

Research Note

Assessing American Attitudes Toward East Asian Countries¹

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This study aims to identify and analyze the current images of East Asia, namely, Japan, China and South Korea, among American people. Although historically Japan was perceived as a 'threat' after the end of World War II, today's image of Japan has changed. The BBC World Service survey (2012) ranked Japan as number one in having a "mainly positive influence" in comparison to 17 other nations. To further explore American attitudes to Japan and other East Asian countries, we conducted an online survey using a SurveyMonkey panel in 2013 (N=827). Results indicate that Japan is perceived most favorably among Asian countries. China's threat is perceived most strongly for military and economic threats. Males more strongly perceive China's threat than females, while females more strongly perceive Japan and South Korea's threat than males. With regard to Japan's whale and dolphin hunting, results demonstrate that while Americans are divided in their opinions about whaling, they have considerably stronger opinions about dolphin hunting. With regard to Japanese popular culture, animation ranked the highest (38.5%) in interest, followed by character goods and "cosplay." In contrast, China is perceived as an economic and military threat and the familiarity of cultural aspects center mostly around food, martial arts, architecture, heritage, and the arts. South Korea is not viewed as a threat in comparison to China or Japan, however, cultural interest is generally lower compared to China and Japan.

Keywords: National Image, Threat Perception, Japan, China, South Korea, Popular Culture, Cultural Interests, Prejudice, Nationalism.

1. Background

This study was conceived to identify and analyze the current images of East Asia, namely Japan, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) among people in the United States. Although the data procured through this study lends itself to a contemporary perspective, it also attempts to acknowledge and supplement an academic lineage that has focused on how national images, especially those of Japan, have been created overseas. This study attempts to preserve this existing line of research that has gained prominence in Japan for over 30 years. Historically viewed both as a "threat" and an "ally" among many nations, Japan is keenly conscious of the formation of images of East Asian nations in the eyes of other nations, especially pertaining to negative sentiments such as prejudice towards Asians or positive attitudes demonstrating interest

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or exoticism felt towards Asians and East Asian nations. Such images of East Asian nations have gone through a gradual transition over the past decades.

Following three decades of economic growth after World War II, the once-diminished perception of Japan as a military threat metamorphosed into that of a new “economic threat” to many industrialized nations in North America and Western Europe in the 1980s. Japan at that time increased exports of industrial products and manufactured goods, which in turn conflicted with the economic interests of industrialized nations in North America and Western Europe. At the height of the trade imbalance and friction between the U.S. and Japan in the mid-1980s, Tsujimura et al. (1987) conducted an extensive study to probe Japan’s international image. The objective behind this study was to investigate the cultural differences and communication gaps that were occurring among nations interacting with Japan and to provide suggestions on how to avoid unnecessary friction in the international arena. The study employed a questionnaire survey among seven nations, along with a content analysis of history textbooks among six nations and a film viewing experiment in 11 nations. The results indicated various degrees of interest towards Japan as a nation that was becoming a modern economic powerhouse, but at the same time, the existence of the study itself also implied how Japan was quite conscious of how it was being viewed in various parts of the world (Tsujimura et al., 1987).

The 1994 Symposium held at the United Nations University by the Executive Committee for a Comparative Study of United States and Japanese Television News Coverage of the Mansfield Center for Pacific Affairs illustrated how images of the U.S. and Japan have changed since the end of World War II and how these images were now being communicated through the various media-especially news coverage and how news images were creating international understanding and misunderstanding between the two nations (Akuto, 1994; Budner, 1994; Kohno, 1994; Krauss, 1994). Accompanying the slowdown in economic growth, Japan was considered less of an economic menace, and subsequently, the urgency of assessing Japan’s image declined in the following decade. Coinciding with this time period, so-called “Japan bashing” receded, however, with an international policy shift during the Clinton Administration to focus more on China, the sentiment in Japan was that it was now being disregarded as unimportant, with “Japan bashing” giving way to similarly negative expressions of “Japan passing” and “Japan nothing.” Even during and after this time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan continued to measure Japan’s image in Russia (MOFA, 2004), Australia (MOFA, 2006), Italy, France, Germany and the U.K. (MOFA, 2007), as well as Brazil, the U.S., Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam in 2008. The results showed a mainly positive image of Japan prevalent among these nations and some associated these results to rising international recognition of Japan’s creative industries.

