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Children's Reasoning About Aggression: Differences Between Japan and the United States and Implications for School Discipline

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Abstract. Results are presented of a cross-cultural study of differences in the reasons that children in the United States and Japan give for refraining from common types of aggression. Over 200 children, primarily fifth-graders, were interviewed individually. The study was an extension of previous research showing that children who voice a self-centered or hedonistic perspective based on punishment, as opposed to a perspective that focuses more on the needs of others, tend to be more disruptive and/or aggressive. In the current study, children in the United States, compared to children in Japan, were more likely to focus on the consequences of their behavior on themselves, not on others. Indeed, nearly all children in the United States (92%) gave at least one response that focused on punishment, and 79% gave a response that focused on either overt or relational retribution. In contrast, 90% of the children in Japan did *not* mention punishment and less than half (42%) mentioned one of the two types of retribution. Given previously reported differences in behavior between Japanese and American students, the present findings suggest that emphasizing rules and punishment—as widely practiced in American schools but not in Japanese schools—might not be the best strategy for promoting responsible behavior, especially over the long term.

A growing body of research indicates that children's behavior is related to their moral reasoning (i.e., the reasons, or justifications, they give about why it is right or wrong

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to engage in certain behaviors). In particular, disruptive and aggressive behavior in the classroom has consistently been associated with moral reasoning grounded in a self-centered or hedonistic perspective based on being caught and punished (Bear & Richards, 1981; Bear & Rys, 1994; Hughes & Dunn, 2000; Kuther & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2000; Manning & Bear, 2002). For example, when asked why they should not hit, steal, start fights, tease, and say mean things to others, disruptive and aggressive students frequently reported that they "might get caught" or that their peers "might do it back" (Manning & Bear, 2002). In contrast to self-centered moral reasoning that focuses on punishment or retaliation, moral reasoning that focuses on concerns about feelings, interpersonal issues, and social norms (i.e., nonhedonistic reasoning) tends to be associated with less disruptive and aggressive behavior (Manning & Bear, 2002), less hyperactivity (Dunn et al., 2000), more prosocial behavior (Dunn et al., 2000; Eisenberg-Berg, 1979; Miller et al., 1996), more cooperative and less conflictual play (Dunn et al., 2000), and more compromise during conflicts (Dunn & Herrera, 1997). Ironically, these findings indicate that discipline violations are highest among students who think that the best reason to refrain from such violations is because they will be punished. As such, the findings are contrary to widespread beliefs among American educators about the effectiveness of emphasizing clear rules and punishment in the prevention and correction of misbehavior. Such an emphasis is reflected in the growing popularity of zero tolerance policies and corresponding high rates of suspension (Justice Policy Institute/Children's Law Center, 2000; Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

The purpose of the present study was to examine whether the punishment-oriented moral reasoning commonly found among children in the United States is also found among children in Japan—a country in which parents and educators place much less emphasis on the use of punishment. Based on cultural differences in disciplinary practices between the two countries (reviewed later in this article), we predicted that children in the United States would be more likely to orient their moral reasoning toward being caught and punished, whereas children in Japan would be more likely to focus on the needs of others. Not only does Japan offer a sociocultural contrast in practices used by parents and teachers to correct misbehavior and develop responsible behavior, but it also is similar to the United States in socioeconomic status and living standards, thus minimizing these confounding variables in cross-cultural research (Azuma, 2001).

Differences in Parental Discipline Practices and Moral Education in Japan and the United States

Ample research shows that Japanese mothers are more likely than American mothers to use indirect and psychological methods rather than coercive methods to manage their children's behavior (Hess, Kashiwagi, Azuma, Price, & Dickson, 1980; Kobayashi-Winata & Power, 1989; Lewis, 1996; Masataka, 2002; Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Balackburn, 1984; Zahn-Waxler, Friedman, Cole, Mizuta, & Hiruma, 1996). In particular, they are more likely to use moral reasoning; to appeal to their children's feelings and goals; to encourage children to consider how their behavior might be perceived by others; to use modeling; and to induce empathy, guilt, anxiety, and shame when responding to discipline problems. Training in moral reasoning and empathy begins at a very early age. As found in a recent study of preschool-aged children (Yamada, 2004), Japanese mothers rely primarily on persuasion and reasoning in responding to misbehavior or situations of conflict. As noted by Yamada (p. 175), this practice is consistent with Japanese mothers' goals to model rational behavior and to help their children "internalize a desire to conform and behave well for their own sake rather than in response to some outside force such as physical punishment and offering rewards (Conroy, Hess, Azuma, & Kashiwagi, 1980; Hendry, 1986)." With such emphasis on moral

reasoning and empathy in parental discipline practices, verbal and physical confrontations between parents and children in Japan are rare, even during adolescence (Rothbaum et al., 2000).

