American and Japanese Students' Values, Perceptions of American Values, and the Impact of U.S. Television on Such Perceptions*

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Introduction

University students in general and Japanese students in particular comprise an elite population in their countries. They can "put their imprint on the contours of tomorrow in their own societies, some on those of regions, and a few on developments... that may affect the world as a whole" (Spaulding & Flack 1976: 1).

No single study, no matter how comprehensive, can forecast precisely how today's university students will imprint the future. This study attempts to compare and contrast the values rank-ordered by a sample of Japanese students' attending four U.S. universities with values rank-ordered by a sample of American students attending one U.S. university. This study also investigates the role television plays in influencing Japanese students' perception of American values. Japanese students attending U.S. universities have been selected, because they represent a distinct population: They hail from a collectivist culture that is now highly developed economically (Lebra 1976; Mursbach 1980; and Triandis, McCusker & Hui 1990). In contrast, American students hail from a country that, until recently, has been considered a paragon of economic development and the most individualistic culture of the 40 probed by Hofstede (1980).

Inquiry into non-native students' perceptions of the values of their host culture holds the promise of 1) suggesting how non- native students fit in or clash with their host environment and 2) illuminating how exposure to television influences positive or negative perceptions of values in populations studied.

Review of Literature

The task of adjusting to a new culture is fraught with stress, confusion and anxiety (Furnham & Bochner 1986; Oberg 1960), an anxiety that may be reduced by increased contact with a host family. Such contact will enable non-native students to acquire social skills and other awarenesses (Furnham & Bochner 1986; Klinberg 1982). Even so, enculturation via interpersonal communication channels is fraught with frustration and contradiction (Eldridge 1986), which may account for non-native students' reluctance to seek out host-culture friends (Furnham & Bockner 1986). Non-native students (NNSs) tend to spend the majority of their leisure time watching television, listening to the radio, and reading newspapers. These practices raise questions about the role played by consumption of U.S. mass media in the socialization of NNSs (see Semlak 1979).

<u>Television and values</u>: Several studies have found television to be a potent agent of socialization (see Jhally 1987 and Comstock 1980). DeFleur (1970) argues that the mass media operate conservatively and reinforce prevailing tastes and values. In an experimental study, however, Sanders and Atwood (1979) found that television is capable of affecting value change. DeFleur (1970) essentially agrees, even though he notes that the media may exercise their capacity for value change infrequently out of fear of alienating their audiences. In 1982, DeFleur and Ball–Rokeach contended that the media may have little ability to change the value structure of individuals, but rather, act as value clarifiers.

Non-native students enter U.S. colleges and universities with their own values. They also hold some firm convictions about Americans and American values. If the media can affect value change, they may well affect such change in particular populations of non-native students. Several studies conclude that television reinforces American values but fails to change those of non-native students (Kapoor & Smith 1978; Kapoor & Williams 1978; Maslog 1971; and Semlak 1978).

<u>The individualist-collectivist dichotomy</u>: Values serve the interests of individuals or groups. "Societies vary substantially in the emphasis

their members give individualistic values versus collectivistic" ones (Schwartz & Bilsky 1990: 879). Values that serve individual interests are postulated to be opposed to those that serve collective ones. This postulate undergirds the theory of individualism-collectivism, as developed by Triandis (1992) and others (see Hui & Triandis 1986; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucas 1988; Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clark 1985; Triandis *et al.* 1986).

Prior to these publications, Hofstede (1980) identified one factor he called collectivism- individualism after studying responses from subjects in 66 countries. Triandis *et al.* (1986) differentiated the factor and found four orthogonal ones related to collectivism-individualism: Family Integrity and Interdependence represent aspects of collectivism, and Self-Reliance and Separation from ingroups represent aspects of individualism.