During the past decade, the concept of “soft power” conceived by Joseph Nye (2005) has permeated into the vernacular of many industrialized nations, including Japan. Soft power can be perceived as the power of attraction, in contrast to traditional hard power demonstrated through force or the power of coercion. Along with soft power, the convergence of media platforms and spread of digital media has increasingly blurred the boundaries of what is considered to be domestic and what is international. Digital media forms have accelerated and promoted dissemination and access to different content formats, and through this facilitation, Japan’s cultural content has extended to audiences abroad, eager to experience its attractions. The importance of soft power was slowly recognized in Japan, as the Japanese government initiated a shift to rediscover and re-evaluate Japan as being attractive through strategic international promotion of its core cultural industries. Since June 2010, with cooperation from the Ministry of Education, Sports, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry created the “Cool Japan” initiative to promote Japan by planning further human resource development and accelerating information dissemination internationally. There are many similarities with the “Korean wave” of South Korea, an earlier initiative of the South Korean government to promote the cultural content of South Korea aimed at “nation branding” following the 1997 Asian financial crisis and subsequent South Korean economic crisis. Initially, Cool Japan emphasized creative industries such as design, animation, fashion, and movies (similar to the Korean wave), however, the initiative has expanded into a grander “nation branding” strategy following the March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Fukushima Dai’ichi nuclear disaster.

With Japan slowly recovering from the damage wrought by the Great East Japan Earthquake, the survey results of the BBC World Service (2012) about national images gained much prominence in Japan, as the results

indicated Japan was number one having a “mainly positive influence” in comparison to 17 other nations and regions measured in the survey. The ranking for this item was as follows: 1) Japan, 2) Germany, 3) Canada, 4) UK, 5) China, 6) France, 7) EU, 8) USA, 9) Brazil 10) India, 11) South Africa, 12) South Korea, 13) Russia, 14) Israel, 15) North Korea, 16) Pakistan, and 17) Iran in last place. Japan’s position in this survey ranking dropped to 4th in 2013 and 5th in 2014, however still remains the highest among Asian nations, especially in comparison to declines in the rankings of China (9th in 2013 and 2014) and South Korea (10th in 2013 and 11th in 2014). The drop in Japan’s position is attributed to negative perceptions indicated among survey respondents in South Korea and China in the past few years (BBC World Service, 2014).

Among studies comparing the “East” and “West,” one can discover a considerably greater amount of research focusing on how citizens of East Asian countries view the U.S. (Steinberg 2005; Shiming 2005), however, academic literature is relatively scarce on how American attitudes vary towards countries such as Japan, China, and Korea. The available research on U.S. perceptions of East Asian countries consists of either stereotypes of “Asians” or images of each country individually. Stereotyping “Asians” in the U.S. refers to prejudice or positive images of individuals in education, the work force or sports (Yee, 1992; Qin 2010; Wilkins, Chand & Kaiser, 2011). Such limited information on U.S. attitudes toward Japan, China, or Korea is often difficult to attain, outdated, non-academic, or not in the context of comparison. For example, one survey on U.S. attitudes toward Japan apart from MOFA poll results² by Masland was conducted more than 60 years ago (Masland, 1941). The topic of the U.S. outlook on China, on the other hand, has been prominent in the last few years³, with articles such as “In America, China is Public Enemy #1”⁴ and papers presented in academic conferences such as “China’s Rise: Assessing Views from East Asia and the United States.”⁵ Even prior to China overtaking Japan as the 2nd largest economy in the world, the image and perception of China in the U.S. was explored in great detail by Li and Hong (1998). However, studies on the perception of South Korea distinctly emphasize foreign policy and with little reference to Korean culture (Cha & Katz, 2010). Currently, there is limited information available on the comparison of the U.S. perception of Japan, China, and Korea in the discourse of culture and national image.

This study is an attempt to reflect variance in the U.S. public view toward Japan, China, and Korea in light of modern changes and globalization. The rebalance of the power and influence of East Asian countries is adding urgency for innovative research in U.S. perceptions toward these countries. Furthermore, “nation branding” is becoming more crucial as countries are making considerable financial investment into promoting positive images of their state. As such, U.S. public opinion will be of great importance, as it can play a role in policy formation.

