

A CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC-SECTOR MANAGERIAL VALUES: UNITED STATES, CANADA, AND JAPAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports a cross-national investigation of public-sector managers' personal values systems using the Rokeach Value Survey. 389 male managers from the U.S., Canada, and Japan participated in the study. The investigation examined the 36 individual Terminal and Instrumental values, together with the seven factor-analytic dimensions derived by Rokeach [6]. Results indicated that North American managers exhibited much more similarity than difference, and that they contrasted dramatically with their Japanese counterparts.

INTRODUCTION

Interest in human values systems dates back many years and greatly increased with the publication of Milton Rokeach's landmark *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values* [5], leading to a substantial growth in the conceptual and empirical literature on personal values. With all the work being done, a consensual definition of "values" has emerged over the past five-plus decades: *Values* are conceptualized as global beliefs about desirable end-states or modes of behavior that underlie attitudinal processes and behavior. *Attitudes* are cognitive and affective orientations toward specific objects and situations. *Behavior*, finally, is the manifestation of one's fundamental values and corresponding attitudes.

These relationships illustrate a major reason for the growth in scholars' interest in values: the pervasive and important influence of personal values on managers' interpersonal, decision-making, ethical, and performance behavior.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

A number of scholars have investigated personal values systems of people around the world, finding them to differ substantially across countries. American managers are said to value achievement, whereas Japanese managers respect ascribed status more [3, p. 242] as well as hierarchy and harmony [7]. For their part, Canadian managers have been described as valuing harmony and egalitarianism more than their American counterparts [7]. These differences are held to reflect fundamental differences in values [3] [4].

The question that such broad allegations raise, and which this research addresses, is: *Are the values of American, Japanese, and Canadian managers – specifically those in the public sector – really different from each other?* Part of a larger project to examine personal values, decision styles, and mobility patterns, this investigation used the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) to examine 36 individual Terminal and Instrumental values, as well as the seven factor-analytic dimensions derived by Rokeach [6].

METHOD

Samples

Participating in the study were a total of 389 public-sector managers, 99 from the United States, 161 from Japan, and 129 from English-speaking Canada. Owing to the paucity of female managers in the Japanese sample (only 10 females out of a total of 174 respondents; three respondents did not report their gender), and preferring to have a tri-national comparison, we decided to limit our analysis to male managers in all three samples. The U.S., Japanese, and Canadian managers work at a comparable governmental level: State, Prefecture, and Province, respectively.

Instrument

Values were measured by means of the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS), Form D [6]. The RVS is composed of two sets of 18 values, Terminal and Instrumental. "Terminal" values describe desirable conditions, or that which one might wish to have, such as *family security*, *equality*, or *salvation*. "Instrumental" values describe desirable modes of conduct, or that which one might wish to be, such as *independent*, *loving*, or *honest*. Within each set, the respondent arranges the 18 values in order of his or her preference. Subjects, therefore, report two sets of 18 ranked values.

ANALYSIS

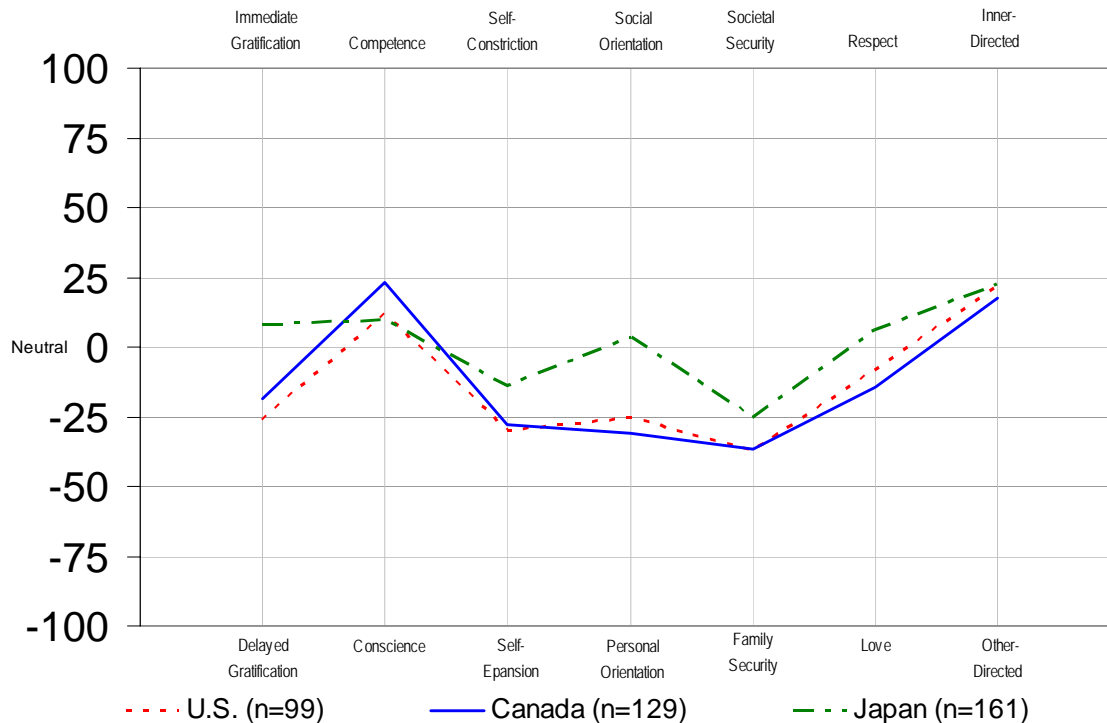
A complete description of the analysis is available from the first author. In essence, the chi-square statistic is employed to test whether a particular value is evaluated at a difference that is statistically significant as between the groups being compared. The seven factors may be thought of as bi-polar dimensions; on each dimension a respondent group may be said to favor one pole relatively more than the other. The procedure for assessing this is detailed in [1, pp. 174-175] and [2, pp. 24-26].

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

On balance, the values systems of the U.S. and Canadian managers were remarkably similar, while those of the Japanese differed dramatically. This is shown clearly in the graphs in Figure 1, below, which illustrates the factors-based values profiles of the three samples. (Detailed statistical comparisons are available from the first author.)

We began this research by asking ourselves, is there a "public-sector managerial values system," one that cuts across national cultures? We conclude from this study that, yes, there is a coherent North American public-sector managerial values system. However, that values system is clearly distinct from its Japanese counterpart.

Figure 1. Value Profiles of American, Canadian, and Japanese Public-Sector Managers



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