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## **Revolutions, Samurai, and Reductons: The Paradoxes of Change and Continuity in Iran and Japan**

**Fathali M. Moghaddam and David S. Crystal**

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*This paper assesses policies for managing cultural diversity in Iran and Japan, with particular focus on the treatment of women as a cultural minority. Following social reduction theory, the distinction between rates of cultural change at macro- and microlevels is highlighted. It is argued that macro political and economic changes have taken place fairly rapidly, but micro changes in everyday social practices have changed much more slowly. The latter, it is argued, are structured by social reduction systems, which can act to slow down societal change. This insight is used to cast light on the situation of women and other minorities in North America.*

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**KEY WORDS:** change; justice; gender; ethnicity; culture

“What does it mean for citizens with different cultural identities, often based on ethnicity, race, gender, or religion, to recognize themselves as equals in the way we are treated in politics?”

Gutmann (1992, p. 3) raised this question as part of an ongoing debate concerning the management of cultural diversity in Western societies. This debate has become particularly heated in the United States and in other immigrant-receiving countries, where ethnic collective movements have added their voices to that of feminist movements, to demand major reforms in government policies toward minorities. At the heart of such reform movements are demands for “equal recognition” for cultural minorities (Taylor, 1992), and a move away from assimilation toward multiculturalism (Moghaddam, 1993).

The term assimilation is associated with a “melting away” of differences, and government policies designed to achieve a merging of peoples to create a more homogeneous society (Lambert & Taylor, 1990; Taylor, 1991). Multiculturalism, in contrast, is associated with a “celebration of differences,” and government policies designed to maintain and strengthen diverse cultural practices. Within this debate, the situation of women as a “cultural minority” is unique, because at least

in *some* societies “The predominant problem for women as women is not that the larger or more powerful sector of the community fails to notice or be interested in preserving women’s gendered identity, but that this identity is put to the service of oppression and exploitation” (Wolf, 1992, p. 76).

Western researchers have explored some of the psychological challenges associated with assimilation and multiculturalism, but their discussions have focused mainly on experiences in Western societies (Katz & Taylor, 1988). Even in those cases where a discussion is labeled “international,” the focus has typically been on North America *and* Western Europe and has excluded non-Western societies. This is despite the fact that perhaps the most dramatic and important examples of both cultural diversity and homogeneity are present in non-Western societies, where the numerical majority of humanity live.

Our objective in this paper is to help move the discussion on psychology and cultural diversity to the international level, by assessing some aspects of government policies for managing cultural diversity in Iran and Japan. We are *not* concerned to make direct comparisons between Iran and Japan on specific criteria, such as the advancement of minorities in education and work. Rather, we intend to show that similar relationships between macro- and microlevels of cultural change exist in both of these societies. We chose to focus on Iran and Japan because they represent dramatic examples of cultural diversity and homogeneity, respectively, and because their traditional Asian cultures stand in sharp contrast to Western cultures. More specifically, we shall bring into focus our discussions of Iran and Japan by making comparisons with the situation in the United States, which has historically emphasized assimilation, and Canada, historically a multicultural society.

## **TWO CENTRAL THEMES: TREATMENT TOWARD THE CULTURAL MINORITY “WOMEN,” AND CHANGE VS. CONTINUITY**

In examining the management of cultural diversity in a more international context, we shall focus in particular on two themes that deserve greater attention. The *first* theme is government policy adopted toward women *as a cultural minority*. Our use of terms such as “cultural minority” requires us to clarify our interpretation of culture. We conceptualize the term very broadly to mean everything that is influenced by humans and, more specifically, as the normative system that prescribes correct behavior for people in different social roles and different social contexts (Moghaddam et al., 1993). For example, such prescriptions concern aggressivity, empathy, language, occupations, moral values, and other aspects of interpersonal relations. Cultural minorities, in particular, possess the added characteristic of lacking political and economic power in relation to the majority group.

Based on such a definition, it is reasonable to regard women as a cultural minority. Women differ significantly from men on many of the criteria noted above, including their lower aggressivity (Baron & Richardson, 1994), language use

(Tannen, 1990), traditional occupations (Maccoby, 1966, 1988; Ross, 1986), and moral values (Gilligan, 1982). In addition, women have historically been excluded, and continue to be excluded, from political power, as reflected by their very small numbers in the U.S. Congress, for example (Ornstein, Mann & Malbin, 1994). Even among young students, who presumably are less sexist than older generations, women are not seen as equally viable political candidates for the top political positions (Ogletree, Cofee & May, 1992).

The question we raise, then, is what policies have central governments, which are predominantly male, adopted toward this female cultural minority? In addressing this question, we shall point to variations on the familiar themes of assimilation and multiculturalism. Of course, government policy on cultural diversity has changed considerably over the last century.

This brings us to the second major theme: *change*, which is central to government policy toward all minorities, including women. Government policies are often introduced with the explicit goal of directing change. But the concept of change is only meaningful in relation to that of constancy.

A focus on the relation between change and constancy in the context of cultural diversity brings to the surface a fundamental paradox: although cultures change, in some essential ways they remain the same. Such "sameness" makes it possible to identify an "Iranian culture" that spans across revolutions and other historic events, just as one can identify a "Japanese culture" that is continuous across the disruptions of war and politico-economic transformation.

The issue of *cultural* change has remained in some important ways neglected in the social sciences, and in psychology particularly (Moghaddam, 1990). One reason why at least some aspects of *cultural* change remain neglected in mainstream psychology is that the essential components of change cannot be fitted into a one hour laboratory study using psychology undergraduates as subjects (see Moghaddam et al., 1993, pp. 26–27). Even the most sophisticated experimental design cannot capture the essentials of cultural change in a laboratory, because such essentials involve historical processes and an unfolding *collective* life. Fundamental to such collective life are normative systems that pattern social behavior and that are imbedded in the social world rather than in imagined "cognitive mechanisms" in individual minds (Moghaddam & Harré, 1995b).

A number of social psychological theories of intergroup relations do address some aspects of change, particularly those concerned with social movements (see Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, for a review). While the major theories, including relative deprivation theory, the various equity theories, social identity theory, realistic conflict theory, and resource mobilization theory, provide valuable guides for understanding some aspects of social change, they neglect the role of everyday social practices in the maintenance of *continuity and stability*.

The major intergroup theories have been particularly concerned with psychological factors associated with changes in power relations. A number of other theories have attempted to tackle the issue of social change more broadly by

focusing on national development (e.g., McClelland & Winter, 1969). However, the “national development” models have typically derived from the reductionism that pervades mainstream psychology. Reductionism has led to a focus on dispositional “factors,” such as a “need for achievement,” which are assumed to reside in individual persons, and to be causally consequential in macro economic performance. Underlying this viewpoint to change is the “self-contained individualist” model of mainstream U.S. psychology (Sampson, 1981), which matches the American ethos of “self-help” and “personal responsibility.” Nor has cross-cultural or Third World psychology made any substantial headway in understanding the relationship between microlevel social practices and macrolevel societal processes (Adair, 1989; Moghaddam, 1990).