In contrast to Japanese mothers, American mothers are more likely to emphasize their authority and to employ direct control through punishment, rewards, and expression of anger (Hess et al., 1980; Kobayashi-Winata & Power, 1989; Lewis, 1996; Masataka, 2002). They also are less demanding than Japanese mothers of good behavior toward others (Hendry, 2003), and often view noncompliance and questioning of authority as a valued aspect of individuality (Rothbaum et al., 2000).

Differences in School Discipline Practices and Moral Education in Japan and the United States

These differences in disciplinary practices found between Japanese and American homes also appear to apply to Japanese and American schools (Hamilton, Blumenfeld, Akoh, & Miura, 1989; Killen & Sueyoshi, 1995; Lewis 1989, 1995; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992; Tsuchida & Lewis, 1996). As noted by Lewis (1989), Japanese teachers emphasize that students should attribute their obedience to both internal and external factors, resulting in both immediate and long-term internalization of values. Furthermore, in their observations of Japanese classrooms, Killen and Sueyoshi (1995) found the following:

> Teachers' reactions to conflict reflected both independent and interdependent values. Teachers refrained from intervening in children's conflicts in order to foster self-efficacy (emphasizing autonomy) and they did so by redirecting children to work it out with one another (thereby strengthening the group). (pp. 328–329)

Research also shows that Japanese teachers often take deliberate actions to minimize the impression of teacher control (Lewis, 1989). As such, unlike in the United States, teachers in Japan are advised not to continuously monitor and supervise student behavior, but to keep a very low profile, which encourages students to manage themselves. Japanese teachers also place much greater emphasis on promoting social and emotional development and strong teacher–student relations (Letendre, 1996; Lewis, 1989, 1996). Such emphasis is consistent with increasing research in the United States indicating that developing social and emotional skills among students and supportive relations between teachers and students fosters self-discipline, reduces behavior problems in the classroom, and promotes academic achievement (Bear, 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Such emphasis also stands in marked contrast to the importance placed on rules, rewards, punishment, and zero tolerance policies in many U.S. schools (Brophy, 1996; Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Another factor likely to influence moral reasoning and empathy relates to differences in the schools' moral education curricula and classroom management strategies. Research suggests that Japanese children are exposed to more formal lessons in moral education than American children. Indeed, weekly instruction in moral education is mandated by the Japanese government (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998). These lessons highlight the importance of moral values, responsibility, good behavior, friendships, community, and family (Lewis, 1996; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998). Although similar lessons are taught in many American schools as part of character education and social and emotional learning programs, they are not mandated by the federal government, and thus it is unclear to what extent students in the United States receive such instruction.

Japanese students also spend much more time than American students in cooperative learning activities (Hoffman, 2000; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). In these and similar group activities, students are often given responsibility to manage not only their own behavior but also that of others in their group (Lewis, 1989). Participation in such activities provides ample opportunities for Japanese children to develop self-discipline and cooperation, as well as an understanding of the importance of

empathy, guilt, and shame to moral and social behavior.

Studies of Differences in Moral Reasoning Between Children in Japan and the United States

Although we found no published studies of the relation between moral reasoning and classroom behavior among children in Japan, several studies have examined moral reasoning among Japanese children. In a recent review of the literature on moral reasoning among children and adolescents in Eastern Asian countries, including Japan, children and adolescents in these countries, compared to their Western counterparts, were more likely to voice moral reasoning grounded in empathy, prosocial intentions, an understanding of normative expectations, and feelings of guilt or personal approval (Naito, Lin, & Gielen, 2001). In contrast, children and adolescents in Western countries were more likely to voice moral reasoning that reflected a self-centered, hedonistic perspective. Not all studies found children and adolescents in East Asian countries to be similar in their moral reasoning, however. For example, Matsui (1997; cited by Naito et al., 2001) found that Japanese students were about twice as likely as students in China, South Korea, and Turkey (as well as the United States) to voice empathic reasons for helping others (e.g., "I would feel sorry for the other person, and want to help") and much less likely to give reasons reflecting concerns about rules and norms. Furthermore, Naito et al. found that Japanese students, in general, were more likely than students in other Eastern Asian countries to express moral reasoning that reflected what is often viewed as a Western "individualistic" orientation as opposed to an Eastern "collectivistic" orientation.

