

# Cultural Psychiatry in Historical Perspective

Laurence J. Kirmayer

## Editors' Introduction

The evolution of cultural psychiatry over the last few decades has been an interesting phenomenon to observe. Psychiatry is perhaps one of the younger disciplines of medicine. The coming of age of psychiatry as a profession was clearly linked with the development of training and laying claim to a knowledge base which gradually has become more evidence based. The period between the two World Wars led to greater questioning of social factors in the aetiology and management of psychiatric disorders. In the UK at least, social psychiatry as a discipline became clearly established and produced impressive studies on life events and their impact on phenomenology, attachment and other social factors. In the last two decades, it would appear that social psychiatry has transmogrified into cultural psychiatry.

Kirmayer, in this chapter, maps out the history of cultural psychiatry as a discipline. In addition, he raises concerns related to this discipline, especially to universality of psychopathology and healing practices, development of diverse service needs of black and ethnic minority groups and analysis of psychiatric theory and practice as products of a particular cultural history. Culture has been defined as a civilizing process which, in European history, Kirmayer asserts, had to do with the transformations from migratory groups to agrarian societies to city states and, eventually, nation states. The definition of culture in this context was related to standards of refinement and sophistication. The second definition of culture has to do with collective identity, which is based on historical lineage, language, religion, genetics or ethnicity. Kirmayer suggests that these two definitions have become conflated. The historical development of comparative psychiatry in colonial times and until the 1960s, when research across cultures used dimensions of distress, ignored local cultural practices and interpretation of these experiences. The role of racism in diagnosis and management of individuals with psychiatric illnesses has

not entirely gone away. Large-scale migrations from east to west and north to south across the globe have raised questions about ethnocultural diversity. An organized and relative newcomer within the larger discipline of psychiatry, cultural psychiatry is becoming mainstream and beginning to influence health-service delivery and research.

## Introduction

Cultural psychiatry stands at the crossroads of disciplines concerned with the impact of culture on behaviour and experience. It emerges from a history of encounters between people of different backgrounds, struggling to understand and respond to human suffering in contexts that confound the alien qualities of psychopathology with the strangeness of the cultural 'other'. The construct of culture offers one way to conceptualize such differences, allowing us to bring together race, ethnicity and ways of life under one broad rubric to examine the impact of social knowledge, institutions and practices on health, illness and healing. Cultural psychiatry differs from the social sciences of medicine, however, in being driven primarily not by theoretical problems but by clinical imperatives. The choice of research questions and methods, no less than the interpretation of findings and the framing of professional practice, is shaped by this clinical agenda, which emphasizes the quest for therapeutic efficacy.

Over the course of its history, cultural psychiatry has been driven by three major sets of concerns: questions about the universality or relativity of psychopathology and healing practices; the dilemmas of providing services to ethnically diverse populations; and, most recently, the analysis of psychiatric theory and practice as products of a particular cultural history and as vehicles of globalization. These concerns correspond to three successive waves of development of the field from colonialist and comparative psychiatry, to the mental health of ethnocultural

communities and indigenous peoples in settler societies, and the post-colonial anthropology of psychiatry.

The emergence and development of each of these themes in cultural psychiatry can be tied to major historical events, especially to global patterns of migration and their associated social, political and economic consequences (Castles *et al.*, 2013; Papastergiadis, 2000). From the mid 1700s onwards, colonialist expansion of European powers led to observations relevant to psychiatry and to occasional efforts to provide healthcare in distant lands. Large-scale migrations of Europeans to North America, Australia and other regions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries prompted attention to the impact of ethnicity on mental health and illness. Successive wars made psychological reactions to stress and trauma a salient concern for psychiatry. The Great Depression and the emergence of the welfare state highlighted the impact of social class and poverty as causes of illness. The promulgation of scientific racism forced researchers and clinicians to clarify their thinking about ethnocultural difference. The flight of refugees and displaced peoples following World War II and later conflicts, led to renewed work both on trauma-related disorders and the adaptation of migrants (Murphy, 1955). The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and emerging anti-colonialist struggles around the world challenged the hegemony of Western versions of history and opened up the consideration of alternative systems of knowledge on both ethical and epistemological grounds.

Most recently, new waves of migration from east to west and south to north have challenged models of culture and ethnicity developed for earlier groups of immigrants from relatively similar European countries (Castles *et al.*, 2013). At the same time, increasing recognition of the historical injustices suffered by indigenous peoples has made their cultures a focus of attention both in terms of the damaging effects of forced assimilation and the potential for resilience in indigenous identity, community and healing practices (Cohen, 1999; Kirmayer *et al.*, 2003). The growth of the Hispanic, Asian and other non-European populations in the USA, and the corresponding increase in the numbers of mental health professionals from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds, pressed for change both from without and within the profession, and this has been reflected in the attention to culture in official psychiatric nosology, with inclusion of

an Outline for Cultural Formulation in DSM-IV and the Cultural Formulation Interview in DSM-5 (Alarcon, 2001; American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Mezzich *et al.*, 1996; Lewis-Fernández *et al.*, 2015). Similar demographic changes are affecting most societies, and will continue to make cultural issues a matter of central concern for psychiatry in the years to come. At the same time, backlash against globalization and the dynamics of migration, the Internet and social media will continue to give new meanings to cultural identity and community.

