[65] These books just present as natural historically constructed terms and concepts. There are also texts that compare Japanese culture with English speaking cultures by looking at examples in language.[66] Underlying this approach is a language determinism : language = conscousness = behaviour. Another form are those textbooks that present the timeless traditions of Japanese culture, which, supposedly, Japanese college students should be made aware of so that they can understand about their Japaneseness.[67]

Some authors do try to address the main concepts and issues in the field of intercultural studies and make explicit their ideas

about the concept of culture. But again we find the popularized notions of culture. Klopf and Ishii, for example, quote Samovar and Porter in their definition of culture and go on to say 'It is the sum total of the learned behaviours of a group of people living in a geographic area.' Furthermore, culture is persistent, and enduring. Japanese culture is described as 'the traditions of the Japanese people' which 'are transmitted from generation to generation.' Differences between Japanese and Americans and Japanese and Westerners provide example which reinforce the authors' idea of Japanese culture as bounded, holistic and enduring.[68]

Condon directly talks about breaking down cultural barriers and yet his generalizations about American ways and Japanese ways in the absence of the social, cultural and political history that brought about and sustain such ways would seem more to increase those barriers.[69]

Conclusion : Building Bridges in Intercultural Studies

Here I have briefly critiqued, in particular, the field of anthropology and how concepts of culture developed in this field seeded and spread their roots into the academic discourse of intercultural studies and also other popular discourse. Rather than producing historic, dynamic and interconnected notions of social and cultural life, these concepts have encouraged stale and rotting labels, and naturalized representations and characterizations of others that block paths to understanding between people. Reified culture is viewed as deterministic and national and ethnic cultures are presented as bounded, distinct, and homogeneous. In intercultural studies such conceptualizations have led to research that has overemphasised the cultural differences between people and over-generalized about the enduring cultural characteristics of nations and ethnic groups.

What is interesting is that scholars within the disciplines of

anthropology and sociology, and more recently cultural geography and literary criticism, have tried to come to terms with their early political, social and theoretical history over the last twenty to thirty years. In so doing they have provided serious critique of such concepts as *nation, culture, ethnicity* and *race,* and have examined the process of naming and categorizing and the relationships between discourse, knowledge and power. An examination of this body of work was beyond the scope of this paper, though it has greatly infused the discussion here.

Intercultural studies has yet to examine its own role in the construction of knowledge. But if as educators and academics we are to help reduce human conflict and increase intercultural understanding by teaching about different ways of doing, knowing and being, we must present to our students more complex models of the interplay between cultural practice and historical and political processes of socialization and group formation and change, especially in a world that seems to be becoming ever more divisive while ever more interconnected.

Notes

1. Said (1993 : 336).
2. The terms intercultural and cross-cultural are often used interchangeably in the literature, though in a semantic sense cross-cultural implies going across barriers and intercultural implies a meeting, sharing, and mixing of cultural forms. I prefer the sense of intercultural and will use it in this paper. In Japanese intercultural is usually translated as *ibunkakan*. Literally this means *between different cultures* so in fact it is closer in meaning to cross-cultural than intercultural.
3. I use the term intercultural studies here in reference to courses within language and communication departments that emphasize the role of culture in communication and understanding. Though these courses can be divided conceptually into two general camps : comparative culture and intercultural communication, in practice there is so much overlap I have chosen to include them under one heading. Courses on comparative

culture or understanding foreign cultures have had a longer history in Japan's post-secondary institutions. Though many of these courses are taught within departments of general studies or anthropology, I am here concerned with those taught in language and communications departments. Depending on the text chosen and the preferences of the instructor, such courses tend to compare different aspects of Japanese culture with a country or countries where the language studied is spoken. For example, within English studies, Japan is compared to the U.S., England, Canada, etc. Courses in intercultural or cross-cultural communication, though first appearing in some universities in the early 1970s, are more popular of recent. These courses also emphasize many aspects of culture, but particularly focus on how culture influences the communicative behaviour of people in interpersonal and intercultural relationships. Most of these course are found in English departments because of the predominance of English studies in Japanese universities and colleges and the association of English with *internationalization*. Also, the field of intercultural communication grew in significance in the 1960s in English speaking countries with growing immigrant populations from diverse backgrounds, particularly the U.S. and Canada. Consequently, intercultural communication research and writing has influenced English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language studies. Researchers in the field of intercultural communication, however, come from such disciplines as anthropology, socio-linguistics, social psychology, and communication.