The review by Naito et al. (2001) referred to only three studies of Japanese children (i.e., Matsui, 1997; Naito, 1994; Yamagishi, 1976), reflecting the scarcity of research on the moral reasoning of Japanese children. Another significant limitation of the literature involves the measure of moral reasoning that has been used. The studies reviewed by Naito et al., as well as a large number of other studies of moral reasoning in the United States, have used Kohlberg's semistructured Moral Judgment Interview (MJI; Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). This popular measure of moral reasoning has three major shortcomings, particularly with respect to studying the moral reasoning that children across cultures apply to common acts of aggression in schools. First, the MJI examines children's moral reasoning not applied to real-life acts of aggression in schools but to hypothetical moral dilemmas such as stealing to save a person's life and disobeying a parent after the parent broke a promise. Second, the MJI yields a global score of moral reasoning (e.g., Stage 2 or Stage 2/3). A focus on global scores largely precludes an analysis of more specific and qualitatively different types of moral reasoning that are embedded within each stage of moral reasoning (Eisenberg, 1982; Manning & Bear, 2002). This is particularly problematic in cross-cultural research. Third, and perhaps most important, responses to the MJI are scored by being matched to responses in the scoring manual, which were derived from interviews of children in the United States. Responses that do not "match" are not scored, reflecting a major source of potential cultural bias in previous studies of children's moral reasoning in non-Western societies (Snarey, 1985). In light of these shortcomings, as well as other limitations of Kohlberg's stage approach to moral development (see Snarey, 1985, and Turiel, 1998, for reviews), an alternative interview and scoring system was used in the present study. Both the interview questions and the scoring criteria had been used in previous research (Manning, 2005; Manning & Bear, 2002) and were adapted from the extensive research that Nancy Eisenberg (Eisenberg, 1982; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998) and John Gibbs (Gibbs, 2003; Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992) have done on moral reasoning and its measurement.

Based on the cross-cultural research cited, we predicted that, compared to Japanese children, the moral reasoning of American children would be more hedonistic, or self-centered, focusing more on the consequences

of their behavior on themselves, especially on whether they will get caught or be punished. In contrast, we predicted that the moral reasoning of Japanese children would focus more on the needs of others. If found, results might suggest that differences in moral reasoning contribute to the commonly reported differences in behavior between Japanese and American children. That is, significant research indicates that children in Japan tend to exhibit markedly fewer behavior problems, including aggression (Masataka, 2002; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1996), bullying (Ban & Cummings, 1999), and general discipline problems in the classroom (Barnes, 1999; National Center for Education Statistics, 1996) than children in the United States. A number of individual child, home, school, classroom, and cultural factors certainly account for differences in discipline problems across and within cultures, but it is very likely that moral reasoning is among the important individual child factors—largely reflecting the significant differences in disciplinary and educational practices toward aggression and moral behavior that children experience at home and school.

Method

Participants

The U.S. sample consisted of 132 students (70 boys, 62 girls) from a total of five schools (three K–4, one K–8, and one 5–6) in a town of approximately 5,000 in the Mid-Atlantic region. Of these students, 74 were in the fifth grade and 58 were in the fourth grade; 89% were Caucasian, 10% were African American, and 1% were Hispanic. Although formal socioeconomic status (SES) data on the students were not available, teachers estimated each student's SES on a scale from 1 (*low*) to 3 (*high*) and rated 25% ($n = 33$) of the students as low SES, 64% ($n = 84$) as average, and 11% ($n = 15$) as high.

The Japanese sample consisted of 75 students (40 boys, 35 girls) in the fifth grade from three schools located in small towns, of similar size to the U.S. sample, in the Hyogo Prefecture of Japan (near Osaka). Information on the SES of the students was not available. All measures, forms, and procedures were approved by the human subjects committees of the University of Delaware and Hyogo University. Parent permission to participate was obtained for each child in the United States but was deemed unnecessary for children in Japan by both human subjects committees. Consistent with public school and university policies in Japan, all measures, forms, and procedures were reviewed by the principals of the participating schools. Parent permission was considered unnecessary because the study was not related to the private matters of children and parents and the results would be part of an evaluation of each school's moral education program.[1]

Measures of Moral Reasoning

Two measures of moral reasoning were administered. Students were presented with questions about their moral reasoning in individual interviews and responded to additional questions presented in a group-administered questionnaire. These two measures are described in the following sections.

Individual moral reasoning interview. In individual interviews, students were presented with six brief scenarios of acts of aggression commonly experienced by children in school.[2] After each scenario, students were asked to explain why children should not engage in such an aggressive act (e.g., "Why shouldn't kids hit others?"). This was followed by a second question to solicit responses that might not come to mind initially (e.g., "Why *else* shouldn't kids hit others?"). The scenarios presented in the interviews reflected both overt aggression (i.e., hitting, fighting, and saying mean things to others) and relational aggression (i.e., spreading rumors, telling children not to play with other children, and telling children that you won't be friends with them unless they do what you say). These scenarios were selected based upon research on the differential forms of aggression exhibited by boys and girls (see Crick et al., 1999, for review). At the beginning and end of the interview, students were asked one or two filler questions (e.g., "Some kids like vanilla

ice cream best, but other kids like chocolate or strawberry. What is your favorite kind of ice cream?") in order to start and finish the interview with neutral, nonevaluative items designed to increase students' comfort level.