## The Uses of Culture

There are three broad but distinct uses of the term culture that are often conflated (Eagleton, 2000; Kuper, 1999) and each has its reflection in the history of cultural psychiatry. Originally, 'culture' meant 'cultivation': the civilizing process which, in European history, had to do first with the move from migratory groups to agrarian societies (cultivating crops) and then to city states and larger political entities including nations and empires. Throughout this history, there was a progressive elaboration of codes of conduct and civility and the cultivation of specialized knowledge and power, initially the possession of elite social classes, but gradually accessible to others through formal education (Elias, 1982; Gellner, 1988). Culture in this sense represents a standard of refinement or sophistication, measured against the cosmopolitan life of urban centres, the achievements of those with higher education, and the 'high culture' (with a capital 'C') of arts and letters. The view of culture as civilization has influenced thinking about psychopathology from Vico's Renaissance views of culture as a civilizing force (Bergin and Fisch, 1984). Early versions of this critiqued European society by contrasting it with the 'natural' qualities of the noble savage (Ellingson, 2001); this took more dynamic form in Freud's tragic view of the ego wrestling with conflicts of 'instinctual' desire and sociomoral constraint in *Civilization and its Discontents* (Freud, 1962). Western European civilization has tended to view itself myopically as the singular standard against which other traditions can be measured, and this hierarchical view of culture persists in characterizations of the contemporary world as a contest of great civilizations with incommensurable values and epistemologies (Huntington, 1996; Bettiza, 2014).

A second meaning of culture has to do with collective identity, the setting apart of one group of people from another on the basis of historical lineage, language, religion, gender or ethnicity which may include membership in a community, regional group, nation or other historical people (Banks, 1996). While the notion of culture as cultivation may be presented in terms of a universal system of values that can be attained by anyone allowed the opportunity to become 'civilized' (even if, in most instances, it depends on racialized or essentialized notions of identity that subvert this possibility), ethnocultural identity is local and particular, the property of groups that regulate its distribution along lines of historical descent, kinship, citizenship or other social markers of identity. Ethnicity is differently constructed in each society, and may merge with local notions of 'race', national identity or other invented traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). While ethnicity has been a source of positive identity, self-esteem and group cohesion, it has also fuelled discrimination, inter-group conflicts, social exclusion and genocidal violence.

The third notion of culture corresponds to its current use in anthropology as a way of life: the values, customs, beliefs, knowledge, institutions and practices that form a complex system (Kuper, 1999). As such, culture encompasses all of the humanly constructed and socially transmitted aspects of the environment. Cultural systems involve many levels of social organization including institutions, communities, families and local practices that cannot be reduced to the cultural models internalized by individuals. Much of culture resides in what might be called 'affordances', structured environments that provide opportunities for cooperative action (Kirmayer and Ramstead, 2017). In the contemporary world, cultural affordances may be constituted both by local communities or 'subcultures' and transnational flows of knowledge and practice shared by groups of experts and professionals (Hannerz, 1992, 1996). Psychiatry itself is one such transnational cultural institution with national variants and subcultures (Ernst and Mueller, 2010).

## Comparative Psychiatry and the Legacy of Colonialism

The roots of cultural psychiatry can be traced to the very beginnings of modern psychiatry. Indeed, long before psychiatry emerged as a distinct medical specialty, examples of odd or deviant behaviour among

distant peoples stimulated philosophical reflections on the uniqueness of humankind and the impact of the 'civilizing process' on human nature (Jahoda, 1993). These early commentaries drew on travellers' observations of foreign peoples who were culturally different, whether viewed as members of a different civilization or simply as undeveloped 'barbarians'. This literature reveals an aesthetic fascination with the strangeness of the other that was often both morally and erotically charged (Segalen, 2002). European explorers and colonizers generally took their own traditions to be the zenith of civilization, while others were seen as backward, primitive and uncivilized (Jahoda, 1999; Gilman, 1985; Lucas and Barrett, 1995; Todorov, 1993).

The taken-for-granted superiority of European civilization demanded that its institutions be established in the colonies, and asylum psychiatry was one of these exports. While attempting to care for suffering individuals, colonial psychiatry also served to justify and maintain the social order of colonial regimes (Bhugra and Littlewood, 2001; Keller, 2001, 2005; McCulloch, 1995; Sadowsky, 1999; Vaughan, 1991). Colonial asylums became important sites for comparative studies of psychopathology. However, their status as colonizers and limited access to the everyday life of people outside hospitals and asylums made it difficult for the practitioners of colonial psychiatry to recognize the social and cultural context of patients' afflictions. As local psychiatrists were trained and took over these institutions, possibilities emerged for innovative approaches to care based on local cultural values. The work of Thomas Adeoye Lambo at Aro village in Abeokuta, Nigeria was an important example of this 'post-colonial' turn, and his integration of traditional healers influenced international views of culture and community mental health through his tenure as Deputy Director General at the World Health Organization (Heaton, 2013).