4. Williams (1976 : 72).
5. Results from a survey of 45 teachers of intercultural studies in Japanese colleges and universities conducted by the author in the spring of 1995.
6. Bourdieu (1991 : 125).
7. See Burtonwood (1986) ; Carrithers (1992) ; Clifford (1988) ; Said (1993) ; Wolf (1982).
8. Fitzgerald (1991) examines what metaphors the media use to unite or separate people into different social groups and what role the media plays in the construction of ethnicity, identity and culture.
9. See Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983) ; Sollors (1989).
10. See Young (1990) for a discussion on the repressive qualities of the desire

for community, in the case of feminist groups and other groups in the U. S., and Keesing (1989) on how political activists oversimplify and romanticize their history and culture for political expediency.

11. See Yoshino (1991) for a more detailed discussion of *nihonjinron*.

12. See Solomon & Black (1994 : 150-151) on how in the new racism, race is coded as culture. They suggest that the central feature of these processes is that the qualities of social groups are fixed, made natural, confined within a pseudo-biologically defined culturalism.

13. Williams (1976 : 76-82)

14. Ibid., 48-50.

15. Ibid., 79.

16. A detailed examination of the history of the changing meaning and role of cultural works and cultural production is beyond the scope of this paper. See Benjamin (1969) and Harvey (1989 : 10-65) for a detailed discussion of this history. The fact that cultural works are seen as critical to representing, reproducing and contesting social reality and the way of life (or culture) of a group of people, especially given the scope and influence of popular culture, shows the reciprocal influence of the second and third usages of the term culture noted by Williams.

17. Williams (1976 : 79)

18. Ibid., 79-80.

19. Burtonwood (1986) ; Williams (1976).

20. Tylor, E. B., quoted in Burtonwood, 2

21. Asad (1973) ; Said (1993).

22. See for example Doggett (1993) ; Greenblatt (1991).

23. Carrithers (1992 : 19) notes how both Benedict and Radcliffe-Brown "took the natural sciences as the model of knowledge," even using words like *laboratory, experiments in living* and specimens.

24. Michael Foucault (1980) has been foremost in writing about how modern discourse helps those who seek dominant control in historical space disguise their will and desire by masking it in a scientific language of truth and rationality that takes on a naturalness and authority through its appearance as scientific and hence verifiable by scientific procedures.

25. Said, 170.

26. Benedict, quoted in Carrithers (1992 : 15).

27. Mead, quoted in Carrithers, 15.
28. Wolf, quoted in Carrithers, 25.
29. Burtonwood (1986 : 14).
30. See, e.g., Fujitani, T., (1993) ; Robinson, M. (1993) ; and Yoshino, K. (1992).
31. On the development of thinking about space during the Enlightenment period, see Harvey (1989 : 240-259).
32. Burtonwood, 13.
33. Clifford (1992 : 97).
34. Appadurai (1990 : 295-310)
35. Anderson (1983)
36. Carrithers (1992 : 8).
37. Williams (1976 : 79). On the usage of *folk* and *Volk* by the German Romantics, Martin-Barbero (1993 : 10-11) notes, 'folk conveyed the accusing and ambiguous presence of tradition in modern life. Volk conveyed a sense of the roots of a lost national unity. It implies ties and traumas that have brought together and confused the cultural imagery of people-tradition and people-race. These two realm of imagery, however, distinguished between a historical idealism placing the truth of the present somewhere in the past and a nationalist racism negating history.'
38. Harvey (1989 : 172).
39. Wolf, quoted in Carrithers, 25.
40. Whorf, quoted in Burtonwood, 10.
41. Leeds-Hurwitz (1993 : 155-174) presents the concepts of *continuity, layering, reinterpretation, transformations, revival, assimilation, appropriation , and syncretism to* explain the dynamic character of codes and how these connect to the dynamism of social life.
42. Ibid., 159.
43. Durkheim, quoted in Burtonwood 12.
44. Robinson (1985 : 10-11).
45. Bourdieu (1991 : 33).
46. Geertz, quoted in Carrithers, 35. Emphasis added here.
47. Sapir (1973 : 209). Emphasis added here.
48. Porter, Richard E., and Samovar, Larry A., "Approaching Intercultural Communication," 31

