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CULTURE, WORK BLUEPRINTS AND BINATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS: JAPANESE FIRMS IN THE
UNITED STATES

by

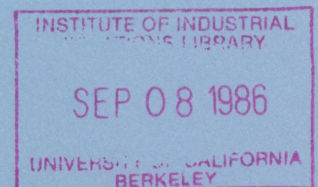
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INTRODUCTION

Although there may be broad agreement internationally concerning the lexicon of business, we are learning that the blueprints which guide the thought and behavior of persons conducting business can vary significantly from one society to another. This fact becomes particularly evident where representatives of different cultural traditions work together within the boundaries of a firm.

This paper concerns the intercultural work environment of Japanese firms in the United States, termed "binational" companies throughout the text. One primary objective is to present a conceptual framework in which "culture" is an effective analytic variable. Within this framework, the paper compares the way Japanese and American employees conceptualize work and order their actions in the workplace. Finally, it examines the implications of cultural divergence for the work process.

CULTURE, ORGANIZATIONAL FORM, AND EMPLOYEE RESPONSE

In recent years, the United States has experienced a surge of scholarly and lay interest in Japanese business and management. Those who attribute the American economic crisis to poor management look to the Japanese for alternative strategies (Ouchi, 1981; Pascale and Athos, 1981). Japanese corporations in the United States, proliferating since the early 1970s, have been viewed as a laboratory for examining how Japanese management practices

fare when transplanted here.

Lincoln, et al. (1981: 96) postulate a linkage between culture, organizational arrangements, and the response of employees to particular organizational forms that provides the essential framework for studies of binational firms. To paraphrase, people of divergent cultural background acquire different expectations about the formal structure of firms and the informal patterns of action that guide the work process. Organizations, under normal circumstances, evolve management systems compatible with the values and expectations of participants. And, finally, the cultural background of an organization's members influences the way they react to formal and informal structures.

Yet, the studies that employ a rigorous research design to investigate the link between culture, organizational form, and employee response (Pascale, 1978a and 1978b; Lincoln, et al., 1978 and 1981), leave unanswered many questions about organizational dynamics. Of relevance to this paper, we are given little insight into the process by which culture affects the perceptions of Japanese and Americans or the texture of on-the-job interaction between them.

These issues are not explicated partly because of the particular behavior researchers have examined and the techniques by which data were collected and analyzed. Just as important, the concept of culture has been integrated into the research design in a way that prevents

its impact from being explained adequately. Existing studies seek (1) correlations between the proportion of Japanese in the binational and the "Japaneseness" of certain formal structures (Lincoln, et al., 1978) or informal practices (Pascale, 1978a), and (2) correlations between various formal structures (Lincoln, et al., 1981) or personnel practices (Pascale, 1978b), characterized as more or less Japanese, and employee's attitudes.

Considering just the construct of "Japanese effect" or, variously, "cultural effect" central to the first set of studies mentioned above (Lincoln, et al., 1978; Pascale, 1978b), we see how the interactional, intercultural dimension is obscured. I have observed that the relative distribution of Japanese and Americans among positions in a firm -- the specific role each plays, is as crucial as the proportion of Japanese in determining both formal and informal organization. Qualitative analysis of data gathered through participant or naturalistic observation (Gamst, 1980), combined with intensive interviewing, would illuminate the process of accommodation to cultural differences. Moreover, readily quantifiable variables commonly utilized in management studies might not emerge as the critical measures of a binational's organizational characteristics.

Japanese managers are considered to be carriers of "culture," but the meaning and dynamic of the culture construct are not systematically elucidated. In all studies of binationals, researchers have deduced the

culturally-based expectations of Japanese personnel from the available literature (for example, Abegglen, 1958, 1973; Clark, 1979; Cole, 1971; Dore, 1973; Nakane, 1970; Rohlen, 1974; Whitehill and Takezawa, 1968, 1981; Yoshino, 1968). Americans' expectations, however, are seldom articulated.

The resulting model of Japanese organizational behavior has limitations. Pascale (1978a: 92-93) cautions that our knowledge mainly derives from observers' impressions and attitudinal measures rather than empirical measures of behavior. Cole notes that many sources are case studies. Although the best "are extremely important for elaborating the cultural meanings of specific organizational behavior and ferreting out data otherwise inaccessible to survey researchers," there are problems in generalizing findings and replicating the research (Cole, 1979: 2).

Furthermore, the common model is an admixture of formal structure and informal practice. Within both categories, it fuses (1) internalized, normative patterns of behavior which characterize a society generally with (2) behavior specifically found in corporate settings, some of which may represent a rational response to socioeconomic forces and historical events rather than cultural prescription (see Dore, 1973: chapter 15; Yoshino, 1968: 29-34; Marsland and Beer, 1983). The unwieldiness of the paradigm seriously diminishes its analytical clarity.

Although sometimes called a model of Japanese

"corporate culture," it can be argued that it does not wholly represent CULTURAL assumptions. Recent method and theory in anthropology define culture as the "ideational order of experience" rather than a realm of phenomena including ideas, behavior, and artifacts (Honigman, 1976: 251). To quote Keesing (1976: 139):

We will use "culture" to refer to systems of shared ideas, to the conceptual designs, the shared systems of meaning, that underlie the ways in which people live. Culture, so defined, refers to what humans learn, not to what they do and make. As Goodenough (1961: 522) expresses it, this knowledge provides "standards for deciding what is,...for deciding what can be,...for deciding how one feels about it, and...for deciding how to go about doing it."

A construct which focuses on cognitive phenomena, distinguishing in Goodenough's (1961:521) phrase patterns for behavior (i.e., culture) from patterns of behavior (i.e., social structure or social organization), leads to an effective framework for assessing the impact of culture on organizational form and on employees' response to particular organizational arrangements. The following section introduces a methodology for mapping the assumptions and expectations regarding work that Japanese and Americans bring to the binational.

DISCOVERING WORK BLUEPRINTS

The findings of this paper are drawn from two years of research among Japanese firms in Southern California. Initial research broadly aimed at exploring problems that arise when Japanese and Americans work together. As the

research progressed, it became evident that each group tends to dwell on particular issues that largely concern the values, conceptual categories and rules of behavior individuals express regarding work.

Together these mental constructs comprise a part of what some anthropologists term "cognitive maps" (Spradley and McCurdy, 1971:2; Spradley, 1979: 7) or "mindscapes" (Maruyama, 1982). A cognitive map is the "grammar" people use "to construct and interpret behavior (Spradley and McCurdy, 1971: 2-3)." Frake (1977: 6-7) clarifies the relationship of cognitive maps to culture:

Culture is not simply a cognitive map that people acquire, in whole or in part, more or less accurately, and then learn to read. People are not just map-readers; they are map-makers. People are cast out into imperfectly charted, continually shifting seas of everyday life. Mapping them out is a constant process resulting not in an individual cognitive map, but in a whole chart case of rough, improvised, continually revised sketch maps. Culture does not provide a cognitive map, but rather a set of principles for map making and navigation. Different cultures are like different schools of navigation designed to cope with different terrains and seas.

The work-related "principles for map making and navigation" revealed by employees in binationals, which I call "work blueprints," encompass aspects of the societal culture, the unique culture of the organization, and even the culture of particular industries. While it is of theoretical and methodological importance eventually to distinguish the various threads that comprise work blueprints, this exploratory study does not systematically tackle that task.

METHODOLOGY

Most of us are unaware of the broad, systematic blueprint which informs our behavior in the workplace. In order to discover the underlying structure of Japanese and American blueprints, I asked people in taped interviews to describe both their current work activities and past work experiences. Invariably, while discussing how they are organizing a particular task or project, recounting an incident of interpersonal friction, explaining why they left a previous job, and so forth, people unconsciously reveal the way they conceptualize the world of work.

Rather than impose categories familiar to management studies, such as "decision making style," I was interested in how the actors themselves talk about and categorize their actions. In other words, I was searching for folk categories. The method rests on a type of content analysis of the interview materials Spradley (1979) terms domain analysis. It involves (1) asking "descriptive" questions, (2) mapping the themes (domains) and subthemes that Japanese and Americans respectively emphasize, and (3) in follow-up interviews, asking "structural" questions to verify the existence of a folk domain and its subsets.

A content analysis based on qualitative evaluation of complex speech events is susceptible to bias by the researcher's own cultural background and intellectual orientation. In addition, it is possible that the responses of persons interviewed were colored by a keen

awareness of stereotypical Japanese management practice, arising from popular media coverage. The unstructured, open-ended thrust of the questions, emphasizing employees' personal experience, nevertheless created the best possible conditions for eliciting deep-seated, culturally-based responses. My general rule was that at least five persons must emphasize a theme for it to be considered a domain or included category of the Japanese or American work blueprint.

In fact, the research results show a great deal of consistency among Americans and Japanese respectively. This was anticipated for the Japanese. They have grown up in a comparatively homogeneous society and, for the most part, have undergone a similar work socialization as university educated, lifetime members of large, elite firms.¹ The consistency in response from Americans, who have diverse educational, class, and work backgrounds was surprising.

The intercultural environment is optimal for discovering contours of work blueprints. People speak with the most fervor when juxtaposing their basic beliefs and preferred patterns of action to their perception of different, sometimes baffling, beliefs and behavior of another cultural group.² It is probable, however, that the maps we discover primarily represent areas where cultural dissonance predominates. A complete work blueprint might exhibit many areas of commonality, about which employees in binational firms feel little need to comment.

