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Traitor in our Midst: Cultural Variations in Japanese vs. Oklahoman Public Discourse on Domestic Terrorism in the Spring of 1995*

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Abstract

When “one of our own” commits mass murder, mechanisms that sustain our social order are opened to question. Based on two samples of newspaper editorials written in 1995 – either after the poison gas attack in the Tokyo subway or after the Oklahoma City bombing – evidence is provided that Japanese editorialists advised strategies for retaining order, whereas Oklahoman authors endorsed ones for reestablishing it. In accordance with Simmel’s distinction between faithfulness and gratitude as social forms, Japanese advised faithful continuation of wholesome interactions with their terrorists, whereas Oklahomans expressed gratitude for rescue workers’ assistance. We apply modality analysis to identify those specific activities that authors presume their readers to accept as inevitable, possible, impossible, or contingent for each other. Working from this modal rhetoric in the two public discourses, we build more comprehensive inferences regarding the underlying logics of Japanese faithfulness versus Oklahoman gratitude – logics that reflect the respective motivational dynamics underlying extant theories of identity and exchange.

Keywords

culture, discourse, terrorism, Simmel, modality, text analysis

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Central to Simmel's sociology is the suggestion that social interaction can be analyzed fruitfully as discrete processes of reciprocal motivation – processes that he labeled “forms of sociation” (*Vergesellschaftungsformen*). In business relations, for example, he argued that merchants' fierce competition is offset by their equally fierce cooperation in ensuring that all competitive acts accord with rules of fairness within the marketplace (Simmel 1955:155–7). Motivations persist so long as competitive and cooperative activities produce a mutually sustaining tension between them. If one merchant were able to dominate a marketplace, dampened motivations would result not only with others whose competitiveness had become impossible but also with the merchant whose domination had now become inevitable.

In this paper we examine the premise (recently suggested by Roberts [2008]) that most societies have a predominant, or default, sociational form. Moreover, we make the key methodological assumption that societies' respective forms can be differentiated via comparative analyses of their public discourse. This is a culture-comparative (Japanese vs. Oklahoman) study in which comparable public discourses (newspaper editorials) regarding similar events (acts of domestic terrorism) provide a platform for distinguishing intracultural processes of reciprocal motivation.¹

Simmel's essay on “Faithfulness and Gratitude” (1950) provides our starting point for understanding the distinct reciprocal dynamics of interactions within Japanese versus Oklahoman societies. After reviewing Simmel's argument, we extend it with the suggestion that his depiction of “faithfulness” has parallels with the interactional dynamics within Japan, whereas his depiction of “gratitude” has parallels with those in the U.S. We then illustrate these dynamics with a modality analysis of texts from editorials that appeared in response to two acts of domestic terrorism in early 1995: the release of sarin (a poisonous gas) in the Tokyo subway system and the Oklahoma City bombing.

¹ Our emphasis on sustainable processes of discourse-based motivation affords an alternative to a more traditional approach (popularized by Triandis 1995:2001; Triandis et al. 1988) of differentiating Japanese versus U.S. psychologies as respectively individualist versus collectivist (individual vs. group goals, high vs. low freedom, independent vs. interdependent, etc.). Rather than draw generalizations from ethnographic sources and experiments, our alternative is to draw them from words spoken by the peoples we wish to differentiate. Instead of locating cultural differences within personality traits, we seek them in people's discursive relations with each other.

Simmel on Faithfulness and Gratitude

Simmel conceptualized both faithfulness and gratitude as grounded in the value people place in their relations with others:

[F]aithfulness... is directed toward the continuance of the relation as such, independently of any particular affective or volitional elements. (Simmel 1950:381)

Although the actions one expects from others may have originated with ulterior motivations (whether self-interest, social responsibility, or others), Simmel argued that in time these actions give rise to an intrinsically valued social form.² Yet as soon as relation crystallizes into form, a tension arises since this form is “bound to contradict the rhythm or un-rhythm of life as actually lived” (Simmel 1950:387). Since a relation’s contents never correspond perfectly to one’s expectations of it, there is a sense in which one’s motivation toward the relation’s continuation is a motivation toward making it intelligible.

These forms [of faithfulness], after all, do not express or shape an ideal, a contrast with life’s reality, but [they express/shape] this life itself. (Simmel 1950:386, our brackets)

Thus faithfulness, as a form of sociation, gives rise to a pattern of reciprocal motivation in which people are motivated to ever-more-perfectly embody intrinsically valued relations – relations that they will never find to have been embodied with perfect intelligibility.

The fundamental difference between faithfulness and gratitude resides in their respective synchronic versus diachronic natures. Whereas faithfulness gains its motivational impetus from imperfect relations in the present, gratitude finds this impetus with inequitable exchanges in one’s past. For Simmel, gratitude can only be understood as among people whose relations are defined in terms of the legal order of exchange – an order in

² Simmel referred to this transformation of “feelings that engender relationships into the feeling designed to preserve the relationship” as “induction by feeling.” He even went so far as to claim it “a fundamental sociological fact” that “mere habitual togetherness, the mere existence of a relation over a period of time, produces this induction by feeling” (Simmel 1950:381–2).

which “[t]he objectively equal is given for the objectively equal, and man himself is really irrelevant” (Simmel 1950:388). Nonmonetary exchanges rarely conclude with all participants believing that the exchange was “objectively equal,” however. In such situations gratitude arises as a supplement to the legal order.

Gratitude is the sense that one has received more than one has given.

If by itself or in response to some external reality, our inner life has made it impossible for us to continue loving, revering, esteeming a person..., we can still be grateful to him, since he once gained our gratitude. (Simmel 1950:393)

Here Simmel’s mechanism of reciprocal motivation involves the sequential production and evaluation of gifts that never quite have the value of gifts already received. Motivation persists as long as repayment remains a not-overly-distant possibility.³

Note how in faithfulness one’s motivation is to keep a relation from disappearing, whereas in gratitude one’s motivation is to have repayment appear. This distinction is difficult to discern in most everyday interactions. (For example, without discursive cues it may be impossible to tell if a purchase is motivated by faithfulness to a merchant or by gratitude for goods received.) Yet as Simmel (1950:394) points out, faithfulness and gratitude do occasionally involve inconsistent motivations, whereby faithfulness to existing relations may or may not take precedence over novel means of gratitude-expression. Moreover, one might argue that it is precisely when their social order is disrupted, that people embrace faithful versus grateful responses toward those related to this threat – as a wife forced to choose between her faithfulness to a disruptive husband and her gratitude to the unfamiliar police who offer relief.

³) As apparent in the previous quotation, Simmel did not believe that when givers die, repayment to them becomes impossible. Instead, repayments can be made “in the name of” some long-deceased other to whom one feels ethically obliged.

Modality and Motivation

Societies would indeed be oppressive places if all interpersonal influence were applied through coercion. Instead, discourse affords a “lighter hand” for rhetorically accomplishing acquiescence or compliance from others (Burke 1969; Gergen 1997). For example, if one is convinced that an event is inevitable, one will not attempt to prevent it (unless, of course, one is convinced that one’s preventative action too is inevitable). Likewise, one does not attempt anything that one truly believes impossible. This leaves people’s discretionary universe restricted to those actions that they are convinced to be contingent (that is, not inevitable) but possible.