2. Method

(1) Online Survey

In October 2013, an online survey was conducted using a SurveyMonkey panel. The survey adopted the quota sampling method and was planned to draw a total pool of 800 respondents living in the U.S. The respondents were selected according to gender and three age categories (18-29, 30-44, and 45-59). To get representative data for the U.S. population, age quotas were assigned based on U.S. population statistics (18-29=29.0%, 30-44=34.3%, and 45-59=46.7%). For each age group, the number of assigned quotas was identical for male and females. However, we could not get the number of respondents as planned above because the response rates of the oldest age group (45-59 years) and females is much lower than their counterparts. Consequently, the resulting age distribution was 18-29=43.1%, 30-44=43.9%, and 45-59=13.0%. Of the respondents, 433 (52.4%) were males and 394 (47.6%) were females, with an average age of 39.5 years (SD=12.6). Of the respondents who completed the survey (N=827), 67.7% were white, 6.8% were Hispanic,

² http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000146.html

³ <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2012/09/18/how-americans-see-china/>
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6971dec4-22d3-11e4-8dae-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3ATuwnWq7>
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/167498/americans-view-china-mostly-unfavorably.aspx>

⁴ <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/in-america-china-is-public-enemy-1/>

⁵ http://www.asianbarometer.org/newenglish/publications/ConferencePapers/2013_3conference/paper1.pdf

14.1% were black, 4.0% were Asian, and 7% were classified as “Other.” Twenty-six percent had graduated from a college or a higher-level education institution, 40.2% had completed junior college or some college without obtaining a degree, 27% had completed high school, and 7% were classified as having completed “less than high school degree.”

(2) Measures

Familiarity with 14 nations (India, Mexico, Brazil, Russia, Australia, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Canada, China, Japan, and South Korea) was measured with 5-point Likert scale (1=‘not familiar at all’, 2=‘a little familiar’, 3=‘familiar’, 4=‘familiar to some extent’, 5=‘familiar to a great extent’). Similarly, “liking” these 14 countries was measured with a 7-point Likert scale (1=‘like a great deal,’ 2=‘like a moderate amount,’ 3=‘like a little,’ 4=‘neutral,’ 5=‘dislike a little,’ 6=‘dislike a moderate amount,’ and 7=‘dislike a great deal’). Due to the broad selection of nations, respondents were requested to indicate responses for only five nations (China, South Korea, Japan, and two other countries which were randomly assigned from among 11 countries, namely, India, Mexico, Brazil, Russia, Australia, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Canada).

Because this study focuses on how people in the U.S. view East Asian countries, cultural interest in these countries was measured with a multiple-choice question whereby respondents were requested to indicate their interest in the cultural aspects of these countries (See Table 3.4.1) and familiarity with Japanese popular culture (See Table 3.5.1). Respondents were also asked whether they had friends or acquaintances from these major foreign countries and whether they had visited these countries.

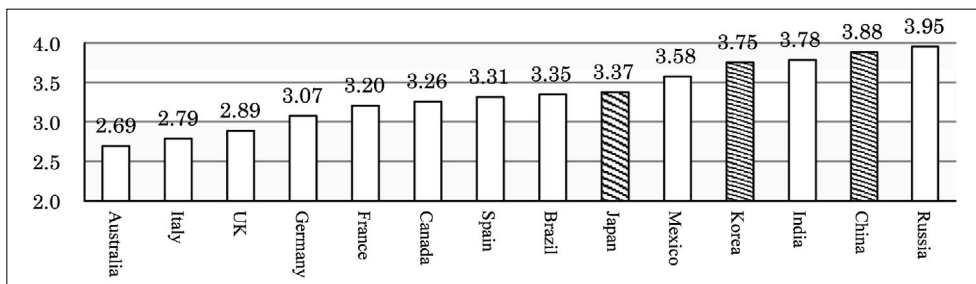
The questionnaire also includes questions about nationalistic attitudes, which are measured with a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=‘strongly agree’ to 5=‘strongly disagree’). Table 3.2.1 indicates the averages of these items. Note that a greater value represents a more negative attitude toward the statement. Similarly, the consumer ethnocentric tendency scale, which is adapted from Shimp & Sharma (1987), is measured with four statements (items 10-13), and patriotism is measured with two statements (items 14-15) with the same 5-point Likert point scale as other nationalism scales. Attitudes toward electronic products made in the three East Asian countries are also measured (items 7-9). Lastly, respondents were requested to describe their demographic characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, and educational level) as well as media use.

3. Results

(1) Liking and familiarity of nations

Consistent with previous polls (BBC World Service, 2014), Japan was perceived most favorably among the Asian countries. Overall, the highest affinity was toward Australia with a mean of 2.69, and the least popular country was Russia (3.95), with the standard deviation ranging from 1.02 to 1.31.