THE DATA BASE

Two sets of complementary data form the basis for this study. The first derives from in-depth personal interviews conducted with employees of six companies. In each firm I spoke with at least three locally hired employees and three Japanese on overseas assignment. Interviews lasted from one hour to as much as six hours over several meetings. Besides the work-related information described above, I asked each person for a complete work history. Questions stressed interaction within the intercultural milieu but did not limit people to this line of discourse. Because one object of the study was to assess Japanese managers' use of English, most interviews were conducted in English. In order to learn the folk terms for concepts being discussed, however, I asked Japanese to reiterate in their native language much of what they told me.

The firms vary in size and operational focus. The smallest employed approximately 50 persons, while the largest employed more than one thousand. The sample includes (1) two local branches of large trading companies (sogoshosha), (2) three subsidiaries of manufacturers that distribute products made in Japan, and (3) one subsidiary of a manufacturer that combined distribution and light manufacture or assembly. Organization charts, company handbooks, and interviews with key personnel supplied basic demographic data about each firm.

The criterion for choosing persons to interview was

that the employee's daily routine involve considerable intercultural contact. Generally, top management instructed the head of personnel to designate particular individuals but, in most firms, it was possible to meet additional personnel. Locally hired personnel in a wide range of positions and of diverse background were interviewed. Nonetheless, the bulk were white males in lower or middle managerial positions. Generalizations made here on the whole are drawn from this narrow group which will be referred to as "American" personnel throughout the text. Japanese-Americans, local Japanese nationals, other ethnic minorities, and women each represent a special case which warrants attention elsewhere.

"Japanese" personnel, people sent from the home office, were men who predominately held middle or higher managerial positions in the branch or subsidiary; several were engineers who were designated technical specialists. Most occupied the ranks of lower or middle management in the parent firm, although some of the younger men had not yet entered what many call the "management class" and some of the subsidiary presidents had achieved at least upper-middle managerial status.

The second data set comes from a nine month intensive study of one of the firms in the pilot sample; it is referred to as LASCO (Los Angeles Subsidiary Company) in the text. LASCO is a subsidiary of major trading company and it specializes in the import and export of computer components and peripherals. Here I continued to gather

data through personal interviews but, in addition, did intensive participant observation.

THE INTERCULTURAL WORK SETTING

Before comparing work blueprints, a few remarks about the intercultural setting are in order. Over the decade that binationals have undergone public scrutiny, the popular view of such organizations has changed. Early reports tended to portray them as having a cohesive Japanese style of management well received by American employees (Johnson and Ouchi, 1974; Kraar, 1975). Gradually, observers recognized that diversity rather than conformity defines the management "style" of Japanese firms in the United States (Fruin, 1981) and that cultural differences along with other organizational constraints can cause friction (Tsurumi, 1978: chapter 4). Recent newspaper and magazine articles frequently highlight problems of binationals rather than extoll the virtues of such firms as in the past.

Other researchers' observations (Fruin, 1981; Lincoln, et al., 1978; Johnson, 1977) coincide with mine that the business thrust of the company not only affects the ratio of Japanese to locally hired personnel but also the distribution of Japanese and Americans among various positions. I found that trading companies usually employ fewer Americans than firms involved in distribution or manufacture and also have proportionately fewer in

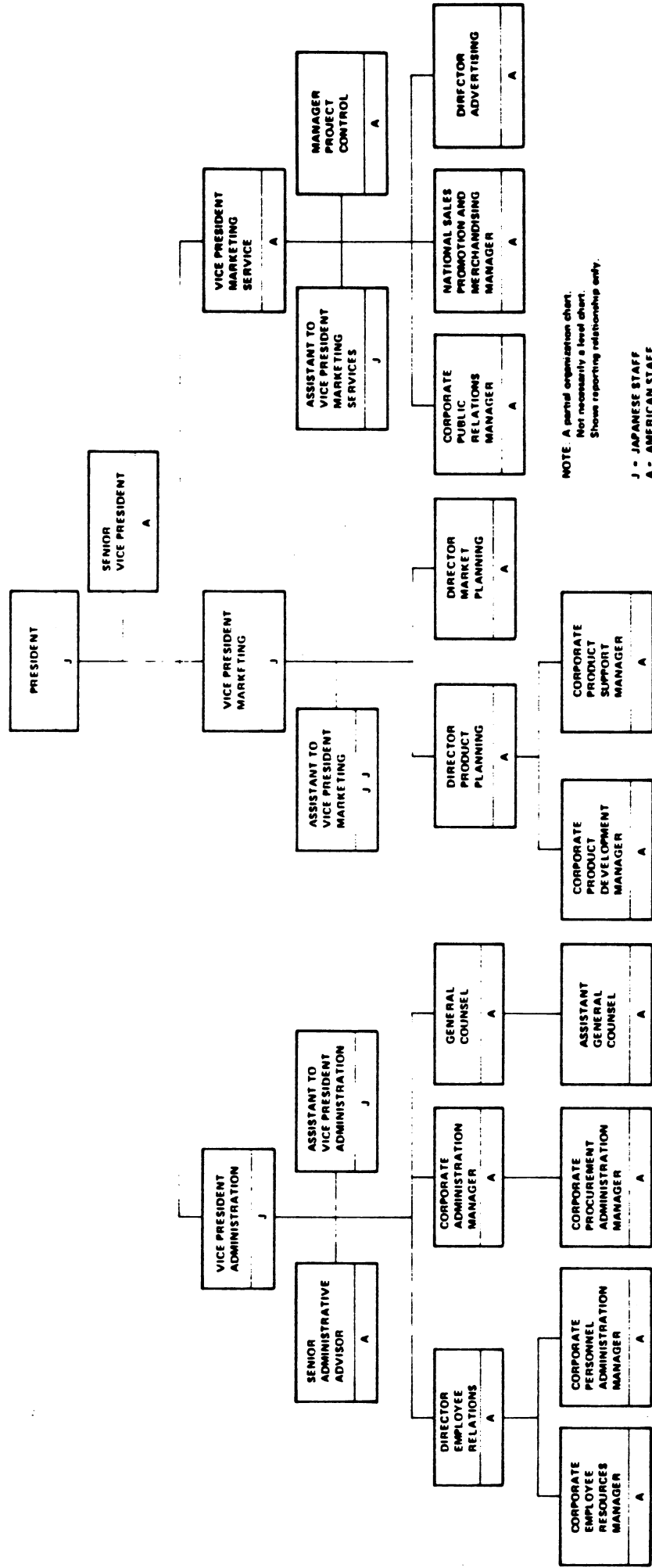
positions of responsibility. According to Japanese managers, Americans cannot handle the close communication with Japan characteristic of trading companies. (See Lifson, 1981, for discussion of the obstacles Americans face.) Americans generally enjoy the greatest opportunity in distribution firms where their marketing and sales expertise is needed.

Illustration A shows a segment of the organization chart for a large, well-established distribution firm. It is unusual among the sample firms because of the number of Americans in higher management. Nonetheless, the chart illustrates a common characteristic of binationals: at all levels, American managers usually are supervised by Japanese personnel. Moreover, the role of Japanese in "advisor" or "coordinator" capacities is anomalous. Amano (1979) and Johnson and Ouchi (1974) point to the integrating function of coordinators whose job is to ensure communication between the two nationalities. Some Americans I interviewed, as well persons quoted in news articles, nevertheless feel that advisors or coordinators actually take a managerial role, often infringing on their own responsibilities.

As a final comment, it is useful to view the interaction between American and Japanese managers within the framework of an intercultural communication paradigm. Culturally-based expectations regarding work condition social perception, a process basic to any act of

ILLUSTRATION A

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS



NOTE: A partial organization chart.
Not necessarily a level chart.
Shows reporting relationship only.

J - JAPANESE STAFF
A - AMERICAN STAFF

communication. As Samovar and Porter describe it:

...culture conditions and structures our perceptual processes in such a way that we develop culturally determined perceptual sets. These sets not only influence which stimuli reach our awareness, but more importantly they have great influence on the judgemental aspect of perception -- the attachment of meaning to these stimuli... intercultural communication can best be understood as cultural variance in the perception of social objects and events (1976: 8-9).

The following section examines those areas in which the cognitive work maps of Japanese and Americans diverge, creating mutual perceptions that tend to generate disharmony.

BLUEPRINTS FOR ACTION

As Japanese and Americans talk about their work, certain themes and sub-themes recur. Domain analysis reveals two broad categories, or macrodomains, emphasized by each group. I have labeled them CONCEPT OF THE JOB and PROCESS OF GETTING A JOB DONE (Illustration B). Although the same cover term applies, Japanese and Americans differ considerably in the way they conceptualize these macrodomains. In contrasting their blueprints, certain details concerning each country's corporate practice and societal norms are provided in order to understand culturally specific assumptions about work. In addition, details of management practices in binationals flesh out the intercultural environment. Excerpts from interview transcriptions, while illustrating the themes being explored, help elucidate the method of domain analysis.

CONCEPT OF THE JOB

A logical starting point for investigating work blueprints is to examine how people define their work role with regard to such things as title, responsibility, authority, prestige, pay and self-image -- common concerns among Japanese and Americans alike. For Americans, these concerns are subsumed under the folk term "the job," or "my job." The Japanese too use terms which translate as "my work" or "my job" (uchi no shigoto) and encompass these same meanings.