Collectivists pay more attention to ingroups such as the tribe, the family, the work group, or the nation and behave differently toward members of such groups than toward outgroup members. On the other hand, individualists do not perceive as sharp a distinction between ingroups and outgroups. In individualist cultures, conflicts between ingroup goals and individual goals tend to resolve in favor of the latter. In collectivist cultures, such conflicts tend to resolve in favor of ingroup goals (Triandis 1990).

In collectivist cultures, both individual and group behavior is regulated largely by ingroup norms. In individualistic cultures, individual likes and dislikes tend to govern individual behavior; attitudes are pivotal in such cultures. In collectivistic cultures, hierarchy and harmony are key. In contrast, individualistic cultures valorize independence from the ingroup and personal achievement.

Triandis *et al.* (1990) warn against oversimplification, however: cultures that stress individualist values can support collectivist ones and vice versa. Even within families in either culture, individual family members may prefer individualistic values with respect to such matters as achievement in school or on the job and collectivist values with respect to such matters as environmental equality considered on a local or global scale.

Triandis (1990) maintains that exposure to contemporary mass media promotes a shift from collectivism to individualism. Our study will also investigate the effect of television viewing on the value preferences of the populations examined.

American and Japanese Cultures

If any two cultures are fit for testing the individualist-collectivist dichotomy, they are American and Japanese. Americans have long been linked with the values of personal independence, achievement, enjoyment, and success (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton 1985; De Tocqueville 1835; Hofstede 1980; Mead 1942). Starting in the late 1970s, however, the preeminence of individualism in America has been called into question (Buck, Newton, & Muramatsu 1984; Lasch 1979; and Yankelovich 1981). Buck *et al.* (1984) found that American and Japanese subjects' valuations of independence and obedience were undergoing change; American subjects displayed a greater appreciation for the collectivist value of obedience than in the past. Buck *et al.* (1984: 299) conclude that "American values are moving toward a more Japanese conceptualization of self and society." This study extends the efforts of Buck *et al.* (1984) insofar as it 1) tests a wider range of values than independence and obedience and 2) tests the validity of their conclusion.

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent does the population of Americans sampled indicate a preference for collectivistic, rather than individualistic values?
- 2) To what extent do the value preferences of the Americans sampled reflect an acceleration, continuation, retardation, cessation, or reversal of the trend identified by Buck *et al.* (1984)?

Japanese culture has been widely characterized as collectivist; the Japanese esteem values such as order, hierarchy (Benedict 1946), group consciousness (Nakane 1970), belongingness, empathy, dependency, occupying one's proper place and reciprocity (Lebra 1976), and intragroup harmony as opposed to individual achievement (Mursbach 1980). The American occupation of Japan after World War II and Japan's rise as an industrial power have prompted studies designed to assess the impact of American values on traditional Japanese ones. Kojima (1977) as well as Buck *et al.* (1984) found a trend toward greater individualism in Japanese society.

This study was also designed to:

- 3) Identify the Japanese students' values and determine the extent to which the sample indicates a preference for collectivistic, rather than individualistic, values.
- 4) Specify the Japanese students' perceptions of American values and the extent to which such perceptions of American students vary from the perceptions of American values.
- 5) Finally, this study investigates the effect, if any, of mass and interpersonal channels of communication on values perceptions.

Method

A self-administered questionnaire was administered randomly in the Fall 1990 term to 114 Japanese and 125 American students. The Japanese students sampled were enrolled in four Midwestern universities while the American students were selected at random from one Midwestern university.

The Measuring Instruments: The Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach 1973) was used to measure values in this study. American students were asked to pick three values most important to them and three least important to them. Japanese students were asked to do the same, except twice: They were directed to pick three values most important to them and three least important to them but keeping in mind their perceptions of "typical American" values.

