

Symposium | Psychotherapy : [Symposium 84] At a cultural crossroads in our time

 Sun. Sep 28, 2025 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM JST | Sun. Sep 28, 2025 12:00 AM - 1:30 AM UTC  Session Room 7 (Conference Room C)

[Symposium 84] At a cultural crossroads in our time

Moderator: Yuichiro Abe (Department of Psychiatry, Ishiki Hospital)

[SY-84]

At a cultural crossroads in our time

Kanako Shimizu^{1,5}, Karen Yanit², Shinichiro Otsuka³, Kazuaki Sugawara⁴, Yuichiro Abe⁶ (1. Rokubancho Mental Clinic, Japan depression center (Japan), 2. Universidad de Monterrey (UDEM) (Mexico), 3. Otsuka Praxis (Japan), 4. Mental hospital Kamakurayama (Japan), 5. Jichi Medical University, department of psychiatry (Japan), 6. Ishiki Hospital (Japan))

[SY-84-01]

Role of “stranger” in liminal spaces: Through the transformation of an international student

*Kanako Shimizu^{1,2} (1. Rokubancho Mental Clinic, Japan depression center (Japan), 2. Jichi Medical University, Department of Psychiatry (Japan))

[SY-84-02]

Eyes That Seek Eyes: From Paternalism to Autonomy

*Karen Yanit De León Valdez¹ (1. Psychiatry Department, Universidad de Monterrey (Mexico))

[SY-84-03]

Psychotherapy as an encounter of strangers

*Shinichiro Otsuka

[SY-84-04]

The Importance of Socio-Cultural Context in Psychiatric Diagnosis

*Kazuaki Sugawara¹ (1. St.Marianna University Yokohama Seibu Hospital (Japan))

[SY-84-05]

Becoming aware of a strangeness- from a personal experience studying abroad in France

*Yuichiro Abe¹ (1. 1) Ishiki Hospital 2) Tokyo University and Graduate School of Social Welfare (Japan))

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Keywords : strangers、study overseas、cultural crossroad

Cross-cultural experiences inherently involve a dual nature. On one hand, they are enriching, offering individuals new perspectives and skills. On the other, they may lead to difficulties in adaptation and even psychological distress. The experience of being a "stranger" in a foreign culture can expose individuals to discrimination, yet it can also foster the generation of novel insights. Studying abroad is a prototypical example of this "stranger" experience. For earlier generations, overseas study posed significant logistical and cultural challenges, often intensifying the psychological impact of cultural displacement. In contrast, the contemporary global environment—particularly in urban settings—has become increasingly diverse, reducing the sense of being a complete outsider. Given these changes, what can still be gained from studying abroad today? This symposium explores how cross-cultural experiences acquired through study abroad are being integrated into clinical practice. Presenters will discuss how such experiences have shaped their approaches to medical care and psychotherapy, particularly in the context of treating international students and foreign patients. Through clinical case examples and reflective discussion, the symposium aims to examine the enduring psychological relevance of the "stranger" experience in our time.

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[SY-84-01] Role of “stranger” in liminal spaces: Through the transformation of an international student

*Kanako Shimizu^{1,2} (1. Rokubancho Mental Clinic, Japan depression center (Japan), 2. Jichi Medical University, Department of Psychiatry (Japan))

Keywords : transformation、stranger、developmental disorder、depression、international student

Studying abroad offers not only academic enrichment but also profound opportunities for psychological transformation. This presentation explores the case of an international student receiving mental health care at a psychiatric clinic in Japan. The patient presented with a mood disorder and developmental trauma. For such individuals, the host country often functions as a liminal space—a harsh yet sheltering boundary zone that facilitates psychological reorganization. Within the liminal space exempt from responsibility, the patient comes into contact with archetypal images, leading to a transformation of the internalized parental imago shaped by past abuse, and ultimately attaining a sense of authentic self-love. This case illustrates how the role of “stranger” can serve as a reparative journey, addressing narcissistic vulnerabilities rooted in early trauma and fostering self-establishment.

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[SY-84-02] Eyes That Seek Eyes: From Paternalism to Autonomy

*Karen Yanit De León Valdez¹ (1. Psychiatry Department, Universidad de Monterrey (Mexico))

Keywords : Autonomy、Dignity、Relational psychiatry、Doctor-patient relationship、Paternalism

The most striking difference I observed in my psychiatric training between Mexico and France lies in the gaze. In France, I encountered a horizontal gaze between clinicians and patients—one that fosters collaborative, reflective, and autonomous decision-making. This gaze acknowledges the patient as a subject, capable of participating actively in their own care.