In general, colonizers and alienists did not see large numbers of mentally ill persons and this prompted speculation about the protective effects of 'primitive' ways of life. The idea that insanity was rare among primitive or uncivilized peoples, as claimed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was popular among early writers in psychiatry including Esquirol, Moreau de Tours, Griesinger and Krafft-Ebing (Raimundo Oda *et al.*, 2005). Sometimes this notion of the 'healthy savage' was framed in terms of the protective effects of living a simple life with few demands, in contrast to the

increasing expectations for productivity and consumption in the complex, urbanized, industrialized environment of Europe. An increase in nervousness was associated with the over-stimulation of modern civilization, especially for those required to do 'brain work', and hence the upper classes were seen as particularly prone to maladies like neurasthenia or nervous weakness – a diagnosis introduced by the American neurologist George Beard and taken up widely throughout Europe and East Asia (Beard, 1869; Rabinbach, 1990). Over time, the living conditions of the poor in large cities, along with the impact of alcohol and a general erosion of traditional moral and religious values, were invoked to explain the apparent increase in mental disorders in urban settings.

Early studies in comparative psychiatry focused on the exotic in order to examine the universality of major psychiatric disorders. The psychiatric literature of the late 1800s and early 1900s was peppered with reports of 'culture-bound syndromes', e.g. *pibloktoq*, *latah*, *amok*, thought to be uniquely linked to cultural beliefs and practices (Simons and Hughes, 1985). These reports seemed to indicate the malleability of expression of psychopathology, captured in the distinction between *pathoplasticity* and *pathogenesis* (Yap, 1952, 1974). Major psychiatric textbooks usually devoted a chapter to exotic and culture-bound conditions. Unfortunately, early observers paid relatively little attention to the social context of the syndromes they were observing and describing.

For example, *pibloktoq* or 'Arctic hysteria', which was described in early accounts by explorers among the polar Inuit, became a stock example of a culture-bound syndrome. Anthropologists and psychiatrists have sought to link *pibloktoq* to specific features of Inuit child-rearing, social structure, religious practice, environment and nutrition (Brill, 1913; Foulks, 1974; Gussow, 1960; Landy, 1985; Wallace and Ackerman, 1960). Historian Lyle Dick (1995, 2002) reviewed all available accounts of *pibloktoq* and found that the few detailed case descriptions came from Admiral Robert E. Peary's visits to Greenland (c. 1982). There, on a few occasions, Inuit women were observed to become agitated and run out on the ice, stripping off their clothes, prompting others to restrain them until their agitation eventually subsided some hours later. This 'hysterical' behaviour seemed entirely inexplicable until Dick provided the missing context: Admiral Peary had sent these women's menfolk out on exploratory missions at a time before

solid ice, exposing them to great risk. The women presumably engaged in shamanistic prayer and magic to ensure the men's safety. Peary also thought it important for the well-being of his crew that they have sexual companions and encouraged his men to take Inuit partners with little regard for existing relationships. Alcohol also played a role in these episodes. The women's 'erratic' behaviour – watched with amusement by Peary's men (as can be seen in a photograph reproduced as figure 6 in Dick 1995: 21) – now seems less like evidence of a discrete culture-bound syndrome than a grimly familiar story of exploitation.

In another historical analysis, Marano (1983) showed how the culture-bound syndrome *windigo*, described among the Ojibway as the fear that one is possessed by a spirit that is turning one into a cannibal, probably never occurred as a behavioural syndrome, but was a part of a legend or mythological belief that could be used as an accusation to attack others. This accusation was effective not only in traditional society but served to mobilize the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as well, invoking a new form of social control available as a result of colonization. Once again, a phenomenon better understood in terms of power, conflict and social change was reified as a psychopathological entity located within individuals (Waldram, 2004). Similar historical accounts of behaviours like *amok* or *latah* suggest that adequate description of culture bound syndromes requires attention to the social context of power and the dynamics of protest and resistance (Kua, 1991; Winzeler, 1990, 1995). Recognition of the importance of context, has led to a de-emphasis of culture bound syndromes in recent cultural psychiatry in favour of concepts (including idioms of distress and explanatory models) that focus on the pragmatic, social and communicative functions of local terminology (Lewis-Fernández, *et al.*, 2015).

This tendency to ignore social context also was characteristic of the comparative psychiatry (*Vergleichende Psychiatrie*) advanced by Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926), who visited Southeast Asia and Indonesia to study *amok* and examine the universality of major psychoses (Jilek, 1995). Kraepelin's conclusion was that clinical phenomenology justified a qualified universalism. However, the differences he did find, he explained in terms of a developmental hierarchy:

based on a comparison between the phenomena of disease which I found there and those with which I was familiar at home, the overall similarity far outweighed the deviant features ... In particular, the

relative absence of delusions among the Javanese might be related to the lower stage of intellectual development attained and the rarity of auditory hallucinations might reflect the fact that speech counts for far less than it does with us and that thoughts tend to be governed more by sensory images.

(Kraepelin, 1904)

Kraepelin viewed cultural differences as reflections of biological differences in races or peoples and effectively elided the social context of psychiatric illness (Roelcke, 1997). His advocacy of theories of biological degeneration as a cause of mental disorder contributed to the rise of eugenic policies in Germany that culminated in the Nazi genocides.

While not adhering to Kraepelin's biological essentialism, H. B. M. Murphy (1915–1987) at McGill University and Julian Leff at the Institute of Psychiatry in the UK identified themselves as heirs to the tradition of comparative psychiatry and used both clinical observations and epidemiological methods to make systematic cross-cultural comparisons. Although they eschewed the sort of colonialist thinking and social Darwinism that plagued earlier writing, both invoked developmental hierarchies in their explanations of certain cultural differences. Murphy (1982) contrasted 'traditional' and 'modern' societies and Leff (1981) argued for a progressive differentiation of the emotion lexicon in Indo-European languages with contemporary British English as the most differentiated (for a critique, see Beeman, 1985).