Individual interviews were administered in each child's native language, at his or her school, for approximately 30 min. The interviews were conducted by undergraduate and graduate research assistants from the University of Delaware and Hyogo University. All interviewers were trained by the authors, with a professional interpreter assisting with the training in Japan. The training emphasized the importance of recording responses verbatim and encouraging students to elaborate upon their responses. During training, which lasted 2 to 3 days, the interviewers extensively reviewed examples of scorable and unscorable responses and were instructed when and how to probe responses. To ensure standardization in the questions asked, scripted questions with specific examples of when to probe and what to say were printed on each interview form.

Criteria for the qualitative coding of responses were adapted from procedures published by Eisenberg (1982), Gibbs et al. (1992), and Colby and Kohlberg (1987). These procedures were used in previous research by the authors (e.g., Manning, 2005; Manning & Bear, 2002) in which a detailed scoring manual was developed consisting of specific categories of moral reasoning drawn from the interviews of over 200 children in the United States. For the purpose of the present study, the manual was revised to include categories voiced by older American and Japanese children. This resulted in the identification of the following 10 categories, in which at least 10% of the total number of students gave a scorable response[3]:

Punishment. Child states that punishment or consequences from authorities, such as teachers or parents, will or might follow as a result of one's behavior (e.g., "You'll get into trouble").

Overt retribution. Child states that overtly aggressive (i.e., physical or verbal) consequences will or might be administered by peers as a result of one's behavior (e.g., "He'll hit you." or "She'll say mean things to you").

Relational retribution. Child states that consequences to a specific peer relationship will or might occur as a result of one's behavior (e.g., "She will never play with me again").

Needs of others. Child demonstrates awareness of the psychological or physical needs of another individual or awareness of the psychological or physical consequences that may ensue as a result of the child's behavior (e.g., "It would hurt him").

Empathy/sympathy. Child takes the perspective of a third person observing the situation and identifies feelings of empathy or sympathy (e.g., "I would feel sad if I saw a child being teased").

Fairness/social perspective taking. Child demonstrates a basic understanding of the concepts of fairness, justice, selfishness, or the rights of others that goes beyond merely labeling the act as unfair or wrong (e.g., "It's not fair to tease others because you wouldn't want them to treat you that way"), or the child demonstrates that he or she is actively taking the perspective of another person (e.g., "Put yourself in their place and see how you feel").

Shame and guilt. Child identifies feelings of shame or guilt (e.g., "He should feel awful about what he did"). For example, child demonstrates negative feelings about oneself (i.e., shame) or one's behavior (i.e., guilt; Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

Friendship/group harmony. Child refers to friendship or trust in a way that implies mutuality rather than a one-way exchange of benefits (e.g., "Friendship is supposed to go both ways"), or the child demonstrates concern for the well-being of the class as a whole (e.g., "The class would feel badly").

Approval/reputation. Child demonstrates a desire for approval from adults or parents

(e.g., "the teacher will think you're nice") or a concern about one's overall reputation and/or the reputation of the class (e.g., "Everyone will know that you don't keep your promises" or "Your class will be known as a problem class").

Social isolation. Child demonstrates concern for the social isolation or rejection of an individual that may occur as the result of the given behavior (e.g., "No one in the class will play with him if he hits others").

For each question in the interview, scores were assigned to each of the preceding categories based upon the extent to which children verbalized the respective form of reasoning. Consistent with procedures used previously by the researchers (Manning & Bear, 2002; Bear & Rys, 1994) and adapted from Eisenberg et al. (1995), a 0 was assigned if *no* responses to the question reflected a particular category, a 1 was assigned if *some but not all* of the responses reflected a particular category, and a 2 was assigned if *all* of the responses reflected a particular category. Although the categories were independent of each other (e.g., students could verbalize concern for both punishment and the needs of others), the scores assigned to each category were not (i.e., if students used more than one category, they automatically received a score of 1 for each). Scores were summed across the six aggression items, yielding a total score for each category of reasoning that ranged from 0 to 12.

All interview protocols were coded by one of the authors or a research assistant, each of whom had previous experience in both administering and scoring the interviews. To establish reliability of the coding, a sample of 15 interviews of children from Japan and a separate sample of 15 interviews of children from the United States were randomly selected, coded, and scored by two of the researchers. One of the two coders was blinded as to whether the interviews were from Japan or the United States. Percentage of interrater agreement was above 75% for all categories for both the Japanese and American samples. All discrepancies between the coders were discussed and resolved.