In a recent work on cultures and modality, Roberts (2008) argues that interpersonal influence is mediated by our use of modal languages. For example, one might convince someone not to leave by employing rhetorical claims like “You are not able to go,” “You ought not go,” “You are compelled not to go,” “You are not permitted to go,” and so on. Note that each time a modal auxiliary verb is used, there are two verbs associated with the subject, namely the modal auxiliary verb (such as “can,” “ought,” “must”) and a main verb in infinitive form (such as “to go”). These usages are not intended to convey facts or to describe events, but rather are used to communicate something about the likelihood of the subject-verb-object link. As illustrated in the following paragraph, a fourfold distinction among these likelihoods results as the modal auxiliary verb, the main verb, both, or neither is negated – a pattern referred to by modal logicians as the “Square of Oppositions” (Horn 1989; Van der Auwera 1996).

Roberts continues by noting that it is instructive to differentiate cultures in accordance with their dominant types of modal usage. In the U.S. people tend to refer to their abilities (possibilities), inability (impossibilities), capacity not (contingency), and, rarely, incapacity not (inevitability) to achieve specific goals. In Japan people typically refer to their obligations (inevitabilities), nonobligations (contingencies), obligations not (impossibilities), and nonobligations not (possibilities) to embody their natures.

Put differently, in the U.S. interpersonal influence is accomplished via a rhetoric of gratitude, goal attainment, and fairness (Coleman 1990; Stewart 1972; Tocqueville 1966).

Fairness is one of the most important values in modern Anglo culture. . . . (It) refers to a potential tension between what one person wants to do and what

can be bad for another. . . . Certain rules apply that limit my freedom of action when it may come into conflict with other people's interests. (Wierzbicka 2006:141, 147)

Yet in Japan interpersonal influence is accomplished via a rhetoric of faithfulness, role-embodiment, and naturalness (Su et al. 1999; Hsu 1981; Dumont 1980).

(T)he goal of East Asian group behaviors is to maintain mutually beneficial relationships with fellow in-group members, based primarily on the self as a relational unit and on an awareness of one's in-groups as networks of relationships. (Yuki 2003:177)⁴

Thus whereas in the U.S. abilities and inabilities reference the correspondence between subjectively-held goals and objective achievements, in Japan obligations and non-obligations reference the correspondence between objective embodiments and subjectively-held expectations regarding one's relations with others. These are the cultural differences we identify in two text populations in which Japanese and Oklahoman residents reflect on their respective encounters with domestic terrorism.

Data

On March 20, 1995, twelve people were killed and over 5,000 injured in Tokyo, Japan, during a nerve gas attack that occurred on the subway system. The following month, on April 19, 1995, 168 people were killed and over 800 were injured when the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City was bombed. Both events were orchestrated by domestic terrorists. Convicted of the respective events are Shoko

⁴ Yuki (2003) and Yuki et al. (2005) provide empirical evidence that Americans' loyalty to groups and trust in others are associated with their in- and out-group identities. By contrast, Japanese loyalty and trust are more strongly correlated with interpersonal relationships than such categorical group membership. Other studies show these relationships to be more situation-specific in Japan than in the U.S. (Smith and Francis 2005; Smith et al. 2001). Our position is that these cultural differences are sustained not merely structurally but also rhetorically, through ongoing references to "abilities" in American public discourses and to "obligations" in Japanese public discourses.

Asahara – leader of the Japanese religious cult, Aum Shinrikyo – and Timothy McVeigh (along with Terry Nichols) – an independent terrorist with links to right-wing militia groups. Our data are from editorials and letters-to-the-editor written in the largest domestic newspaper in the cities where the events took place.

The Daily Oklahoman is the largest daily newspaper in Oklahoma and *Asahi Shimbun* is the world's second largest newspaper.⁵ In our first screening we assembled all event-related editorials and letters-to-the-editor that appeared in these newspapers immediately following the respective events. We then continued sampling all editorials until no such editorial appeared in the newspaper for ten consecutive days. In the case of the sarin attack this was from March 22 to August 1, 1995; in the case of the bombing it was from April 21 to August 13, 1995.

Our sample consists of all these editorials that were (1) authored by citizens of the respective countries, and (2) contained at least one complete modal usage (that is, one with information regarding its form [possibility, impossibility, contingency, or inevitability], plus its subject and predicate). This procedure yielded final sample sizes of 48 Japanese and 46 Oklahoman editorials (see Roberts et al. [2008] for more detail on modality analyses like this one).

Only the last modal usage in each editorial was encoded. This is because authors typically provide summary positions of their overall arguments at the ends of their editorials (as generally borne out in our experiences with the texts). Data from our sampled editorials were fit into the following semantic grammar:

$$\text{It is } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{possible} \\ \text{impossible} \\ \text{inevitable} \\ \text{contingent} \end{array} \right\} \text{ for a person who is } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a victim of} \\ \text{involved in rectifying} \\ \text{associated with those who caused} \\ \text{the cause of} \end{array} \right\} \text{ terrorism to } \text{———}.$$

⁵ The world's largest newspaper, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, is also based in Tokyo. However, data from it were not used in this analysis because *Asahi Shimbun* is more comparable to *The Daily Oklahoman*, given its greater focus on Japanese understandings of domestic events and *Yomiuri Shimbun*'s relatively stronger emphasis on Japan's image abroad (Cai 2003).

Thus, for example, let us consider how one would apply this template to the following text:

In order to prevent such tragedy from happening again..., *it is necessary* (for authorities) *to* broadly combine their (experts') expertise. (Wata Yuichi, "Must Establish a Committee of Experts on How to Manage Sarin," *Asahi* March 31, 1995)⁶

In terms of the semantic grammar, this text is rendered as, "*It is inevitable (necessary) for a person who is involved in rectifying terrorism to combine experts' expertise.*"

Beyond indicators of editorials' country and date of publication, we thus have data on three additional variables within each of 94 modal-usages – one set of variables for each editorial. In the order listed in the above semantic grammar, these are:

- The modal form (4 attributes: "possible," "impossible," "inevitable," or "contingent");
- The form's subject (4 attributes: a person who is "a victim of," "involved in rectifying," "associated with those who caused," or "the cause of" terrorism); and
- An open-ended indicator of the activity to which the subject and form apply.

For the previous paragraph's illustrative sentence, these variables' values are respectively "inevitable" (it is necessary), "involved in rectifying" (authorities), and the open-ended phrase, "combine experts' expertise." An appendix to this paper lists phrases classified into the first variable's four modal form categories. The second variable's attributes were chosen broadly (and exclusively) to capture the types of persons empirically mentioned in the texts.⁷ The third variable is treated qualitatively in our analysis.

⁶ In this and all subsequent indented quotations, clarifying parenthetical phrases are ours as are italics used to identify the editorial's encoded modal phrase. Quotations are followed by parentheses containing the cited editorial's author, title, newspaper, and publication date.

⁷ Some clarity may be needed regarding the attribute of "a person who is associated with those who caused terrorism." In the Japanese case, these would include references to members of the perpetrators' religious cult, Aum Shinrikyo, but who were not involved in the sarin attack. In the Oklahoman case, this includes a single reference to Muslim non-

Results

Let us proceed by contrasting how each of the four modal forms was applied in the respective sets of editorials. The idea here is to differentiate what constitutes “the inevitable,” “the possible,” etc. within each cultural setting. In this way we shall illustrate how Japanese expressions of faithfulness and Oklahoman ones of gratitude become manifest in their public discourses.