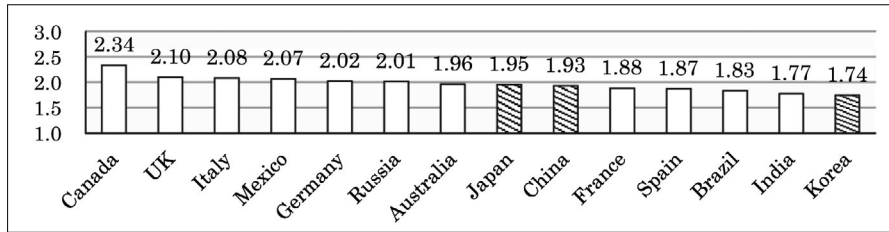
Figure 3.1.1. American (dis)like of foreign countries



The results of Japan having a more positive image than Korea and China are also supported by the number of respondents wanting to visit Japan (25.4%) more than Korea (9.2%) or China (18.6%). The least popular country to visit was South Korea, with only 76 participants out of 827 indicating an interest in visiting the country. Survey results on familiarity showed that Americans were the least familiar with South Korea out of the 14 countries, and out of all the Asian countries, Japan ranked the highest, closely followed by China. The standard deviation for this question ranged from 0.92 to 1.22.

Among those Americans who indicated familiarity with Asian countries, there is a significant difference

Figure 3.1.2. American familiarity with foreign countries (from most familiar to least familiar)



among the age groups. The results suggest that younger Americans are more familiar with Asian countries than older nationals. According to the analysis of variance, there is a significant difference in the familiarity of Asian countries among gender (China $F(1,825)=26.3$ $p<.01$, Japan $F(1,825)=29.65$ $p<.01$, and Korea $F(1,825)=27.39$ $p<.01$).

Table 3.1.1 Familiarity with Japan, China and South Korea

| Country (Familiarity) | Gender | | | | Age | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------|---------|-------|----------|----------|-------------|---------|-------|
| | Female Mean | Male Mean | F value | Prob. | 18 to 34 | 35 to 54 | 55 or older | F value | Prob. |
| China | 1.75 | 2.12 | 26.30 | *** | 2.10 | 1.85 | 1.66 | 9.05 | *** |
| Japan | 1.76 | 2.17 | 29.65 | *** | 2.11 | 1.87 | 1.73 | 7.05 | *** |
| South Korea | 1.56 | 1.94 | 27.39 | *** | 1.88 | 1.67 | 1.55 | 5.89 | ** |

Note: ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$.

Overall, across all categories of liking, familiarity, desire to visit, and actually visiting, Japan ranked the highest among the Asian countries.

(2) Nationalism

Of the three Asian countries, China's threat is perceived most strongly both for military and economic threats (Table 3.2.1). Lower scores represent stronger nationalism except for items 7-9. Interestingly, gender affects differently the perceived threat of these three countries. Males more strongly perceive China's threat than females, while females more strongly perceive threats from Japan and South Korea than males.

Attitudes toward electronic products of these three countries show similar results. Chinese products are evaluated most negatively. Furthermore, a statistically significant difference is found among the age groups with older people showing the most negative attitudes toward Chinese electronic products. Similarly, the oldest range of respondents indicated the most negative attitude toward Japanese and South Korean products. The gender difference is significant for Japanese and South Korean products: Males are more positive about Japanese and South Korean products than females.

Consumer ethnocentrism tendency (items 10 to 13) and patriotism (items 14 and 15) are also measured. Table 3.2.1 indicates that older people are more consumer-ethnocentric than younger people, which is consistent with previous studies (Shimp & Sharma 1987). On the other hand, no age difference is found concerning patriotism.