Social reducton<sup>1</sup> theory represents a recent attempt to address this gap, by incorporating the idea of greater complexity in the ways in which cultural change occurs (Moghaddam & Harré, 1995). The theory focuses on cultural change and the relationship between the speed of change at the macro- and the microlevels. In some cases changes (e.g., such as those in the domain of sexual practices) take place at the microlevel of everyday social practices, but these are resisted at the macrolevel by authorities—through censorship, media manipulation, legal and education systems, religious rulings, and the like. An example would be changes reflected by the “sexual liberation” and the “gay rights movement” of the 1960s, and the reactions of religious and government authorities, who continue to attempt to maintain traditional lifestyles. However, there are also many instances where macrolevel changes, involving government and economic systems, meet resistance at the microlevel, where changes materialize at a far slower speed. For example, government legislation banning discrimination on the basis of race has been resisted at the level of everyday interactions at least in some communities.

The theory proposes that the maximum speed at which change can take place at the macrolevel, including the political and economic sectors, is faster than the maximum speed of change that is possible at the micro-, social-psychological level. This means that while government policy, such as that on cultural diversity, can change fairly rapidly, the actual behavior of people in their everyday lives changes relatively slowly. Thus, instead of asking, “Why does change come about?” the point of departure for the theory is, “Why is there continuity? Why do certain patterns of behavior persist?” Instead of asking “Why do people rebel?” the theory asks, “Why do rebels and revolutionaries so often fail to bring about fundamental change even when they gain power?”

<sup>1</sup> Rom Harré and I created the term “reducton” as part of the terminology for “Social Reducton Theory.” A reducton is akin to “proton,” and we think of it as an elementary bit of social behavior that is often carried out without conscious effort, but involves socially acquired skills. Such skills evolve through socialization processes and reflect ideas about “correct behavior.” Because reductons are microlevel and involve seemingly “trivial” bits of social interactions, such as how to greet others, how to introduce oneself, and so on, they are often overlooked in “grand” or “revolutionary” attempts to create change. Fathali Moghaddam.

Social reducton theory, then, is addressing the age-old question, "Why is it that in so many cases, the more things change, the more they stay the same?" (Moghaddam & Harré, 1995a). This theory is in line with a number of other research developments in interdisciplinary studies, focusing on what Middlebrook (1995) has termed *the paradox of revolution*: this "paradox" being that popular mobilization and socioeconomic transformation so often give rise to new forms of authoritarian rule. In social reducton theory, the concern to provide an explanation for continuity, rather than change, leads to a focus on the "stabilizing" or "anchoring" function of everyday social practices within the context of societal transformation.

The theory assumes that psychological change is structured by *social reducton systems*, these being "interconnected networks of locally valid practices, implemented through implicit norms and related social skills that realize social relationships in particular domains" (Moghaddam & Harré, 1995a). For example, "authority relationships," involving persons in authority positions in relation to those who are relatively powerless, are realized in a social reducton system that implements norms and skills relating to leader-follower, male-female, and various other types of high status-low status relations.

Social reducton theory assumes a normative rather than causal model of behavior, viewing behavior as guided by normative systems embedded in culture rather than as determined by "cognitive mechanisms," as discussed in orthodox cognitive psychology (Moghaddam & Harré, 1995b). People are assumed to have varying levels of skills that enable them to follow and use normative systems. An example of such skills are those pertaining to adjustment to new cultures, to novel nonverbal communications systems (i.e., where one is expected to learn to interpret novel body gestures), and the like (see Moghaddam et al., 1993, pp. 137–160). The skills related to cultural change are best studied through longitudinal and historical research.

We begin by reviewing government policies for managing cultural diversity in Iran and in Japan, with particular focus on the themes of *change/constancy* and *the treatment of women and other minorities*. Next, we use our observations on Iran and Japan to reflect back on the situation in North America. In the concluding discussion, we make observations on the psychology of change and continuity.

## **IRAN AND JAPAN IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT: TOWARD A GLOBAL VILLAGE OR A MORE FRAGMENTED WORLD?**

Nation-states and their governments are necessarily influenced by events outside of their borders. The economic and political domination of the world by Western powers in the 20th century has meant increasing homogeneity and the spread of Western lifestyles in Iran, Japan, and other non-Western societies. Thus, government policies within such non-Western countries have to be understood in

the wider context of global trends, which involve the increasing influence of Western cultural models.

Among the factors associated with greater homogeneity in lifestyles and increased Westernization around the world, at least among the middle and upper classes, are increased international trade, the growth of multinational corporations, and a more mobile international work force. It is now possible for a manager of an international corporation to be transferred over a number of years from London to Istanbul, from Istanbul to Tokyo, from Tokyo to Chicago, and back to London again without experiencing a major change in life conditions. Each transfer would take the manager to a new location where essentially the same modern goods and services could be found, and business could be conducted according to the commonalities which make up a "world business culture." The formation of large free-trade political/economic blocs, such as the European Common Market (EEC) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), act to accelerate assimilation. On this theme, some have claimed that a common culture will engulf the world and result in "the end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992). The core of such a global culture, presumably, would be Western.

But the move toward a "global village" through assimilation to a Western model seems to be resisted by a movement in the opposite direction, one leading to fragmentation, separatism, and the highlighting, strengthening, and sometimes exaggeration of collective differences (Moghaddam & Solliday, 1991). The most dramatic examples of such movements are found in non-Western societies, as in the case of Islamic fundamentalism, for example. However, fragmentation is also evident in the West: consider, for example, separatist fervor shown by Scottish and Welsh nationalists in the United Kingdom, by Quebec separatists in Canada, and by ethnic groups and their warring armies in the former Communist Bloc.

Within this international context, governments of individual nations, such as those of Iran and Japan, are challenged by questions such as the following: (1) To what extent should they allow their own societies to become Westernized and thus assimilated into a Western-dominated global lifestyle? (2) To what extent should they assimilate their own cultural minorities into a homogeneous and distinct "national" lifestyle? In grappling with these issues, central governments obviously are aware that greater Westernization may decrease their control of local societal trends, whereas a strong and homogeneous national culture is more likely to increase central government control.

### **ASSIMILATION: PRE- AND POST-REVOLUTION IN IRAN**

Iranian government policy in the 20th century has changed on the issue of Iran's assimilating to a Western lifestyle but has remained loyal to the goal of achieving a homogeneous national lifestyle, "modern" before the revolution and "Islamic" after the revolution. In elaborating the details of the different processes

of assimilation, we shall focus on three specific topics, moving from the treatment of (1) women and (2) ethnic minorities, to a more fine-grained analysis of (3) authority relations.

### Women in Iran

Our objective in this section is to show how both before and after the 1978 revolution women in Iran have in some respects served as pawns in a power struggle between competing groups of men. The exploitation of women in the service of this power struggle may best be seen in government policy toward the veil traditionally worn by women in Iran, at least for most of the last 1400 years, that is, since the introduction of Islam into Iran. To some extent the veil symbolizes different things to different groups. For example, revolutionary Muslims have argued that the veil “frees” women by allowing them to escape being viewed as sex symbols; it serves to protect their “honor.” However, critics claim that the veil prevents women from achieving a modern gender role, because it stigmatizes them and it severely restricts their activities outside the home.

Although on the surface, the situation of women has changed dramatically several times during the 20th century, as symbolized by the banning and legalization of the veil by different regimes, at a deeper level gender relations have remained static. Both the “modern Iranian woman” of the pre-1978 Pahlavi era (Abrahamian, 1982) and the “Islamic female warriors” of the post-revolution era (Reeves, 1988) are creations of elite males.

