A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Ethnocentrism Among Japanese and United States College Students

James W. Neuliep
St. Norbert College

Michelle Chaudoir
Dane County Parent Council-Head Start

James C. McCroskey
West Virginia University

This study is a cross-cultural comparison of ethnocentrism among Japanese and American college students. Both Japanese (N=372) and American (N=173) college students completed a measure of ethnocentrism and responded to several questions about their travel experiences, interaction with foreigners, and other similar kinds of questions. Results revealed that Japanese students scored significantly higher in ethnocentrism than the American students. Further results indicate that in both samples, men scored higher in ethnocentrism than women. The within group differences across both cultures were remarkably similar. In both Japanese and American samples, class rank, travel abroad experiences, interaction with foreigners, and hometown populations did not affect ethnocentrism scores.

A principal concept in understanding intergroup communication is ethnocentrism. Because ethnic tensions are at the root of the crisis in Yugoslavia, tensions in South Africa, Lebanon, Israel, and even Canada, a thorough understanding of this phenomena is warranted. The term ethnocentrism was formally introduced to the social science literature

nearly a century ago by Sumner (1906) who defined it as "the technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it" (p. 13). Levinson (1950) argued that ethnocentrism is "based on a pervasive and rigid ingroup-outgroup distinction; it involves stereotyped, negative imagery and hostile attitudes regarding outgroups, stereotyped positive imagery and submissive attitudes regarding ingroups, and a hierarchical, authoritarian view of group interaction in which ingroups are rightly dominant, outgroups subordinate" (p. 150). Several scholars have argued that ethnocentrism is a universal phenomenon experienced, at least to some degree, in all cultures (Lewis, 1985; Lustig & Koester, 1999; Lynn, 1976; Rushton, 1989). The idea is that all cultures are so imbedded in their own special codes and value orientations that there is an ethnocentric inclination to believe that their unique interpretations and perceptions of the world and human nature are the best and most correct ones. In fact, Gudykunst and Nishida (1994) have maintained that everyone is ethnocentric to some degree and that, while it may be possible and preferable to have a low degree of ethnocentrism, to be nonethnocentric is impossible.

Applebaum (1996) proposes two dimensions of ethnocentrism, namely (a) making cross-cultural evaluations on the basis of pre-reflective beliefs and values rooted in one's native culture, and (b) making cross-cultural evaluations based on a dominant viewpoint that oppresses and silences differing viewpoints. Applebaum (1996) maintains that the former position is not morally reprehensible since it is a natural product of successful socialization processes. The latter dimension of ethnocentrism is problematic not because of the cultural origins of a particular perspective but because of the issues of dominance and power that the perspective bestows. In this case, ethnocentrism fosters feelings of superiority. This latter dimension, in its most extreme form, can manifest itself in intense nationalism as in the case of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

Expressions of ethnocentrism can be seen during ingroup-outgroup communication. Ethnocentric ingroups often hold disparaging attitudes and engage in anti-social behaviors toward outgroups (Hewstone & Ward, 1985; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Weber, 1994). Attitudinally, ethnocentric groups see themselves as strong and superior, while viewing outgroups as inferior and weak. Behaviorally, ethnocentric groups foster cooperative relations and obedience with ingroup members but compete with and are disobedient with outgroup members. Triandis (1990) has argued that ingroups often perceive outgroups as threatening to the accomplishment of the ingroup's goals. History is replete with examples of how this has led to violence.

Theoretically, the consequences associated with an ethnocentric bias may be more serious in a diversely populated country, such as the United States, than in countries with homogeneous populations, such as Japan. Even in relatively small communities across the United States, people interact daily with people from different cultures and ethnicities. Gudykunst and Kim (1997) contend that ethnocentrism is dysfunctional with respect to intercultural relationships in that it influences the way people communicate with others. In multiethnic populations like the United States, ethnocentrism would create serious barriers to communication and relational development. Given these possibilities, the general purpose of this study is to compare ethnocentrism scores of persons from the United States with those of persons from Japan. Japan was chosen because of its dissimilarity with the United States, its homogeneous population, and its reputation for being ethnocentric (Condon, 1984). Identifying countries that are ethnocentric can be useful in terms of managing and

reducing conflict with members of such countries. If we know, for example, that a particular country fosters ethnocentrism among its people, then we can develop communication strategies for dealing with such countries. For example, Kim (1990) identifies ingroup bias (i.e., ethnocentrism) as key factor that facilitates interethnic conflict.