(3) Prejudice against Asian practices

In the last five years in the U.S., there has been widespread media coverage and protests against Japanese whaling and dolphin hunting. Documentaries such as the Cove and the series Whale Wars, depicting cruel and grotesque scenes of Japanese nationals killing dolphins and whales, are thought to contribute to prejudice against Japan by Western countries. There is a cultural difference in the perception of whales: in Japan, they are considered to be fish, and in the U.S., they are thought of more as a mammal (Hirata, 2005). However the results of the survey demonstrate that Americans today are more divided in their opinions about whaling than they were in 1992, when over 48% of Americans indicated that they were opposed to whaling under any circumstances⁶. Furthermore the results suggest that Americans have considerably stronger opinions about

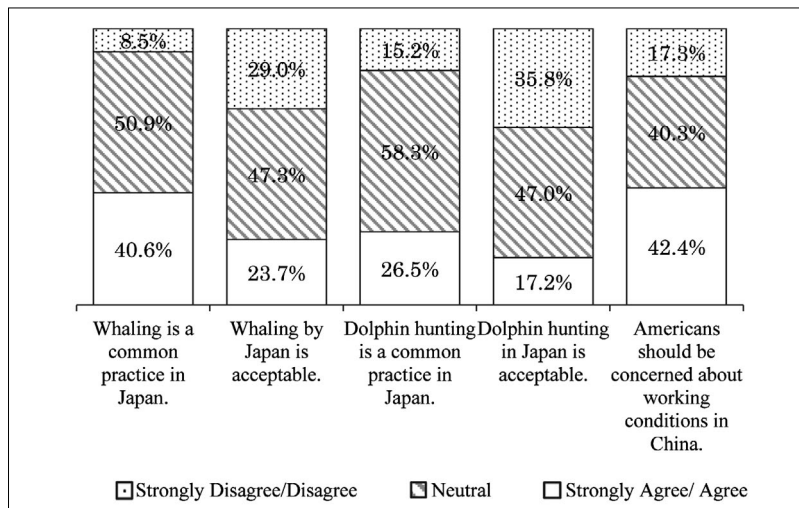
⁶ Milton M. R. Freeman & Stephen R. Kellert, PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO WHALES: RESULTS OF A SIX-COUNTRY SURVEY 4 (1992) http://luna.pos.to/whale/icr_pub_pall.html

Table 3.2.1 Average of nationalism items

| Statement | Total | Gender | | | Age | | | |
|--|-------|-------------|------|--------------|-------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| | | Fe- male | Male | F value | 18-34 | 35-54 | 55 or older | F value |
| 1. China is a military threat to America. | 2.66 | 2.73 | 2.58 | 5.22 * | 2.73 | 2.63 | 2.54 | 1.88 |
| 2. Japan is a military threat to America. | 3.39 | 3.20 | 3.60 | 32.97 *** | 3.30 | 3.45 | 3.43 | 2.06 |
| 3. South Korea is a military threat to America. | 3.21 | 2.97 | 3.48 | 41.03 *** | 3.14 | 3.23 | 3.35 | 1.37 |
| 4. China is an economic threat to America. | 2.24 | 2.33 | 2.15 | 6.47 * | 2.29 | 2.20 | 2.23 | 0.80 |
| 5. Japan is an economic threat to America. | 2.78 | 2.76 | 2.80 | 0.31 | 2.87 | 2.72 | 2.71 | 2.51 |
| 6. South Korea is an economic threat to America. | 3.13 | 3.04 | 3.23 | 7.84 ** | 3.16 | 3.11 | 3.08 | 0.34 |
| 7. I prefer buying Chinese electronic products. | 3.57 | 3.55 | 3.60 | 0.42 | 3.36 | 3.68 | 3.95 | 17.21 *** |
| 8. I prefer buying Japanese electronic products. | 3.20 | 3.36 | 3.03 | 20.35 *** | 3.03 | 3.28 | 3.50 | 9.75 *** |
| 9. I prefer buying South Korean electronic products. | 3.52 | 3.66 | 3.37 | 18.60 *** | 3.42 | 3.57 | 3.74 | 4.94 ** |
| 10. It is not right to purchase foreign products, because it puts Americans out of jobs. | 2.74 | 2.67 | 2.81 | 2.84 | 2.90 | 2.65 | 2.50 | 6.99 *** |
| 11. A real American should always buy American-made products. | 2.89 | 2.85 | 2.94 | 1.34 | 3.08 | 2.78 | 2.66 | 9.08 *** |
| 12. We should purchase products manufactured in America instead of letting other countries get rich off us. | 2.44 | 2.40 | 2.48 | 1.08 | 2.61 | 2.34 | 2.23 | 7.58 *** |
| 13. Americans should not buy foreign products, because this hurts American business and causes unemployment. | 2.73 | 2.64 | 2.82 | 5.22 * | 2.88 | 2.63 | 2.57 | 5.59 ** |
| 14. I love my country. | 1.58 | 1.59 | 1.58 | 0.06 | 1.63 | 1.58 | 1.49 | 1.00 |
| 15. I am proud to be an American. | 1.59 | 1.59 | 1.60 | 0.01 | 1.64 | 1.58 | 1.51 | 0.91 |
| N | 827 | 433 | 394 | | 352 | 359 | 106 | |

Note: N=827. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Figure 3.3.1 Perception of whaling, dolphin hunting and Chinese working conditions



dolphin hunting than about whale hunting.