Much of the innovative work of Alexander Leighton and Jane Murphy (Leighton, 1981; Murphy and Leighton, 1965) in Africa, Alaska and rural Nova Scotia also falls under the rubric of comparative psychiatry, although they employed dimensional measures of distress and, owing to their anthropological training, were interested in the impact of social and cultural context on mental health and illness. Despite this ethnographic orientation, Jane Murphy's (1976) influential paper arguing for the universal recognition of psychotic symptoms across diverse cultures did not consider the impact of colonial history on attitudes toward psychosis in the African and Alaskan communities she studied (Sadovsky, 1999).

The 'neo-Kraepelinian' revolution of DSM-III in 1980 introduced operationally defined discrete diagnostic categories in place of dimensional or narrative descriptions of psychiatric disorders (Wilson, 1993). With this new nosology and the accompanying technology of highly structured diagnostic interviews,

comparative psychiatry followed the rest of the discipline, abandoning in-depth ethnographically informed studies in favour of research organized around discrete diagnostic categories. This line of research has culminated in a series of important cross-national studies of the prevalence, course and outcome of major psychiatric disorders including the International Pilot Study of Schizophrenia (IPSS; World Health Organization, 1973; Leff *et al.* 1992), the Determinants of Outcome Study (Sartorius *et al.*, 1986), the WHO Collaborative Study on Standardized Assessment of Depressive Disorders (World Health Organization, 1983), and the International Consortium of Psychiatric Epidemiology (e.g. Andrade *et al.*, 2003). Successive generations of studies have used more refined measures, particularly standardized diagnostic interviews, most recently the Composite International Diagnostic Interview (Robins *et al.*, 1989). However, these instruments continue to have limitations when used across cultures and methodological artifacts have not been eliminated (Hicks, 2002; van Ommeren *et al.*, 2000). As well, most epidemiological studies have made little provision to identify culture-specific symptoms not included in the core definitions of disorders. In this way, the diagnostic categories of psychiatry bury the traces of their origins in European and American cultural history and become self-confirming 'culture-free' commodities ready for export.

Another important line of work in comparative psychiatry has centred on the effectiveness of traditional or indigenous healing practices (Kiev, 1969; Marsella and White, 1982; Rivers, 1924). Drawing from a rich ethnographic literature on healing rituals, Jerome Frank (1961), Raymond Prince (1980) and others argued that psychotherapy shares essential features with traditional healing and that both could be understood in terms of symbolic action at social, psychological and physiological levels. This work has become increasingly important as efforts are made to integrate or coordinate the activity of mental health practitioners and traditional or indigenous healers in many societies.

## Cultural Essentialism and Racism in Psychiatry

A central feature of most colonial enterprises was the use of racist concepts and ideologies to justify the subordination and exploitation of colonized peoples

(Fredrickson, 2002). Though they have no clear foundation in biology, notions of race serve to mark off particular groups as intrinsically different and less than other human beings (Lock, 1993). Psychiatry itself has been used to buttress racist perspectives (Littlewood, 1993). The notion that southern or non-Western peoples had underdeveloped frontal lobes and hence were prone to disinhibited behaviours was promoted by several generations of neuropsychiatrists, both to explain cross-national differences and to account for inequalities within colonized nations that actually reflected the legacy of racism, slavery and economic marginalization. For example, influenced by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's notion of primitive mentality, Antoine Porot, the head of the École d'Alger, argued that the native Algerian's mind was structurally different from that of the civilized European (Lévy-Bruhl, 1923; Porot 1918; Begue, 1996). This biological essentialism was matched by a complete disregard of social, cultural and political context that served colonial interests. This sort of essentialism persisted into the 1950s in the work of J. C. Carothers on the African mind. For Carothers, the African was developmentally child-like owing to underdeveloped frontal lobes that result in an effective leucotomy (Carothers, 1953; McCulloch, 1993, 1995). A whole generation of African psychiatrists was educated with texts containing this tendentious account.

Of course, there were also essentializing accounts of cultural difference presented in psychological terms. In *Prospero and Caliban* (1990; originally published in French in 1948), French intellectual Octave Mannoni described the people of Madagascar as primitive, and uncivilized, with a fundamentally different mentality based on a 'dependency complex' that protected them from the neurotic conflicts that were the burden of Europeans. Although Mannoni later developed a more nuanced account of the psychology of colonization, with Lacan displacing Adler in his psychodynamic theorizing, his earlier portrait remained a provocation to others seeking to understand and escape from the colonization of the psyche that accompanied political domination (Lane, 2002).

The migration of North African workers to France after 1945 stimulated French psychiatrists' interest in cultural difference and gave rise to the field of ethnopsychiatry (Fassin and Rechtman, 2005). Thus, the study of ethnic diversity in colonizing societies was closely linked with the history of colonial comparative

psychiatry. At the same time, there was the growing recognition that the colonial context itself was one of exploitation and stress that could account for some of the suffering and symptomatology seen in clinical contexts.

Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) was an important voice in this critique of the colonial origins of psychopathology (Gordon, 2015; Macey, 1996; Razanajao *et al.*, 1996). Fanon denounced the theories of the École d'Alger, which he saw as based on a colonial perspective with racist devaluing of the values, traditions and autonomy of others. In *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1982; originally published in 1952), Fanon powerfully portrayed the self-alienating effects of racism and colonialism. Fanon's account of the psychopathology of colonialism echoed the earlier account by the sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) in *The Souls of Black Folk* on the 'double consciousness' of African Americans (Du Bois, 1989). Fanon worked in the space between the political and the psychological – insisting on the primacy of politics and power, but showing how it was inscribed in the psychological and how change could come from within and without (Vergès, 1996). Ultimately, however, Fanon was less interested in the dynamics of culture and colonialism than in the struggle for political revolution and fell prey to the same tendency to essentialize cultural difference that plagued writers less aware than he was to the violence of racial stereotypes.

The process of unpacking the impact of racism and colonialism on the psychology of the colonizer and colonized is far from complete, the more so because the forms that oppression takes continue to mutate. This has been one focus of post-colonial theory, which offers a rich array of ideas about identity and alterity in the contemporary world that has as yet had little impact on cultural psychiatry (Bhabha, 1994; Chakrabarty, 2000; Gunew, 2003; Lazarus, 2011; Said, 1994).

## Ethnocultural Diversity: Settler Societies and Indigenous Peoples

The large migrations of Europeans to North America, Australia and other countries from the 1700s onwards created settler societies with high levels of ethnocultural diversity. This experience of people from many different national and regional backgrounds living side by side made ethnicity salient (Banks, 1996). Epidemiological studies conducted from the 1930s

onwards documented differential rates of psychiatric hospitalization for ethnocultural groups (Westermeyer, 1989). Of course, this difference reflected help-seeking and pathways to care more than population base rates. Subsequent waves of migration following World War II and other conflicts made the mental health needs of immigrants and refugees increasingly important in most psychiatric settings and led to a substantial literature on ethnic differences in illness behaviour.

The response to ethnic diversity has followed different trajectories in different countries owing to the history of colonization and migration but also following local ideologies of citizenship and dominant theories within psychiatry itself (Kirmayer and Minas, 2000; see for example, Bäärnhielm *et al.*, 2005; Beneduce and Martelli, 2005; Fassin and Rechtman, 2005; Fernando, 2005). Thus, the US and France share republican values of egalitarianism that imply that all citizens should be treated the same, with no regard to their cultural background (Todorov, 1993). Along with this came the assumption that, over time, ethnic groups would assimilate and acquire the cultural identity and practices of the dominant society. In fact, ethnicity has persisted in most settler societies despite pressure to assimilate. In the US, the egalitarian ideal has been complicated by the history of slavery and racial discrimination against African Americans and other groups. The current language of culture refers to 'diversity', defined in terms of ethno-racial blocs (Hollinger, 1995), but this diversity is recognized mainly insofar as it is associated with health disparities (Smedley *et al.*, 2003). In Canada and Australia, the ideology of multiculturalism has encouraged explicit attention to ethnic difference as a positive social value that warrants direct support by the state (Kivisto, 2002). At other moments, and in other societies, ethnicity has been profoundly divisive and, along with biologically essentialized notions of race, served as an incitement to violence and genocide (Fredrickson, 2002; wa Wamwere, 2003).

In Britain, cultural psychiatry has focused more on issues of race than on culture or ethnicity because of the conviction that racism is a crucial determinant of mental health and of the adequacy of psychiatric services (Fernando, 1988; Littlewood and Lipsedge, 1982). African Caribbean immigrants have been observed to have high rates of schizophrenia. This phenomenon, which affects some other migrant groups in other countries as well, does not appear to be due to diagnostic biases but may result from the

stresses of marginalization, discrimination and social exclusion (Hutchinson and Haasen, 2004; Kelly, 2005; Veling, 2013).

Recognition of the importance of culture, ethnicity and race has been prompted by demographic and political changes in settler countries, sometimes crystallized by specific confrontations or violent events that have commanded public attention. In the UK the death of Stephen Lawrence increased public awareness of issues of racism and social exclusion and prompted a government inquiry that led to changes in policy, with attention being directed to counter racism in institutions including health services (Fernando, 2003). In Canada, the Oka Crisis of 1990 (York and Pindera, 1991) led to the reports of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the establishment of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to provide support for projects to address the legacy of the residential school system (Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo, 2003). A Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that Canada had committed cultural genocide and called for wide ranging efforts to acknowledge and support indigenous peoples' identity and communities.<sup>1</sup> However, much of the response to cultural diversity has been at the grassroots level with minimal governmental support (Fernando, 2005). At the same time, subtler forms of racism and social exclusion continue to go unmarked and unchallenged (Gilroy, 2005; Holt, 2000).

## Anthropology of Psychiatry

The revolution in philosophy of science provoked by the work of Thomas Kuhn made biomedicine and psychiatry appear not so much universal truths as culturally constructed bodies of knowledge. Post-colonial writing challenged the taken-for-grantedness of Euroamerican values. The antipsychiatry 'movement' of the 1960s (Boyers, 1974) and the labelling theory of mental illness (Rosenhan, 1973; Scheff, 1974) drew attention to the social and political dimensions of psychiatric diagnosis. Historical accounts showed the ways in which psychiatric notions of madness emerged from and helped to maintain core cultural values (Ellenberger, 1970; Foucault, 1965; Micale and Porter, 1994; Porter, 1988). Within mainstream psychiatry itself, the US-UK Diagnostic Project

<sup>1</sup> See [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca).