Inevitability

Rectifying Japanese Subject

As indicated in Table 1, modal references to inevitability were equally frequent in the Japanese (23 cases) and Oklahoman (21 cases) data. Yet in the Japanese data 70 percent of these references were to people involved in rectifying terror, compared to only 38 percent in the Oklahoman data. In eleven of these Japanese cases, the editorial’s author was offering advice to investigating officials, politicians, experts, or newscasters:⁸ IN DEALING WITH THE SARIN INVESTIGATION OFFICIALS MUST SAFEGUARD JAPANESE FREEDOM OF RELIGION (2×); THEY MUST COORDINATE EXPERTS’ INPUT (2×); THEY OUGHT TO ENSURE INTERACTION AMONG GROUPS IN JAPANESE SOCIETY; THEY MUST HELP REINTEGRATE AUM SHINRIKYO MEMBERS INTO JAPANESE SOCIETY; THEY MUST LEARN FROM THEIR MISTAKES. POLITICIANS MUST RECONSIDER THE PRESENT LAW DEALING WITH “RELIGIOUS LEGAL ENTITIES”, and THEY MUST DETERMINE THE LEGAL BASIS OF SEARCH & SEIZURE METHODS. THE MEDIA MUST REPORT THE FACTS CLEARLY, DEVOID OF SENSATIONALISM. EXPERTS “OUGHT TO DISENTANGLE THE KNOTTED (SOCIAL) THREAD” THAT ALLOWS SUCH THINGS TO OCCUR.

The other five cases in which a Japanese author referred to things inevitable for someone involved in rectifying terrorism were ones in which the author offered advice of a self-referential nature: WE OUGHT TO BE COGNIZANT AND CRITICAL OF MEDIA SENSATIONALISM (2×); WE MUST REASSURE AUM SHINRIKYO MEMBERS OF THEIR PLACE IN JAPANESE SOCIETY; WE OUGHT TO CULTIVATE INDEPENDENT THINKERS WHO WILL NOT BE

involvement, plus allusions to the sorts of anti-government right-wing militia groups with which Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols were known to be associated.

⁸) We use SMALL CAPS throughout the results section to signify empirical modal usages paraphrased from our sample of 94 editorials.

Table 1
Percentages of modality statements according to location, modal form, and modal subject

Modal subject	Japan					Oklahoma					
	Inevitable	Possible	Impossible	Contingent	Inevitable	Possible	Impossible	Contingent	Possible	Impossible	Contingent
Rectifying	69.6 (16)	77.8 (14)	0.0 (0)	60.0 (3)	38.1 (8)	20.0 (3)	28.6 (2)	33.3 (1)			
Victimized	17.4 (4)	11.1 (2)	50.0 (1)	20.0 (1)	61.9 (13)	66.7 (10)	28.6 (2)	66.7 (2)			
Associated	8.7 (2)	11.1 (2)	50.0 (1)	20.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	13.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)			
Caused	4.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	42.9 (3)	0.0 (0)			
Total	47.9 (23)	37.5 (18)	4.1 (2)	10.4 (5)	45.7 (21)	32.6 (15)	15.2 (7)	6.5 (3)			

Note: Frequencies are in parentheses below percents. N = 94.

ATTRACTED TO MOMENTARY CHARISMA; WE OUGHT TO EXAMINE WEAKNESSES IN THE FOUNDATION OF JAPANESE SOCIETY.

Victimized Japanese Subject

The common message among the previous paragraph's modal statements is that understanding inevitably affords means for transcending distractions that might entice us to act in socially destructive ways. Each lapse of self-discipline, each lessening of faithfulness leaves those with impressionable minds open to such potentially-detrimental distractions.

In similar fashion, the four instances when authors referred to victimized persons' inevitability, the victimized person failed to transcend the emotional strains of the moment. INSTEAD OF BEING CAUGHT UP IN ONE'S IMMEDIATE EMOTIONAL STRAINS, ONE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE HIDDEN ROOT OF AUM'S CORRUPTION; SHOULD CALL AUM A TERRORIST GROUP; SHOULD GAIN A MORAL EDUCATION; OUGHT (as per the below quotation) TO DO SOME SELF-DIAGNOSIS.

[O]ur society since long has had the tendency to create illusions. In recent world history quite a few dictators have created substanceless-images to maintain their rule. Let them worship a specific personality; stop their personal judgment. Give them cosmetically-beautified information. Exaggerate threats to confuse people, the complete life (without confusing illusions) is taken away. . . . This society currently sustains a moderate prosperity, but it perhaps is not as strong as at first sight. Isn't it wise to (*Ought* one not) do some self-diagnosis?⁹⁾ (no byline, "Society has the Same Pathology [as Aum]," *Asahi* May 19, 1995)

Remaining faithful to each other requires that we transcend distractions from a substantive life free of illusions.

Causal or Associated Japanese Subject

The Japanese authors extend such guidance even to people associated with terror, including the one ultimately responsible for it.

⁹⁾ In modality analyses rhetorical questions are encoded as if they were stated in the declarative (Roberts et al. 2008). For example, this last sentence would be encoded as "we Japanese ought to do some self-diagnosis."

Asahala claims he is a religious person (and so) to protect freedom of religion (he) *should* immediately in public give an answer to the mystery. (no byline, “Answer/Resolve Deeper and Deeper Mystery and Lack of Peace,” *Asahi* March 25, 1995)

[S]hould not legal entities themselves strive to establish a highly transparent system? ... (T)ransparent operation, information disclosure, self-discipline, and supervision over leaders are closely associated with (their) proving to the world that the existence of religious legal entities is for the public welfare. (Tanamura Naoyuki, “Hasten the Reconsideration of the Law of Religious Legal Entities,” *Asahi* August 1, 1995)

Isn't it *required that* religious legal entities start to enforce self-discipline, (and to) not let illegal acts such as violence, threat, and holding-in-captivity happen under the name of religious-legal-entity, (and is it not required that religious entities have) with (their) obligation of contributing to society the obligation for improving the quality of religions? (Matsumura Hinako, “Religious People are Required to Have Self-discipline,” *Asahi* April 4, 1995)

The presumption is apparently that if one is cognizant of one's obligations, one will (inevitably) act upon them. Being self-disciplined means remaining faithful to one's obligations.

In sum, faithfulness-expressions pervade all references to inevitability within our Japanese data. They may be found in advice to oneself (5) and others (11) involved in rectifying terrorism; in advice to oneself (3) and others (1) as victims of terrorism; and even in advice to those who are associated with (2) and who caused (1) the terrorism.

Rectifying Oklahoman Subject

Not only do the Oklahoman editorialists refrain from referring to the inevitabilities of terrorists or of those associated with them, only 38 percent (3 of 8 instances) of their provisions of inevitability-advice are for people other than themselves who are involved in rectifying terrorism – as opposed to 69 percent (11 of 16) of these instances within the Japanese data: OFFICIALS SHOULD CHANGE A STREET'S NAME TO A COMMEMORATIVE ONE; THE MEDIA SHOULD CONVEY A MOTHER'S LOSS; THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REBUILD THE FEDERAL BUILDING BACK IN DOWNTOWN OKLAHOMA CITY.