In contrast, in Mexico, there remains a noticeable tendency toward paternalism, where the patient is often infantilized. The clinician is positioned as an authority who “knows best,” while the patient is expected to comply—frequently without the opportunity to express their preferences or to assume an active role in their treatment. This dynamic is often mirrored in the patient’s perception of the clinician as an omnipotent figure, responsible not only for treatment but for resolving existential dilemmas. In such cases, the patient may abdicate their own agency, locating both power and responsibility outside themselves.

In this presentation, I will explore the paradoxes that emerge when clinicians attempt to fulfill the role of the omnipotent caregiver, as well as the tensions and resistance that arise when we strive to return agency to the patient.

I propose that a more sustainable and ethical therapeutic relationship depends on seeing the patient face to face. This horizontal gaze implies more than eye contact—it is an epistemological and relational stance. It invites us to engage with the patient’s concerns, to co-construct meaning, and to accompany them as they take responsibility for their own care and well-being.

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[SY-84-03] Psychotherapy as an encounter of strangers

*Shinichiro Otsuka

Keywords : stranger、 personal psychotherapy、 cross-cultural encounter

Within the collective Japanese culture, psychotherapists are still somewhat strangers. And nowadays we see many clients from different cultural backgrounds. This makes the experience of psychotherapy an encounter from stranger to stranger. I'd like to discuss the uniqueness and the meaning of personal psychotherapy in Japanese culture.

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[SY-84-04] The Importance of Socio-Cultural Context in Psychiatric Diagnosis

*Kazuaki Sugawara¹ (1. St.Marianna University Yokohama Seibu Hospital (Japan))

Keywords : Cultural Psychiatry、 Cross-Cultural Diagnosis、 ICD and Clinical Judgment

During my stay in Heidelberg, Germany, I attended a language school and observed psychiatric outpatient consultations alongside German psychiatrists and healthcare professionals. I also participated in psychiatric conferences and study groups, engaging in discussions and sharing perspectives.

These experiences were conducted in German. While my German sufficed for daily communication, it sometimes fell short in complex clinical interactions. However, psychiatric practice extends beyond verbal communication—nonverbal cues, attitudes, and atmosphere are crucial for understanding patients.

What stood out most was the role of socio-cultural background in clinical diagnosis. Although Japanese and German psychiatrists use the same international diagnostic criteria, such as the ICD, diagnoses often varied. I observed cases where identical symptoms led to different conclusions based on cultural context, social expectations, and clinician-patient dynamics.

These variations highlight that psychiatric diagnosis involves more than applying standardized criteria; it includes culturally shaped interpretations. In this symposium, I aim to share these observations and reflect on how cultural and social factors influence diagnostic decision-making. My goal is to raise awareness of cultural influences in clinical psychiatry and emphasize the value of cross-cultural experiences in fostering a nuanced understanding of mental health.

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[SY-84-05] Becoming aware of a strangeness- from a personal experience studying abroad in France

*Yuichiro Abe¹ (1. 1) Ishiki Hospital 2) Tokyo University and Graduate School of Social Welfare (Japan))

Keywords : Strangeness、 encounter、 Paris Syndrome

After having studied abroad in France for four and a half years around 2010, I previously wrote an essay about this experience (Abe Y: Bulletin Médical Franco-Japonais, 2016). Rereading my own text for the first time in several years brings back fond memories of those times. This nostalgia is not just nostalgic, but also sheds light on the unresolved strangeness I continued to feel in my daily life, even after returning to Japan. One of the benefits of studying abroad is that it makes us realize this in an explicit way. During that stay, I got interested in several concepts of French sociology. Therefore, the early texts I translated, after returning to Japan, were the result of collaboration with Japanese sociologists.

Translating may be my own way of coming to terms with the strangeness that I have carried with me.

Leaving a familiar place once is to confront an uneasy strangeness through the body. The famous concept of "Paris Syndrome (*Syndrome de Paris*)" has long been known in relation to the mental health of Japanese people living in France. The mental troubles of such patients may be due to the way in which the subject comes to terms with their own strangeness. Having had an experience of being a stranger might permit us to take care of the sense of strangeness that others should have. Several encounters by staying overseas for an extended period of time are surely valuable and unique experiences to me.