ILLUSTRATION B: WORK BLUEPRINTS

<u>CONCEPT OF THE JOB</u>		<u>PROCESS OF GETTING A JOB DONE</u>	
AMERICANS	JAPANESE	AMERICANS	JAPANESE
CONCEPT OF POSITION	CONCEPT OF POSITION	INDIVIDUAL-ORIENTED DRAMA	GATHERING AND SHARING INFORMATION
<u>Defined Parameters</u>	<u>Place in the Company</u>	<u>Follow a Job From Start to Finish</u>	<u>Work Revolves Around Human Relationships</u>
<u>Correspondence Among Title, Duties, Rights and Pay</u>	<u>Orderly Career Path</u>	<u>"Control" Over the Job</u>	<u>Work Involves Teamwork</u>
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESPONSIBILITY, AUTHORITY AND RISK	SHAPE OF ONE'S RESPONSIBILITY <u>Flexibility in Task Allocation</u>	<u>Maintaining Job Boundaries</u>	<u>Conventions of Information Flow</u>
PERSONALIZATION OF THE JOB	<u>Flexibility of Action</u> <u>Responsibility for Co-Workers</u> <u>Balancing Self/Group Interests</u>		

CONCEPT OF POSITION

Within the macrodomain CONCEPT OF THE JOB, both Americans and Japanese conceptualize an included domain which focuses on the CONCEPT OF POSITION. Americans tend to dwell on this theme when discussing how the intercultural milieu affects their job. Japanese, on the other hand, are more likely to reveal their concept of position when contemplating career paths within the parent company. Because this issue elicited the most voluminous and vehement response from Americans, I will examine their assumptions regarding position first.

Americans

One dimension of this concept frequently articulated is that one's position should have clearly Defined Parameters. A manager, whom we will call Bruce, voices the conventional wisdom when he asserts, "Each person should have clear goals and responsibilities and know what his job is." In the U.S., we have come to expect a written record of the duties, responsibilities and requirements of a particular job (Bennet, 1958:9-18). A "job description" represents the normal guideposts for orderly and predictable action. Yet it is of urgent concern to many Americans in binationals that job parameters lack definition.

Smaller, more recently established companies often do not provide employees with job descriptions at all. Larger or longer established companies are trying to institute a

system of job descriptions. Their efforts, however, sometimes enjoy limited success. The reason is that the resulting positions lack cultural relevance, as Bruce's words imply:

If you look at some of these responsibilities [of co-workers]...I mean, some of these guys are responsible for Pluto and Mars. Anything. I mean, whatever you want it to be. This is the first corporation I've worked at where employees write their own job descriptions...The [Japanese] manager says, 'I need a person to do this type of job,' and you hire the person and that becomes his job description. I look at some of these job descriptions and I say, 'What is the job description for THIS POSITION, for THAT POSITION.' Not what the guy perceives it is. What actually is it?

Bruce alludes to a second and extremely important sub-theme of Americans' concept of position. They consider "position" to be conterminous with formal job title (e.g., Vice President of Marketing) or job category (e.g., Clerk-typist). Moreover, they expect that positions will be categorized systematically and that the categories will correspond to familiar models. The idiosyncratic nature of job descriptions in Bruce's firm, in his mind, defeats the reason for having them. Expanding on this theme, given titles tend to be associated with a particular set of discretionary rights and and particular pay scale in addition to a particular set of responsibilities. The notion of rough Correspondence Among Title, Duties, Rights and Pay strongly influences Americans' behavior and perceptions.

In the binational setting, more often than not the expected correspondences are awry. Americans sometimes

find that both their job title and their duties are unconventional, or that their conventional job title matches neither their background and skills nor their assigned tasks. The Personnel Manager of a medium-sized distribution firm, for example, described the confusion created when people whose qualifications and actual job content fit the Clerk-typist category were given the title of Secretary. The same firm, in early stages of its development, tended to attach ad hoc titles to managers, inappropriate for the industry but difficult to modify later.

The following passage reveals one American's expectations regarding the proper balance between title, responsibility and authority. Bob, a Sales Manager, has just been reprimanded by his Japanese boss for going on a business trip without checking with him first. While the specific situation might be unique, tension caused by differing views on autonomy is common.

If I don't go through the process of being less autonomous, I get him [the boss] upset. There's a tendency for them [the Japanese] to treat you like a clerk...In my position, as a manager [in an American company], you'd be somewhat autonomous. In other words, you would have a reporting relationship but, from my viewpoint, it tends to be one of 'if you get the job done, I don't care how you do it.'...As a manager, I am above a clerk. I don't feel I need to seek permission to do business related things. If I'm not goofing off, AND IT IS PART OF MY JOB, and for the benefit of the company, then what's the deal?

The presumption that a symbiotic link exists between responsibility and authority is one of the most conspicuous and deeply felt sub-themes of the American concept of

position. It receives constant validation in formal and informal corporate behavior. An example which helps establish temporal continuity comes from Bennet's reference to Standard Oil's managerial position descriptions. Bennet (1958: 11) writes,

As stated in the firm's manual, responsibilities and authority are combined in a single section, on the theory that A PERSON CANNOT REASONABLY BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR AN ACTIVITY IF HE DOES NOT HAVE CORRESPONDING AUTHORITY.

The words of Kevin, a Production Manager, reveal the moral force underlying the assumption that pay should correspond to other attributes of one's position. His remarks are prompted by the fact that often an American's job is upgraded -- he might be given a higher title along with greater responsibility, but his salary changes little, if at all.

American managers are not interested in position ...They are into completing, being successful, generating satisfaction out of what they're doing. If a person is successful, he'll be rewarded accordingly. That's a problem with the Japanese because the Japanese are not into money... Advancement in position is a form of reward. BUT IF YOU ARE ADVANCED IN POSITION, [FINANCIAL] REWARD SHOULD JUST FOLLOW IT. Not so in this corporation. You can get a position up without ever getting a financial up. It creates a lot of confusion, frustration, and animosity.

Kevin actually touches on other important aspects of Americans' work blueprint. For example, although many show a keener interest in achieving ever higher position than Kevin, many share his feeling that "generating satisfaction out of what they're doing" ranks higher in priority. This theme constitutes a domain under CONCEPT OF THE JOB which

is not treated in this paper.

The case of a fourth manager, Steve, illustrates some of the problems Americans encounter in trying to define their position satisfactorily. He entered the binational without a written job description but with the conventional title of Product Marketing Manager, a job slot previously nonexistent in his product group. I talked with Steve a month after he joined, so his initial impressions are vivid. Other actors include Ken, the Group Manager and only Japanese in the group, and Irving, an American. (It is common for Japanese managers to choose an "American" name or to Anglicize their Japanese given name. This helps narrow the social and psychololgical distance between Americans and Japanese.) Steve relates:

I felt like I had a position with no responsibilities. I was here but what was I all about. I wasn't given anything to do. I was fighting a battle if you will with Irving for him to release himself from certain responsibilities. And I have to criticize Ken at this point. He didn't sit down with the group and say, 'This is Steve, and these are his clear-cut duties and responsibilities. Anything you're working on in that area right now, bring him up to speed and turn it over to him.' That wasn't done and so, consequently, everybody said 'OK, so Steve's here. So what? What does he do?' It was up to Ken really to define that for me and for them and for himself.

From the beginning, Steve tried to clarify his job with the Group Manager. After ten days he wrote a job description for himself and distributed it to Ken and the other managers in the group, asking for their response. According to Steve, only Irving disagreed with the outline of responsibilities. Believing that the Group Manager must

resolve the issue, Steve recounts that:

Then I called everybody in -- not the secretaries, but the other people who were involved, and we sat down and went over that [job description]...I was looking for more support from Ken than he gave me, but I almost got the impression he didn't want to rock the boat...But on the other hand, I'm sitting here saying, 'Hey, I've got a job and you're starting to define it. Give me some support.'

Steve remained with the company a very short time. Throughout his stay, he failed to make his job conform to the formal description he eventually secured.

This case is instructive on several counts. First of all, Steve strongly articulates the belief that the parameters of a position should be clearly demarcated. And, although unquoted portions of his testimony give greater insight, the responsibilities Steve seeks to legitimize are those he associates with the position of Product Marketing Manager. His difficulties largely occurred because he and Ken lack a common understanding of the specific meaning of "Product Marketing Manager" and of the inclusive meaning of "position." Even though a satisfactory job description exists on paper, as Steve learned, it might not determine on-the-job behavior to the extent the American expects.

Depending on their background, Americans conceptualize the correspondence among title, responsibilities, authority, and pay differently. Some have only a vague notion of the correspondence while others articulate it in detail. Few Japanese managers fully comprehend either the correspondence or its importance to Americans.

Japanese

Consideration of the Japanese CONCEPT OF POSITION helps us understand the responses of Americans quoted above from an intercultural perspective. The following description shows little overlap with the configuration of meanings Americans attach to his domain.

Status distinctions receive far more weight in the Japanese blueprint. Japanese employees carry a detailed mental picture of where they stand relative to others in the company's scheme of formal and informal position markers which constitute their Place in the Company. This behavior neatly fits Lebra's (1976) and Nakane's (1970) complementary analyses of Japanese society, according to which people's strong status orientation revolves around finely graded variations in an hierarchical order. On the formal level, defining one's position might include the calculation of what can be termed 1) one's official rank (tokyu or, more informally, shikaku), and 2) one's official title (yakushoku).³ The nomenclature for various ranks and titles differs, but a system of interlinked categories similar to that seen in Illustration C defines formal position in many large enterprises today.