From Rokeach's value scale and Schwartz and Bilsky's (1987) reduction of it, we tested for eight domains of motivation or value types: Enjoyment, Security, Achievement, Self-direction, Restrictive conformity, Prosociality, and Maturity. Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) include the following values in the eight value types: having "pleasure," "a comfortable life," "happiness," and being "cheerful," in Enjoyment; having "inner harmony," "freedom," "family security," "national security," and a "world at peace," in Security; being "capable," being "ambitious," having "social recognition," and having an "exciting life," in Achievement; being "imaginative," "intellectual," "logical," "independent," and "broad-minded," having a "sense of accomplishment"and "self-respect," in Self-direction; being "obedient," "polite," "clean," and "self-controlled," in Restrictive conformity; and being "helpful," "forgiving," "loving," "honest," and having "salvation" and "equality" in Prosociality. They categorize Enjoyment, Self-direction, and Achievement as typically

individualistic types, <u>Restrictive conformity</u> and <u>Prosociality</u> as typically collectivist types, and <u>Security</u> and <u>Maturity</u> as mixed types.

Our second instrument included questions on media usage and influence of various traditional agents of socialization in the case of American students. Japanese students responded to questions on media usage, influence of interpersonal channels of communication, competence in using English language and duration of stay in the United States.

Findings

Japanese Students' Perceptions of American Values

Japanese students perceive Americans to value being "independent" (69%), having "freedom" (61%), and being "cheerful" (38%) above any other value. These are all individualistic values. The sample rated "polite" (50%), "obedient" (48%), and "clean" (43%) as those values among the 39 listed as least esteemed by Americans. These are all collectivistic values.

TABLE 1

JAPANESE PERCEPTION OF AMERICAN VALUES (INSTRUMENTAL)

MOST REFLECTIVE

NUMBER OF

		NUMB	ER OF		
	VALUE	STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE	RATING	
11 1	Independent	41		36	
2 1	Broadminded	14		12.3	
4 1	Cheerful	16		14	
4 2	Cheerful	19		16.7	
11 2	Independent	15		13.2	

Intercultural Communication Studies V:1			1995			Kapoor and Wolfe
6 2	Courageous	13			11.4	
11	Independent	17			14.9	
3 2	Broadminded	14			12.3	
3 0	Courageous			9		7.9
3	C					

LEAST REFLECTIVE

		NUMB	ER OF	
	VALUE	STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE	RATING
15 1	Obedient	21		18.4
5 1	Clean	20		17.5
16 1	Polite	18		15.8
16 2	Polite	18		15.8
2 5 2	Clean	17		14.9
15 2	Obedient	15		13.2
16 3	Polite	20		17.5
15	Obedient	19		16.7
3 5 3	Clean	13		11.4

(TERMINAL)

MOST REFLECTIVE

	NUMB	BER OF	
VALUE	STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE	RATING
		47	

1		1 C	munication	C4 1: 3	57.1	1005
J	mercuni	urai Com	munication	Studies	v:i	199.)

Kapoor and Wolfe

8	Freedom	45	39.9	
1				
1	Comfortable Life	15	13.2	
1				
2	Exciting Life	13	11.4	
1				
8	Freedom	24	21.1	
2				
2	Exciting Life	12	10.5	
2				
6	Equality	10	8.8	
6 2 9				
9	Happiness	10	8.8	2
13	Pleasure	10	8.8	
2				
13	Pleasure	25	21.9	
3				
2 3	Exciting Life	12	10.5	
3	_			
15	Self-Respect	11	9.6	
3				

LEAST REFLECTIVE

	NUMBER OF					
	VALUE	STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE	RATING		
4	World at Peace	25	21.9	1		
18	Wisdom	17	14.9	1		
5	World of Beauty	12	10.5	1		
4	World at Peace	16	14	2		
18	Wisdom	15	13.2	2		
10	Inner Harmony	10	8.8	2		
6	Equality	18	15.8	3		
16	Social Recognition	11	9.6	3		
5	World of Beauty	10	8.8	3		
10	Inner Harmony	10	8.8	3		