Intercultural Communication and Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism influences social interaction. Whenever two people come together and exchange messages they bring with them a veritable plethora of values, emotions, and behaviors that were planted and cultivated by culture. Culture teaches people how to think, instructs people how to feel, and conditions people how to act; especially how to inter-act with others. If communication is a symbolic activity where the thoughts and ideas of one are encoded into some verbal or nonverbal code then transmitted through some channel to another person who must decode it, interpret it, and respond to it, then communication is replete with cultural noise. The codes people use to compose messages are necessarily representations of their culture. Gudykunst (1997) has argued that during intercultural interaction culture acts as a filter through which all messages, both verbal and nonverbal, must pass. To this extent all intercultural exchanges are necessarily, to a greater or lessor degree, charged with ethnocentrism. Guan (1995) labels this type of interaction "self-centered dialogue" where interactants use their own cultural standards to evaluate and communicate with others.

Rogers and Steinfatt (1999) maintain that most languages are, to some degree, inherently ethnocentric. Contemporary linguists agree that the verbal language of a particular culture reflects that culture's experience and affects how members of the culture shape and organize their cognitions. In this way, ethnocentrism is most likely an obstacle to effective and competent intercultural communication. To be sure, Jandt (1995) has argued that ethnocentrism obstructs social interaction and hinders the exchange of ideas and skills among interactants. Chen and Starosta (1998) have suggested that ethnocentrism is problematic during intercultural interaction because it limits the choice of message strategies used by the communicants. Moreover, Gudykunst and Kim (1997), Lukens (1978), and Peng (1974) have argued that ethnocentric attitudes are reflected in linguistic diversity among cultures and create a communicative distance of indifference, avoidance, and disparagement between interactants. According to Lukens (1978), the communicative distance of indifference is expressed in speech patterns such as talking loudly and slowly to a non-native speaker of the language, including exaggerated pronunciation and simplification. Gudykunst and Kim (1997) have pointed out that the communicative distance of indifference is heard in such expressions as "Jew them down," "top of the totem pole," and "the blind leading the blind." The communicative distance of avoidance is manifest when speakers minimize or avoid contact with persons from other cultures though the use of ingroup jargon or slang that members of other cultures or outgroup do not understand. Finally, the communicative distance of disparagement openly expresses contempt for persons of different cultures and is communicated through ethnophaulisms such as "nigger," "nip," "chink," "honky," etc. Lustig and Koester (1999) have argued that competent intercultural interactants do not necessarily suppress ethnocentric attitudes, but instead recognize their existence and then strive to minimize their impact on social interaction.

Culture and Ethnocentrism

Although some scholars have argued that ethnocentrism is a universal phenomena experienced by everyone, the magnitude of ethnocentrism may be mediated by culture. For example, as Taylor and Porter (1994) point out, the political ideology of the United States (US) has been based on a melting pot metaphor where people from diverse cultures enter the US and get stirred up in the same pot. The phrase *e pluribus unum*, represents the socio-political philosophy that from myriad ethnicities comes a single unified culture. Simultaneously, however, most social, political, legal, and educational institutions recognize and celebrate the diverse ethnic origins and identities of their people. To be sure, Lustig and Koester (1999) note that a tributaries, tapestry, or tossed salad metaphor may be more appropriate in describing US culture than the melting pot image. To the extent that the US is composed of various ethnic groups and where Americans are taught to be tolerant of diverse ethnic differences, they may experience less ethnocentrism than in cultures with different political and social ideologies, such as Japan.

In comparison with the United States, Japan's population is quite homogeneous (99.4 percent ethnic Japanese). In addition, as an island nation, Japan is an isolated country geographically. Historically, Japan has a record of isolating itself politically. As Gudykunst and Nishida (1994) note, prior to the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), the Tokugawa Shoguns instituted a policy of seclusion (i.e., sakoku) that severely restricted contact between Japanese citizens and foreigners. According to Gudykunst and Nishida (1994), during this period, Japanese who left Japan were forbidden from returning home, under penalty of death.