Moral Reasoning Interview Supplement (MRI Supplement). In addition to the preceding individual interview, students completed a written questionnaire administered in class by a research assistant. The questionnaire consisted of a series of five questions that was repeated for each of the six behaviors addressed in the moral reasoning interview (i.e., hitting, fighting, saying mean things to others, spreading rumors, telling children not to play with other children, and telling children that you won't be friends with them unless they do what you say):

1. Do you think there should be a rule at school against _____ (e.g., fighting, hitting others)?
2. Do you think it would be okay or not okay to _____ (e.g., fight) if there were no rule against it at school?
3. Should the student be punished?
4. Should the student feel like he or she did a bad thing?
5. Should the student feel like he or she is a bad person?

The first two questions were designed to tap the student's perspective on the need for external rules for governing moral behavior, whereas the third question tapped one's view on the use and degree of punishment for each behavior. The last two questions were designed to assess the degree to which feelings of guilt (Item 4) and shame (Item 5) are associated with each of the moral transgressions.

Students circled either "yes" or "no" for the first two questions and scores of 1 or 0 were assigned for the respective responses. Students responded to the final three questions using a 4-point Likert scale, with 0 (*No, not at all*), 1 (*No*), 2 (*Yes, a little*), and 3 (*Yes, a lot*). To reduce the number of variables analyzed, responses to each of the five items were totaled across the six different behaviors, creating five separate scales: Extrinsic Rules (Item 1), Intrinsic Rules (Item 2), Punishment (Item 3), Guilt (Item 4), and Shame (Item 5). Scores

Table 1
Mean Differences in Moral Reasoning

	Japan (n = 60)		United States (n = 132)			
Category of Moral Reasoning	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*	$F(1, 189)$	Partial η^2
Punishment	0.13	0.50	2.11	1.37	117.27**	0.38
Overt retribution	0.30	0.72	1.29	1.47	23.73**	0.11
Relational retribution	0.35	0.63	0.84	1.27	7.94*	0.04
Needs of others	6.70	3.58	5.21	2.53	10.60**	0.05
Empathy/sympathy	0.33	0.68	0.07	0.28	14.47**	0.07
Fairness/social perspective-taking	0.07	0.25	0.43	0.90	9.21*	0.05
Shame and guilt	0.20	0.58	0.45	0.90	3.59	0.02
Friendship/group harmony	0.53	0.89	0.94	1.32	4.58	0.02
Approval/reputation	0.13	0.39	0.24	0.67	1.27	0.01
Social isolation	1.27	1.42	1.06	1.18	0.97	0.00

*$p < .005$. **$p < .001$.

could range from 0 to 6 for the first two scales, and from 0 to 24 for the other three scales. Coefficients of internal reliability were computed for each of the resulting five scales, yielding coefficients of 0.75 for Extrinsic Rules, 0.76 for Intrinsic Rules, 0.77 for Punishment, 0.79 for Guilt, and 0.83 for Shame.

Translation of Measures

Each of the preceding measures, and procedures for administering them, were translated by two university graduate students in the United States who were bilingual in English and Japanese. The interview instructions and items were first translated from English into Japanese, and translated back again into English by a second translator. The translators and researchers conferred to resolve discrepancies, discuss cross-cultural concerns about the relevancy of particular items in Japan, and produce the items that were the most culturally appropriate and the translation that was the most accurate (i.e., conveyed the truest meaning of the original content). Interviews conducted in Japan were translated into English and the responses were coded by the same researchers who coded the responses of students from the United States.

Results

Two separate multiple analyses of variance (MANOVAs), using Pillai criteria, were conducted, with the first examining differences across the ten 10 categories of moral reasoning and the second examining differences in total response scores to the five supplemental questions. Because the measures were administered on different days, a few students failed to complete both of them. Therefore, sample sizes differed slightly for the two analyses, as seen in Tables 1 and 2. Owing primarily to skewness in the data, as should be expected given the questions students were asked, assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance–covariance matrices were not met. However, as noted by Stephens (2001) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2000), such violations have very little effect when cell sizes exceed 20, especially when the larger variances and covariances are found in the cells with the larger sample sizes (which result in a more conservative alpha level, allowing one to reject the null hypothesis with greater confidence). In the present study, the smallest cell size was 29 and the larger variances and covariances were found in the larger

Table 2
Mean Differences on Moral Reasoning Supplement Scales

	Japan (n = 75)		United States (n = 118)			
Moral Reasoning Supplement Scales	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*	$F(1, 189)$	Partial η^2
Support of extrinsic rules (There should be a rule against _____.)	3.45	1.97	4.76	1.48	32.05**	0.14
Intrinsic rules (It's okay to _____ if there isn't a rule?)	0.64	0.94	1.22	1.72	6.87*	0.03
Degree of punishment (Should be punished for _____.)	11.45	2.35	11.49	3.15	0.55	0.00
Guilt (Should feel like he or she did a bad thing.)	14.45	2.54	13.79	3.40	1.80	0.00
Shame (Should feel like he or she is a bad person.)	13.77	2.84	11.01	2.84	22.63**	0.11

*$p < .01$. **$p < .001$.

size cells in all cases in the first MANOVA and most cases in the second MANOVA. Given these violations, and as recommended by Stephens and by Tabachnick and Fidell, the conservative Pillai criterion was used to evaluate multivariate significance and the conservative Bonferroni inequality was used in follow-up analyses of variance to assure greater confidence in the results.