<u>Japanese Perception of Their Own Values</u>

The sample rated "happiness" (38%) as the most esteemed value. Significantly, this is an individualistic value, as is being "broadminded" which the sample rated third, just behind the collectivistic value of being "honest" (31%). The sample rated being "obedient" (32%), having "national security" (32%) and having "salvation" (27%) lowest among those listed. The first and third values are collectivistic; having "national security" is a mixed value. [See Table 2 on pages 49-50]

American Students' Own Value Perceptions

American students [see Table 3 on pages 52-53] rated the value of being "honest" (42%) highest among all values. Being "honest" is a collectivist value. Runners-up for the sample were the individualistic values of being "responsible" (35%) and "broadminded" (21%).

The least favored values for the American sample were all collectivist: being "obedient" (44%), "clean" (42%), and having "salvation" (36%).

TABLE 2 FOREIGN STUDENTS' OWN VALUES (INSTRUMENTAL)

MOST REFLECTIVE

NUMBER OF				
VALUE	STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE	RATING	
Honest	20	17.5	1	
Broadminded	18	15.8	1	
Ambitious	11	9.6	1	
Honest	15	13.2	2	
Polite	14	12.3	2	
Cheerful	12	10.5	2	
Responsible	19	16.7	3	
Broadminded	13	11.4	3	
Polite	11	9.6	3	
	Honest Broadminded Ambitious Honest Polite Cheerful Responsible Broadminded	VALUE STUDENTS Honest 20 Broadminded 18 Ambitious 11 Honest 15 Polite 14 Cheerful 12 Responsible 19 Broadminded 13	VALUE STUDENTS PERCENTAGE Honest 20 17.5 Broadminded 18 15.8 Ambitious 11 9.6 Honest 15 13.2 Polite 14 12.3 Cheerful 12 10.5 Responsible 19 16.7 Broadminded 13 11.4	

LEAST REFLECTIVE

	NUMBER OF			
	VALUE	STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE	RATING
5 1	Clean	15		13.2
13	Logical	13		11.4
15 1	Obedient	13		11.4
1 1	Ambitious	12		10.5
15 2	Obedient	14		12.3
11 2	Independent	12		10.5
5 2	Clean	12		10.5

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10 2	Imaginative	9	7.9	
7 3	Forgiving	14	12.3	
13	Logical	11	9	
11 3	Independent	10	8.8	
15 3	Obedient	10	8.8	

(TERMINAL)

MOST REFLECTIVE

	VALUE	NUMB STUDENTS	ER OF PERCENTAGE	RATING	
	VALUE	STODENTS	TERCENTAGE	KATINO	
9 1	Happiness	22		19.3	
1 1	Comfortable Life	14		12.3	
8	Freedom	13		11.4	
1 8	Freedom	14		12.3	
2 9	Happiness	12		10.5	
2 13	Pleasure	12		10.5	
2 1	Comfortable Life	10		8.8	
2 17	True Friendship	10		8.8	
2	True Triendship	10		0.0	
17	True Friendship	12	10.5		3

Intercu	Intercultural Communication Studies V:1 1995 Kapoor and Wolfe					
11 3	Mature Love	9		7.9		
9	Happiness	9		7.9		
3 4	World at Peace	9		7.9		
3 2 3	Exciting Life	9		7.9		
		<u>LEAS</u>	T REFLECTIVE			
	VALUE S	NUMB STUDENTS	ER OF PERCENTAGE	RATING		
12 1	National Security	23		20.2		
14 1	Salvation	19		16.7		
11	Mature Love	11		9.6		
1 12	National Security	14		12.3		
2 14	Salvation	12		10.5		
2 8	Freedom	10		8.8		
2 14	Salvation	28		24.6		
3 16	Social Recognition	12	1	0.5		
3 13 3	Pleasure	11		9.6		

