

Cultural Values and Involvement in Physical Activity : A Cross-Cultural Analysis

Yasuo YAMAGUCHI *

Abstract

Most studies of socialization into sport have looked at the influence of significant others and opportunity sets within several social systems upon sport involvement. Although these studies have contributed to understand the process of socialization into sport within a given society, little attempt has been made to explain cultural differences. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between cultural values and involvement in physical activity in a cross-cultural setting. The population for the study is comprised of employees of large corporations in Japan and Canada in which company physical activity programs are provided. Information was provided by 371 employees of two large corporations in Japan and 262 employees of two large corporations in Canada. The questionnaire was administered and the response rate was 92.5 percent for the Japanese survey and 66.3 percent for the Canadian phase.

The contextualism orientation is identified as a cultural value which influences the socialization process into physical activity in the organization or community. The concept of contextualism orientation is derived from the Hamaguchi's study of Japanese society (1981) and is defined as a shared belief that cooperation, interdependence and intimacy in interpersonal relations are important to the community's identity or well-being. Five questions using a four point scale are adapted to measure the degree of contextualism orientation. These questions are called as follows: 1) group-identification orientation, 2) social orientation, 3) other orientation, 4) cooperation orientation and 5) group-achievement orientation. Bivariate analyses were used to examine the cross-cultural differences in the frequency distributions, as well as the associations between the independent and dependent variables.

The findings indicated that there were significant cross-cultural and sex differences in the associations between cultural values and involvement in physical activity in Japan and Canada. Among males in both countries, a significant association between contextualism orientation and sport involvement was found. However, a significant association between contextualism orientation and exercise involvement was seen only in Japan, but not in Canada. The findings suggest that value orientation differs in countries and has different influence on the socialization process into physical activity.

KEY WORDS : *Physical activity, Socialization, Cultural values, Cross-cultural analysis*

Introduction

In recent years considerable attention has been given to comparative cross-national studies on sport involvement (Kenyon and Knoop, 1978; Kenyon and McPherson, 1978; Imamura et al., 1980; Seiwa, 1986). Kenyon and McPherson (1978) examined the process of socialization into sport of young adults in four industrialized countries (Belgium, Canada, Japan and Norway). They found that primary enactment of sport roles is not a dominant part

*National Institute of Fitness and Sports in Kanoya, Kagoshima, Japan.

of the life-style, while secondary involvement is a major part of their life-style when the country's national sport is involved. Kenyon and Knoop (1978) examined the viability of the social role-social system approach in term of national sport involvement among male adults from seven cities in six countries. Imamura et al.(1981) compared the process of socialization into professional players between Japan and Canada.

Most studies of socialization into sport have looked at the influence of significant others and opportunity sets within several social systems (e.g., the family, school and community) upon sport involvement. Although these studies have contributed to understand the process of socialization into sport within a given society and the similarities in the process, little attempt has been made to explain cross-cultural differences. In other words, the impact and influence of cultural factors on the socialization process have been largely ignored.

Each culture has different social values which influence human social behaviors and the process of socialization. In order to explain more adequately the process of socialization into physical activity, there is a need for examinations of cultural values from a comparative cross-national perspective. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between cultural values and involvement in physical activity in a cross-cultural setting.

Hypothesis

Although the number of comparative cross-national studies involving Japan have increased considerably in the last decade, most studies have been based on simple description which contrast some unique features of Japan with those of the West. In other words, these studies have been based on the authors' individual experiences and subjective expressions (Yasuda, 1980). Also, these studies have ignored similarities existing between Japan and the West. Hamaguchi (1981, 1982) presented some insightful work which seeks an innovative paradigm for the study of Japanese society. He criticized most previous work on Japanese society as having been paradigmatically based on methodological individualism. Hamaguchi pointed out that the basic concepts and analytical scheme in methodological individualism have been on Western development and thought, and cannot be accepted by the Japanese people in general. Thus, there is a need for a comparative cross-national study involving Japan using systematic and scientific methods within an appropriate paradigm.