Illustration C represents one man's conceptualization of the arrangement of positions within LASCO's parent company. Mr. Yamanaka (he has not adopted an American name) drew the matrix when, after several conversations, I still failed to grasp the complexities of the system. In

RANKS (shikaku)

Shacho
Fuku-Shacho
Sonmu
Torishimariyaku
Jomu
Torishimariyaku
Torishimariyaku
DIRECTORS (Yakuin)
EMPLOYEES (Jugyoin)
Sanyo
Buchō-yaku
Buchō-ho
Jokyu Kacho-yaku
Kacho-yaku
Kacho-ho
1-Kyu
2-Kyu
3-Kyu

JOB TITLE (yakushoku)

Hiraishin (Employee)
Kacho-Daiko
Kacho
Buchō-Daiko
Buchō
Honbuchō-Daiko
Honbuchō
Bunbō-Yakuin-Mos
Bunbō-Yakuin
Shacho (President)

□ = Never
○ = Sometimes
△ = Seldom

this white-collar trading company, as in most large firms,⁴ male cohorts enter in April after school graduation. They start out with a rank of Grade Three (3-Kyu) on the vertical axis and no official title. (Hirashain, on the horizontal axis, merely designates regular company employee.) Then, as Mr. Yamanaka explains,

Up to [the rank of] Kacho-ho you are promoted automatically. From Kacho-ho to Kacho-yaku [and above], it depends on ability. Not only ability, but the ability to show ability to the upper class.

An employee's rank does not indicate his work role, although men who enter the ranks of Director (yakuin) comprise the company's Board of Directors. The connection between position markers for rank and for title, which does relate to one's functional role, is viewed by Mr. Yamanaka in this way:

They are related. In order to get yakushoku (title), we have to have a certain level of shikaku (rank). For example, if I want to be assigned Bucho (a title), at least I have to reach Bucho-yaku (a rank). It is a kind of military system.

The diagram of the relationship between rank and title (Illustration C) goes beyond official requirements that a particular rank must be reached before a man is eligible for a particular title. It represents Mr. Yamanaka's understanding of how likely it is for a person of a given rank to have achieved a certain title. When asked whether rank or title is most important in reckoning prestige, Mr. Yamanaka asserted, "Both...shikaku (rank) is not enough. We want also yakushoku (title)." Ironically, an official

document introducing the system in 1975 states that "status" should be determined solely by one's rank.

The current system took shape in this company as an attempt to give employees of all ages opportunity to advance in position. Previously only a system of ranks existed, similar to what Clark (1979: 104-112) and Rohlen (1974: 24-28) describe for the companies they observed. As the economy slowed, however, fewer men could expect to reach higher rungs on the ladder of ranks which then were tied, albeit loosely, to functional work role.

In the new system, title (yakushoku) refers to the level of organizational unit headed by the title holder. Illustration D shows the English translations Mr. Yamanaka's company uses for the Japanese terms. Just as Regional Sales Manager broadly connotes certain duties and powers for Americans, so does a title like Deputy Manager of the Electronics & Business Machine Department (Johokiki bucho-daiko) for the Japanese -- particularly within an organization or an industry.

As Nakane (1970 81) notes, however, an employee's actual work role does not necessarily correspond to his rank or status. Clark (1979: 110-112), for instance, discusses strategies for manipulating the organization chart so that the individual's responsibilities approximate his abilities regardless of formal rank.

Furthermore, while the duties of production workers may be carefully elaborated (see, for example, Dore, 1973: 234), managers in Japanese firms normally do not rely on

ILLUSTRATION D

JOB TITLES (YAKUSHOKU) IN A JAPANESE TRADING COMPANY

Kacho-daiko	Deputy Manager of a Section
Kacho	Manager of a Section
Bucho-daiko	Deputy Manager of a Department
Bucho	Manager of a Department
Honbucho-daiko	Deputy General Manager a Division
Honbucho	General Manager of a Division
Bunsho-yakuin-hosa	Deputy Executive Director of a Group
Bunsho-yakuin	Executive Director of a Group
Shacho	President

detailed formal job descriptions to define and legitimate their position in terms of responsibilities and rights. The manuals of regulations regarding managers' "duties and authority (shokumu kengen)" that I have seen sketch broad guidelines for each functional role. For example, the description of "Department Manager" might translate, "he will supervise all of the Section Managers and their subordinates within his jurisdiction; he will coordinate the activities of these Sections; and he will coordinate with other Departments where necessary." Manuals typically include a chart indicating the level and category (e.g., sales department, administrative department) of management responsible for investigating, drafting documents, approving, or making the final decision on such matters as business planning, organizational structure, rules and regulations, and personnel.

In translation, the chart locating these different responsibilities seems to legitimize the "authority (kengen)" of a manager; indeed managers sometimes do make decisions unilaterally. This interpretation, however, disregards another aspect of "authority," reflected in the Japanese word keni. Iwata (1982: 3) argues that keni, "the influence arising from circumstances, in particular the character, status prestige, or title of the person," is far more important in Japanese organizations than kengen, or "a set of rights and power granted to a person to carry out a delegated job."

As Rohlen describes it, decision making normally involves superiors and subordinates in group processes aimed at building cooperation. According to his assessment (1974: 119),

...the leader's virtue, his concern for others, and the general esprit within the group are the most effective means to individual acceptance and participation. Involvement and trust, once established, permit considerable "arbitrary" discretion.

Building cooperation, moreover, mutually involves persons from various work groups in informal consultation and, frequently, the formal procedure of 'proposal submission and deliberation (Dore, 1973: 227)' known as the ringi system. By all accounts (see particularly Yoshino, 1968: chapter 9), the function of these processes is to diffuse responsibility.

The correspondence between formal position and salary is close. Mr. Yamanaka's firm, for example, determines salary according to a complex formula that includes, first of all, a base pay which reflects age (and, given the predominant practice of "lifetime" employment, length of service). Base pay is augmented by adjustments which relate to rank and, much less significantly, merit. One's job title (yakushoku), however, does not enter into the calculation.

Many Americans working in a binational become attuned to the Japanese managers' conception of relative Place in the Company. They note with interest the ritual observance of status -- inferiors bowing more deeply to superiors upon greeting and leave-taking, or subordinates

walking slightly behind the company president. Although they cannot fully understand, they recognize that variables such as when one joined the parent organization and one's formal position in it determine the respect accorded an individual.

The notion of an Orderly Career Path derives from the fact that employees normally do not skip markers in their progression up the linked ladders of rank and title. Moreover, this sub-theme of CONCEPT OF POSITION encompasses a common understanding of timetables for the progression from one point to the next.

The "management class" in Mr. Yamanaka's firm, as in many comparable companies, begins with the rank (tokyu) of Kacho-ho. As the system is structured, people reach this lowest level of management after, at the least, ten years of employment. A second member of the same company outlined the following timetable norms based on the shortest length of time spent in each rank, as shown in Illustration E. His scheme closely conforms to the official requirements of minimum tenure before promotion is possible. Very few people, however, progress through the ranks this rapidly.

While most male university graduates can expect to become lower and middle managers as they gain seniority, top managerial positions are hard won. Therefore, that part of the salary determined by rank in time contributes to wide salary differences among members of an entering cohort.

ILLUSTRATION E

RANKS (TOKYU) IN A JAPANESE TRADING COMPANY: MINIMUM TIME IN EACH RANK

Sanyo	1 to 10+ years (timetable norm weakly developed)
Bucho-yaku	4 years
Bucho-ho	2 years
Jokyu Kacho-yaku	2 years
Kacho-yaku	2 years
Kacho-ho	2 years
1-Kyu	10 years (almost automatic promotion)
2-Kyu	
3-Kyu	

SHAPE OF ONE'S RESPONSIBILITY (JAPANESE)

In contrast to Americans who stress the CONCEPT OF POSITION when talking about their job in the binational, Japanese managers speak most emphatically about a domain labelled SHAPE OF ONE'S RESPONSIBILITY. A preoccupation with responsibility is understandable given the slow-paced rhythm of advancement and comparatively weak association between responsibility and authority in headquarters. The parameters of responsibility may well be as crucial an issue as parameters of position are to an American.

Japanese managers exhibit a great deal of conceptual flexibility with regard to responsibility. Flexibility in Task Allocation, for example, runs counter to Americans' efforts to mold their job description to precedented parameters. It is a flexibility closely tied to the abilities of specific individuals, as the president of one company clearly articulated:

The Japanese way of organization, of operating is: the organization is secondary. The point is, who is the person, the individual now working? So, depending on the person, every organization can be changed. The American way is the organization chart. It is like hiring a pre-fixed box on the organization chart. In Japan, the person is first, and then you make the box under him. For example, if I go back to Japan and someone else comes here as a replacement, the [subsidiary's] organization might be completely different. So I think Japan is stronger on individualism; not well organized like the United States...MY PHILOSOPHY IS: SELECT THE PERSON FIRST, AND THEN MAKE THE BOX. JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE ONLY BASED ON THE PERSON, NOT ON THE BOX.

The sub-theme Flexibility in Task Allocation frequently is expressed through the organizational structure.

Individual Japanese personnel in particular might be assigned diverse synchronous duties. Consider Tak, who is both Vice President and Group Manager of Administration at LASCO. Besides acting as guardian and trouble-shooter for activities relating to Systems Administration and Office Administration, including heading the Personnel Committee, he participates in most aspects of corporate planning, is involved in new business development, and joins in most legal discussions or negotiations regarding the company's external relations. In addition, he is Assistant to the President for a subsidiary located 45 miles away. Since the President of LASCO serves as President of the subsidiary, Tak is the main liaison between LASCO and the subsidiary.