In contrast, the other five instances are assertions of inevitability for oneself: WE MUST PROTECT OUR CHILDREN (2×); WE MUST PROVIDE 12

JURORS; WE NEED BRICKS AS WELL AS GRIEF; WE MUST INCLUDE MUSLIM AMERICANS. Yet only the last of these instances – not incidentally, one authored by a U.S. citizen of Arab decent – was intended to convey advice on faithfulness to one’s obligations by transcending divisive tendencies of the moment. Instead, they are recommendations of specific actions that the editorialists believe to be inevitable for restoring an order that was disrupted by the bombing.

Victimized Oklahoman Subject

Whereas only 17 percent (4 of 23 instances) of Japanese statements of inevitability are for victims of terrorism, among the Oklahoman data fully 62 percent (13 of 21 instances) of such statements were applied to victims. Moreover, in 62 percent (8) of these 13 cases “we Oklahomans” are characterized as victims – PEOPLE WHO OUGHT TO PRAY AND TO FOCUS ON MEMORIES OF THOSE LOST, yet ARE IN NEED OF COMIC DIVERSION. In addition, WE ARE OBLIGED TO GIVE THE U.S. CORRECTIONS SYSTEM A CHANCE (2×), and TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE FOR ASSISTANCE RECEIVED FROM THE POLICE and THE MEDIA.¹⁰ In fact, those who criticize (rather than show gratitude for) such assistance are chastised for doing so:

¹⁰ The eighth instance of inevitability for “we Oklahoman victims” may seem at first glance to refer to a Japanese-like appeal for integrating right-wing militias into the broader U.S. society:

Let us not change the meaning of words such as militia and “Christian fundamentalist” and “patriot.” I consider myself a patriot, Don’t you? *Let us* instead use words in the context of their correct and historical meaning. (Hopper Smith, “Militia Honorable,” *The Daily Oklahoman* May 11, 1995)

Yet the advice provided here has nothing to do with reintegration. Indeed, the author may well sympathize with militias’ uncompromising resistance to such integration. Rather than characterize negative references to “militia” (etc.) as being socially divisive, the author’s position is that they are simply ungrammatical. (It may be worth noting here that a parallel argument is typically applied when denying the legitimacy of “gay marriage”: Like “evil militia” – a violation of the “correct and historical meaning” of militia – “gay marriage” is grammatically inappropriate because it violates the “correct” definition of marriage.) This modal usage participates in neither a discourse of faithfulness nor one of exchange (that is, within which gratitude might emerge). Instead, one might argue that it exemplifies an entirely different modality (cf. Roberts 2008:chap. 7).

(State Representative Charles) Key *should* have more faith in the federal investigation. Because there is no evidence any federal agent participated in the conspiracy to bomb the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, there is no reason to doubt the objectivity of the federal government's investigation of the bombing. (no byline, "Speaker Speaks For Us," *The Daily Oklahoman* July 7, 1995)

More typical references to inevitabilities of victims other than ourselves are ones of compassion:

(You *ought* to) Lean on us as we will not fail you and we will see that those responsible are brought to justice. (Mary McAninch, "Lean on Us," *The Sunday Oklahoman* April 23, 1995)¹¹

These three churches have the same right to disaster aid as any other property owner. It is time for them to assert their rights to equal treatment under the law of the land. I believe that they *should* file the lawsuit as co-plaintiffs. (James A. Webb, "Miscarriage," *The Daily Oklahoman* July 1, 1995)

But then again, even compassion must be understood within the context of fair exchange:

Surely everyone knows that churches pay no taxes. They do not contribute in any way to the ongoing of the government. . . . *It's high time* that churches paid their fair share of taxes and joined the community. (John Densford, "What Gall!" *The Daily Oklahoman* July 8, 1995)

And so, one finds only two expressions of gratitude (one each for police and media assistance) and one expression of faithfulness among Oklahomans' modal references to persons' inevitability. (To this one might add three expressions of "passive gratitude" for a system that "we ought to allow to work" effectively, plus one expression of ingratitude for CHURCHES that OUGHT TO PAY TAXES.) Other such references are better characterized as conveying not only means for PHYSICALLY RESTORING ORDER TO OURSELVES (4) and OTHERS (3) involved in rectifying terrorism, but also means for EMOTIONALLY RESTORING ORDER TO OURSELVES (3) and OTHERS (2) victimized by terrorism. The last two of Oklahomans' inevitability references

¹¹ As indicated in our parentheses, imperative mood is encoded as conveying inevitability via the modal auxiliary verb, *ought*.

apply a doctrinist modality of permission – on the one hand, for victims to CORRECTLY ARTICULATE DISCOURSE ON WORDS LIKE “MILITIA” (see note 10), and on the other hand for them to “decide how to punish these people.”¹²

Possibility

Victimized Oklahoman Subject

Referring back to Table 1, modal references to possibility have comparable frequencies in the Japanese (18 cases) and Oklahoman (15 cases) data. In the Oklahoman data 67 percent (10) of these are references to victims’ possibilities, as opposed to only 11 percent (2) of such references in the Japanese data. The Oklahoman statements convey a progression of increasingly possible recoveries for their authors or for Oklahomans in general – a progression . . .

- from hope (April 26–27: FOR COMFORT AND HEALING, FOR TERRORISTS’ BEING BROUGHT TO JUSTICE)
- to justice (May 4: WANTING TERRORISTS’ LIFE SENTENCES)
- to gratitude (May 14–28: WANTING TO SHOW APPRECIATION TO GOVERNOR KEATING, TO THE MEDIA, and even to “MESSAGE PROFESSIONALS” WHO VOLUNTEERED THEIR SERVICES FOR RESCUE WORKERS)
- to empowerment (June 12–August 5: BEING ABLE TO BE PROUD, CAPABLE OF MORE COMPASSION, TRYING, conditionally, TO ESTABLISH FRIENDSHIPS WITHIN THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY, and CAPABLE [as per the below quotation] TO TAKE BACK WHAT WE HAVE LOST).

When we, the people, make up our minds and unite our efforts, we *can* take back what we have lost. I am ready to take it back. Are you? (C. Paul Gray, “America Stands At Crossroads,” *The Sunday Oklahoman* June 18, 1995)

Thus victims’ possibilities are depicted in varying degrees of indebtedness. The progression here suggests that recovery may occur (and gratitude may subside) when victims are able to take care of themselves.

¹²⁾ In addition to this reference, punishment is involved in all three Oklahoman references to things impossible for the bombers: THEIR SURPRISE AT SWIFT JUSTICE, THEIR ABILITY TO ESCAPE JUSTICE, THEIR VICTORY. Punishment is a position never advocated within the Japanese editorials. (In fact, it is only mentioned once as an option one author “wants to observe” in Japanese society’s dealings with Aum.)