From a review of the literature, the most often discussed national character of the Japanese is "group orientation", as opposed to the individualism of the West (Reischauer, 1978; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale and Athos, 1981). However, the application of the individualism versus group dichotomy to the comparative study of Japanese and Western societies may be inappropriate and lead to a critical misunderstanding. First, the Japanese are not as totally group-oriented as they are perceived to be by people in the West. For example, while many Japanese have traveled abroad in group tours in recent years, the reason can be attributed to the possibility of maximizing the individual benefit associated with more economic group travel. The rapid economic growth in post war Japan gave birth to a "new middle class" (Hamaguchi, 1981). The formation of Japan's new middle class led to a gradual shift in the social values away from the traditional focus on production and the company toward

individualization and self-expressiveness. With increases in leisure time, this tendency has become significant. Furthermore, the members of the new middle class have become self-productive and seek to preserve the status quo. Thus, the Japanese today are not totally group-oriented, although there are group pressure and group norms in the Japanese society.

Traditionally, the group orientation of the Japanese has often been linked with relationship between master and subordinate characteristic of the feudal system of Japan. Such a relationship has been used to explain the calm and peaceful relationship between the employer (or company) and employees (e.g., De Mente, 1981). However, such an outdated characterization scarcely presents an accurate description of present-day Japan. The high morale of Japanese workers is largely due to the fact that they know if the company's productivity and profit increase, they can obtain extra benefit through bonus and employee welfare (Pascale and Athos, 1981).

Second, Western individualism sees the individual as a distinct entity, separate from all others in most important respects, with separable beliefs, talents and experiences. As a result, the following ideology is common in the Western individualism:

Ideologically speaking, they regard the individual as real and as the proper focus of rights and duties. The collectivity is simply an abstraction and enjoys no existential status as such. (Curtis and Lambert, 1980: 108–109)

From this point of view, a group orientation refers to the tendency for group members to be fiercely loyal and totally dedicated to the groups or organizations to which they belong. The group orientation of the Japanese has been viewed as counter to an individualistic orientation, which strives to defend throughly the autonomy, freedom, and equality of the individual. As a consequence, the Japanese have been viewed as neither possessing nor supporting such individualism. Pascale and Athos (1981: 202), in thier work on a comparison of Japanese and American management, emphasize that:

We often disparage our involvement with groups as a weary task that others require.... Note that the disparagement is often stated in language that suggests others are immature, insecure, childish, dependent, or naive.

The more scholars and journalists emphasize the groupism of the Japanese, the greater the possibility that misunderstandings will arise with regard to the Japanese and their society. Thus, a simplistic application of the Western approach does not always facilitate understanding of either the society or the modernization process of Japan or the East.

Instead of the individualism versus group orientation, the contextualism orientation is identified as a cultural value which influences the process of socialization into physical activity in the organization or community. The concept of contextualism orientation is deived from Hamaguchi's study of Japanese society (1981, 1982) and is defined as a shared belief that cooperation, interdependence and intimacy in interpersonal relations are important to the

community's identity or well-being.

The contextualism orientation may influence the degree of involvement in physical activity. In Japanese communities and workplaces, the importance of cooperation and harmonious human relations have been emphasized (Reischauer, 1978; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale and Athos, 1981). A variety of sports such as baseball, softball and volleyball have been promoted in communities for the purpose of developing community ties and identity. Furthermore, industrial sport leagues and intra-company tournaments have been developed under the philosophy of Japanese management style – the company as a family. Thus, physical activity plays an important function in developing people's ties and identity in Japanese communities and workplaces.

Although the contextualism orientation is identified as a significant cultural value in Japan, it may be also seen in some organizations or communities in other societies. For example, in Toronto and many large cities in North America there are number of ethnic clubs which maintain strong ties with emphasis on the contextualism orientation among members. It should be noted that unique sports are played by members of the ethnic club. Cricket is played by Indian-Canadians, and table tennis is popular for Chinese-Canadians. These sports are all popular in the mother countries and often become a common topic of conversation in the clubs.

The contextual person sees cooperation as an important value within the organization or community and is more other-oriented than self-oriented. Company physical activity programs are often given in group settings with a great deal of social interaction. Therefore, if involvement in physical activity is encouraged as a valuable or desirable form of life style within the workplace, the contextual person may be more likely to be involved in company physical activity programs. From the above discussion, the following hypothesis is presented:

Assuming involvement in physical activity is encouraged within the workplace, the greater the contextualism orientation, the greater the propensity for involvement in physical activity.

Procedures

Table 1 illustrates characteristics of the samples and sources of data. One large corporation from the business sector (i.e., life insurance business) and one from the manufacturing industry (i.e., brewery industry) were selected for the Canadian phase of the study. In Japan, two equivalent corporations were selected for the Japanese sample. A sample of 200 male and female employees were drawn from each corporation by systematic sampling from the list of all employees. A total of 367 usable questionnaires from Japanese survey and a total of 265 usable questionnaires from the Canadian survey were returned for an overall response rate of 93 percent and 66 percent, respectively.