49. Carrithers, 29.

50. This book, as of 1990, was in its 29th printing. See also his other titles:
Hall, E., *Beyond Culture* (1976), which is in at least its 24th printing &
Hall, E. & Hall, M. R. *Understanding Cultural Differences* (1990).

51. Hall (1959: 123).

52. Hall & Hall (1990: 3).

53. Ibid., 88.

54. Barnlund (1982: 13).

55. Ibid., 13.

56. Examples of means might include images, built landscape, gossip, press,
laws and academic papers; actors might include politicians, teachers,
priests, neighbours, family member and talk-show hosts; and institutions
might include publishing houses, universities, courts, churches, citizen
organizations and government bureaucracies among others.

57. Barnlund, 14.

58. Ibid., 14.

59. Porter & Samovar (1982). This book is now in at least in its tenth
printing, attesting to its popularity.

60. Kanazawa (1992).

61. Honna (1993).

62. Ishii et al. (1990: 9).

63. See, e.g., Gudykunst, W. & San Antonio, P. (1993); Sakamoto, N. &
Naotsuka, R. (1982).

64. Sauceda, J. S. (1972) discusses the polemics surrounding the use of the
terms Mexican American and Chicano and the inaccurate representation
of the people so labeled.

65. For examples of the first type see Nishida & Gudykunst (1983) and
McLean (1991); for examples of the second type see Burleigh & Tobioka
(1986); Collett (1995); Dowd & Asano (1987); Kurokawa (1985); and
Yukawa & Yatsushiro (1988).

66. See e.g., Fromm (1988).

67. See Seidensticker et al., (1979) for a good example of this kind of
textbook.

68. Klopf & Ishii (1984).

69. Condon (1979).

208

References

Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities*. London : Verson.

Appadurai, A. (1990) 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' in *Theory, Culture & Society*. London : Sage, 7 : 295-310.

Asad, T. (ed.) (1973) *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. London : Ithaca Press.

Barnlund, D. (1982) "Communication in a Global Village" in Porter, R. & Samovar, L. (eds.), *Intercultural Communication : A Reader*. California : Wadsworth, Inc. Third Edition, 4-15.

Benjammin, W. (1969) *Illuminations*. New York : Schocken Books.

Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge : Polity Press.

Clifford, J. (1992) 'Traveling Cultures' in *Cultural Studies*. Lawrence G., Nelson, C. & Treichler, P. (eds.) New York, London : Routledge, 96-116.

Collet, P. (1995) *Human Watching*. Tokyo : Seibido.

Condon, J. (1979) *Cultural Barriers : Considerations for the International-minded* Tokyo : Nan'un-do.

Doggett, R. (1991) *New World of Wonders : European Images of the Americas, 1492-1700*. Seattle : University of Washington Press.

Dowd, G & Asano, M. (1987) *Cross-Cultural Dialogues*. Tokyo : Macmillan LanguageHouse.

Fitzgerald, T. (1991) 'Media and Changing Metaphors of Ethnicity and Identity' *Media, Culture and Society*. London : Sage, 13 : 193-214.

Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge : Selected Interview and Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York : Pantheon Books.

Fromm, M. (1988) *The Culture of Language*. Tokyo : Macmillan Language-House.