Itoh (1996) has argued that the combination of natural and voluntary isolation has fostered a distinctive homogeneous culture and "parochial" psychology that serves as the foundation for modern Japanese thinking and behavior. As mentioned earlier, ethnocentrism is manifest in the attitudes and behaviors people develop toward ingroups versus their attitudes and behaviors toward outgroups. Itoh (1996) points out that most Japanese retain a sakoku mentality in their treatment of foreigners (i.e., outgroups). For example, Japanese refer to non-Japanese as "gaijin" which translated means "people from outside." Although the term is not considered derogatory, it underscores the exclusiveness of Japanese attitudes and has taken on negative connotations for some Westerners. Moreover, Itoh (1996) has asserted that Japanese generally are not willing to assimilate foreigners into their society and that gaijin often experience prejudice and discrimination. Itoh (1996) argues that even Korean residents of Japan who grew up in Japan and speak fluent Japanese are treated as gaijin.

Condon (1984) has mentioned that although they appear to be very modest publically, Japanese can be very ethnocentric. According to Condon (1984), many Japanese naturally assume that gaijin can not comprehend Japanese culture. Condon (1984) has alleged that it is very difficult to initiate and maintain substantive intimate relationships with Japanese because they are so exclusive.

Although nationalism and ethnocentrism are not synonymous, they have similar roots and manifestations. Pyle (1971) defines nationalism as "a process...by which large numbers of a people of all social classes are psychologically integrated into active membership in and positive identification with the nation-state" (p. 6). Current research into Japanese nationalism shows a social movement away from the traditional forms of nationalism, practiced during the first half of the twentieth century, toward a form of postwar nationalism remarkably similar to current conceptions of ethnocentrism. For example, in his work on the resur-

gence of Japanese nationalism, Stonach (1995) has maintained that sociocultural nationalism, also called ethnic nationalism, is the dominant form of nationalism in contemporary Japan. Stonach (1995) defines sociocultural nationalism as a "psychological phenomenon by which individuals define themselves as members of a group" (p. xvii). Stonach (1995) has suggested that sociocultural nationalism fosters attitudes and behaviors of intense loyalty and group orientation (e.g., collectivism).

Doak (1998) has argued that Japan has moved away from the nationalistic ideology of the Japanese Empire during the Pacific War. Nationalism and patriotism were so misused by the Japanese militarist regime that contemporary Japanese hesitate to utilize such ideology and terminology. Doak (1998) has suggested that the nationalistic ideology that stressed a political alliance with a nation-state has been replaced with an ethnically based sense of identity. This form of nationalism emphasizes an ethnic nation that is distinct from the politically oriented state nation and is more reflective of Japanese culture. In extant research, Doak (1994) has argued that "much of the appeal of nationalism for Japanese people has rested on the belief that the 'nation' could also be reconceived as an 'ethnic people' that might resist representation of the people with the concept of 'nation-state'" (p. 21). In this sense, according to Doak (1998), the idea of an ethnic nation would distance itself from the state, instead embracing Japanese culture as its basis. Furthermore, cultural identity, rather than racial identity, would form the basis of the nationalistic mentality of contemporary Japan. The line of argument presented here suggests that Japanese may be more ethnocentric than Americans. Hence, the general hypothesis is forwarded that:

H: Japanese will score higher on measures of ethnocentrism than Americans.

METHOD

Participants

To test the hypothesis that Japanese will score higher on measures of ethnocentrism, two convenience samples were selected on the basis of availability, including 372 Japanese students enrolled in courses at a large university located near Tokyo, Japan and 173 United States (US) college students enrolled in courses at a four year liberal arts college in the Midwestern US in a community of approximately 200,000 people. Of the Japanese students, 222 were females and 134 were males (16 did not indicate their sex). Of the US participants 109 were female and 64 were male.

Procedures

Participants were asked to complete Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997) Generalized Ethnocentrism (GENE) scale. The GENE scale is composed of 22 items, 11 worded positively and 11 worded negatively, that are designed to reflect a conceptualization of ethnocentrism that can be experienced by anyone, regardless of culture. In a study using the GENE scale, Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) report that reliability for the scale, as determined by Cronbach's alpha, was .92. Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) also report that the GENE scale demonstrated predictive validity for a number of conceptually related constructs such as cross-cultural contact. In addition to the GENE scale, participants were asked to answer a number of questions about their travel experiences and interaction with persons from different cultures. The English version of the questionnaire was translated into Japanese.[1] In each culture, participants completed the questionnaire in class.