The 1978 revolution in Iran is part of historic changes leading to the strengthening of the central government and attempts to assimilate the various diverse factions of the country under new visions of a “modern” (roughly 1921–1978) and later an “Islamic” (post-1978) state (Amirsadeghi, 1977; Graham, 1990; Keddie, 1981). The “modern” Iranian state was launched soon after the first major oil find in the Middle East at Masjed-Soleiman (northeastern Iran) in 1908. Internal corruption, together with turmoil created by rivalries between foreign powers active in Iran, eventually led to the collapse of the Qajar dynasty (1796–1921) and created an opportunity for Reza Khan to seize power and establish his own Pahlavi dynasty (1926–1978).

Although during the latter part of Reza Shah’s reign Iranian women were forcibly unveiled (there are still Iranian women alive to tell the tale of how policemen were posted on street corners to pull the veil off the head of any woman who dared to come out in public with her *chador*), as soon as the Shah lost power in 1941 many women went back to the veil, either voluntarily or because their fathers, husbands, and other men forced them to do so.

The abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 and the occupation of Iran by Allied forces coincided with a weakening of the central government. Reza Shah was replaced by his son, Mohammad Reza Shah (1941–1979), who for many years was unable to dominate the larger national scene. During this time the veil became the



normal covering for women in public places, although a minority of modernized women did appear in public without the veil. There also evolved a nationalist movement, led by a new educated middle class, who supported Mossadeq's becoming prime minister in 1951. This movement was democratic and antimonarchist, but it was thwarted by a U.S.-backed coup which brought the Shah back to full power after a brief exile in 1953.

From about the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, the Shah used Iran's enormous oil revenues to create a much more centralized and homogeneous modern Iranian state. Part of "becoming modern" meant that women were forced to abandon the veil. The Shah's main objective was to create a national identity, based on a common language and culture, with two key characteristics. First, the central political institution would remain the monarchy. Second, in many other respects Iran would be modernized according to a Western model. He vastly expanded the educational system and the army, making basic education and two years military service compulsory for both men and women, and he used the school and the army as socializing agents to manufacture a new national consciousness.

During the "modernization era" of the 1960s and 1970s, women once more came under government pressure to abandon the veil. By the mid-1970s, it had become normative for women to be without the veil in the larger urban centers, such as Tehran, Mashad, Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Rasht. Indeed, during this era any female who wanted to take advantage of opportunities in higher education or to work in the modern sector of the economy was forced to abandon the veil and become *be-hejab* (without the veil). It became customary to see traditionally dressed women take off the veil at the entrance to universities, government ministries, and modern private sector offices, and then return to the veil when they left such places to go back to their homes.

A dramatic change came about after the 1978 revolution, eventually leading to women's being forced to wear the veil in public (*ba-hejab* again!). This change had started several years earlier, when many women went back to the veil in order to indicate their opposition to the Shah. Thus it became normative for women to be veiled during their participation in the mass demonstrations of 1976–1978 against the Shah. Women who had become used to not being veiled now put on the veil to participate in demonstrations, then took off the veil once more to return home. But within a few years after the revolution the political climate had changed dramatically, so that women no longer had a choice—they had to adhere strictly to Islamic dress codes and wear the veil.

On the surface, this new Islamic identity seems very different from the Shah's Iran (Simpson, 1988). For example, symbols of Westernization (such as clean-shaven men sporting neckties) have been replaced by "Islamic" symbols (such as bearded men wearing buttoned-up long-sleeved shirts without neckties). Western "pop" music and most other forms of Western entertainment have been banned. Alcohol is prohibited, as are nightclubs and mixed beaches. However, at a deeper

level, both the way in which the policy of assimilation is being attempted and the ideals toward which assimilation is moving have remained the same.

Most importantly, both before and after the revolution “correct” behavior for women has been established by an elite group of all-powerful men. A pervasive and continuing social reducton system endorses the practice of women as objects of enjoyment for men. For example, in her detailed analysis of marriage in Shi’i Iran, Haeri (1989) demonstrates continuity in the practice of temporary marriage, which is a contract between a married or unmarried man and an unmarried woman. This contract can be verbal and need not be witnessed or registered (although the actual requirements have varied), and can be for a very short length of time (e.g., one hour) or much longer (e.g., several years). The length of time of the marriage and the amount of money to be given by the man to the woman must be stipulated (Haeri, 1989). It is considered “correct” behavior for men to be driven by sexual urges but for women to be ambivalent toward sex. Consequently, a Shi’i Muslim man is legally allowed to contract simultaneously with as many temporary wives as he desires, in addition to the four wives legally permitted to all Muslim men. A woman can only have one husband of any kind at any one time.

These marriage customs are based on everyday social practices guided by rules about correct gender relations that span centuries and have been only slightly altered by recent political events. The power of these seemingly trivial everyday practices is that they are often implicit and hardly ever discussed.

For example, people purposely avoid discussing temporary marriage practices. In Iran, temporary marriage is actually regarded in very negative terms, as something “shameful.” Perhaps this is because women often enter temporary marriage contracts out of financial need, and thus the temporary marriage is considered by some to be a form of prostitution. Married women who discover that their husbands have entered into temporary marriages may prefer to avoid making this publicly known because of the shame it may bring upon the family (despite its being perfectly legal). Thus, one reason why the temporary marriage has persisted, uninfluenced by major political changes, is that it *operates at a micro- and often unacknowledged level of everyday life*. The practice of temporary marriage, then, may be seen as part of a social reducton system that governs male-female authority relations in Iran. As long as these everyday practices remain unchanged, large-scale political changes may take place without influencing the status of women in Iran.

### **Ethnic Minorities**

Although Iran is fairly diverse in terms of ethnicity (Persian 51%, Azerbaijani 24%, Kurd 7%), the politically dominant group are the Persians (or Parsi), who have made their language the official national language of Iran (other languages spoken by significant numbers of the Iranian population being Turkish, Kurdish, and Luri). Both before and after the 1978 revolution, the goal of central Iranian

governments has been to assimilate ethnic minorities. This assimilationist policy has met with some resistance from these ethnic groups. However, because the central government controls key resources and also most channels of advancement in society (such as educational and employment opportunities), successive governments have been able to use a “carrot and stick” strategy to achieve assimilation. Ethnic minorities have been rewarded with jobs and other resources when they have conformed to modernization schemes (before the revolution), or to Islamicization schemes (after the revolution), but have been denied resources or even attacked when they have refused to assimilate or attempted rebellion.

From 1926 until 1941, Reza Shah followed a policy of assimilating the various ethnic and linguistic minorities into a “modern Iranian state.” The disarming and forcible settlement of nomadic tribes meant that they could be more effectively controlled and brought under national influence. The attempt to force all men and women to wear Western-style clothes in the later 1920s and 1930s represented an attempt to eliminate regional and tribal dress differences in favor of a homogenized Western tradition, matching the identity of modern Iran. The policy Reza Shah tried to implement was in many ways similar to that followed by Kemal Ataturk in Turkey during 1923–1938, although Reza Shah was not effectively able to exclude the Muslim religion from public life, as was done fairly effectively in Turkey.

After the abdication of Reza Shah, localism and tribalism were strengthened, and during 1945–1947 separatist movements thrived again. But oil gave the new Shah the resources to strengthen the army and to crush various separatist movements, with the Kurds being a particularly important target, perhaps because of the long-established tradition of Kurdish nationalism (Olson, 1993). In the period immediately after the 1978 revolution, ethnic minorities took advantage of a temporary power vacuum to openly resume their former lifestyles, and nomadic practices were taken up again. However, since the mid-1980s, the central government has attempted to achieve strict adherence to an “Islamic” lifestyle.