Themes of illness and recovery are also recurrent among the Japanese modal usages. However, they are not mentioned as individual attributes but as a global attribute of modern Japanese society. The Japanese malaise is nowhere more clearly explained than in a “diagnosis” from a Japanese pediatrician:

Why is the master (Asahala, the leader of Aum) more attractive for those children than parents and people close to them? I often look into children’s eyes when I diagnose them, (and I) have also met eyes with weak souls. As I think that these are the people on whose shoulders the future of Japan lies, I become extremely sad (and) want to shout, “What’s wrong?” Children are mirrors of adults. Children being so apathetic at this early age should not be. Those youth and adults who feel nothing when they see others painfully bleeding are the products of educations provided by family, school, and society, starting from childhood. (I) *Want* to keep an eye on how Japanese society deals with Aum. (Kou Zhiun, “Children’s Apathy Reflected in the Adult World,” *Asahi* May 23, 1995)

Intermittently between March and June 1995, seven (15 percent) Japanese editorialists refer to A MYSTERY (OR AN EVENT) LEFT UNSOLVED – the mystery of why Japanese youth would choose poisoning others to preserving their relations with them. As a solution, thirteen (27 percent) argue that these youth are merely seeking ethical alternatives to a society with a weakening moral compass.

Associated Subjects

Our data’s two Japanese modal references to the possibilities of the sorts of impressionistic youth associated with Aum clearly positions them as products of (not agents within) society.

In the ’70s there were young people who *tried* natural food, India, and spiritual worlds for help. I feel that Asahara appears very similar to those young people. Aum religion is a child of modernity. . . . If everyone does not take reality as one’s own problem, even if Aum is buried there will appear other forms of “whatever.” (Itayama Michiko, “Calling Aum ‘Fanaticism’ (is) Not the End,” *Asahi* May 27, 1995)

Even the youths refer to themselves as having such a passive nature.

[H]ope that the adults do not give up the consideration into (understanding, not planning) the future society and world. Because part of the reason that we have lost our ground lies in you. (Fukai Tamaki, “There are no places where one is (anywhere); the young people’s sense of powerlessness,” *Asahi* May 23, 1995)

Now contrast these passive references to the possibilities of those associated with terrorism to the two corresponding cases mentioned within the Oklahoman editorials:

As a Muslim I *would like* to inform the readers that Islam neither condones nor advocates violence. . . . (T)o connect these acts of terrorism with any particular religion is morally wrong. (Iftikhar Ahmad, “Islam Peaceful,” *The Daily Oklahoman* April 28, 1995)

If he is so bent upon warehousing, feeding and clothing the scum who perpetrated the bombing for the next 20, 40, 60 years, perhaps *arrangements could be made for* Batchelder to pick up the tab. (Boyd Hefley, “Pick Up the Tab,” *The Daily Oklahoman* May 12, 1995)

One (Muslim) Oklahoman believes it possible for him to inform others of Islamists’ non-association with terrorism, and another suggests a negative activity as possible for a terrorist-sympathizer. Thus being associated with terrorism bodes ostracism from Oklahoman society, yet it invites empathy and hopes of reintegration to the impressionistic youths associated with Japan’s terrorism.

Victimized Japanese Subject

Both Japanese references to a victim’s possibilities convey the author’s loss of serenity as resulting from the sarin attack. In wanting “with-a-regular-heart to observe the investigation,” the following editorialist acknowledges his victimization:

[T]he more unusual an event is, the more (one) wants society to be calm. . . . However, (considering) what measures the cornered cult will possibly take, (the investigative authority) should be prepared for the unpredictable. Don’t be anxious; don’t relax alertness; *want* with-a-regular-heart to observe the investigation. (no byline, “Want to Calmly Observe the Investigation,” *Asahi* May 16, 1995)

The only other Japanese reference to victims' possibilities conveyed the author's "want to say this problem is Japan." Accordingly, loss of serenity is evident whenever one expresses wants or hopes without mentioning an advisee from whom actions are hoped or wanted. Two additional suggestions for serenity from others (for example by HOPING FOR CALMNESS IN THEIR PURSUITS or by WANTING TO KEEP A CRITICAL EYE ON THEIR DEALINGS) are thus instances of possibility for an author involved in rectifying terrorism – instances among the fourteen discussed in the following subsection.

Rectifying Japanese Subject

Adult Japanese editorialists tend to depict themselves as representatives of their society's older generation, who are thereby obliged to pass moral values on to those younger than themselves. When their acceptance of others' actions is jeopardized, editorialists may convey possible corrective actions for these others by articulating a HOPE – or DESIRE TO EXPECT – that OFFICIALS INVESTIGATE CONSCIENTIOUSLY (4x), RESOLVE THE AUM MYSTERY, CONFIRM PEOPLE'S SAFETY, or CORRECT THEMSELVES BY ACKNOWLEDGING JAPAN'S WRONGS DURING WORLD WAR II.

Whereas hopes reference possible qualities of actions underway, wants reference possibilities of actions yet to begin. Thus, editorialists HOPE THE MEDIA REPORT WELL (2x) but they WANT LAWYERS TO VOLUNTEER FOR ASAHALA'S DEFENSE and they WANT THE COURTS TO TREAT A LEGAL REQUEST AS THE BEGINNING OF A LONGER INQUIRY. Only once is hope mentioned for another's comfort/healing, namely FOR SOMEONE WRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE TERRORIST EVENT. Not once is empathy expressed for a victim of the poisoning itself! In one case an editorialist's ability is mentioned, yet this too is for someone associated with terrorism – a disillusioned member of Aum Shinrikyo that a nun finds herself able to teach "as (were he) my grandson." Nowhere in the Japanese editorials does possibility reference an occasion for gratitude. Instead, possibility almost uniformly refers to the likelihood that my hopes and wants are heeded by those whom I seek to counsel.

Rectifying Oklahoman Subject

Finally, all three possibilities attributed to those rectifying the Oklahoma City bombing involve references to exchange discourse and to the image of a scale for measuring things for which we "are" versus "are not" grateful.

These are references to Oklahomans' abilities to HELP EASE VICTIMS' PAIN, TO SUPPORT RESCUE WORKERS BY MOWING THEIR LAWNS, and (as per the below quotation) to FIND THE BOMBING UNDERSTANDABLE.

Is it any wonder some of the more disturbed members of society take this rhetoric literally and use any means they can, including violence, to “fight back” against the government? For those editorial writers and commentators who have religiously preached the “government is bad” sermon, the Oklahoma City bombing *should be no surprise*. (Carl James, “Reflect On Damage Caused,” *The Daily Oklahoman* May 4, 1995)

In this third case one might suggest that the author is attempting to advise commentators on how better to do their jobs. Yet unlike the Japanese modal usages, this one does not afford the commentators positive guidance on how to behave. This is a statement of how not to behave, and as such conveys condemnation – an assignment of blame for past misbehaviors.

But what of the first two cases? Surely one advises people by recommending that they help or support others. But in advising faithfulness one refers to actions that one hopes or wants others to embody, whereas in advising gratitude one points out actions that others can embody if they are sufficiently grateful.

Impossibility

In the Japanese data there are only two modal usages that convey impossibility: WE OUGHT NOT DEFINE THE TERRORISTS AS HAVING BEEN “EVIL FROM THE VERY BEGINNING”; and A DISCIPLE OUGHT NOT BECOME THE MASTER'S SLAVE. In the Oklahoman data there are seven: Beyond three mentions of things impossible for the terrorists (see note 12), WE CANNOT ESCAPE FROM EITHER OUR PAIN OR OUR RECOLLECTION OF A FIREFIGHTER'S AGONY. Moreover, WE OUGHT NOT RESPECT THE VICTIMS WITH A RENAMED STREET, and OFFICIALS MUST NOT PUBLICLY CRITICIZE EACH OTHER.¹³ Whereas the Japanese modal usages suggest that one should

¹³ One might argue that advising the impossibility of public criticism among officials is similar to Japanese recommendations to their officials. However, here the reference appeals more to the inefficiency produced by such criticisms than to its deviation from their social obligations.

accept but not defer to the *terrorists*, the Oklahoman ones commend empathy with but not unlimited respect for terrorism's *victims*.