Another point of criticism of Asian countries in the U.S. is the working conditions in China, which 42.4% of participants indicated should be a cause for concern among Americans.

(4) Cultural interest in Asia

Across all three countries, the main cultural interest was food. Chinese food drew the most cultural interest, followed by Japanese food, and then Korean food. This is not surprising, as there are twice as many Chinese restaurants in the U.S. compared to McDonald restaurants⁷. Following food, the second largest area of interest was in martial arts, particularly Chinese and Japanese. This is a common stereotype of Asian men in the American film industry, with enduring legacies such as Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Jet Lee for Chinese martial arts and popular movies such as *The Karate Kid* trilogy and *The Last Samurai* for Japanese martial arts that could explain the cultural interest. Though Tae-kwon-do is well known in the U.S., compared to the interest in Chinese (31.3%) and Japanese (25%) martial arts, relatively few participants showed interest in Korean martial arts (9.8%). Out of the three countries, the least amount of cultural interest ultimately was South Korea, with 46.9% of respondents indicating no interest.

Further looking into cultural interest in China, following food and martial arts, 22.7% indicated an interest in its heritage, followed by an interest in its customs and people. Similarly, in the category of Japanese cultural aspects, the top five interests included heritage, people and customs. The only difference was that there was more interest in Japanese electronics (25%). In the case of Korea, the only area that had more than 20% interest was Korean food.

In the differences between the countries across the categories, the largest difference is in the percentage of

Table 3.4.1 Interest in cultural aspects of the three Asian countries (%)

| | | China | Japan | South Korea | Cochran's Q | |
|----|----------------------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|-----|
| 1 | Alcoholic beverages | 5.6 | 7.7 | 4.8 | 13 | ** |
| 2 | Animation | 12.6 | 18.3 | 4.2 | 109.8 | *** |
| 3 | Architecture | 19.2 | 16.6 | 6.9 | 87.3 | *** |
| 4 | Clothes | 14.8 | 16.1 | 7.0 | 57.9 | *** |
| 5 | Comics/manga | 7.3 | 12.9 | 2.5 | 92 | *** |
| 6 | Customs | 20.8 | 22.0 | 13.2 | 44.1 | *** |
| 7 | Electronics | 18.1 | 25.0 | 9.6 | 92.4 | *** |
| 8 | Fashion | 10.6 | 11.2 | 6.4 | 20.2 | *** |
| 9 | Folk handicrafts | 9.7 | 8.7 | 4.5 | 34.5 | *** |
| 10 | Food | 47.5 | 38.1 | 22.9 | 182.7 | *** |
| 11 | Heritage | 22.7 | 22.5 | 12.9 | 64 | *** |
| 12 | Language | 12.9 | 13.9 | 6.8 | 47.3 | *** |
| 13 | Literature | 5.7 | 7.0 | 3.7 | 13.3 | ** |
| 14 | Martial arts | 31.3 | 25.0 | 9.8 | 204.3 | *** |
| 15 | Movies | 12.8 | 13.2 | 5.7 | 52.8 | *** |
| 16 | Paintings and art | 18.5 | 15.1 | 6.0 | 98.4 | *** |
| 17 | People | 20.6 | 22.2 | 14.9 | 35 | *** |
| 18 | Philosophy | 13.8 | 14.6 | 7.0 | 49.3 | *** |
| 19 | Popular music | 2.8 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 1.7 | |
| 20 | Porcelain | 7.4 | 6.0 | 2.1 | 42.5 | *** |
| 21 | Religion | 5.4 | 6.0 | 2.4 | 25.8 | *** |
| 22 | Tea | 16.4 | 12.0 | 3.4 | 118.1 | *** |
| 23 | TV drama | 2.9 | 3.3 | 2.4 | 1.5 | |
| 24 | Video/computer games | 11.6 | 15.4 | 5.8 | 64.7 | *** |
| 25 | I have no interest. | 19.1 | 23.5 | 46.9 | 321.1 | *** |