But the lifestyles of cultural minorities have proven to be extremely resilient. For example, studies of nomadic tribes in Iran before (Barth, 1961; Oberling, 1974) and after (Barker, 1981; Bradburd, 1981) the revolution reveal the tremendously strong tendency for them to maintain and return to their nomadic routes, going against powerful political and economic forces.

Even when members of rural-dwelling tribal minorities, such as the *Qashqa'i* or the *Bakhtiari*, enter urban centers, many of them manage to achieve a compromise between their traditional lifestyle and an urban lifestyle, creating a new “city-nomad” pattern. They often maintain a “nomadic” style of seasonal work, moving from urban back to rural areas when their help is needed “back home.” During their sojourns into the city, they maintain tribal ties and traditional affiliations, and influence urban life by importing their normative systems to the cities. The resilience of these ethnic normative systems acts as a break to assimilation and the development of homogeneous lifestyles.

### Authority Relations

It is indicative of the tradition of authority relations in Iran that historically assimilation has been attempted through a “top down” policy, directed by a male leadership with absolute power. At a surface level, leadership changed after the revolution, because the Shah was replaced by a religious leadership: a “grand ayatollah,” or if the clergy could not agree on who this man should be, then a small group of ayatollahs (Bakhash, 1984). However, at a deeper level, authority relations did not change because the tradition of an all-powerful male leader directing policy through an all-male elite has continued. In practice, there has been a continuation of the “cult” of an all-powerful leader (Abrahamian, 1993). Arjomand (1988) best captured this theme with his phrase, “The turban for the crown,” implying that the symbols of power had changed without a transformation in power relations, and others have pointed to the deeper, more long-term cultural basis for the contemporary political situation in Iran (Amirahmadi & Manouchehr, 1988; Behnam, 1991). Many normative aspects of Iranian culture can be traced at least to medieval times (Lambton, 1988), but we believe norms governing authority relations have roots in pre-Islamic times and that Iran represents a society where style of authority relations has persisted across major economic and political transformations.

Continuity in style of authority relations is evident in a number of other societies that have experienced major political revolutions. For example, after the fall of the last emperor and the end of the Manchu dynasty in China (1911), a series of authoritarian “nationalist” leaders paved the way for communism and the leadership of Mao Zedong, who “ruled” from 1949 until his death in 1976 with as much power as was enjoyed by any emperor. One can find similar continuities in authority relations in much earlier historical periods, such as the re-emergence of an all-powerful leader (in the form of Emperor Napoleon) after the French Revolution of 1789 and the collapse of monarchy.

An integral component of authority relations in Iran has been absolute control by male leadership, with complete control of the media and communications systems. In Iran both before and after the revolution, this leadership has used the full force of modern communications, including radio, television, and the press, to attempt to ensure that assimilation takes place along the lines desired by the leadership. For example, Iranian cinema maintained a high level of production before and after the revolution (Issari, 1989; Maghsoudlu, 1987), but always under strict government control and directed toward assimilationist goals.

Only the surface elements of what has been termed “political culture” (Mashayekhi & Sami, 1992) have changed. Political personalities at the very top are different, but the deeper structure of authority relations are not. The Shah’s “Rastakheez” (“resurrection”) party has been replaced by the “Islamic Republic Party,” but both before and after the revolution only one “party line” has been tolerated. Members of the political opposition still face oppression, persecution by the secret police, and even torture (Arjomand, 1988; Rejali, 1993).

One facet of this continuity is that although many political personalities changed, most of the “new” personalities came from the same extended families as the old. For example, prominent “bazaari” (merchant) and clerical families enjoyed enormous power both before and after the revolution, although the particular family members representing them in the political arena were often different after the revolution. Again, this is not a new phenomenon. In his brilliant analysis of the French revolution, for example, Schama (1989, pp. 516–517) has pointed out that the postrevolutionary political leadership was in large part a continuation of the cultural climate of the *ancien régime*.

But the real key to cultural stability often lies in the details—even what might perhaps seem like “trivial” details—of how everyday social interactions are conducted. Such “details” tend to be intricately tied up with authority relations and other key aspects of culture, such as gender relations. Consider, for instance, the example of seating arrangements, which seem to have changed dramatically in Iran over the last century. If one enters a middle- or upper-class Iranian home in the 1990s, on first impression it may appear that everything, particularly the furniture, is just like that in Western homes. However, a careful examination of how Western furniture is used in most Iranian homes reveals that change has only taken place at a surface level and that seating arrangements continue to uphold traditional authority relations.

Although the chair with a high back and a seat supported by four upright legs has a long history of association with Iranian kings, in everyday life Iranians followed the custom of sitting directly on carpeted or matted floors. *How* and *where* people sat was determined by their status. With respect to *how*, Iranians would sit on their heels in the presence of a superior, cross-legged in the presence of an equal, and any way they chose in the presence of inferiors. As regards *where*, those with highest status would sit in the center, furthest from the entrance door.

The essential function of seating arrangements has been to *maintain status hierarchies*, and this traditional function continues to be served by Western furniture:

Although seating customs have been modified by the chair, the established protocol for receptions with eminent persons being seated in the center and lesser persons to the side has not been significantly changed except in extreme examples of Westernized homes and offices. Indeed, rather than Iranian protocol being changed by its occurrence, it is the modern chair which has been modified by Iranian use . . . it has continuously been adapted to conform to traditional seating practices. (Peterson, 1981, p. 390)

In turning to cultural management policies in Japan, we continue our focus on two major themes, that of change/constancy and policies toward minorities. But now we examine these themes as they play out in a society that contrasts dramatically with Iran, particularly with respect to cultural homogeneity. Indeed, Japan

represents a classic case of a society where everything looks changed and Westernized, but where the modern has actually been transformed to uphold traditional social relations.

### ASSIMILATION POLICY AND THE PERPETUATION OF MYTHS IN JAPAN

Japan poses a contrast to Iran in several ways. In terms of religion, the majority of Iranians practice the Shiite form of Islam while the Japanese follow a combination of beliefs melded from indigenous Shinto and Chinese Buddhism. Japan is an island country that has used its surrounding waters as walls to keep out foreign visitors and, until the Allied Occupation of 1945, had never been invaded by a foreign power. Although bordered on two sides by water, Iran, being located at an important East-West cross-point, has experienced numerous invasions and incursions from neighboring states. From these contrasting ecologies and histories comes perhaps the most important difference between the two societies: the cultural and racial homogeneity of Japan in comparison to the heterogeneous mixture of ethnic and linguistic groups that constitutes Iran.

Despite Japan's relative homogeneity, minorities do exist in Japanese society. The three chief minority groups in Japan are the women, Burakumin, and Koreans. Our focus is on the first two of these groups. In the situation of both Japanese women and the Burakumin, we see the interplay between change and constancy implicit in social reducton theory—the fact that despite any political or economic gains these groups may have made, their lower status and prejudicial treatment at the hands of mainstream Japanese or Japanese males remains essentially unchanged.