Television Viewing and Value Perception

American Students: When American students were placed into two television viewing categories, 93 students (74%) indicated they watched television more than three hours a day (high viewing) while only 32 (26%) students noted they watched television for less than one hour (low viewing). The low television viewing group rated the individualistic attributes being "Ambitious," "Broadminded," "Independent" and "Intellectual" as most reflective of American culture. Also they highlighted collectivist values being "Honest" and "Loving" as reflecting American culture. On the other hand, they rejected collectivist attributes like being "Clean," "Obedient" and "Self-controlled" as typical American attributes. However, they rejected some individual attributes like being "Cheerful," "Imaginative" and "Logical." The high television viewing group displayed similar tendencies concerning instrumental attributes.

<u>Japanese Students</u>: Unlike the American students, the Japanese had fewer students comprising the high television viewing group (41) compared with the low television viewing group (72), with one student not marking either category. Both groups rated being "Broadminded" and "Independent," two individualist attributes, as most reflective of American values while rejecting collectivist attributes being "Clean," "Honest," "Obedient" and "Polite" as representing American culture. Similarly both television viewing groups accepted the individualist values "a Comfortable life, "an Exciting life," "Freedom" and "Pleasure" as typifying American values. They simultaneously rejected collectivist values like "World at peace," "Salvation" and "Wisdom" as specimens of American cultural values.

With regard to their own attributes, the Japanese students in both television viewing categories marked collectivist attributes, such as being "Honest," "Polite," "Responsible" and "Self- controlled" as highly reflective of their cultural perception, while rejecting individualist attributes, such as being "Capable," "Independent" and "Logical." The two groups, however, accepted several individualist values, such as having a "Comfortable life," "an Exciting life," "a Sense of accomplishment," and "Freedom." They rejected collectivist values, such as having "Mature love" and "Salvation."

TABLE 3 AMERICANS' OWN VALUE PERCEPTIONS (INSTRUMENTAL)

MOST REFLECTIVE

	NUMBER OF					
	VALUE	STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE	RATING		
9 1	Honest	19		15.5		
17 1	Responsible	18		14.4		
1 1	Ambitious	17		13.6		
9 2	Honest	22		17.6		
2 2 2	Broadminded	13		10.4		
11 2	Independent	13		10.4		
17 2	Responsible	11		8.8		
2 3	Broadminded	13		10.4		
14 3	Loving	13		10.4		
9	Honest	12		9.6		
10 3	Imaginative	10		8.8		

LEAST REFLECTIVE

NUMBER OF VALUE STUDENTS PERCENTAGE RATING 5 Clean 27 21.6 1 15 Obedient 24 19.2 1 Self-Controlled 12.8 1 18 16 13 Logical 10 1 8 Cheerful 10 8 1 4

Intercu	ltural Communication	Studies V:1 1995		Kapoor and Wolfe
15	Obedient	23	18.4	2
5	Clean	14	11.2	2
10	Imaginative	13	10.4	2
7	Forgiving	13	10.4	2
13	Logical	12	9.6	2
15	Obedient	17	13.6	3
18	Self-Controlled	16	12.8	3
4	Cheerful	12	9.6	3
5	Clean	12	9.6	3
13	Logical	12	9.6	3
16	Polite	10	8	3

(TERMINAL)

MOST REFLECTIVE

	NUMBER OF				
	VALUE	STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE	RATING	
9	Happiness	16	12.8	1	
14	Salvation	15	12.8	1	
8	Freedom	13	10.4	1	
15	Self-Respect	10	8	1	
8	Freedom	13	10.4	2	
17	True Friendship	12	9.6	2	
7	Family Security	12	9.6	2	
2	Exciting Life	10	8	2	
4	World at Peace	18	14.4	3	
2	Exciting Life	11	8.8	3	
15	Self-Respect	11	8.8	3	
11	Mature Love	10	8	3	