Contingency

In the Oklahoman data there are only three instances of contingency: I HOPE NOT TO BE ALONE IN EXPRESSING THANKS, WE DO NOT NEED REMINDERS OF THE BOMBING, and OFFICIALS ARE NOT OBLIGED TO GIVE A \$2 MILLION BOUNTY. In the Japanese data there are 5: I HOPE NOT that AUM MEMBERS ARE DISTURBED BY PRYING NEIGHBORS, that THE INVESTIGATORS WASTE TIME, and that THE MEDIA RESTRICT REPORTING TO POLICE INTELLIGENCE; plus I WANT NOT that RUSSIA (BECAUSE OF ITS MANY AUM MEMBERS) DISTRUSTS JAPAN, and (written by an Aum member) that PEOPLE RUSH TO JUDGE US UNFAVORABLY. Whereas the Oklahoman modal usages convey the contingency not only of ingratitude, but also of excessive empathy or thanks; the Japanese ones convey the contingency not only of Aum members' discomfort, but also of specific misdeeds from officials, outsiders, and the general public. Table 2 summarizes the patterns of modal usage described thus far – patterns integrated in the words and figures that follow.

Table 2

Summary of findings among Japanese and Oklahoman modal usages

Modal form	Japan	Oklahoma
Inevitability	It is necessary for officials to gain understanding and for all to convey and act upon this understanding.	It is necessary for victims to restore “emotional order” and for officials to restore physical order.
Possibility	Others' embodiments of my advice are possible, as are youths' embodiments of frivolous advice.	Victims' hope-justice-gratitude-empowerment are possible, as are nonvictims' opportunities for gratitude.
Impossibility	It is impossible for us not only to dismiss terrorists, but also to accept their counsel.	It is impossible for us not only to ignore victims' suffering, but also to provide them unlimited support.
Contingency	Nonterrorists' misdeeds as well as terrorists' suffering are unnecessary.	Our ingratitude as well as excessive empathy or thanks are unnecessary.

Discussion

Insofar as modal usages are used to rhetorically delineate generally accepted domains of inevitable, possible, impossible, and contingent social actions, our findings can be used to develop a coherent understanding of the logic that underlies this rhetoric. For example, one might argue that it is through a rhetoric of impossibility that the boundaries of social action are delineated. Accordingly, our Japanese authors counsel faithfulness (that is, ongoing counsel), no matter how slightly the advisee may embody her or his obligations. In perhaps the penultimate faithful expression, one argues for the impossibility (something obliged not to happen) of ostracizing even the vilest of terrorists (J-im).¹⁴

Yet inclusion does not entail submission. There is a hierarchy among Japanese advisors and advisees, such that it is also impossible (that is, obliged not) for anyone to accept advice from a lowly terrorist (J-im). Faithfulness and hierarchy are thus ensured by placing a rhetorical boundary around the field of social action within which unfaithfulness and hierarchy-averse-counsel are impossible.

Within this field – and thus distinct from the domain of impossibility – inevitability marks out a second domain of social action that is beyond Japanese readers' discretion. The editorials' rhetoric of inevitability references people's self-disciplined adherence to their obligations, be they experts' obligations to make our common experience intelligible, or everyone's obligations both to convey and act upon this understanding for the benefit of those more impressionable than ourselves (J-in). Thus Japanese people's discretionary social acts are restricted to a "playing field" within which everyone has obligations (that is, activities they are inevitably motivated to embody, and from which exclusion and distraction are impossible).

Perhaps the most important obligation is one's self-discipline (that is, one's ongoing adherence to experts' understanding of our obligations and inattention to counsel from those with less understanding than ourselves). And so the last inevitable aspect of our Japanese field of social action is an ever-present hierarchy (from the wisest monk to the vilest terrorist)

¹⁴ The empirical grounding of this discussion is demonstrated throughout by linking our statements to specific corresponding cells in Table 2. For example, the parenthetical indicator, "(J-im)," grounds this sentence in an empirical finding (viz., instances of "It is impossible for us... to dismiss terrorists") represented within Table 2's Japan-impossibility cell.

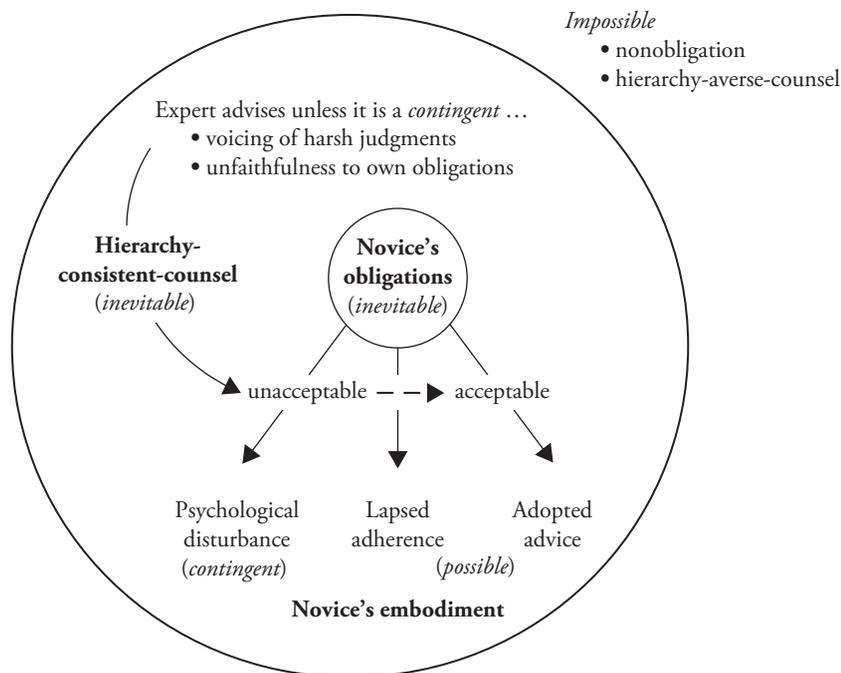
according to which everyone present is ranked in terms of their understanding of one's obligations.

So where within this field does Japanese discretion lie? For those with greater understanding (that is, for those ranked relatively high on the social hierarchy), any lapse in adherence to their obligations is unnecessary, or contingent (J-co). Such lapses are to be expected from those with less understanding, however. For this reason, it is unnecessary that they suffer from being held to as high a standard as others (J-co). That is, it is contingent not only for more prestigious people to judge less prestigious ones harshly, but also for less prestigious people to be disturbed by others' harsh judgments.

Since I have direct control over my own body, self-disciplined embodiment of my own advice is inevitable (that is, obligated of me). However, the advice I might convey to others remains something that only has a possibility of being embodied (J-po). This possibility results from a parallel possibility appropriate to those with relatively less understanding of their obligations, namely that their lack of understanding makes it possible for them to deviate from their obligations by accepting frivolous rather than wise counsel such as my own (J-po).