#### Japanese Women

“A woman has three masters: when young, she should obey her father; when married, she should obey her husband; and when widowed, she should obey her son.” Until after the Second World War, the Confucian Doctrine of the Three Obediences, as this dictum was called, epitomized the cultural attitude toward women in Japan that had prevailed for centuries. This attitude was expressed in numerous everyday social practices, such as a wife's always walking several steps behind her husband, or never eating together with male guests. This attitude could be seen in prewar legislation that prevented a wife from having any rights over her children or sharing in her husband's family property. Although postwar reforms have brought legal and political improvements in the social and economic status of women in Japan, many daily social interactions that betoken Japanese women's role as second-class citizens are still a conspicuous part of the culture. These daily

interactions, reflecting Japanese women's subservient status and stubbornly resisting change by political fiat, may be seen as having their roots deep in the soil of Japanese history.

### **Historical Background to the Situation of Women in Japan**

The strong continuity evident in the experiences of Japanese women over the last 2000 years is intimately linked to specific systems of popular belief that incorporate philosophical, spiritual, and religious teachings. In Japan, these popular beliefs mainly comprise an amalgam of Shinto, Buddhist, and Confucianist ideas, which are intricately woven into the fabric of everyday social practices.

From the first recorded mention of Japan in a third-century Chinese document until approximately the end of the eighth century, Japanese women frequently ruled the land as goddesses, queens, and empresses (Ryusaku, de Bary, & Keene, 1959). With the introduction of Buddhism from Korea in the middle of the sixth century, and the gradual absorption of Confucianist ideas from China, including those of a patriarchal family hierarchy, the spiritual landscape of Japan began to change. Under the patronage of Prince Shotoku (regent from 593–622) Mahayana Buddhism especially began to flourish, with its sutras that spread discriminatory teachings about women similar to that contained in the Three Obediences mentioned above. The establishment of a national system of administration in the seventh century resulted in women's being excluded from posts in major religious institutions (Okano, 1995). These political changes, driven largely by the spread of Buddhist teachings, in addition to a civil war precipitated by the political scheming of Empress Shotoku (764–770) and her Buddhist priest lover, marked the beginning of the decline in Japanese women's social and political power (Robins-Mowry, 1983).

This decline became particularly precipitous during Japan's feudal period. The Tokugawa regime (1600–1868) inculcated the populace of Japan with a combination of Buddhist and Confucianist ideas that was aimed at creating a tightly controlled and rigidly hierarchic society. Both Buddhism and Confucianism, however, were strongly male-oriented, containing blatantly negative and deprecating views of women. Traditional Buddhism taught, among other things, that women were covetous and sinful by nature, incapable of attaining Nirvana, and agents of devils put on earth to prevent man from reaching enlightenment (Ackroyd, 1959; Fujikawa, 1964). Confucianism saw woman as the soft, dark, passive yin force in contrast with man's active, bright, dynamic yang force. Confucianist writers also popularized the Doctrine of the Three Obediences (*Sanju kun*), mentioned above (Ackroyd, 1959).

Quite early in the Tokugawa period, women lost their rights to own land or any other substantive property. They had no right to file for divorce, and adultery was punishable by death. The Tokugawa shogunate promulgated the belief that women's chief value, in essence, lay in bearing children and perpetuating the family

line; as helpmates, women were enjoined to be subservient, pliant, uncritical of and loyal to men. For Japanese women, the Tokugawa era was the nadir of a slow but constant process of attenuation in terms of their power and influence that had begun a thousand years previously. For the next 300 years, during which time Japan was virtually cut off from the outside world, images of women as submissive, docile, and powerless, and the thousands of daily interactions that instantiated these images, became deeply ingrained in the minds and hearts of the Japanese people. These are the images and customs, built up over a period of more than a millennium, that form the core of the social reducton system with which Japanese women must contend in their efforts to win freedom and equality in contemporary Japan.

### Change and Constancy

The major obstacles to freedom and equality for contemporary Japanese women lie in three areas: education, employment, and politics. In each of these areas, we find that a patina of change in women's status, usually deriving from political or legislative reforms, covers an underlying bedrock of constancy in male-female authority relations that resists alterations and rapid social transformation. Of the three areas, the domain of education has seen the most progress in terms of women's participation.

*Education.* After World War II, a spate of reforms in Japan opened up access for women to all educational levels, including the university, from which women had previously been excluded. At the opening of the Meiji era (1868), about 40% of boys and 10% of girls attended some kind of elementary school (Robins-Mowry, 1985). Today, a little more than a century later, approximately 99% of Japanese children of both sexes receive compulsory education which includes six years of elementary and three years of middle school. Similarly, 95% of girls and 93% of boys go on to attend senior high school (Beauchamp, 1989). Enrollment of women in higher education has also seen enormous gains, specifically, a sevenfold increase in the proportion of 18 year olds entering universities and junior colleges since the end of World War II (compared with a threefold increase for men) (Kelly & Elliott, 1982).

Beneath the surface improvements in educational opportunities for Japanese women, which have been undeniably impressive, we find that sex differences still persist, especially in higher education. First, overall more Japanese men than women enroll in higher institutions. Second, a large percentage of women who pursue higher education enter junior colleges rather than four-year universities, the latter being the overwhelming choice of the majority of men. Women account for only 22% of university student populations, yet represent almost 90% of the students who attend junior colleges (Fujimura-Fanselow, 1985). Moreover, the majority of women enrolled in universities tend to focus on traditionally female fields such as literature, home economics, and education. The percentage of women



majoring in science and engineering is approximately one-seventh that of men (Monbusho, 1981).

Several explanations may be posited for the sex differences in patterns of attendance at Japanese institutions of higher learning. For one thing, cultural attitudes still strongly reflect traditional images of Japanese women as being primarily wives, mothers, and homemakers. For another, given the high cost of private four-year universities and the abovementioned cultural attitudes toward women's proper role, Japanese parents are more likely to invest in a son's than in a daughter's university education. Lastly, the proportion of men and women attending colleges and universities is often related to employment options: societies where employment opportunities for women are most plentiful are those where sex ratio in education approaches closest to parity (e.g., Giele & Smock, 1977; Fujimura-Fanselow, 1985). In Japan, however, employment opportunities for men and women are far from equal.

Therefore, the considerable gains made by Japanese women in education notwithstanding, widespread disparity in academic attainment between men and women in Japan still exists. In many ways, this disparity derives from the nature of Japanese male-female relations and from a cultural stereotype that still portrays women as helpmates to men, whose main job lies in bearing children and making a home for a man. Such a stereotype sees a woman as needing an education only to make her a more attractive marriage partner rather than to prepare her for a career outside the home. Adding weight to the stereotype is the fact that opportunities for Japanese women to pursue satisfying careers outside the home are still extremely limited.

*Employment.* In April 1986, when Japan's Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) went into effect, many of the legal obstacles that had previously prevented Japanese women from reaching economic parity with men were removed. The EEOL prohibited employers from discriminating against women in terms of on-the-job training and supplementary education, dismissal, retirement, and fringe benefits. It also forbade the establishment of specific hiring requirements only for women, such as having to be unmarried, to be below a certain age, or to commute to work from one's parents' house. Furthermore, the law encouraged, but did not force, employers to give men and women equal consideration in hiring, assignments, and promotions.

Evidence suggests that the EEOL has had some positive impact on women's employment opportunities in Japan. Cannings and Lazonick (1994), for example, show that the EEOL has encouraged employers to increase significantly the proportion of university-educated women among new company recruits. Also, a survey by the National Institute of Employment and Vocational Research (1988) found that the percentage of Japanese companies planning to use women only for auxiliary positions without potential for promotion had fallen from 34% to 15% after the implementation of the EEOL. Additionally, job opportunities without

gender distinction increased from 32% in 1986 to 72% in 1987 (Josei Shokugyo Zaidan, 1987).