Note: N=827; ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

⁷ <http://www.lifeintheusa.com/food/chinese.htm>
http://www.crimus.org/index.php?option=com_webflow&view=report&layout=dochart&Itemid=50
<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/jul/17/mcdonalds-restaurants-where-are-they>

people indicating “no interest” in any cultural aspects of the three Asian countries. Following the “no-interest” category were martial arts, food, tea and animation. Another category that varied greatly was tea: 16.4% of respondents were interested in Chinese tea culture, while only 12% were interested in the same category for Japan, and a scant 3.4% interested in Korean tea. In the category of animation, Japanese animation was the most popular with 18.3%, followed by Chinese animation at 12.6% and Korean animation at 4.2%. Looking across all categories among the three countries, Japan has the largest percent of respondents interested in various aspects of its culture in 16 out of 24 cultural aspects.

(5) Interest in Japanese popular culture

Out of 13 various aspects of Japanese popular culture, animation ranked the highest, with 318 people out of 827 being familiar with Japanese animation. A higher percentage of American males compared to females was familiar with various aspects of Japanese popular culture, including categories such as gaming, *hentai* (anime and manga pornography), and Japanese AV. The only two items that females were more familiar with were character goods (e.g. Hello Kitty) and “Harajuku style.” The younger age groups overall were significantly more familiar with Japanese popular culture than the older age groups.

3. Conclusion

The results of respondents having higher levels of familiarity towards Japan, more desire to visit Japan, and actually having visited Japan, when in comparison to South Korea or China, is in alignment with the recent survey results (BBC World Service, 2014). The results showing China being perceived as the largest threat also reflect recent poll results. This study found that male respondents more strongly perceive China’s threat, while female respondents perceive Japan and South Korea as threats more strongly. Although further research is necessary to identify the factor(s) for this result, we can suggest that some type of information- or news issue-related cultivation is more salient among males than females in relation to China, but lacks similar resonance in the case of Japan or South Korea. The working conditions of Chinese laborers is also an issue of higher concern among the respondents. This study also confirmed that whaling and dolphin hunting are highly unpopular practices conducted by Japan; however, on the other hand, cultural interest towards Japan was high and, in comparison to China and South Korea, Japan had a larger percentage of respondents interested in a majority of the measured cultural aspects. When focusing on Japan alone, various aspects of Japanese popular culture were also of interest among the respondents.

This study found that China is perceived as an economic and military threat and the familiarity of cultural aspects center mostly around food, martial arts, but also architecture, heritage, and the arts. South Korea was

Table: 3.5.1 Familiarity with Japanese popular culture

| Aspect of Japanese popular culture | | Total % | Female % | Male % | Chi-square |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---------|----------|--------|------------|
| 1 | Anime | 38.5 | 37.0 | 40.1 | 0.865 |
| 2 | Character Goods | 36.9 | 42.5 | 30.7 | 12.31 *** |
| 3 | Gaming | 15.2 | 12.2 | 18.5 | 6.32 ** |
| 4 | Electronic Toys | 24.8 | 23.6 | 26.1 | 0.740 |
| 5 | Cosplay | 25.3 | 17.1 | 34.3 | 32.22 *** |
| 6 | Manga | 7.5 | 9.7 | 5.1 | 6.36 ** |
| 7 | Hentai | 12.9 | 6.7 | 19.8 | 31.43 *** |
| 8 | Harajuku | 4.0 | 2.5 | 5.6 | 5.00 * |
| 9 | Reality TV | 6.3 | 5.3 | 7.4 | 1.47 |
| 10 | JPop | 15.0 | 12.7 | 17.5 | 3.75 * |
| 11 | Otaku | 4.7 | 3.7 | 5.8 | 2.11 |
| 12 | Japanese AV | 7.5 | 6.0 | 9.1 | 2.92 |
| 13 | Vocaloid | 2.1 | 1.8 | 2.3 | 0.195 |
| 14 | None of the above | 38.6 | 40.6 | 36.3 | 1.65 |

Note: N=827; * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

not viewed as a threat in comparison to China or Japan, however, interest was generally low, excluding cultural aspects such as food, people, customs and heritage. This study also found the perception of Japan as a military threat low and moderately low economic threat among this U.S. sample, and that a fairly large proportion of the respondents had a generally positive feeling when considering various aspects about Japan in comparison to the two other Asian nations, however, some cultural practice related tensions existed and one can suggest that this may be contributing to lowering the general score.

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