Five questions using a four point scale are adapted to measure the degree of contextualism orientation. These questions are called as follows: 1) group-identification orientation, 2) social orientation, 3) other orientation, 4) cooperation orientation and 5) group-achievement orientation.

Table 1 Characteristics of the samples and sources of data

		All employees							Respondents						
		# of employees			Sex		Average age		# of employees			Sex		Average age	
		M	F	Total	M	F	M	F	M	F	Total	M	F	M	F
Japan	Company J1	1249	1108	2357	53%	47%	40.0	28.1	102	80	182	56%	44%	37.1	27.2
	Company J2	516	140	656	79%	21%	33.9	23.5	152	33	185	82%	18%	31.7	27.2
Canada	Company C1	478	1063	1541	30%	70%	40.3	33.2	44	96	140	31%	69%	34.6	29.5
	Company C2	600	250	850	71%	29%	42.5	33.0	100	23	125	81%	19%	38.2	35.9

The following three dependent variables were used in this study: 1) exercise involvement, 2) sport involvement, and 3) involvement in physical activity (combination of exercise and sport). The degree of involvement was expressed on a six point scale of the frequency of involvement in each activity in corporate settings. Bivariate analyses were used to examine the cross-cultural differences in the frequency distributions, as well as the associations between the independent and dependent variables.

Findings

Figure 1 indicates the comparisons of contextualism orientation in Japan and Canada. The Japanese employees had strong group-achievement and group-identification orientations, while the Canadian respondents had a strong cooperation orientation. Furthermore, according to the descriptive statistics, the value orientation of the Japanese was homogeneous, which reflects the mono-ethnicity of Japan, while that of the Canadians was heterogeneous reflecting the multi-culturalism that is the characteristic of Canadian society.

Table 2 shows the comparisons of involvement in physical activity in Japan and Canada. The results indicate that there were no cross-national differences in the degree of involvement in physical activity. However, Canadian employees were more active in exercise than Japanese employees, while Japanese employees were more active in sport than Canadian employees. These findings reflect the fact that exercise activities such as group fitness programs are encouraged in Canadian corporations, while sport activities such as industrial sport leagues and intra-company tournaments are widespread in Japan.

The next phase of analyses includes the examinations of the hypothesis. Since there are sex differences in the process of socialization into physical activity (Greendorfer and Ewing, 1981; McPherson, 1981), data were analyzed separately by sex.

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between the contextualism orientation and exercise, sport and physical activity by cross-tabulation analysis. The hypothesis was partially supported among the male cohort in both Japan and Canada. However, the hypothesis was rejected among the female cohort in both countries, except in one case. With respect to the Japanese, there were significant positive associations between social and other orientations and all three dependent variables. Although active male participants in Japan had strong group-achievement, group-identification and cooperation orientations, there was no signifi-