Despite these gains, the general consensus among Japanese scholars and social scientists is that not very much has changed in the workplace for Japanese women. For one thing, the EEOL seems to have had little effect on people's attitudes regarding women and work. It is still generally expected that Japanese women will quit their jobs when they get married, pregnant, or reach a certain age (Maruta, 1991). A majority of companies (46%) still seek to place women in jobs where their "feminine characteristics" can be best utilized, as opposed to those companies (23%) that are willing to place women in all kinds of jobs (Women's Bureau, 1989).

Furthermore, since the passing of the EEOL, a two-track employment system for university graduates—a "managerial employee track" and a "clerical employee track"—has appeared in numerous Japanese companies. In theory, both employment tracks are equally opened to men and women, but in practice, the clerical track has become the equivalent of the "mommy track" (Ehrlich, 1989; Schwartz, 1989) in the United States—a track for educated women who want to pursue a career but are limited in their professional commitment by family obligations to children and spouses (Cannings & Lazonick, 1994).

Finally, a survey of Japanese companies found that 88% would transfer only men to another location, in contrast to 11% that said they would transfer both men and women, if the assignment required the employee to move (Women's Bureau, 1989). Such an attitude seriously limits opportunities for managerial women to gain the versatility in job experience needed for further promotions (Cannings & Lazonick, 1994).

The recent history of Japanese women's participation in the workplace suggests that a complex relationship exists between cultural practices and the legal system of a nation. A blending of economic and sociopolitical forces (the worldwide women's movement) may be seen as contributing to the passing of the EEOL in Japan in 1986. However, as often occurs, political legislation such as the EEOL tends both to reflect past progress and prematurely anticipate the future direction of cultural change. While anticipating cultural changes and sometimes acting as a vehicle for change itself, the passing of a piece of political legislation by no means signals that society has arrived at a hoped-for destination. In many cases, such an arrival must wait for the transformation of the social reducton systems and the associated everyday social practices.

Thus, although Japanese women are legally equal to Japanese men in terms of rights and access to employment opportunities, in fact, everyday business practices and the social demands of daily family life in Japan conspire to prevent women from realizing the economic parity promised by political legislation.

*Politics.* The realm of politics itself is the most intractable of the three main areas in which Japanese women are striving for equality. It was only with the revision of the Election Law of 1945 that Japanese women were given equal rights

to vote and to run for elected office. Since then, however, women have not had particular success in breaking into the world of Japanese politics.

The one exception occurred in 1986 when Takako Doi, a female scholar of constitutional law, was chosen to be chairperson of the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ). The party at that time was said to be in crisis and in need of a "sacrificial lamb" (Iwao, 1993). Doi's cool, straightforward, and powerful style, however, became very popular on the campaign trail, especially with women voters, resulting in unexpected success for the SDPJ in the 1989 elections. The elections that year saw a record number of women voted into the House of Councilors and elected as assembly members of the Tokyo city government. The "Madonna Whirlwind," as that summer was known (do Rosario, 1993), was seen as Doi's triumph and briefly introduced the possibility that a woman might become prime minister. That possibility, however, quickly faded when Doi's uncompromising opposition to the use of Japan's Self-Defense Forces in the Persian Gulf War lost both her and the SDPJ the support of many voters in the 1991 local elections (Iwao, 1993). The following year, Doi resigned as the SDPJ chairperson.

At present, women are only minimally represented in the Japanese Diet. Of the 511 seats in the lower house, a mere 2.7% are occupied by women. This places Japan 110th among 130 countries in a recent United Nations survey of women's participation in elected legislatures (do Rosario, 1993). In the weaker upper house, as well, women only hold 35 out of a total of 252 seats. Some female politicians estimate that it will take another 10 to 15 years before women will be able to enter Japanese politics in any significant numbers (do Rosario, 1993).

In sum, the difficulty Japanese women experience in attaining social and economic equality may be clearly understood in the context of social reduction theory. Although the Japanese government has attempted to legislate equal access to education, employment, and political power, images of women's traditional roles as childbearers, homemakers, and wives create powerful expectations that thwart sociopolitical efforts to bring about rapid change. The image of Japanese women as being submissive, obedient, and passive, whose major role consists in raising children and creating a comfortable home for their husbands, may be seen as the product of a thousand years of subtle oppression and abasement on both an interpersonal and a societal scale. Given the longevity of the social reduction system that governs male-female power relations in Japan, it is not surprising that the pace at which Japanese women are winning equality is considerably slower than that of their counterparts in much younger cultures such as Canada and the United States. Nevertheless, the same longevity of oppressive cultural dynamics also make the progress Japanese women have attained in a relatively short time all the more remarkable.

## The Burakumin

The case of the Burakumin, as well, provides a vivid example of the tension between the surface change brought about by sociopolitical forces on the one hand, and the deep-rooted constancy of a social reducton system on the other. Until 100 years ago, Burakumin were forcibly segregated from mainstream Japanese society. Since the Meiji Restoration (1868), government policy regarding the Burakumin has slowly shifted toward a position of assimilation. Unlike many of the minorities in Iran, such as the Kurds, Burakumin for the most part seek assimilation into the Japanese mainstream. However, as in the situation of Japanese women, abundant inertia exists at a deep cultural level that appears to resist all gross political alterations and seeks to maintain the status quo of this minority group.

### History of the Burakumin

The Burakumin are a geographically stable lower caste of indigenous Japanese who have lived in urban and rural ghettos for numerous generations. According to various estimates, the Burakumin comprise over 2,000,000 people, or approximately 2% of the Japanese population. The Burakumin have been part of Japanese society for over 1000 years. Originally tanners, butchers, and leather-workers, their occupations brought upon them the disdain of a populace immersed in Buddhist teachings that proscribed the killing or eating of cattle. In the 17th century, the Tokugawa government officially designated them as outcasts (*eta*) and forcibly settled them in segregated communities or hamlets (*buraku*), whence came their name “Burakumin” or “hamlet people.” The imputation of lower caste status to members of certain despised professions is by no means unique to Japan. The untouchables of India are perhaps the most well-known targets of this kind of occupational ostracism.

Although restrictions limiting their activities and rights were lifted after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, public attitudes toward the Burakumin did not change appreciably up through World War II, when unsuccessful attempts were made to find some kind of measurable physical differences between the Burakumin and mainstream Japanese (DeVos, 1992). In the postwar years, as a result of agitation by various political groups, a program of aid for the Burakumin, the so-called “Ten-Year Plan,” was finally passed by the Japanese Diet in 1969. The philosophical underpinnings of this plan lay in the belief that sufficiently improving the economic and social conditions of the Burakumin was the primary means of eliminating discrimination. Moreover, education, both of the Burakumin themselves and of the mainstream Japanese majority, was seen as the major force for bringing about such change (Hawkins, 1986).

## Change

Since 1969, the equivalent of several hundred million dollars has been allocated for the government's Burakumin program and, on the surface, the program seems to have succeeded on several fronts. First, the percentage of Burakumin students who graduate to high school has almost tripled since 1963 (Dowa Kyoiku Shiryu, 1985). Second, social education courses to raise the awareness of mainstream Japanese regarding Burakumin problems have increased, along with in-service sites for the training of Burakumin teachers (Dowa Kyoiku Shiryu, 1985). In addition, the government has provided the Burakumin community with steadily increasing amounts of financial assistance in the form of public housing, welfare, and national health insurance.