Although they are from different companies, Tak is an example, albeit an extreme one, of Bruce's contention that "some of these guys are responsible for Pluto and Mars (p. 18)" Americans' responsibilities tend to be allocated more narrowly than those of Japanese staff, if not according to precedent. Nonetheless, Japanese and Americans alike often find that their responsibilities overlap with those of a fellow worker.

Besides reflecting the culturally-based practice of building on individual strength, the seemingly eclectic assignment of duties and overlap in responsibility partially reflect the gap between Japanese and Americans in both communication and work experience. Certain tasks are assigned to Japanese because it is felt that a knowledge of Japanese language and the intricacies of the Japanese

organizational and business environment is required.

Furthermore, when top management feels the need for tight control over an area nominally managed by an American, the shadow organization described earlier might be instituted.⁵

In addition to flexibility in allocating responsibility, Japanese managers stress Flexibility of Action in carrying out one's responsibilities. Many Japanese believe that Americans conceive the range of action appropriate to fulfilling their duties too narrowly. To give a simple example, when one manager first came to the U.S. subsidiary, he was bothered because Americans let the phone ring if it were not their own line. After three years, he says he lets the phone go unanswered too.

A company president, known as Harry, perceives that there is a lack of common understanding about the term "responsibility." Harry translates "responsibility" into the Japanese word sekinin, and then back-translates it as "a strong mind to get good results." He then draws a circle within a circle, explaining that the inner circle is "the job area which you have to do. If you don't do this job you will be blamed." He emphasizes that sometimes a person must go outside the inner circle in order to accomplish a task, but contends that Americans have difficulty understanding this. In conclusion Harry juxtaposes two thoughts: (1) "The purpose of business is to get good results," and (2) "Don't make anything to be blamed." In his mind, the second thought characterizes the American approach to responsibility.

A third manager, Mike, approaches Flexibility of Action from another direction, resonating a theme common in analyses of Japanese management style. That is, Japanese favor indirect, implicit communication (Pascale and Athos, 1981). Therefore, a subordinate should do what is implied in a superior's request, not what is specifically asked of him. Mike alludes to the popular Japanese saying which translates roughly, "hear 1 and understand 10."

In Japan, if the boss tells you to do "1," he means that you should do "10"...Because it is the same race and the same language, Japanese don't talk too much. For instance, in the company the boss tells his employee to do this [task]. Maybe he just says do "1," but the employee has to understand that the boss's requirement is not just "1" -- that he needs to do other things too...If the employee prepares [all] these things the boss is satisfied. But if he brings back exactly what the boss requests, then the boss is not satisfied.

According to Mike, lower and middle level Americans in particular do not understand that "1" means "10." Those in higher positions do not need as detailed instructions. Still, Japanese managers generally agree that Americans do their best when given clear and comprehensive directions.

Mike explains Americans' tendency to view responsibility narrowly by contrasting the two employment systems. Japanese white-collar employees work their way up from a clerical role, taking on varied assignments over the years of continuous employment in one firm. They are consequently familiar with many aspects of the organization and work process. Americans are hired for specific functions, moving from one company to another. In addition,

In Japan, the relationship between managers and employees is kind of intimate; it is not based just on job functions. Employee and management know each other and even know the physical condition on a particular day. So if the manager says "1," then the lower level can understand he actually wanted more.

As a closely related sub-theme, Japanese managers also talk about Responsibility for Co-Workers. Accounts of Japanese firms based on participant observation (Cole, 1971; Rohlen, 1974) depict the relationship among co-workers, especially that of superiors and subordinates, as many-stranded. It sometimes it involves people in activities many Americans would consider an infringement on their professional or personal time. Given societal values of dependency and empathy (Lebra, 1976), it is difficult to separate feelings of obligation from affective emotion.

The expression of responsibility for fellow workers is many-stranded in the binational setting as well. For example, the rare unmarried Japanese resigns himself, often⁶ willingly, to matchmaking by his seniors. And, as in Japan, one frequently sees subordinate Japanese managers attending their superiors in a "fetch and carry" capacity Americans normally associate with the role of secretary.

Americans largely fall outside these kinds of interactions, although sometimes very young managers and secretarial staff feel they are expected to perform tasks for Japanese superiors that exceed their obligatory work role. (The strongest response came from a female executive assistant whose boss, fresh from Japan, asked her to take care of matters such as finding a tutor for his children.)

On the other hand, Japanese managers who actively try to replicate the unity of work groups in Japan, partially forged through frequent after hours eating and drinking (see, for example, Atsumi, 1979), carefully observe birthdays and other special occasions by taking all of their subordinates to lunch.

Another dimension of the sub-theme Responsibility for Co-Workers concerns employees' responsibility for developing co-workers. The company president Harry again offers a noteworthy example. The case involves an American Accounting Manager who has sent a succession of memos to a procrastinating Procurement Manager. Referring to the Accounting Manager's efforts to end the procrastination, Harry states:

Writing a letter is a clerical job. You have to do more than this. The important thing is how to develop the Procurement Manager's mind to make him think, 'Oh. I have to do this job by this date.' That's the manager's job.

Of course countless Americans also attempt to mold ineffectual or recalcitrant co-workers' behavior in order to accomplish given tasks. The difference between Japanese and Americans is (1) the frequency with which this approach is taken, and (2) the degree to which it is articulated as appropriate behavior. Americans more likely appeal to the authority of formal rules or job descriptions; their strategy might involve a direct and heated confrontation. This happens among Japanese too, despite the stereotype of the harmonious workplace. Nonetheless, angry scenes occur much less often.

A final sub-theme of the domain SHAPE OF ONE'S RESPONSIBILITY warrants examination. Labelled Balancing Self/Group Interests, this subset concerns the way Japanese conceptualize the compromise between self interest and the welfare of the group. Interestingly, Japanese and Americans sound much alike when they discuss what makes a job satisfying. Each wants a job which challenges them -- which allows them to develop new skills and expertise and to use their minds creatively. Both groups tend to view increased responsibility as the key to a continuously challenging job. In both contexts, responsibility is linked to the prestige system as well.

But along with a clear awareness of self-interest, the Japanese conceptualize responsibility in terms of the welfare of the work group or firm. The story of Steve, the American who encountered problems defining the parameters of his job, gives some insight into this aspect of the Japanese blueprint. In attempting to reconcile his job title with his responsibilities, Steve ultimately offended the Japanese Group Manager's basic values. Ken, the Group Manager, had this to say:

I didn't review his record and character and personality well enough [before hiring him]. Judging from experience, I see his character better. He is into a political issue -- to sell his name rather than doing the dirty job...He has a unique personality. It is hard to adjust himself to the organization, yet he has a strong inside ambition to be regarded as a big shot...He always spends more time on expanding his own responsibilities than on doing the job.

Ken believes Steve put his personal interests, namely

enhancing his own strength, above those of the product group. To Ken this is unacceptable behavior. The constant balancing of self and group interests generates a lot of tension for ambitious Japanese managers. My observations indicate that, with rare exception, the successful executive is one whose public image is consonant with the notion, verging on moral imperative, that group welfare comes first.

Clearly the overall flexibility of the Japanese challenges certain American assumptions about the meaning of responsibility, as does their mapping of the proper balance between self interest and group welfare. A second major domain of Americans' CONCEPT OF THE JOB, treated next, heightens the contrast between Japanese and American work blueprints with regard to responsibility.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESPONSIBILITY, AUTHORITY AND RISK (AMERICANS)

Americans frequently bring up the issue of personal risk. The predominate concern is having enough authority to fulfill one's responsibilities in such a way that personal risk is minimized. Thus, Harry's characterization of Americans as seeking to avoid blame anticipates the domain labelled RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESPONSIBILITY, AUTHORITY, AND RISK.

One American manager, Richard, reveals the complexity of the relationship and the depth of emotion it inspires. At issue is his ultimate authority to hire his own

subordinates. The context is so rich that I quote his idiomatic English at length:

Personnel and the Japanese management make the hiring decisions here. As far as I know, I'm the only person [American] who has ever hired anyone [on his own] here. Only I hire my people. No one else hires my people -- because he's not working for you, he's working for me. And you're asking me to fail [if I do not make the hiring decision]...

[Talking to Personnel and top management], I said, "Hey, you've got to realize one thing. I'm the one risking. That person I hire is a direct extension of myself and my personal capabilities. Not the corporation's capability, but my capabilities. Which in turn becomes the corporation's capabilities. But I'm the one risking. But that's what you hired me for. That's why I'm in this [managerial] position.

But for you [Personnel/top management] to say 'Let's be a committee of three and we'll hire this one even though you like that one' -- it's out of the question. If you happen to agree that the one you want is the one I want, fine. If it doesn't work out, I get my butt chewed. But if your guy doesn't work out, I still have to eat that decision."

We should not conclude from this passage that every binational firm limits American managers' hiring power. Richard's words merely reflect one incident which challenges the American conviction that a manager should have the power to make decisions on aspects of the work process for which he is "held responsible."

Almost without exception, Americans associate their responsibilities with risk. The term "responsibility" in fact carries a nuance of blame. When a mistake is made, usually "someone is to blame," or "someone is responsible." In American corporations the consequences can be serious in terms of keeping one's job, getting a raise, or getting a

promotion.

Performance -- how well responsibilities are met -- obviously influences Japanese career paths too, and the element of personal risk is not missing from their conceptualization of responsibility. This especially holds for large trading companies where most managers in sales divisions are judged on their ability to expand business and contribute to profits. But, because of the diffusion of decision making, the linkage between responsibility, authority and personal risk familiar to Americans does not loom large in the Japanese blueprint.