A 2 (country) by 2 (gender) MANOVA revealed significant differences between American and Japanese children in moral reasoning, $F(10, 179) = 20.93$, $p < .001$. The effects of gender and the interaction of country and gender were not statistically significant, $F(10, 179) = 1.37$ and 0.75, respectively, $p > .05$. Results revealed a moderate association between country and moral reasoning, with partial $\eta^2 = 0.54$. As shown in Table 1, univariate analyses of variance, with overall alpha set at 0.05 and at 0.005 for univariate comparisons using the Bonferroni procedure (0.05/10), showed that compared to children in Japan, the moral reasoning of children in the United States focused more on punishment, overt retribution, relational retribution, and fairness, and less on the needs of others and empathy or sympathy. There were no statistically significant differences in moral reasoning in the categories of approval and reputation, social isolation, shame and guilt, or friendship and harmony.

With respect to differences in responses to the five supplemental questions, a 2 (country) by 2 (gender) MANOVA revealed significant differences in the responses of American and Japanese children, $F(5, 185) = 21.93$, $p < .001$. Again, the effects of gender and the interaction of country and gender were not statistically significant, $F(5, 185) = 1.39$ and 0.87, respectively, $p > 0.05$. Results revealed a moderate association between country and total item responses with partial $\eta^2 = 0.37$. As shown in Table 2, with overall alpha set at 0.05 and at 0.01 for univariate comparisons using the Bonferroni procedure, children in the United States were more rule oriented, less intrinsically guided, and less likely to anticipate feelings of shame. There were no significant differences in degree of punishment and feelings of guilt.

Discussion

Results show that when thinking about reasons why children should not use aggression against others, children in the United

States are much more likely to focus on themselves rather than on others. This hedonistic perspective is reflected in a greater concern about punishment from authorities, and to a lesser extent in a concern about overt and relational retribution from peers. Indeed, nearly all children in the United States (92%) gave at least one moral reasoning response that focused on punishment, and 79% gave a response that focused on either overt or relational retribution. In contrast, 90% of the children in Japan did *not* mention punishment and less than half (42%) mentioned one of the two types of retribution. Although statistically significant, differences in other types of moral reasoning were less meaningful than the difference in punishment-oriented reasoning, as reflected in smaller effect sizes. Although children in the United States focused more on punishment and retribution, it should be highlighted that, as also true with children in Japan, their most common reason for not engaging in aggressive acts concerned the needs of others. Likewise, although voiced much less than concerns about punishment and the needs of others, children in the United States were significantly more likely than children in Japan to voice concerns about issues of fairness and social perspective taking.

In general, however, whereas children in the United States focused more on punishment and rules than children in Japan, children in Japan focused more on the needs of others. Likewise, children in Japan focused more on the intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, reasons for not transgressing against others. That is, on the MRI Supplement they were more likely to respond that external rules are not necessary for regulating moral behavior, that they would not transgress in the absence of rules governing the moral behavior, and that they would likely experience feelings of shame as a consequence of moral transgressions. These findings support the preceding responses to the moral reasoning interview and are particularly important in that differences on the MRI Supplement, which is a rating scale, cannot be attributed to the overall lower number of responses given by Japanese children during the moral reasoning interview.

Implications for Theory and Research

It should be noted that although these results show children in the United States, compared to children in Japan, focus more on themselves, they should not be interpreted as necessarily supporting a Western "individualism" versus Eastern "collectivism" dichotomy that often is used in comparisons of Western and Asian cultures (Azuma, 2001). Although this simplistic distinction may have face validity (Azuma, 2001), it is not supported by empirical research (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeir, 2002; Takano & Osaka, 1999). For example, in their meta-analysis of studies examining individualism and collectivism across countries throughout the world, Oyserman et al. (2002) found that the Japanese tended to be slightly *lower* than Americans on measures of collectivism. Differences in individualism varied widely, primarily as a function of the measure used to assess individualism. As argued by Azuma (2001), although it might be of heuristic value, dichotomizing cultures as either individualistic or collectivistic is misleading as "it seems more likely that collectivism and individualism as abstract concepts are dimensions of all cultures than that they are polar opposites" (p. 32). Consistent with this view, the differences in moral reasoning found, and not found, in the present study cannot be adequately interpreted within the framework of a simple individualism versus collectivism dichotomy. Indeed, although marked differences were found in punishment-oriented reasoning (which one might well argue reflects individualism), differences in other types of moral reasoning that one might assume reflect collectivism were either statistically nonsignificant or small in magnitude. This includes reasoning that focused on friendship and group harmony, approval and reputation, and social isolation. Moreover, it should be noted that although a slight difference between cultures, in favor of Japan, was found in a focus on the needs of others (which one might argue reflects collectivism), this was by far the most common type

of moral reasoning voiced by children in *both* countries.