## Constancy

Yet, despite improvements on the sociopolitical level, it is debatable as to how much has actually changed in the everyday lives of the Burakumin. DeVos and Wetherall (1983) claim that on various dimensions the social conditions of the Burakumin have improved very little compared with mainstream Japanese. They note, for example, that the incidence of poor health among Burakumin is twice that of majority Japanese. In some Burakumin communities unemployment runs as high as 50%, whereas the national average is 2.2%. As a group, Burakumin exhibit higher rates of family instability, alcoholism, delinquency, and poorer academic performance than do the majority population (DeVos, 1992). Special lists of Burakumin addresses have been compiled and sold to major firms such as Nissan, Mitsubishi, and Mobil Oil of Japan, so that the companies can be sure they do not hire Burakumin "by mistake" (DeVos & Wetherall, 1983). Also, public school studies have shown that Buraku children still score significantly lower than majority Japanese children on IQ tests (DeVos, 1992). Finally, attempts to educate mainstream Japanese about Burakumin culture notwithstanding, Isomura (1985) reports that prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory practices toward Burakumin at the level of everyday social interactions at work, school, and on the street are still widespread. In fact, Hawkins (1986) suggests that something of a backlash is taking place against Burakumin, especially among mainstream Japanese who reside near Buraku communities.

We see, then, that the situation of the Burakumin reflects much the same bilevel duality as does that of Japanese women. Ostracized for more than a thousand years, the Burakumin's efforts to assimilate into mainstream Japanese culture have been stymied by deep-rooted social attitudes that maintain prejudicial customs and subtle discriminatory practices on a daily interactive level. This, despite continued government efforts in the political arena to improve the financial, educational, and physical condition of this minority group.

In juxtaposing the situation of the Burakumin with that of Japanese women, the question arises as to why the latter seem to have made more progress than the former in their struggles for social and economic equality. There are several possible reasons. First is the matter of shared values, which is viewed as an important component in facilitating the assimilation of minorities into the mainstream of a society (Lambert & Taylor, 1990). Various social practices of the Burakumin seem to controvert the accepted norms of the mainstream Japanese. For example, the Burakumin are stereotyped as having a greater casualness regarding marriage ties and sexual fidelity, more accepting attitudes toward out-of-wedlock births, a custom of eating the internal organs of animals, and other characteristics strongly disapproved of by the majority culture (DeVos, 1992). In contrast, Japanese women, by and large, not only share the values of the majority (male) group, but they play an important role in transmitting such values to the younger generation.

Second, in a similar vein, at least by anecdotal accounts, domestic violence is more prevalent among the Burakumin, as is fighting among Buraku children, compared to the mainstream population (DeVos, 1992). Such violent behavior is contrary to the general cultural prohibition against the outright expression of aggression in Japanese society (Lebra, 1976). Japanese women, of course, are conspicuously nonaggressive in their behavior.

Finally, the Burakumin comprise approximately 2% of the total Japanese population, whereas women make up more than 50%. The sheer difference in numbers suggests that while the Burakumin may be ignored with minimum inconvenience to society as a whole, the government can ill afford to ignore the complaints of women who represent such a large segment of the population. For all these reasons, it is not surprising that women have made relatively more progress than the Burakumin in improving their social and financial status.

The inability of legislative and political measures to change public attitudes and daily interactions of members of a majority culture vis-à-vis an oppressed minority may, in part, be due to the perpetuation of long-standing authority relations that exist in a certain culture. Like Iran, Japan presents an example of a society where authority relations have remained essentially unaltered despite a variety of profound political and economic changes.

*Authority Relations.* As is true of many aspects of modern Japan, contemporary Japanese authority relations may be traced back to the Tokugawa era. The rigid hierarchy characteristic of Tokugawa society was based on Confucian teachings that linked harmony in the state to harmony and order in the family. Consequently, the structure of the Tokugawa government resembled that of the traditional Japanese family or household, known as the *ie*.

The Japanese *ie* consisted of a main house, headed by the father, and a number of subordinate branch houses, in which lived the sons of the father and their families. Within each house, relations between members were hierarchically organized along lines based on age, sex, and expectation of permanency in the house.

Younger members were seen as indebted to older members for their upbringing. Males, especially the father and the eldest son, were given preference and power over females. The two main principles governing life in the *ie* were that the good of the *ie* took precedence over the good of any one individual, and that the continuation of the *ie* was the chief goal of all its members.

Similarly, the Tokugawa government was constructed as a kind of society-wide *ie*, with a pyramid structure, consisting of a descending order of subhierarchies. The "main house" comprised the Tokugawa family, which was headed by the shogun, the "father" of the state. Beneath the main house were hundreds of "branch houses," fiefdoms controlled by territorial lords called *daimyo* who, in turn, ruled over thousands of *hatamoto* or retainers. Each *daimyo* family might itself be considered a subordinate *ie*, with hundreds or perhaps thousands of retainers and their families under its control. The nature of the Tokugawa power structure, then, was essentially that of a huge network of hierarchically connected households (Morioka, 1986).

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the government attempted to break up the *ie* system through a series of political reforms. As we have seen, these political measures did little to change the basic structure of interpersonal authority relations. Rather than disappearing, the *ie* system simply metamorphosed into more subtle but equally pervasive social structures and institutions in Japanese society.

For example, as in the case of pre- and post-1978-revolution Iran, the basic elements of Tokugawa political rule were simply transferred to the political system of post-Meiji Japan and given new names. The shogun became the emperor, the *daimyo* became the *kenrei* (governor), and the local leader became the *jinushi* (landlord) (Maruta, 1991).

Although the *ie* system has weakened considerably since the end of World War II, its underlying principles still serve as a model for other areas of social endeavor. Perhaps the most conspicuous example of how the *ie* system has transformed itself into modern Japan is that of the present-day Japanese company. Just as the head of the *ie*, the father, expected loyalty and self-sacrifice from his children, so a company superior expects loyalty and self-sacrifice from his subordinates. The primary loyalty of the Japanese "*sarariman*" is to the company, the "main house," while the worker's own family, the "branch house," comes second. Just as loyalty to the *ie* was rewarded with paternalistic protection and support, so in exchange for the *sarariman*'s loyalty and devotion to the company, the superior promises to take care of him and his family, even to the extent of arranging a marriage for him. Just as in the *ie*, authority relations in the company are arranged on the basis of age, permanency in the house (company seniority), and sex (males occupy the vast majority of authority positions in Japanese companies).

Given that the essential structure of authority relations in Japan has remained relatively unchanged for the past 400 years, it is not surprising that minority groups systematically oppressed during the Tokugawa period, such as women and Burakumin, find it difficult to improve their status in contemporary society. Any political

measures that do not address the basic nature of this power structure in Japanese society are unlikely to produce any real change on a day-to-day level.

## REFLECTING BACK ON ASSIMILATION AND MULTICULTURALISM IN NORTH AMERICA

The cases of Iran and Japan act as a mirror, reflecting back to illuminate aspects of assimilation and multiculturalism in the United States and Canada. In examining these Western cultures, our attention is again drawn to the disparity that exists between the speed of change at the “macro” political and economic levels, and at the “micro” social psychological level. Macrolevel change, involving legislation, macroeconomic policies, and the like, can come about much more quickly than microlevel change. To begin this section, we shall review policies for managing cultural diversity in the United States and Canada.