PERSONALIZATION OF THE JOB (AMERICANS)

For Americans, the issue of responsibility, authority, and risk touches a level of cognition where concepts of work inextricably intertwine with concepts of self. The above quote from Richard illustrates the interconnection. He clearly expresses concern for his self-image, reflecting the domain PERSONALIZATION OF THE JOB. The idea that "my people" are "a direct extension of myself and my personal capabilities" captures the essence of this domain.

An American's self-esteem rests on his and others' evaluation of his job performance. This is another reason why having distinct definitions of responsibilities and authority, and having adequate authority, are considered critical. In order to maintain self-esteem, Americans seek visible recognition through promotion, pay increases and verbal or written commendation from superiors. Many

report, however, that they receive neither positive nor negative feedback from Japanese superiors. The dearth of praise for a job well done may concern a manager more than the lack of constructive criticism.

There are several reasons for the limited amount of feedback. Some firms lack a formal system of evaluation or, if one exists, it often fails to provide the expected exchange of information. Japanese unfamiliarity with the skills of direct communication (Pascale and Athos, 1981), as well as Japanese managers' inclination to eschew the would-be "superman" or "hero, inhibit communication of the kind Americans expect in both formal and informal situations. The latter point will become clearer when we turn to a second macrodomain of work blueprints.

PROCESS OF GETTING A JOB DONE

Japanese and Americans agree with Harry's sentiment that "the purpose of business is to get good results (p. 34)." The two disagree however on how to achieve this. The contrast between Americans, who define themselves primarily in terms of their professional expertise, and Japanese, who find personal identity through membership in a work group, has become a truism (Lebra, 1976: 32). Nevertheless, these opposite assumptions which dominate their CONCEPT OF THE JOB influence how each conceptualizes the PROCESS OF GETTING A JOB DONE.

INDIVIDUAL-ORIENTED DRAMA (AMERICANS)

American managers most often envision the work process as an INDIVIDUAL-ORIENTED DRAMA. While this orientation conforms to the stereotypical view of Americans as individualistic, consideration of several sub-themes adds fresh insight to the common wisdom.

A number of managers voice the desire to Follow a Job from Start to Finish. Kevin (p. 20) hinted at this sub-theme earlier when, discussing the correspondence between position and pay, he asserts that Americans "are into COMPLETING, being successful, generating satisfaction out of what they're doing." He goes on to talk of "the satisfaction of taking a job from the embryonic stage to the conclusion stage," vehemently contending that:

The last thing the American wants to do is a piece of the job. If you're asked to do this, you max out; you lose your creative drive...What happens here [at my company] is, the American manager will grab something and run with it. He'll create it, he'll implement it. Now the Japanese like the idea -- they are astounded by the way we are dynamic on that point. But when they think we should go into a meeting and make a decision, the American manager says, 'This is a trivial matter, I'll decide on that,' and goes ahead [on his own].

In describing what he perceives as a Japanese tendency to interrupt the natural flow of work with useless meetings, Kevin alludes to a second sub-theme -- "Control" Over the Job. John, a Production Manager, provides further insight. He explains that "the key words for career and job are money, and to control the ability to get the job done." Of the two, he ranks "control" first in

priority. The link between the desire to exercise control over the job and the desire to follow a job from start to finish is obvious, at least to most Americans.

Americans most often cited requests for a written report or a meeting regarding something they consider routine and/or within their purview as hinderances to their control. Especially unwelcome are requests from outside the circle of persons who, by American custom, "should" be involved. Or, sometimes a manager might start a project only to find it taken over by another person.

Much Japanese behavior in this context is guided by work maps that conceptualize authority diffusely and task allocation flexibly. Non-cultural factors may also be relevant however. An example offered by John comes to mind. He relates:

I've heard a lot about decisions made by the Japanese without American input. I used to hear all the time from the Engineering Manager. He would complain that, 'It's clear the engineering decision should be this, and then the Japanese all go and talk to each other for 15 minutes and then come back and [the decision is different]...

And I did see an example of something like that...They [the Japanese] had already decided that they wanted to reject this [superior American-made] component. The Engineering Manager was not let in on the reason. And you know, his point was, "You're paying me to be the engineer. Trust me to be the engineer or let's just forget about it. Just tell me all you want me to do is interpret drawings and I'll do that."

Sometimes Americans are left out of decision making because the Japanese find it easier to discuss matters in their native language. Other times, parent company policy and politics render American input superfluous, even

counterproductive, in the eyes of Japanese managers.

Conceptual, structural, and linguistic obstacles to controlling their job and seeing it through to the end perhaps intensify Americans' concern with Maintaining Job Boundaries as they carry out their duties. This sub-theme is of course a corollary to Defining Job Parameters, one dimension of Americans' CONCEPT OF POSITION. We hear the remark, "that's my job," when someone perceives that his work role has been infringed on. "That's not my job" is a common response when someone is asked to act outside the parameters of his work role, as he defines it. Americans associate boundary maintenance with efficient performance. And, as one Japanese president observes, "Americans work best when the job is clearly defined...If everyone knows what he is supposed to do, the job gets done."

GATHERING AND SHARING INFORMATION (JAPANESE)

The discussion of CONCEPT OF THE JOB shows that the Japanese conceptualize their job in interactional terms. Concomitantly, the main domain they articulate when talking about the work process also emphasizes the interactional aspect. Japanese managers place great importance on GATHERING AND SHARING INFORMATION.

Two sub-themes that make up this major conceptual category echo common images of the interpersonal dynamics of Japanese management style (Ouchi, 1981; Pascale and Athos, 1981). One is the notion of a people-orientation: Work Revolves Around Human Relationships. Quoting a

manager named Kaz, "Human relationships are the basic thing. It is basic to performance and problem solving ...Human relationships are based on the daily work; it takes a long time to develop a good relationship." Getting a job done, therefore, is a human drama, not an individual-oriented one.

According to Kaz, human relationships are fundamental because, "A person can't do anything by himself. He has to get advice and help from others." Another manager formulates it this way: "Each person must consider the relationship with the other person. This is the base for teamwork." These statements reflect the sub-theme that Work Involves Teamwork. Interestingly, the English-language term has entered the everyday Japanese vocabulary (chiimu waku) as a buzz word for an essential dimension of the work process. Effective action is predicated on seeking and giving cooperation.

Along with an ingrained belief in teamwork, Japanese managers have a sense of etiquette regarding it. Conventions of Information Flow is a third and important sub-theme. It has received little attention in the literature, although Peterson and Schwind (1977: 48-49) and Tsurumi (1984: 25) suggest that, using Tsurumi's words, "knowledge of the implicit rules influencing the give and take of personal relationships inside the firm" is crucial in Japanese organizations.

The conventions or rules undoubtedly vary from one company to another, and perhaps even from one group to

another within a firm, but two points stand out: (1) cooperation is wide-ranging, definitely crossing functional categories, and (2) pressure to follow the conventions is intense. Our stereotype of Japanese management dwells on "consensus" or "consultative" decision making. Japanese managers' comments, however, suggest that decision making merely represents one aspect of a broader process. Extensive, patterned communication characterizes the routine course of work.

Japanese in binationals lament that "Americans don't understand teamwork," a statement that really implies ignorance of all three sub-themes of information gathering and sharing. A number of managers describe how they consciously cultivate new patterns of communication among Americans. For example, Kaz says that when someone brings him a problem, he suggests, "Why don't you discuss that with Frank (or some other co-worker); he knows about that."

One American interestingly observes that in his company the process of gathering and sharing information may be just as important to Japanese management as the outcome of that process. A young junior manager, Robert responds in the following way to his Japanese boss's efforts to mold his behavior:

And it's a very slow, it's a very methodical process...A lot of people could never respond to that. I've talked to a lot of managers [in U.S. firms] where you're responsible to implement a project and where the result is more important than the process. Whereas in the Japanese company, the process is I think more important. THE RESULT IS OF COURSE IMPORTANT, BUT I THINK THE PROCESS IS

EQUALLY IMPORTANT, MAYBE MORE SO...At first I thought, 'Oh, this is bullshit. Just give me a budget and tell me what you want done and I'll get it done.' But he [the boss] kept bothering me.

Robert acknowledged that he grew to respect the patterns of interdependence his boss worked to develop. On the other hand, Americans predisposed to seek the "BLT (bright lights and trumpets)" kind of celebrity that Pascale and Athos (1981: 143) recognize as a common goal in the workplace might react differently.

IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIVERGENCE

IS IT ONLY COMPLAINTS?

Interview excerpts quoted in the text leave the impression that dissatisfaction abounds because of cultural divergence in work blueprints. Yet many managers, Japanese and American, thrive on the challenges of working in a binational setting. They enjoy piecing together an understanding of one another's societal and corporate cultures and using this knowledge to create synergistic work strategies. Furthermore, Japanese employees, for the most part, have more responsibility and autonomy than they would at the headquarters; this fact often makes them ambivalent about their inevitable rotation back to Japan.⁷

In addition, some Americans find a work environment guided by Japanese blueprints to be congenial for personal development and job satisfaction. Behavior subsumed under the category Flexibility in Task Allocation is noted most often. The most cogent expression of appreciation comes from an employee of Mitsubishi International Corporation (MIC) in New York City:

They're willing to actually distribute the workload according to what a person can handle. Responsibility makes me feel good...In my previous work, no way would they put me into a management position, with limited college and being a woman... [Here] they go by your abilities where most companies don't...The more I accomplish, the more they give me. If you make a mistake, they will shake their finger in your face, but they don't keep it pointing at you (Lifson, 1981: 20).