LEAST REFLECTIVE

	VALUE RATING	NUMB STUDI	-	PERCENTAGE	Ε
14	Salvation	21	16.8	1	
16	Social Recognition	18	14.4	1	
10	Inner Harmony	10		8	1
16	Social Recognition	17		13.6	2

Intercultural Communication Studies V:1 1995					Kapoor and Wolfe
5	World of Beauty	12	9.6	2	
2	Exciting Life	12	9.6	2	
14	Salvation	11	8.8	2	
16	Social Recognition	16	12.8	3	
14	Salvation	11	8.8	3	
12	National Security	12	9.6	3	
18	Wisdom	10	8	3	
13	Pleasure	10		8.6	3

Significantly, about 90 percent of the Japanese students stressed that television viewing has helped them in getting better acquainted with American values.

Discussion

This study sought responses to the questions: (a) What are the differences between American and Japanese students' perceptions of American values? (b) How similar to American students' perceptions of their values are Japanese students' perceptions of their own values? and (c) What role does consumption of U.S. television play in such perception?

The Japanese sample clearly perceived the Americans to be individualistic. On the other hand, the Americans sampled esteem a collectivist value, being "honest," above all others. Significantly, the Japanese also prize this value, a finding that could be used to support Buck *et al.*'s (1984: 299) contention that "American values are moving toward a more Japanese conceptualization of self and society." The finding may be read to reflect a continuation of this trend. The findings of this study, however, offer support for the converse as well; the values of the Japanese sample are moving closer to a more American conceptualization of self and society: Two of the Japanese sample's three most favored values are individualistic, with "happiness" leading the way. Arguably, these results lend weight to Iwao's (1993) discovery of a social group within Japanese society that has become strongly individualistic in orientation—Japanese women born in the 1960s.

The results of the present effort, however, offer no clear and compelling evidence of cultural transformation. Rather, they suggest the inadequacy of individualism-collectivism dichotomy. As Schwartz (1990: 151) has noted, the dichotomy first:

leads us to overlook values that inherently serve both individual and collectivist interests. Second, the dichotomy ignores values that foster the goals of collectives other than the ingroup (e.g., pro-social values). Third, the dichotomy promotes the mistaken assumption that individualist and collectivist values each form coherent syndromes that are opposed to one another. It fails to recognize that the subtypes of individualist and collectivist values sometimes do not vary together and are sometimes not opposed.

Triandis, whose work has employed the dichotomy, recently noted that all humans are both individualistic and collectivist. "Individualism and collectivism can coexist and simply emphasize a culture depending upon the situation" (1993: 162). Schwartz (1990) stresses the need for refining these concepts and the instruments formulated to measure them. Gudykunst *et al.* (1992) suggest that relational and personality factors moderate the influence of individualism and collectivism on ingroup and outgroup communication.

Two recent studies that tested universal values structure theory in relation to individualism-collectivism, however, lend support both to Schwartz and Bilsky's theory and the individualism-collectivism dichotomy. Kang, Kapoor and Wolfe's (1995) inquiry into the value orientations of Indian high school and university students found that the subjects preferred collectivist and mixed value types over individualist ones. This finding also lends weight to the categorization of India as a collectivist culture (see Hofstede 1980 and Triandis *et al.* 1990). Kapoor and Blue (1995) probed the values orientations of American students and found they preferred individualist and mixed value types over the collectivist ones.

The Japanese sample did find television a useful source for values. However, television in particular is not a factor in this study. One plausible reason for this could be that the majority of the Japanese students in the study did not indicate a lot of television exposure. In any case, the role of such cultural institutions as television in the formation of values in any society should continue to be probed: Triandis insists "exposure to the individualistic mass media, especially television, has the effect of exposing people to individualistic norms" (1993: 171; see also Iwao 1990).

Kang and Caroll, the co-authors, have declined to be associated with the present manuscript.

^{*} An earlier version of this study with Suraj Kapoor, Jong Kang, and Latoria Caroll as authors was presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention in Chicago, November 1992.

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