Figure 1 affords a graphic depiction that integrates these modal relations into a self-sustaining form of faithfulness-sociation – a Simmelian form within which experts' motivations are for novices' obligatory embodiments and novices' motivations are for experts' acceptance. More specifically, the Japanese field of social action is restricted to interactions between experts (for example, investigating officials) and novices (for example, terrorists), whose respective obligations and hierarchy-consistent-counsel are inevitable. Experts retain their advisor-status (that is, do not themselves become advised) unless they cause others' diminished faithfulness by judging them too harshly or otherwise being unfaithful to their own obligations. The domain of possibility references novices' embodiments of their obligations – embodiments that may range from acceptable adoption of experts' advice to less acceptable lapses in adherence to their obligations. (Their least acceptable embodiments are ones of psychological disturbance that are the unnecessary consequence of experts' overly harsh criticism.) By providing advice and refraining from harsh criticism, experts motivate novices to more acceptable embodiments of their obligations; to avoid others' judgments, experts are motivated to faithfully adhere to their own obligations.

Figure 1
The field of social action depicted in the Japanese editorials



Note that by distinguishing impossibility, inevitability, possibility, and contingency in these ways, this modal rhetoric provides a cognitive framework for control-system-like interaction, within which “(t)he subject behaves exactly as if he [sic] is comparing the perceived state of affairs with the reference position of how that perception ‘should’ look” (Powers 1973:46). Here the novice’s obligations (as understood by the higher-status Japanese expert) comprise the reference position to which the novice’s behaviors are continually compared.

Much theoretical writing is based on such control-system models of human interaction. For example, Mead (1982:187) argued that behavior cyclically “calls out” its own stimulus. More specifically, individuals’ behaviors are both stimulated by and reflexive reactions to ongoing feedback from their audience – a “generalized other,” whose roles people seek to embody.

In his early writings Goffman (1959, 1961) too depicted actors as motivated toward having their role-performances “come off” before their audiences. Yet like the Japanese experts depicted in Figure 1, Goffman’s audiences are often complicit in performance acceptability. For instance, “at moments of crisis for the performers, the whole audience may come into tacit collusion with them in order to help them out” (Goffman 1959:231–2).

And for Peter Burke (1991, 2006) expert-audience and novice-performer reside in the same individual, namely one who critically applies one’s subjectively-held identity standard to one’s “*perceived* meanings of who one is as implied by the social setting” (Burke 1991:838, emphasis in original). Thus our suggestion here is that such theories of identity may be particularly useful in analyzing Japanese interactions, or at least ones that emerged in response to a poison gas attack.

In the Oklahoman data the field of social action is delineated as a domain beyond which one’s costs or one’s benefits have become impossibly high. Referring to the right column in Table 2, the data indicate an impossibility for one to ignore not only someone’s excessive suffering, but also anyone’s unfair advantage (O-im). With this field-delineation, people need not be motivated to end suffering, but may instead seek merely to keep suffering sufficiently low for people to return to the field (that is, to become at least minimally self-sufficient in their goal-attainment efforts).

Following Simmel, we characterize gratitude within this field as an undesirable state that increases when one receives and dissipates when one gives. As such it is one’s aversion to gratitude that holds one’s otherwise purely selfish desires in check. Moreover, one unavoidably adds to the suffering of those whom one assists. Thus the boundary of this quite different field is reached once recipients’ capacities have been restored to the point that further assistance would only add (via gratitude) to their discomfort, as it would to our indignation at inequity via their increasing advantage.

Once incapacity and excessive assistance are banished from one’s field of action, the inevitability of capacity and non-excessive assistance becomes rhetorically self-evident. Thus we find in the Oklahoman editorials obligations not only for victims to restore their emotional capacities, but also for officials to help restore everyone’s physical capabilities (O-in). The corresponding “playing field” is one in which everyone is ensured minimal capacity for participation. Those with resources are obliged to provide

assistance only to the point that recipients' gratitude increases their overall suffering. And so the last inevitable aspect of Oklahoman social action is an ever-present awareness that recipients' assistance is not inevitable. Eventually victims will be left to cope with the last of terrorism's effects on their own.

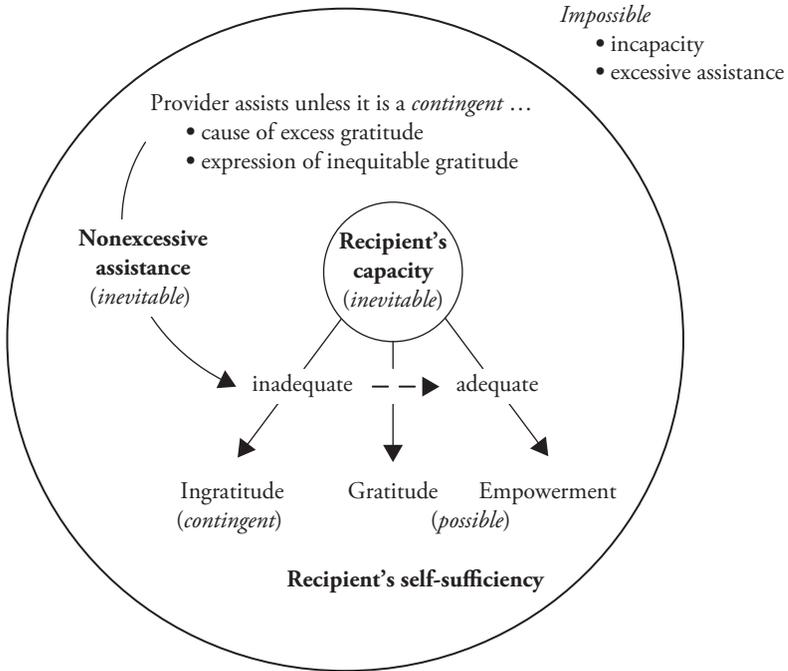
Discretion in the Oklahoman editorials is articulated, in part, via references to people's ability not to provide so much assistance that the recipient either suffers unnecessary gratitude, or gains more benefit than would be equitable given one's own gratitude (O-co). Although in the texts only one mention was made of recipients' expressions of gratitude as being contingent, they were more commonly mentioned as victims' possibilities (namely, as hoped-for assistance, as empowerment attained, or as opportunities to express gratitude for what one has received [O-po]).

Figure 2 integrates the modal relations discussed in the previous three paragraphs. Here Oklahomans' field of social action is depicted as involving interactions between providers (for example, rescue workers) and recipients (for example, victims) of assistance. Both recipients' incapacities and providers' excessive assistance comprise impossibilities (and both recipients' capacities and providers' non-excessive assistance are inevitabilities). Providers assist only until they engender excess gratitude in the recipient, or until they reach the limits of their own gratitude. Although recipients' gratitude is unnecessary, it remains possible for them to express it (albeit without excess). A Simmelian form of gratitude-sociation emerges as follows: By giving assistance and taking care not to generate excessive gratitude, providers motivate recipients toward more adequate self-sufficiency; to reduce their own gratitude, providers are motivated to assist equitably (that is, to an extent commensurate with their gratitude).

In contrast to discourse within the Japanese texts, this modal rhetoric provides a cognitive framework for the type of interaction extensively described by exchange theorists (esp. Homans 1950, 1958; Blau 1964, 1977). Central to the idea of exchange is the premise that people are motivated by a sense of distributive justice, whereby everyone in one's social group receives rewards commensurate with their costs.