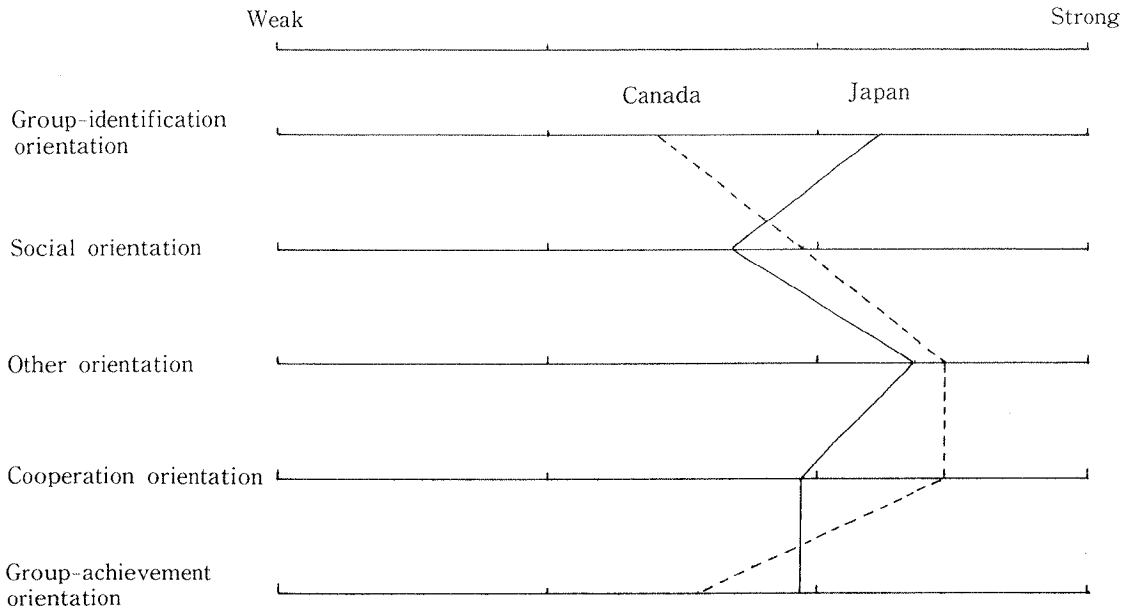


Figure 1. Comparisons of contextualism orientation in Japan and Canada

Table 2. Degree of involvement: Exercise, sport and physical activity*

	Rarely	3-5 times a year	6-12 times 2-3 weeks	Once every 2-3 weeks	1-2 times a week	3 times a week or more
Exercise						
Japan	47.7%	8.1	7.3	7.0	13.2	16.7
Canada	43.1%	1.9	3.1	3.1	14.5	34.0
		$X^2 = 39.16$ $df=5$ $p=0.00$, $p < .01$				
Sport						
Japan	47.7%	12.1	10.8	7.8	10.8	10.8
Canada	60.5%	6.5	4.2	5.0	21.5	2.3
		$X^2 = 46.36$ $df=5$ $p=0.00$, $p < .01$				
	Not at all	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Physical activity						
Japan	32.3%	12.7	18.1	18.9	11.6	6.5
Canada	28.2%	6.9	21.0	26.0	10.3	7.3
		$X^2 = 10.02$ $df=5$ $p=0.06$, N. S.				

* Additive scale of the degree of exercise and sport involvement.

cant association between such orientations and the dependent variables. This was due to the fact that inactive employees also had these same characteristics. Thus, these orientations appear to be unrelated to involvement in physical activity.

Table 3. Crosstabulation analysis between contextualism orientation and exercise, sport and physical activity

		Exercise		Sport		Physical activity	
		Japan	Canada	Japan	Canada	Japan	Canada
Male cohort							
1. Group-identification orientation	X ² df	3.37 2	0.45 2	4.25 2	9.39**2	5.00 2	0.27 2
	Gamma	0.14	-0.06	0.13	0.33	0.15	-0.08
2. Social orientation	X ² df	9.56**2	0.24 2	7.11* 2	4.85	16.24**2	1.73 2
	Gamma	0.21	0.03	0.29	0.26	0.37	0.20
3. Other orientation	X ² df	8.86* 2	1.79	13.60**2	6.02* 2	13.10**2	0.13
	Gamma	0.33	0.07	0.41	0.27	0.40	0.06
4. Cooperation orientation	X ² df	1.44 2	0.12 2	1.23 2	14.72**2	1.79 2	4.82
	Gamma	0.13	0.05	0.11	0.38	0.06	0.16
5. Group-achievement orientation	X ² df	0.27 2	0.98	4.21 2	4.80 2	1.72	2.49 2
	Gamma	0.02	0.04	0.21	0.30	-0.03	0.25
Female cohort							
1. Group-identification orientation	X ² df	0.55 2	3.18 2	5.39 2	1.23 2	0.33 2	3.80 2
	Gamma	0.11	0.13	-0.35	0.14	0.09	0.22
2. Social orientation	X ² df	1.11 2	4.95 2	1.49 2	2.59 2	0.82 2	1.27 2
	Gamma	0.05	0.12	0.09	0.22	0.01	0.02
3. Other orientation	X ² df	1.06 2	1.29 2	4.15 2	3.08 2	0.22 2	9.91**2
	Gamma	0.12	0.18	0.38	0.27	0.04	0.14
4. Cooperation orientation	X ² df	5.77	1.33 2	0.09 2	1.61 2	5.67 2	0.15 2
	Gamma	0.22	0.19	-0.13	-0.26	0.32	-0.06
5. Group-achievement orientation	X ² df	2.09 2	1.63 2	2.73 2	2.23 2	1.35 2	1.41 2
	Gamma	0.24	0.21	-0.12	0.15	0.19	0.16

In terms of the Canadian male cohort, there were significant positive associations between group-identification, other and cooperation orientations and sport involvement, although no significant association between each element of the contextualism orientation and exercise involvement was found. The findings for Canadian males indicated that sport involvement was associated with the contextualism orientation, although there was no relationship between exercise involvement and the contextualism orientation. For the Japanese males, the contextualism orientation was associated with both exercise and sport involvement. Furthermore, no association between the contextualism orientation and involvement in physical activity was observed among the females in both countries.