RESULTS

Factor Analysis and Scale Reliability

Because the GENE scale has not been used cross-culturally, responses on the instrument were subjected to a series of factor analyses.[2] Previous research (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997) indicated we should expect a single meaningful factor for this scale. The factor analysis reported here is based on responses of both Japanese and Americans. Scores on the ethnocentrism scale were subjected to a principal components factor analysis. The unrotated solution was examined. To determine which items to retain, a minimum unrotated loading of .40 on the first factor was used, with no loading on another factor higher than the primary loading. Five components were extracted from the analysis with of 18 the 22 items loading on the initial factor. The remaining four scale items did not form a second factor, nor did they meet the criteria and were deleted from further analysis. The remaining 18 items constituted the operationalization of ethnocentrism. In calculating overall ethnocentrism scores, the negatively worded items were reversed scored. The loadings for the items on the first unrotated factor are reported in Table 1. Reliability estimates for each culture, as determined by Cronbach's alpha, were .84 for the Japanese and .93 for the Americans. Overall reliability, as determined by Cronbach's alpha, collapsed across both samples was .88.

TABLE 1
Factor Loadings for the 22-item Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale

Scale Item	Loading
1. Most cultures are backward compared to my culture.	.54
2. My culture should be the role model for other cultures.	.55
3. Lifestyles in other cultures are just as valid as those in my culture.	.40
4. Other cultures should try to be like my culture.	.66
5. I'm not interested in the values and customs of other cultures.	.63
6. People in my culture could learn a lot from people in other cultures.	.44
7. Most people from other cultures just don't know what's good for them.	.62
8. I have little respect for the values and customs of other cultures.	.70
9. Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.	.62
10. People in my culture have just about the best lifestyles of anywhere.	.43
11. Lifestyles in other cultures are not as valid as those in my culture.	.63
12. I'm very interested in the values and customs of other cultures.	.55
13. I respect the values and customs of other cultures.	.64
14. I apply my values when judging people who are different.	-.17
15. I have many friends from different countries.	.20
16. I see people who are similar as virtuous.	.16
17. I do not cooperate with people who are different.	.64
18. I do not trust people who are different.	.62
19. I dislike interacting with people from different cultures.	.72
20. Most people in my culture just don't know what's good for them.	-.33
21. Other cultures are smart to look up to my culture.	.63
22. People from other cultures act strange and unusual when they come into my culture.	.59

Scale items 14, 15, 16, and 20 were eliminated from the analysis.

Japanese Within-Group Differences

Several within-group mean ethnocentrism score comparisons were calculated among the Japanese and American samples. Table 2 presents the mean ethnocentrism scores by gender for each culture. Among the Japanese, men scored significantly higher than women [t (373) = -3.83, p < .001]. Ethnocentrism scores among first, second, third, and fourth year

Japanese students were not significantly different [F (3, 371) = .927, p = .448]. Ethnocentrism scores for 184 Japanese students who had traveled abroad (M = 42.4) were not significantly different than the 188 Japanese students who had not traveled abroad (M = 44.1), although the difference approached significance [t (371) = -1.78, p = .075]. Among the students who had traveled abroad, there were no significant differences in ethnocentrism scores [F (3, 184) = 1.14, p = .329]. Scores for 51 Japanese students who indicated that they often interacted with foreigners (M = 42.0) did not differ from the 320 who indicated that they had almost no interaction with foreigners (M = 43.5), [t (369) = 1.08, p < .280]. Finally, scores of Japanese from different hometown populations did not differ significantly [F (3, 370) = .788, p = .501].

TABLE 2
Mean Ethnocentrism Scores for Japanese and Americans by Sex *

| Sex | Culture | | | |
	Japanese		Americans	
Males	45.6	(9.2)	40.3	(13.1)
Females	41.8	(8.7)	30.7	(8.4)

*Standard Deviations are in parentheses. All row and column cell comparisons are significant (p<.001).

American Within-Group Differences

Among the Americans, men scored significantly higher than women [t (171) = -5.81, p < .001]. Ethnocentrism scores among first, second, third, and fourth year American students did not differ significantly [F (3, 172) = .259, p = .855]. Scores for the 94 students who had traveled abroad (M = 33.0) did not differ significantly from the 79 students who had not (M = 35.8), [t (171) = -1.62, p = .106]. Among those students who had traveled abroad, scores did not differ significantly [F (3, 93) = .714, p = .545]. Ethnocentrism scores of the 84 Americans who indicated they had almost no interaction with foreigners (M = 36.7) were significantly higher [t (172) = 2.73, p < .007] than the 89 who indicated that they often interacted with foreigners (M = 32.0). Finally, scores of Americans from different sized hometown populations did not differ significantly [F (3, 172) = .872, p = .457].