If the costs of the members of one group are higher than those of another, distributive justice requires that their rewards should be higher too. But the thing works both ways: If the rewards are higher, the costs should be higher too (Homans 1958:604).

Figure 2
The field of social action depicted in the Oklahoman editorials



Thus whereas people are obliged to assist those whose costs have risen (for example, at the hands of terrorists), they are also obliged to ensure that nobody receives undue rewards (for example, excessive assistance). Accordingly, we suggest that exchange theory would be an appropriate perspective when analyzing Oklahoman interactions during the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing.

Conclusion

Late in his life Foucault spoke of how the knowledge underlying social action becomes most evident at times of social change.

In my books I have really tried to analyze changes, not in order to find the material causes but to show all the factors that interacted and the reactions of

people. I believe in the freedom of people. To the same situation, people react in very different ways. (Foucault 1988:14)

This paper was written in this same spirit. Domestic terrorism challenges the underpinnings of social order. At such times, people find themselves revisiting the rhetorical foundations of their shared existence. The Japanese editorialists uniformly interpreted their terrorists as persons whose adherence to their obligations had lapsed – the natural result of an older generation's failure to have faithfully provided them moral guidance. With near uniformity the Oklahoman authors interpreted their victims as having suffered excessive costs, deserving of gratitude-engendering assistance.

The difference in these discourses is stark. Although they dominate the Oklahoman texts, references to victims' suffering are totally absent from the Japanese data. Instead, Japanese authors repeatedly expressed concern for the suffering-by-association incurred by members of the terrorists' cult. References in the Japanese editorials are to people's embodiments of their obligations and to experts' provisions of advice. References in the Oklahoman editorials are to people's capacity for self-sufficiency and to aide-workers' provisions of assistance. Japanese discourse generally responded to the question, "Why did they do this?" Oklahoman discourse responded to, "How can we recover?"¹⁵

Indeed, it seems that when faced with a sentence like, "One-of-us injured one-of-us," Japanese and Oklahoman editorialists have distinct ways of parsing subject, verb, and object. For the Japanese subject+verb seem fused – as is glaringly apparent to Westerners who find subjects chronically absent in the original Japanese texts – leaving the object unworthy of comment whenever the subject's action is inappropriate. According to the ancient Chinese sage, Confucius, "The virtuous man completes the good in others, and does not complete their evil" (*Analects*, 15:7). Inappropriate actions yield nothing of consequence; nothing to be completed. Yet the Oklahomans appear to parse the same sentence between its subject

¹⁵ Of course, one might argue that the two events are too dissimilar for such comparisons, and that these differences simply correspond to the events' idiosyncrasies. In response we recommend a bit of Weberian *Verstehen* from the reader: If local members' of a radical Christian sect were to release poison gas in a U.S. subway, it is hard to imagine that many Americans would blame the act on our collective failure to have advised them of their obligations in life. Likewise, it is hard to imagine a different Japanese reaction if their terrorists' weapons of choice had been bombs rather than sarin.

and a fused verb+object predicate. In originating a despicable predicate, the subject makes itself unworthy of acknowledgment. Whereas the Japanese self is a visible manifestation – a performance that one’s audience never ignores but faithfully nurtures; the Oklahoman self is a disembodied intentionality that may be ignored if it yields nothing worthy of gratitude.¹⁶

Yet we already understand much about the modal rhetorics and the self-imagery of these disparate discourses. Extensive theoretical writings exist on how the motivational dynamics in each of these cultures work. Identity theories like those developed by Mead, Goffman, and Burke account for much of the rhetorical logic embedded in the Japanese texts, and exchange theory corresponds well to that contained in the Oklahoman editorials. And so, we suggest, it may not be fruitful to merely consider classical sociological theories as different ways of understanding a universal referent, called “social interaction.” Instead, they might better be understood as distinct “cultural perspectives” that societies of people have adopted for their public discourse.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the motivational dynamics of identity and exchange theories only emerged during our analysis of modal rhetorics within comparable samples of Japanese and Oklahoman modal usages. Accordingly, we suggest that it is through modal use (that is, through rhetorical mentions of things inevitable, possible, impossible, and contingent) that the cognitive foundations for these dynamics are established and maintained. If so, modality analyses such as the one applied in this paper may afford a methodology for studying cultural variations in forms of sociation.

¹⁶ Western and East Asian conceptions of self and personhood have been distinguished in works by Cousins (1989), Markus and Kitayama (1991), and Choi et al. (1999). Whereas the Western self is “abstract and decontextualized” (autonomous and independent of one’s situation and group affiliations), the Eastern one is “contextual, holistic, and situational” (dependent on others’ situational expectations). Our contribution is to suggest (here in the cases of Oklahoma and Japan) how these differences in personhood are discursively maintained through modal use.

Appendix

As discussed in the “Modality and Motivation” section, there are three ways to negate a modal statement: negate the modal auxiliary verb (for example, I am *not able* to do something), negate the main verb (for example, I am *able not* to do something), and negate both modal and main verbs (for example, I am *not able not* [that is, I must] do something). Note in the last parentheses that double-negation of the modal, *to be able*, yields *must*. Conversely, double-negation of *must* yields *can* (that is, I am *not compelled not* to do something conveys that I *am able* to do it) as well. The same sort of relation also exists between *may* (or *to be permitted*) and *ought*, since *non-permission not* to do something conveys an *obligation* to do it, and anything one is *not obligated not* to do is something one *may* (or *is permitted* to) do.

When an inflected modal auxiliary verb was mentioned in the text of one of our sampled editorials, we classified it as conveying possibility (for example, *can*, *may*, *non-compulsion not*, *non-obligation not*), impossibility (for example, *inability*, *non-permission*, *compulsion not*, *obligation not*), inevitability (for example, *non-ability not*, *non-permission not*, *compulsion*, *obligation*), or contingency (for example, *ability not*, *permission not*, *non-compulsion*, *non-obligation*). Other modal auxiliary verbs that appeared in our texts were variants of *hope*, *want*, and *attempt* – each a person-related modal auxiliary verb that, when not negated, conveys possibility reflexively believed by the subject (cf. Roberts et al. 2008).

Of course, just because one *ought* to do something, does not make it inevitable that one will empirically do it. Yet it should be kept in mind that *may* and *ought* are used to reference speech and actions that are consensually agreed upon as respectively possible and inevitable within one’s community and situation. Whereas *can* and *must* convey empirical likelihoods, *may* and *ought* convey consensual ones.

The four columns below list phrases from our texts that we have classified as possible, impossible, inevitable, or contingent:

Possible	Impossible	Inevitable	Contingent
hope	cannot	must	hope not
can	must not	ought	want not
be able	ought not	should	do not need
could be		need	be not obliged
want		be in need of	
would like		be necessary	
try		be required	
desire to expect*		be obliged	
It should be no surprise		It's high time	
to you that*		that*	
		It's wise to*	
		Let us*	

What follow are transformation rules applied to the five entries asterisked above, the first of which occurred exclusively within the Japanese editorials:

X desires to expect Y. → X hopes that Y.

It should be no surprise to X that Y. → X can understand Y.

Let us Y. → We ought to Y.

It's wise for X to Y. → X ought to Y.

It's high time that X Ys. → X ought to Y.

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