Table 4 indicates zero-order correlations between the contextualism orientation and exercise, sport and physical activity. A composite indicator was used to integrate the concept of contextualism orientation. The composite indicator was constructed by the formula (Yamaguchi, 1984) using weights derived from the item loading on the first unrotated factor

Table 4. Zero-order correlation between contextualism orientation and exercise, sport and physical activity

	Exercise		Sport		Physical activity	
	Japan	Canada	Japan	Canada	Japan	Canada
Male						
Contextualism orientation	.185*	.033	.231*	.315*	.258*	.216*
Female						
Contextualism orientation	.103	.067	.028	.062	.112	.096

of a principal component analysis of the total set of items.

The results assured that for males the contextualism orientation was associated with both exercise and sport involvement in Japan, while no relationship between exercise involvement and contextualism orientation was found in Canada. Furthermore, in both Japanese and Canadian females, there was no significant relationship between the contextualism orientation and involvement in physical activity.

Conclusion

The relationship between cultural values (the contextualism orientation) and involvement in physical activity was examined in a cross-cultural setting. Overall, the hypothesis was mostly supported by males but not by females in both Japan and Canada. For male employees, active sport participants within the workplace are likely to have a strong orientation toward contextualism. In other words, male employees who are actively involved in sport tend to be other-oriented, and to see cooperation and group-achievement as important elements in social life.

However, for female employees, there is no relationship between the contextualism orientation and involvement in physical activity. The findings may reflect the fact that female employees, who have higher social status tend to seek physical activity opportunities outside their workplace (Yamaguchi, 1984). These findings suggest that females' involvement in physical activity may be more dependent on individual factors than on the influence of the group.

The results also show interesting cross-cultural differences. Among Japanese males, exercise and sport participants are likely to have strong orientation toward contextualism. They are likely to have strong corporate identity through physical activity programs. However, there is no association between exercise involvement and contextualism orientation in Canada. Exercise participants in Canadian workplaces may be more influenced by individual factors such as interest in personal health than by group factors. These findings suggest that value orientation differs in countries and has different influence on the socialization process into physical activity.

The present study provides evidence of the influence of the contextualism orientation on involvement in physical activity. Since the socialization process is greatly affected by the cultural values of a given society, more attention should be paid to the influence of cultural

values on involvement in physical activity. Further analyses are needed to understand unique cross-cultural differences in the process of socialization into physical activity, and to go beyond the limitation of ethnocentric perspective.

文化的価値と身体活動参与：比較文化的研究

山口 泰雄

近年、スポーツの社会化に関して国際比較研究による知見が蓄積されつつある。しかし、社会化過程の二国間における差異を比較文化的視点からアプローチした研究は少ない。本研究の目的は、文化的価値と身体活動参与の関係を比較文化的視点から検証しようとするものである。サンプルは、日本とカナダの同等な大企業4社の従業員である。系統抽出法によりサンプルを選び、質問紙法による調査を実施した結果、日本では367名（回答率93%）、カナダでは265名（回答率66%）の回答を得た。身体活動参与に影響を及ぼす文化的価値として、浜口（1982）によって提起された間柄主義を適用し、集団所属志向、社交志向、他者志向、協力志向、集団達成志向の5変数を用いた。身体活動参与は、職場内における運動、スポーツ、身体活動（運動参加とスポーツ参加の合成変数）

の参加程度による3変数を用いた。二国間の異同を検証するため、クロス分析と相関分析法を適用した。

データ分析の結果、間柄主義と身体活動参与との関係が検証されたが、顕著な性差と異文化間における差異がみられた。すなわち、日本とカナダ両国の男子従業員で活発なスポーツ参加者は、強い間柄志向を示したのに対して、両国の女子従業員においては、有意な関連性を示さなかった。また、日本の運動参加者が強い間柄志向を持っているのに対して、カナダの運動参加者はむしろ個人的な関心や動機により影響されていることがうかがえた。これは日本とカナダの職場環境における文化的差異を反映しているといえよう。すなわち、カナダの職場は個人が中心で、運動参加も個人的要因により影響されるのに対して、日本の職場では人間関係が重視され、運動・スポーツプログラムが企業文化（corporate culture）への社会化の機能を果していることを示唆している。

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