Some Americans also feel they do not have to work as

hard and that they have greater job security in a Japanese firm. Binationalists generally have been slow to fire unsatisfactory employees, largely because of Japanese managers' inclination to view the relationship between employee and company as a long-term one. Top management in several firms, however, indicated that their future policy would be closer to the American model.

We must consider the context in which data were gathered in order to comprehend the predominately negative thrust of employees' responses. The interview format offers people the cathartic experience of discoursing on their perceptions, their annoyances, their grievances, and their philosophies. The vehemence they sometimes voice seldom translates fully into action. Still, cultural variation in the way people conceptualize the attributes of their job and the process of doing that job adds a dimension to the work environment which compounds normal tensions. The following sections briefly consider the effect of cultural divergence on the mutual perceptions of Japanese and Americans and, consequently, their behavior in the workplace.

MUTUAL FRUSTRATIONS, MUTUAL PERCEPTIONS

AMERICANS

Feelings of "frustration," "confusion," "resentment," and "animosity" stand out as Americans' response to the binational setting. As mentioned, discrepancies in the way

Americans and Japanese map the CONCEPT OF THE JOB, especially the domain CONCEPT OF POSITION, bring the most heated reaction from Americans. The work environment obviously reflects the fact that the Japanese do not share Americans' predisposition for Defined Parameters, or their notion of a Correspondence Among Title, Duties, Rights and Pay.

Employees in firms where titles and job content are not culturally relevant tend to be resentful because they lack a sense of direction. Uncertainty can reach crisis proportions when the parameters of their job are not defined clearly or, if defined, not observed in the group process. In Americans' view, the manager's goals in large part crystallize through formally labeling and defining the job. Moreover, without the customary markers provided by a set of standardized positions, people conclude, "I have no place to go in this company."

A management "style" which in these and other ways (see Johnson and Ouchi, 1974: 62-63) fails to articulate the objectives of management so that Americans comprehend them, contributes to a common perception that the Japanese do not have clear objectives and goals and, therefore, are incompetent managers. The failure of a firm to establish conventional job categories, job definitions, or systems of evaluation also leads to the suspicion that many of the Japanese come to the binational without prior managerial experience. This helps nurture the perception that "they don't know what they're doing."

The elusiveness of the anticipated correspondence among title, responsibility, authority, and pay frustrates more than Americans' desire for clear objectives. The oft-heard complaint that "I do not have the necessary authority to carry out my responsibilities" many times is accompanied by the perception that the Japanese do not trust Americans enough to give them authority. Or, Americans feel the boss lacks respect for both the man and his position. The perception that Japanese management is trying to get around paying what it "should" when salary lags behind title and/or job content also rankles many managers.

Given the proclivity for PERSONALIZATION OF THE JOB, the feeling that they are not trusted or respected by their superiors bothers some Americans tremendously. When the common symbols of personal recognition also are missing -- if, for instance, as one MIC employee realizes, "you can't look for immediate gratification and a pat on the back (Lifson, 1981: 21)," Americans are doubly frustrated in their efforts to gain personal satisfaction in the workplace.

Concomitantly, dissonance between Japanese and American conceptualizations of the job directs attention to the particular RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESPONSIBILITY, AUTHORITY, AND RISK that is part of Americans' work blueprint. They tend to fear the ambiguity of situations where responsibility and authority are loosely defined. Ambiguity reverberates on a manager's self-image, largely by tempering his perceived ability to do his work. Many

feel that the PROCESS OF GETTING A JOB DONE is especially fraught with risk in the binational environment.

Inclined as they are to view the work process as an INDIVIDUAL-ORIENTED DRAMA, Americans encounter numerous other frustrations. Attempts to Maintain Job Boundaries have limited success in securing managers' ability to Follow a Job From Start To Finish or generally to maintain Control Over the Job. Obstacles to satisfying these aspects of Americans' work blueprint only heighten Americans' perception that the Japanese neither rate their capabilities highly nor trust them. Such hinderances also strengthen their perception that the Japanese are not competent managers. As Kevin (p. 43) intimates, it is counter-productive to break the flow of an individual's work with interference regarding "trivial" matters.

Overall, Americans perceive that the Japanese managers' primary orientation is toward the headquarters rather than toward the U.S. organization. This view derives in part from their interpretation of the Japanese concept of position. They might not understand the intricacies of the concept, but Americans recognize that the career and, to a large extent, the self-image of Japanese co-workers inextricably relates to their place in the parent firm.

One senses an undercurrent of resentment because Americans feel this orientation makes Japanese managers less sensitive to local personnel concerns than they might be otherwise. Voiced just as vehemently, however, is the conviction that the focus toward Japan adversely affects

business. Besides considering decision making prejudicially slow because all the "appropriate" people in Japan must be consulted, Americans often perceive that decisions favor the interests of the headquarters. One manager states it this way:

In our job there are many times we have to negotiate a difference of opinion. Maruhachi USA (pseudonym) wants to do it one way, and Maruhachi Ltd. [Japan] wants to do it another way...They [Japanese staff] tend to look at the political ramifications. What does it mean within the inner workings of Maruhachi? Who's going to be upset by it? Not whether it's good business judgement to do it for Maruhachi USA. Oh, they'll consider it. But if it comes to push versus shove, THEY WILL GO FOR THE POLITICAL WAY AND THEY WILL ALWAYS REMAIN LOYAL TO MARUHACHI Ltd. BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO GO BACK AND WORK FOR THAT COMPANY.

JAPANESE

Japanese managers' begin their U.S. sojourn well aware that their CONCEPT OF POSITION differs from Americans' in significant ways. They realize that their idea of a particular interconnection among formalized ranks or titles, prestige, work role and pay which has been labeled One's Place in the Company bears no resemblance to American practice. And it is received wisdom that most Americans have little interest in a slowly paced, Orderly Career Path within the boundaries of just one firm.

Yet, because of their culturally ingrained expectations regarding "position," Japanese managers frequently become annoyed by what they perceive as an American preoccupation with job titles and job parameters, as well as an impatience for promotions and pay raises. As one company

President laments, "Every time I let an American know I appreciate the job he's doing (by expanding his responsibilities), he asks for a raise." Similarly, Japanese often interpret Americans' openness to offers from other companies as lack of commitment or lack of loyalty.

The Japanese are less prepared for the differences in CONCEPT OF THE JOB which trouble the interface between Americans' notion of position and their own notion of responsibility. We saw that the much emphasized domain SHAPE OF ONE'S RESPONSIBILITY stresses Flexibility in Task Allocation, Flexibility of Action, and Responsibility for Co-Workers. Although familiar with the common view of Americans as "specialists" and Japanese as "generalists" (Ouchi, 1981; Pascale and Athos, 1981), many Japanese managers are bothered by Americans who cannot adapt to performing unconventionally diverse work tasks or who narrowly envision their range of action in carrying out a task. They consider such employees to be "inflexible" and inflexibility, in the Japanese mind, seriously diminishes effectiveness.

Moral indignation frequently colors the Japanese response to Americans' seemingly narrow conceptualization of the job. This is especially true when, as in the example drawn from the company President Harry (p. 34), American behavior is interpreted as self-serving concern with "avoiding blame." Another manager expressed it this way: "Americans aren't willing to accept responsibility for their mistakes. If they make a mistake, they should say

'I'm sorry' and then try to correct it instead of trying to say it was another guy's fault because this other guy didn't do his job." In addition, the perceived tendency of Americans to identify and protect their "rights" also prompts many Japanese to react with indignation.

In fact, given the emphasis Japanese place on Balancing Self and Group Interests, much of Americans' effort to define job parameters and achieve desired correspondences among title, responsibilities, authority and pay strikes the Japanese as improperly ego-centered. Steve's struggle to establish his position as Product Marketing Manager (p. 21-22) vividly illustrates this point.

The Japanese have similar complaints when it comes to the PROCESS OF GETTING A JOB DONE. The domain of GATHERING AND SHARING INFORMATION, built on the premises that Work Revolves Around Human Relationships and Work Involves Teamwork, demands a flexible mapping of responsibility. It also requires an internalized map of the Conventions of Information Flow. Japanese managers are inclined to view Americans' individual-oriented strategies for doing a job not only as a personal shortcoming of the individual but as indication of American inefficiency or ineffectiveness.

Some of the most candid Japanese interviewed express a clear sense of superiority to many of their American counterparts. Differences in culturally-based work blueprints substantially contribute to this attitude.⁸ One manager, for instance, vehemently contends that "it is only common sense" to consult with everyone who is going to be

affected by a decision, an approach he observed only rarely among Americans. Because they do not comprehend the particular conventions of information flow followed by Japanese personnel, do not conceptualize teamwork in the same way and, generally, have a more instrumental view of interpersonal relations in the workplace, it is difficult for Americans to win the trust of Japanese managers.

As Sullivan and Peterson (1982) point out in their study of joint ventures, trust is an element of great concern for the Japanese. Interestingly, they report that Japanese managers view their dominance in the venture as important for building trust with Americans. The researchers conclude: "The Japanese need for power over Americans as a prelude to building trust appears to be based on deep-rooted cultural values and on perceptions of Americans as lacking in these values (1982:37)."

ACHIEVING ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

The preceding section illustrates the process of intercultural communication. Given divergent cultural conditioning, Japanese and Americans tend to attach their respective meaning to each others' behavior. Very often mutual perceptions are negative because their respective notions of common sense, or even propriety, have been violated. One group's (or individual's) perception of the other's motives, intentions, or abilities in fact may be inaccurate. For example, are we to accept unquestioningly that both Japanese and Americans are incompetent, that

Americans lack commitment, or that the Japanese feel no loyalty to the subsidiary?