As noted previously, research has shown that moral reasoning based on getting caught and punished is associated with greater, not less, aggressive and disruptive behavior in the classroom (Manning & Bear, 2002). A significant limitation of the current study is that we did not examine the children's behavior. However, in light of previous research on the relationship between moral reasoning and behavior, results suggest that a lack of hedonistic moral reasoning among Japanese children and a greater focus on the needs of others and internal attributions for responsible behavior contribute to reported differences, as reviewed earlier, in moral behavior between Japanese and American children. Clearly, further research is needed to examine cultural differences in the relation between moral reasoning and behavior, especially causal relations. Such research should be guided by existing research, as discussed in the introductory section, which shows that both parents and teachers in Japan tend to adopt what is commonly referred to in the literature as an authoritative approach to childrearing (Baumrind, 1989; 1996) and to school discipline (Bear, Cavalier, & Manning, 1998; Brophy, 1996) characterized by a healthy balance of (a) promoting social and emotional competencies associated with autonomy and the internalization of society's moral values and (b) expecting, and demanding, socially and morally appropriate behavior.

Future research might also be guided by current theories of both social information processing (Crick & Dodge, 1994) and moral reasoning (Hoffman, 2000) that explain how underlying beliefs about "right" and "wrong " behaviors, and related emotions, are critical to fostering prosocial behavior and deterring aggression (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Dodge & Rabiner, 2004; Gibbs, 2003; Nucci, 2004). These theories are consistent with Azuma's (2001) proposed theory of cultural differences in moral reasoning. Each of these theories highlights the critical importance of cognitive scripts that are embedded in one's culture and learned through different stories and scripts taught at home, school, and the rest of society. In turn, these scripts, which are seen in moral reasoning responses, govern moral behavior. As noted by Azuma, the content, structure, and accessibility of these stories and scripts (including those taught during disciplinary encounters and in school curriculum) differ across cultures.

It seems plausible that cognitive scripts, which include moral reasoning, of Japanese children are influenced more strongly by the home than the school (and that homes and schools work together more closely in Japan than in the United States) and thus the impact of the school per se on moral reasoning and behavior is minimal. As such, one might well argue that cultural differences in behavior, especially in child rearing practices and societal expectations, largely account for the actual differences in educational practices between Japan and the United States. That is, teachers adopt practices, including classroom management and disciplinary techniques, that best fit the given social or cultural context. As such, in schools with well-behaved students who are guided by cognitive scripts that focus on needs of others, teachers can easily focus on developing moral reasoning, empathy, teacher–student relations, and a positive school climate. In contrast, in schools, or cultures, in which a large number of children exhibit behavior problems and are guided by cognitive scripts that promote aggression, teachers are more inclined to focus on external control, including the use of punishment.

Implications for Practice in School Psychology

With respect to implications for practice in school psychology, it should be emphasized that many of the classroom management and disciplinary practices that characterize Japanese schools also can be found in some classrooms and schools in the

United States. That is, not all schools adopt a pervasive zero tolerance approach to school discipline. Indeed, in recent years several evidence-based programs have risen in popularity that emphasize the development of social and emotional competencies, including empathy, fairness, perspective taking, and moral reasoning, as well as positive and supportive teacher–student relations and a sense of community. Examples of these programs, which have been proven effective in developing social and emotional competencies and preventing behavior problems, include *Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum* (Committee for Children, 2003; Grossman et al., 1997), the *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies* program (Greenberg, Kusche, Cook, & Quamma, 1995), the *Child Development Project* (Battistich, Schaps, Watson, Solomon, & Lewis, 2000), and the *Responsive Classroom* (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Whereas the first two examples are curriculum packages, the latter two are more system-wide programs that emphasize components of school-wide discipline often highlighted in school psychology literature. These components help develop various social and emotional competencies, (Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins et al., 2004), foster additional aspects of character development linked to academic and social behavior (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005), foster supportive student–teacher relations (Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999; Hughes, Cavell, & Willson, 2001), emphasize the importance of home–school collaboration (Minke, 2000; Sheridan, Warnes, Cowan, Schemm, & Clarke, 2004), promote positive disciplinary practices that encourage self-discipline (Bear, 2005; Bear, Cavalier, & Manning, 1998; Bear, Manning, & Izard, 2003), and emphasize that school climates should focus on positive supports and interventions rather than punishment (Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002). It remains to be determined if programs such as those noted here foster moral reasoning that focuses more on the needs of others and internal attributions for responsible behavior rather than on external punishment and rewards. Likewise, it remains to be determined if differences in moral reasoning that might result from such programs translate into differences in classroom behavior, especially in the absence of close monitoring and supervision.