(Cooper *et al.*, 1972) revealed important differences in the practice of British and American psychiatrists, with overdiagnosis of schizophrenia and underdiagnosis of bipolar disorder in the US. Subsequent efforts to improve the reliability of diagnostic practice in the US contributed to the emergence of DSM-III (Wilson, 1993). These and other social changes encouraged a more self-reflective stance and led anthropologists to consider biomedicine and psychiatry as cultural institutions (Good, 1994; Kleinman, 1988; Lock and Gordon, 1988). The anthropology of psychiatry developed a substantial body of literature showing how psychiatric practices draw from and contribute to cultural concepts of the person and experiences of the self (Gaines, 1992; Kleinman, 1995; Young, 1995). The third phase in the history of cultural psychiatry is strongly influenced by this turn toward cultural analysis and critique of the institutions and practices of psychiatry itself.

The seminal figure in this body of work has been Arthur Kleinman (1977, 1980, 1986, 1988, 1995), who, through his incisive writing, vision and leadership, has stimulated a whole generation of scholars. The 'new cross-cultural psychiatry' introduced by Kleinman (1977) argued for a renewed emphasis on ethnographic research. Rather than assuming the universality of psychiatric categories and psychological modes of expressing distress, Kleinman insisted on paying close attention to the social and cultural context of suffering and healing. This approach could be applied equally well across cultures and within the institutional and community settings of Western psychiatry.

Kleinman introduced the notion of the category fallacy, the erroneous assumption that conceptual categories that work well in one cultural context will have the same meaning and utility in another. In cultural psychiatry this is most obvious in questions about the meaning of psychiatric diagnostic categories. A further epistemological complexity arises from what the philosopher Ian Hacking (1999) has called 'the looping effect of human kinds' – that is, the tendency for the ways we categorize the world to become reified and institutionalized as cognitive and social facts.

The importance of these ideas for cultural psychiatry can be seen in the history of the emergence of diagnostic categories like post-traumatic stress disorder (Young, 1995) and dissociative disorders like multiple personality or fugue (Hacking, 1995,

1998). Psychiatric knowledge and practice reflect and reshape folk psychologies (Gaines, 1992; Littlewood, 2002; Nuckolls, 1992). For example, the reception and evolution of psychoanalysis and other forms of psychotherapy in different countries provides a window onto cultural concepts of the person (Cushman, 1995; Ellenberger, 1970; Rose, 1996; Shamdasani, 2003; Zaretsky, 2004). The broad shift away from psychoanalysis and toward biological accounts in the US in the 1980s reflects tensions within the discipline of psychiatry as well as larger political and economic forces (Luhmann, 2000). Psychopharmacology has played a crucial role in the development of psychiatry, driving diagnostic nosology and clinical practice (Healy, 2002). A growing body of research shows the role of the pharmaceutical industry in controlling the production of clinical 'evidence', establishing clinical guidelines, and influencing popular conceptions of mental illness, which now extends to marketing new disorders (Lakoff, 2005; Metzl, 2003; Petryna *et al.*, 2006; Cosgrove and Wheeler, 2013).

Psychiatric theory and practice are embedded in larger social and cultural systems. Understanding the impact of these systems on patients' lives and psychiatric practice demands critical and social science perspectives. A growing body of work in critical neuroscience examines the social origins and implications of the increasing reliance on neurobiology in psychiatry (Choudhury and Slaby, 2011; Rose and Abi-Rached, 2013). Of course, the attempt to apply social science perspectives to analysing psychiatric practice raises the problem of self-reflexivity, since social science theory itself is a product of the society it seeks to critique. Indeed, the notion of culture is also a cultural construction that changes with new configurations of society and geopolitical concerns.

## The Contribution of Psychological Anthropology

Cultural psychiatry derived some of its early theoretical models from the various schools and approaches of psychological anthropology that link individual personality with broader social processes, particularly culturally shaped child-rearing practices (Bock, 1999; Spindler, 1978). Franz Boas (1858–1942), often called the father of American anthropology, argued that culture could affect personality and behaviour by



amplifying or suppressing certain traits, thus creating conflicts for different individuals. In the 1930s, 'culture and personality' researchers (notably Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead) attempted to relate social structure, child-rearing and other cultural life-ways to modal national characters and specific patterns of psychopathology within groups (Spindler, 1978; Stocking, 1986). They used mainly ethnographic observations and borrowed psychodynamic theory or learning theory to explain the links between individual and culture.

For Benedict, Mead and later contributors to the field of culture and personality, psychopathology could be understood in part as an exaggeration of cultural traits or as a mismatch between individual personality and overarching cultural norms and values. This tradition enjoyed a period of prominence during and after World War II when studies of 'nations at a distance', based on interviews with small numbers of emigrés and analysis of media, were used as a form of military intelligence (e.g. Benedict, 1934).