### Assimilation in the United States

The frontier is the line of the most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. . . . He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails. . . . The fact is, that here is a new product that is American.

By 1893, when the American historian Turner (p. 634) made this statement as part of his innovative essay on the significance of the frontier in American history, the thesis of assimilation was already well established in the United States. The writings of the earliest settlers in the U.S. reflect a feeling that the immigrants arriving in the New World were undergoing a transformation. The settlers spoke many different languages and brought with them diverse cultural practices, religious beliefs, and normative systems. Most of them, however, were of Western European heritage, and the belief arose that their differences would soon melt away, and out of this process would evolve a new being: the American. Turner’s (1893) seminal contribution was to demonstrate the role of the frontier in creating the “new” beings, the Americans.

It is essential to note that Turner’s thesis implies an “inevitability” to assimilation, rather than its being seen as a “policy” selected through explicit choice, by governments or any other authorities or individuals. He argues that the particular conditions of the frontier inevitably led to assimilation and the evolution of the “new product that is American.”

But certain groups of people, including blacks and other visible minorities, were excluded for a very long time from what the playwright Zangwill (1914) popularized as the “melting pot.” It is not that blacks and other minorities did not



influence the majority; recent scholarship clearly shows they did. For example, Sobel's (1987) detailed historical analysis demonstrates how blacks and whites influenced one another, and came to share core values, such as their perceptions and evaluations of time, in 18th-century Virginia. But such "sharing" was not acknowledged by whites, and everyday practices of blacks and whites were regulated by social reduction systems that maintained the marginal status of blacks. For example, blacks were incorporated into the economic and social system of Virginia, as when a black cook or maid worked in a "white home," but always in subservient roles that would "validate" their "inferiority."

Also, black-white contact would occur only when the work to be carried out by blacks—as nannies, house-cleaners, gardeners, and the like—required that they interact with whites. Thus, irrespective of how much contact occurred between blacks and whites, the inferior status of blacks ensured that, as predicted by the contact hypothesis (see Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994), black-white understanding would not improve.

Of course, political and economic changes since the mid-19th century have fundamentally transformed the context in which black-white relations take place in the U.S. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1862, and more recently the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 ruling in *Brown versus Board of Education*, are part of such political and economic changes. However, at the microlevel of everyday life, the "segregation" patterns of the past tend to persist. The exclusion of blacks continues, and a review of recent research strongly suggests that, as we approach the year 2000, black-white contact is still primarily "functional," occurring mainly through task performance at school or work (Burlew, Banks, McAdoo, & Azibo, 1992; Katz & Taylor, 1988). Those who attempt to break such barriers, for example through multiracial marriage (Rosenblatt, Karis, & Powell, 1995), become ostracized.

Our intention here is to point out that, as we saw in the case of minorities in Iran and in Japan, a disparity exists between changes at the macro political level, involving in this case the achievement of "equal rights" by blacks, and changes at the microlevel of everyday social practices, involving the continued segregation of visible minorities. Again, as in the case of seating arrangements in Iran, it is the details of everyday interactions, such as whites avoiding sitting next to blacks or even making eye contact with them, that are so important in this regard. As Carter (1993), a black researcher, points out about the life of blacks in the U.S., "It is . . . the many *small daily slights* that . . . add up to a miasma of racial exclusion" (p. 59, our emphasis).

### Multiculturalism in Canada

The Canadian government follows a policy of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" and in 1972 set the pace for other Western nations by becoming the first officially multicultural nation in the world (Moghaddam &

Solliday, 1992). Central to Canadian multicultural policy is the so-called "multiculturalism hypothesis" (Lambert, Memergis & Taylor, 1985), which proposes that positive and appreciative feelings toward members of other ethnic groups are based, at least in part, on a sense of security and well-being of one's own ethnic identity. This hypothesis poses a challenge to the more established concept of ethnocentrism, which assumes that people view their own values and "ways of doing things" as natural and better as compared to those of outgroups (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994).

The Canadian government has provided institutional and financial support for ethnic minorities to retain at least some aspects of their heritage cultures, and very strong support for the strengthening of the bilingual character of Canadian society. At the political and legal levels, then, major changes have come about in support of parity for ethnic minorities and French Canadians as a linguistic minority.

Detailed studies of the relationships between ethnic minorities and majority-group Canadians reveal a continuation of segregation and perceived discrimination (e.g., see Moghaddam & Taylor, 1987; Moghaddam, Taylor, Pelletier & Shepanek, in press). Also, contact between French and English Canadians has remained minimal (Taylor, Dubé & Bellerose, 1986). But what of the situation for the largest minority in North America, women?

### **WOMEN, THE "GLASS CEILING," AND OTHER PREDICAMENTS IN NORTH AMERICA**

The political, economic, and legal status of women has improved dramatically over the last century. After pioneering breakthroughs, such as gaining the right to vote in major political elections, they have gained the legal right to compete as equals in all education and work domains. However, critics of the status quo have argued that despite recent gains by women, economic and power disparities persist, as indicated, for example, by the concentration of women in lower-status occupations, and the lower pay women receive even when they are in the same occupations as men (Blau & Ferber, 1992; Matteo, 1993).

At one level, then, the status of women has dramatically changed, whereas at another level things seem to be "as always." In explaining this paradox, we once again point to the resilience of social reducton systems guiding microlevel social practices, particularly as they relate to gender and family relations. A similar idea is expressed by researchers concerned with the more subtle aspects of the "new sexism" (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1986).

For example, women who work outside the home are still expected to take more responsibility than husbands for family life (Gappa, St. John-Parson, & O'Barr, 1982). When a father takes his children to the park or spends time with them in another way, he is considered to be doing something special and "in addition to" his normal duties. But a mother who works outside the home is still

expected, as part of her “natural” responsibilities, to look after her children and “her kitchen” when she comes home from work.

Of course, critics of the status quo have in practice recognized the fundamental role of everyday social practices in maintaining traditional gender inequalities. It is exactly for this reason that such critics have attacked the “traditional family” and the norms and rules that govern family life; and it is for this same reason that defenders of the status quo view the “traditional family” as a cornerstone of conventional society. In one sense, the debate over “family values,” as it relates to everyday social practices, may be as important politically as the “large scale” battles on civil rights legislation and other human rights reforms.

### CONCLUDING COMMENT

In part because of the reductionism of mainstream psychology, the issue of cultural change is not given adequate attention in traditional psychology. Social scientists outside psychology have made efforts to examine the relation between change at different levels (e.g., Gordon, 1964), but there is a need for more psychologists to become active in this domain. Traditionally, cultural change has been viewed as an economically determined “top-down” process that assumes economic factors to be causal agents, or through a cognitive deterministic “bottom-up” model that assumed “mental mechanisms” to be causal agents (for variations, see Sampson, 1994; Sperry, 1993). Our view is that psychological factors are important in cultural change, not because “the causes are in our heads,” but because the normative systems regulating everyday social practices can resist, and even help shape, macro political and economic changes. Such normative systems are socially constructed, collectively shared, and upheld by communities. They are part of the seemingly “trivial” details of everyday life, and it is exactly because they are so intricately imbedded in cultural life that they are often both overlooked and resilient to change.

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