Limitations of the Study

Clearly, replications and extensions of this study are needed before definitive conclusions are drawn about differences in moral reasoning and behavior between children in Japan and the United States. As previously noted, a recognized limitation of this study is that actual behavior of the children, and, more important, differences in relations between moral reasoning and behavior, were not examined. Thus it is unknown whether aggressive children in Japan tend to use moral reasoning that is self-centered and focused on punishment, as found to be true in the United States (e.g., Hughes & Dunn, 2000; Kuther & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2000; Manning & Bear, 2002). In studying cultural differences in relations between moral reasoning and aggression, it is important that researchers consider language and cultural differences in the aggressive behaviors investigated. For example, "bullying" might not be the same in Japan as in the United States. Indeed, a possible limitation of the present study is that the scenarios of aggressive behavior were drawn from previous research on children's overt and relational aggression in the United States. Although such scenarios were not first field-tested with Japanese children to help ensure the behavior were perceived similarly across countries, it should be noted that the researchers (a school psychologist in America, a school psychologist in Japan, and two Japanese and two American graduate students in the United States) thoroughly examined and discussed all scenarios (and all measures) during the process of forward and backward translations in recognition of this potential problem. Deletions and revisions of items were made as a result. Based on their personal experiences in the schools and knowledge of the related research, it

was agreed that the scenarios represent common problems in both countries (i.e., hitting, fighting, saying mean things to others, spreading rumors, telling children not to play with other children, and telling children that you won't be friends with them unless they do what you say).

Another limitation of the study was the failure to adequately demonstrate that the Japanese and American samples came from similar populations with respect to demographics. Whereas SES information was obtained in the United States, the researchers were unable to obtain similar information in Japan. Although such data were requested, Japanese teachers and school administrators refused to provide SES information, insisting that such information was private (despite assurances of confidentiality) and was not of relevance to the study. Although no substitute for actual SES data, it should be noted that the schools selected for participation in the study were visited by the Japanese and American researchers in both countries and were chosen primarily on the basis of apparent similarities. They were similar in school size (300–500) and each was located approximately 1 hr from a major city (i.e., Philadelphia and Osaka) with residents employed primarily in agricultural and "blue-collar" occupations. As noted previously, 64% of the U. S. sample was rated by teachers to be of middle SES and 25% of low SES. In addition to future researchers providing a clearer match with respect to Japanese and American samples, it also is important that researchers provide a more representative sample of American and Japanese populations at large (and examine differences in moral reasoning and behavior as a function of population characteristics). Despite these limitations, the results challenge school psychologists and educators in the United States to reflect upon how the moral reasoning and behavior of children in the United States are influenced by popular educational practices that focus primarily on rules and consequences.

Footnotes

[1]Unfortunately, the principals also ruled that SES and disciplinary data were private and thus could not be collected.

[2]These scenarios were selected from a larger pool of scenarios used in previous research by the authors (Manning & Bear, 2002). The decision to reduce the number of scenarios for the present study was based upon both logistical (e.g., time) and cross-cultural considerations (e.g., concern that some scenarios would not apply to, or be understood by, the Japanese students).

[3]Most of these responses had been encountered in earlier research by the authors (Manning & Bear, 2002) but had been collapsed into larger, more inclusive categories given the infrequency with which they occurred. For example, the "higher level" reasoning category referenced in the previous study included the categories of fairness, friendship, and approval referenced in the present study. The categories of empathy/sympathy, shame and guilt, and social isolation were developed for the present study after extensive review of the responses. In addition, the category of friendship was expanded to include the concerns for group harmony that emerged in the present study. Although the higher level reasoning category from the previous study was divided into several categories for the present study, other categories were collapsed for the present study. For example, "imminent" (e.g., "He *will* be punished") and "probable" (e.g., "He *might* be punished") forms of punishment and retribution were separate categories in the previous study but were collapsed in the present study because it was difficult to distinguish between them in the translated responses of Japanese children. Likewise, "Psychological Needs-Oriented" and "Physical Needs-Oriented" reasoning were collapsed into a single, "Needs of Others" category that was similar to the concept of needs-oriented reasoning recognized by Eisenberg (1982; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998).

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