Between-Group Differences

Only one between-group difference was calculated. Overall, the Japanese students (M = 43.2, SD = 9.2) scored significantly higher [t (543) = 9.74, p < .001] in ethnocentrism than the American students (M = 34.3, SD = 11.4).

DISCUSSION
A survey of relevant literature suggests that this is the first direct empirical comparison of ethnocentrism among Japanese and Americans. The results of this study indicate that, overall, Japanese students score higher on GENE for ethnocentrism than their American counterparts. Although the between groups difference was significant, the within group comparisons among Japanese and American students were quite similar. Across both groups, men scored higher in ethnocentrism than women. Because ethnocentrism is thought to be learned, gender differences in socialization may account for this effect. In his meta-analysis of gender differences in personality, Feingold (1994) found that females scored notably higher

than males on personality inventories measuring trust. Feingold (1994) also reports that, in several studies, females scored higher than males on scales designed to measure openness. Feingold's (1994) meta-analysis included several non-US samples, including Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Poland, and Russia. Although we are unaware of any studies that have directly examined a possible link among ethnocentrism, trust and openness, from a theoretical perspective, ethnocentrism would seem negatively correlated with trust and openness. Hence, if women, on average, are more trusting and open than men, they would be tend to be less ethnocentric. Future research should further investigate the gender-ethnocentism link because it may be necessary to use gender-based socialization strategies to reduce ethnocentism.

In both the Japanese and American samples, ethnocentrism scores did not differ according to class rank, whether the students had traveled abroad, the number of times a student had traveled abroad, or the size of their hometown. In comparing Japanese and American within group differences, the only significant difference was associated with interaction with foreigners. Among Americans, the students who indicated they often interacted with foreigners scored significantly lower than those who indicated that they had almost no interaction with foreigners. No differences were observed in these same categories in the Japanese sample. Perhaps the Japanese notion of gaijin helps explain these results. As mentioned in the review of literature, Itoh (1996) has asserted that Japanese generally are not willing to assimilate foreigners into their society and that gaijin often experience prejudice and discrimination. American students may be more open to cultural differences, and upon experiencing them, become more open and trusting. But in Japan even Korean residents of Japan who grew up in Japan and speak fluent Japanese are treated as gaijin. Japanese ethnocentrism is so nurtured that it transcends cross-cultural experiences.

Although the results are relatively straightforward, caution in interpreting them is necessary. To begin, replication with samples from populations other than Japanese and American students is essential. For example, older members of both societies might report substantially higher ethnocentrism than the current generation of young adults.

Upon first examination, the current results may suggest that the centuries of parental and community teaching of ethnocentric values to children in Japan simply have produced a highly ethnocentric society. Certainly, a person visiting that nation will see little that is likely to indicate the present results are incorrect. However, our review of literature suggested that Japan may have evolved from its pre-WWII extreme nationalism into a post-war ethnocentrism based on cultural superiority (as opposed to racial). The results of the present research, however, neither confirm nor deny this speculation. Japan seems to be marked by a clear sense of superiority where gaijin still are marginalized and ingroup-outgroup distinctions are highly salient. This type of cultural conditioning presumably fosters ethnocentric biases. However, whether the orientations are qualitatively different today than they were in previous times was not addressed in the current research.

It is also important to obtain data from more diverse cultures in order to provide a base for examining the cultures presently studied. At this point, we have no empirical basis for determining how these countries fit within the larger spectrum. While it might be that these two countries represent the two extremes of high and low ethnocentrism among nations, we seriously doubt that this is the case. Future research should examine other cultural indicators for clues as to what aspects of a culture are likely to lead to higher or lower ethnocentrism. Eventually this work may lead to our determining what cultural changes nations may need to make if they wish to become effective partners in the world community.

NOTES

[1] The English version of the GENE scale was translated into Japanese. The Japanese scale was then back translated by a different translator into English for comparison with the original. The authors would like to express their gratitude to Michiru Horiike and Tsukasa Nishida for their assistance in translation.

[2] Three factor analyses were conducted with the scores on the GENE scale. The initial factor analysis was conducted with only the American sample. The second analysis was with only the Japanese sample. The third analysis, which is reported in this study, was with the combined samples. All three analyses yielded essentially identical factor structures and corresponding factor loadings.

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