Fujitani, T. (1993) 'Inventing, Forgetting, Remembering : Towards a Historical Ethnography of the Nation-State' in Befu, H. (ed.) *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia : Representations and Identity*. Berkeley : Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Research Papers and Policy Studies No. 39.

Greenblatt, S. (1991) *Marvelous Possessions : The Wonder of the New World*. London : Clarendon Press.

Hall, E. T., & Hall, M. R. (1990) *Understanding Cultural Differences : Germans, French and Americans*. Maine : Intercultural Press Inc..

Hall, E. (1976) *Beyond Culture*. New York : Anchor Books/Doubleday.

Hall, E. (1959) *The Silent Language*. New York : Doubleday.

Harvey, D. (1989) *The Conditions of Postmodernity*. Oxford : Basil Blackwell Ltd.

Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T. (eds.) (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

Honna, N. (1993) *Communication Beyond Culture*. Tokyo : Kaiseishupan.

Ishii, S., et al. (1990) *Intercultural Communication : Keywords. Tokyo :* Yuhikaku.

Kanazawa, Y. (1992) *Ibunka to tsukiau tame no shinrigaku*. Tokyo : Seishin-shobo.

Keesing, R. (1989) *Creating the Past : Custom and Identity in the Pacific*. The Contemporary Pacific, 1/2 : 19-42).

Klopf, D. & Ishii, S. (1984) *Communicating Effectively Across Cultures*. Tokyo : Nan'un-do.

Kurokawa, S. (1985) *Typical Mistakes in Japanese-American Communication*. Tokyo : Kinseido.

Leeds-Hurwitz, W. (1993) *Semiotics and Communications : Signs, Codes, Cultures*. New Jersey : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Martin-Barbero, J. (1993) *Communication, Culture and Hegemony : From the Media to Mediations* . London : Sage Publications Ltd.

Porter, R. & Samovar, L. (1982) 'Approaching Intercultural Communication' in Porter, R. & Samovar, L. (eds.), *Intercultural Communication : A Reader*. California : Wadsworth, Inc. Third Edition, 26-42.

Robinson, G. (1985) *Crosscultural Understanding' Processes and Approaches for Foreign Language, English as a Second Language and Bilingual Educators*. New York : Pergamon Press.

Robinson, M. (1993) 'Enduring Anxieties : Cultural Nationalism and Modern East Asia' in Befu, H. (ed.) *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia : Representations and Identity*. Berkeley : Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Research Papers and Policy Studies No. 39.

Said, E. (1994) *Culture and Imperialism*. New York, Vintage Books.

Sapir, E. (1973) *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in language, culture and personality*. Mendelbaum, D. (ed.) Berkeley : University of California Press.

Sauceda, J. (1982) 'Chicano/a Ethnicity : A concept in search of a Content' in Porter, R. & Samovar, L. (eds.) *Intercultural Communication : A Reader.* Wadsworth, Inc., Third Edition, 185-194.

Seidensticker et al. (1979) *Japanese Culture from Foreign Eyes.* Tokyo : Kinseido.

Sollors, W. (ed.) (1989) *The Invention of Ethnicity.* Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Solomos, J. & Black, L. (1994) 'Conceptualising Racism : Social Theory, Politics and Research'. Sociology 28 : 1 :143-161.

Tobioka, K. & Burleigh, D. (1986) *Japanese and Westerners.* Tokyo : Macmillan LanguageHouse.

Whorf, B. L. (1956) *Language, Thought, and, Reality.* Cambridge Mass : M. I. T. Press.

Williams, R. (1976) *Keywords : A Vocabulary of Culture and Society.* Glasgow : Fontana/Croom Helm.

Wolf, E. (1982) *Europe and the People without History.* Berkeley : University of California Press.

Yoshino, K. (1992) *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan : a Sociological Enquiry.* London : Routledge.

Young, I. M. (1990) 'The ideal of community and the politics of difference', in L. Nicholson (ed.) *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* Princeton : Princeton University Press.

Yukawa, E. & Yatsushiro, C. (1988) *Developing Intercultural Communication Skills.* Tokyo : Kinseido.