Benedict (1934) saw culture as personality writ large. Anthropologist Edward Sapir rejected this view, arguing that culture had no reality beyond the actions and representations of individuals, each of whom responds differently to social exigencies. Sapir was a close colleague of psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan and looked to psychiatry to provide a way of understanding culture through the vicissitudes of individual biographies (Sapir, 1938; Kirmayer, 2001). This approach led to more theoretically sophisticated accounts of the interplay of culture, social structure and character, notably in the work of A. I. Hallowell (1955), but the field of culture and personality waned in the late 1950s owing to the failure to develop more rigorous methodology and a tendency to caricature whole societies with broad strokes (Levine, 2001).

A parallel tradition in psychological anthropology has used clinical psychoanalytic methods and perspectives to study individuals cross-culturally (Devereux, 1961, 1979; Kardiner and Linton, 1939; Delille, 2016). In these various forms of 'ethnopschoanalysis', the emphasis has been on examining the universality of psychodynamics and considering the ways in which these psychological mechanisms might resolve dynamic tensions created by particular social systems. In-depth interviews, prolonged relationships with subjects and attention to 'clinical material' including psychopathological symptoms, dreams,

fantasies and 'transference' distortions, all contributed to the effort to characterize the psychic interior cross-culturally. A nuanced attempt to integrate cultural identity and psychoanalytic ideas was developed in the work of the Department of Psychiatry at the Fann Hospital of the University of Dakar in Senegal in the 1960s. Under the direction of Dr Henri Collomb (who remained chief until 1978), a group of clinicians and researchers undertook careful empirical studies on the interface of Senegalese culture and Western psychiatry (Bullard, 2005; Collignon, 1978). There is a rich literature based on clinical experiences with psychoanalytic theory and methods that offers insights into the cultural logic of diverse traditions, increasingly conducted by clinicians who can integrate psychodynamic perspectives with their own intimate cultural knowledge (e.g. Crapanzano, 1973; Doi, 1973; Kakar, 1978; Levy, 1978; Obeyesekere, 1981, 1991).

In contrast to the case study approach of ethnopschoanalysis, the field of cross-cultural psychology has employed quantitative statistical methods to compare personality and psychopathology in different cultural or national groups. Despite its origins in German social psychology (Hogan and Tartaglino, 1994; Jahoda, 1993), cross-cultural psychology has been dominated methodologically by Anglo-American empiricism and conceptually by an individualistic cultural concept of the person (Kim and Berry, 1993; Marsella *et al.*, 1985). This cultural concept is taken over from American folk psychology and supports a large body of research that is generally presented as universal truths about the human psyche. The recent movement for indigenous psychologies attempts to reformulate basic models of personality from alternative perspectives, emphasizing, for example, the centrality of relationships with others in the dynamics of the self (Ho *et al.*, 2001).

Another strand in the development of psychological anthropology relevant to cultural psychiatry has its roots in the early ethnographic work of W. H. R. Rivers (1864–1922), who emphasized the rationality and potential efficacy of healing practices in the Melanesian and other societies he studied (Rivers, 1924). As a leading figure in both anthropology and psychiatry, Rivers used a variety of models to understand psychopathology and healing, but was most invested in psychological explanations that could be connected to an evolutionary biology (Young, 1993; 1999). Gregory Bateson (1904–1980) followed the direction of Rivers' work, incorporating psychological

notions from Benedict and Mead, but approaching mind with biological metaphors (Bateson, 1972). Bateson challenged the static view of culture in early British social anthropology by developing a 'cybernetic' approach to culture as a dynamical system (Stagoll, 2005; Wardle, 1999). In the 1950s and 1960s, Bateson's ideas about communication, interaction and the 'ecology of mind' had tremendous influence on the emerging field of family therapy.

Psychological anthropology has had a renaissance in recent decades with an increasingly eclectic range of theories brought to bear on understanding personality, identity, and psychopathology (Good, 1992). Most recently, contemporary versions of cognitive, social and developmental psychology, and social neuroscience have provided models for the interplay of culture and psychology (Casey and Edgerton, 2005; Hinton, 1999; Shore, 1996; Shweder, 1991; Sperber, 1996; Stigler *et al.*, 1990; Strauss and Quinn, 1997). This work is concerned with understanding culture in terms of discourse, interpersonal interaction and socially distributed knowledge, and makes links with cognitive science and discursive psychology (Kirmayer, 2006; Kirmayer and Ramstead, 2017).

## A Fourth Wave? Cultural Psychiatry in the Anthropocene

Recent events suggest we are on the cusp of a fourth wave in the history of cultural psychiatry. In part, this reflects the changing meanings of culture brought on by globalization and the pervasive impact of the Internet and social media. Information and telecommunication media made new forms of community possible by linking distant individuals in real time. This can give rise to new forms of pathology (like 'Internet addiction'), forms of social support and networks that may help or exacerbate particular mental health problems as well as pointing toward new strategies for prevention and intervention (Kirmayer *et al.*, 2013).

Globalization has reduced some economic inequalities but amplified others – and we now face a world in which inequalities within and between countries are likely to accelerate (Milanovic, 2016). Recognition of the enormous disparities in mental health across the globe has given new impetus to efforts to make mental health a higher priority in global development, as advocated by the Movement for Global Mental Health (Patel, 2014). Efforts to provide mental health services for the majority of

the world population acknowledges the importance of cultural and contextual adaptation but usually assume that current diagnostic and treatment methods of psychiatry are adequate to the task. The history of cultural psychiatry provides some reasons for caution and urges on us a more serious engagement with diversity and with the power structures that privilege the interests of wealthy countries and corporations (Kirmayer and Pedersen, 2014).

Finally, theories of globalization have emphasized the role of economic systems but a broader perspective would approach health in terms of our planetary ecosystems (Whitmee *et al.*, 2015). Geologists have proposed that we have entered the *Anthropocene*, a new epoch characterized by the human reshaping of our planet on a large scale (Davies, 2016). In the years to come, urbanization, climate change, and forced migration will challenge our concepts of culture, community and mental health in ways that will demand rethinking the concepts of cultural psychiatry (Kirmayer *et al.*, 2015).

## Conclusion: a World in Flux

As an organized field within the larger discipline, cultural psychiatry has a relatively short institutional history. A section of transcultural psychiatry was established in 1955 at McGill University by Eric Wittkower and Jacob Fried (1959). At the Second International Psychiatric Congress in Zurich in 1957, Wittkower organized a meeting attended by psychiatrists from 20 countries, including many who became major contributors to the field: Tsung-Yi Lin (Taiwan), Thomas A. Lambo (Nigeria), Morris Carstairs (Britain), Carlos Alberto Seguin (Peru) and Pow-Meng Yap (Hong Kong) (Prince, 2000). The American Psychiatric Association established a Committee on Transcultural Psychiatry in 1964, as did the Canadian Psychiatric Association in 1967. H. B. M. Murphy of McGill founded the World Psychiatric Association Section on Transcultural Psychiatry in 1970. By the mid 1970s transcultural psychiatry societies were set up in England, France, Italy and Cuba (Cox, 1986). The World Association for Cultural Psychiatry was founded in 2005. The major journals in the field, *Transcultural Psychiatry* (formerly *Transcultural Psychiatric Research Review*), *Psychopathologie Africaine*, *Culture Medicine and Psychiatry* and *Curare*, began in 1956, 1965, 1977 and 1978, respectively.

Over the last 60 years, the discipline has grown from a marginal field, concerned mainly with folklore, exotica and the distant cultural ‘other’, to a dynamic research and clinical enterprise of crucial importance in the light of increasing migration, globalization, cultural intermixing and new insights from social and cultural neuroscience (Seligman *et al.*, 2015). Over this same period of time, both the meanings of culture and the dominant theory and modes of practice of psychiatry have changed substantially in ways that have reshaped the field of cultural psychiatry.

Despite this progress, there is a persistent legacy of colonialism in contemporary cultural psychiatry that can be seen in the continuing romance with exoticism, the de-contextualized view of mental health problems and focus on culture-bound syndromes, efforts to reify and essentialize culture as individual traits, and the tendency to employ developmental hierarchies contrasting traditional and modern societies. The corrective to these biases requires thinking about culture as a dynamic process of creativity and contestation among individuals participating in different ways of life, with issues of power and agency always at stake.

Wittkower adopted the term ‘transcultural’ to imply moving through and beyond cultural barriers (Wittkower and Rin, 1965). Others have preferred to call the field ‘cultural psychiatry’ to indicate that all human experience is culturally constituted and that we can examine cultural meanings in a single society as well as comparatively (Prince, 1997). In the context of globalization, ‘transcultural’ takes on new meaning based on the recognition that cultures are always mixed or creolized, giving rise to new forms (Glissant, 1997; Kraidy, 2005). Many urban settings now present a sort of ‘hyperdiversity’ in which many different groups co-exist and hybrid forms of identity abound. Transcultural psychiatry must explore the significance for mental health and illness of various forms of cultural hybridity at both social and individual levels (Bibeau, 1997).

Among the central questions for contemporary cultural psychiatry are the nature of the interaction of psychopathological processes and cultural idioms of distress in the genesis and course of disorders; the specific mechanisms of action of socio-cultural factors on the course of schizophrenia and other disorders; the range of cross-cultural applicability of psychopharmacological, psychotherapeutic and psychosocial interventions – both those derived from biomedicine and those of indigenous origin; and the impact of

emerging practice models and healthcare systems that aim to provide culturally sensitive or responsive care across cultures and within culturally diverse settings. To do this, cultural psychiatry must consider how local clinical and research practices reproduce larger gender, class and other social differences of the dominant society.

In addition to these enduring concerns, new issues are emerging. Psychiatry has been enjoined to play a role in conflict resolution and rebuilding communities torn apart by ethnic violence (Kirmayer, 2010). Cultural psychiatry itself has been co-opted by pharmaceutical companies seeking strategies to open up new markets for their products (Kirmayer, 2006). Clinical trials for new drugs are now taking place in the developing economies of Eastern Europe and South Asia, raising important questions about the role of culture in psychopharmacology. At the same time, the changing configurations of the world system – through migration, ethnic nationalism, ethnogenesis, globalization, telecommunications and the growing web of the Internet with its communities and identities forged in cyberspace – require us to rethink the nature of culture. These social changes directly impact on health and raise fundamental questions, not only of a scientific nature but also with an ethical or sociomoral dimension that concerns the value of diversity versus integration, of sameness and difference, and the implications for mental health and illness of cultural pluralism and the dramatically enlarged scale of community and malleability of identity made possible by new technologies. The creative potential of cultural pluralism will be an essential resource in the years to come as we face the challenges of the growth of political extremism and the crisis of climate change.

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