Nonetheless, perceptual differences promote an obvious "we/they" dichotomy in the minds of Japanese and American employees and, concomitantly, influence behavioral responses to people and events. And, apart from the issue of perception, work blueprints do inform patterns of action at both formal and informal levels of the organization.

Interview data give largely idealized pictures of behavior, as well as subjective interpretations of cause and effect. The evidence, however, amply supports the conclusion that cultural dissonance in work blueprints not only affects the individual's ability to realize his goals within the organization, as much of the preceding discussion has indicated, but also the binational's ability to meet its objectives.

One example demonstrates particularly well how the existence of divergent blueprints tempers organizational effectiveness. It also demonstrates the relevance of the intercultural communication paradigm as an analytical framework. The case involves tension between the Japanese Executive Vice President, Yoshi, and the American Vice President of Marketing, Paul, in a newly formed spin-off from LASCO. Their disagreement mainly stems from the clash between two domains of their respective cognitive work maps: Yoshi's conceptualization of the SHAPE OF ONE'S RESPONSIBILITY and Paul's CONCEPT OF POSITION. The situation echos the concerns expressed earlier by Bob

(p. 19) regarding authority.

Yoshi believes that a manager at Paul's level should try to be at the workplace throughout the day, as a visible role model and accessible advisor for subordinates. He was unhappy with the flexible schedule maintained by Paul who often arrived late or spent an entire day away from the company. Paul, on the other hand, feels that much of his work can best be done away from the office. If he does not appear until 10:00 a.m., he was working at home or in a business meeting elsewhere; he even views out of town "vacations" with his family (taken more frequently than among Japanese of equal standing) primarily as work time for himself. Given his high position, Paul expected to have the authority to determine his personal schedule. Moreover, before the subsidiary's formation, Paul headed an independent company with exclusive distribution rights for the product now handled through the subsidiary. He was, therefore, accustomed to having extensive autonomy.

When I first visited the company, antipathy between the two managers had taken on overtones of the "we/they" dichotomy. "Japanese" or "American" expectations, respectively, were thought to be unreasonable. The response of various employees, Japanese as well as American, indicated that the apparent friction inhibited the effective flow of information throughout the organization. Additionally, employees most directly affected expressed low morale. The immediate problem was resolved by placing Paul in another closely affiliated

subsidiary of the parent firm.

Anecdotal data indicate that, besides communication and morale, cultural dissonance adversely affects motivation and turnover rates. For example, according to their own comments, vague instructions together with vague job definitions encourage laxity among some Americans. Occasionally I sensed that this purportedly relaxed behavior reflected their resentment over the lack of direction given them.

Many Americans working in binationals contend that turnover is unusually high. A number of leave-takings I have observed occurred because Americans could not see a clear career path within the firm. The absence of a set of progressive positions a young manager could strive for was as discouraging as the suspicion that most top posts were defined as "Japanese." Additional circumstances confounding Americans' expectations of what their position and the work process should entail triggered other resignations, such as Steve's (p. 22).

A few people interviewed cited the binational as an especially stressful work environment. The ambiguity inherent in job definitions and weak control over the work process certainly resonate with recent findings regarding occupational stress among Americans. For example, some of the work conditions that a 1984 study by the organization 9 to 5 found to be most stressful for women -- pressure without having clout and not being able to decide how to do your work, parallel the situation of many American managers

in binationals. Stress due to the gap between Japanese and American work blueprints very likely lowers organizational effectiveness through its negative impact on variables such as communication, morale, and turnover.

DISCUSSION

The particular ethnographic approach central to this analysis of the binational work environment gives us the tools for uncovering and describing, in its own terms, the respective system of predominately tacit cultural meanings which guides Japanese and American behavior in the workplace. Using domain analysis of taped interviews, we are able to transcend popular stereotypes of "work expectations." These stereotypes have limited analytical utility not only because they are oversimplified, but because they tend to merge cognitive and non-cognitive elements such as, for the Japanese, slow promotion and evaluation and an emphasis on "collective values."

The conceptual framework of the study holds much promise for organization and comparative management research. Scholars in the field only recently have begun to recognize the value of a research design that systematically develops the concept of culture and, furthermore, formulates it in terms of native-view paradigms (Smircich, 1983; Gregory, 1983). This kind of framework allows us to focus attention on "multicultural" interaction, between persons of different nationality or even representatives of different occupational subcultures. And, as Adler (1981) points out, organizational research published in U.S. journals tends to slight the interactional perspective. The real essence of Japanese-style management in binationals is reflected in the areas

of individual conduct and interpersonal relations where "culture" is synonymous with the rules for behavior.

This exploratory study only partially elaborates Japanese and American work blueprints. More extensive analysis of the transcripts, along with further interviewing, undoubtedly would reveal additional macrodomains and domains as well as additional subsets of these broad conceptual categories. It also would discover more variation among Americans based on occupational or industry differences. At the present stage of analysis, the research results highlight the consistency among Americans on the one hand and Japanese on the other. Not only do significant numbers of persons dwell on similar issues in a similar manner, but we can detect general cultural themes that integrate the blueprints of each national group.

Spradley defines a "cultural theme" as a "cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning (1979: 186)." A major principle underlying American blueprints is the individual's perceived need to protect himself by clarifying boundaries. Japanese blueprints, in contrast, are integrated by a notion of social control achieved through rules of diffuse personal interaction.

While the work blueprints discussed here largely conform to the commonly juxtaposed stereotypes of Americans emphasizing the individual and Japanese the collectivity,

domain analysis uncovers in greater detail the rules which guide behavior. Such knowledge has immense practical relevance, far beyond characterizations of a nationality as individualistic or group-oriented. For example, according to Johnson and Ouchi (1974: 63), Japanese managers want American employees to take more initiative instead of waiting for objectives to be established from above. But, unless Americans understand the guidelines by which Japanese show initiative, their independent actions are likely to incur disapprobation. Clearly, a good understanding of Japanese blueprints subsumed under the domains SHAPE OF ONE'S RESPONSIBILITY and GATHERING AND SHARING INFORMATION would enhance Americans' chances of gaining approval from Japanese superiors.

Observers familiar with American organizations correctly point out that all of the strains between Japanese and Americans outlined in the body of this paper may also be found in the exclusively American setting. One person, for example, may criticize a co-worker for not being a "team player." The question then arises: what does "culture" have to do it; are not these variations in behavior universal? The cultural difference between Japanese and Americans becomes clear when we consider, first of all, the meaning of particular types of behavior within each society and, secondly, the particular way that meaning is expressed.

The American who raps a fellow worker for not being a

team player almost certainly will not bring the same moral tone to the criticism as a Japanese making the same charge. It is noteworthy that, in studying the experience of British workers under Japanese management, White and Trevor (1983) discovered the same sense of moral outrage among Japanese managers that I did in response to what they perceived as "private careerism at the expense of the company (108)." Japanese managers were indignant about British managers' lack of "loyalty" when they left the firm for a better situation, and about British managers' failure to share information. Americans lack of "loyalty" to the firm or their failure to share information. Going back to the notion of "teamwork," it has much stronger meaning among Japanese as a normative pattern of behavior. Moreover, as indicated above in the example regarding initiative, the rules for what constitutes proper team behavior will differ substantially among Japanese and Americans, as will the circumstances under which teamwork is stressed.

As mentioned earlier, the blueprints presented here focus on dimensions of work expectations where cultural clash between Japanese and Americans is most evident. A broader Japanese work map would acknowledge, for instance, individual competition and provide rules for acceptable competitive behavior. Japanese notions of competition, however, generally are played out within the context of parent company politics rather than within the boundaries of the binational. Furthermore, the Japanese vocabulary

dwells on collective harmony. This orientation is intensified when Japanese managers speak in English, using the cooperation-centered buzz words and phrases that form the Western stereotype of Japanese management. My knowledge of patterns of competition among Japanese comes from long-term association with members of LASCO and headquarters personnel. Even after several years of observation, direct inquiries about the competitive behavior I see, in particular personal rivalries, elicit embarrassed looks instead of informative answers. Except with intimate friends, such behavior is talked about only indirectly.

The every-day English vocabulary, in contrast, emphasizes individual endeavors and concerns as much as, if not more than, cooperation and teamwork. American notions of teamwork do not seem impeded by the binational setting. Thus Americans do not talk about it much in interviews. Many do however, as we have seen, voice moral indignation that their individual-oriented concept of "the job," and "getting a job done" is often challenged.

It is important eventually to illuminate the non-stereotypical aspects of Japanese and American blueprints. Cultural synergy models of management, considered by Adler (1980) to be the most effective organizational form in a multicultural environment, depend on knowing each group's rules for even the less dominant dimensions of cognitive work maps.

Without question, cognitive work maps influence the perceptions and behavior of persons in multicultural organizational settings. Discussion in the text nevertheless touches on non-cultural factors that also affect formal and informal structures. The relationship between the parent firm and the subsidiary or branch is of particular importance. Headquarters policy regarding personnel and business matters, based as much on exigency as on a cognitive grammar, strongly tempers career opportunities for Americans as well as Japanese and colors day-to-day activity within the firm. The impact of culture on individual and organizational behavior can be understood only within a holistic framework. Intensive participant or naturalistic observation is needed in order to evaluate the interconnection of cultural and non-cultural factors.

NOTES

1. Japan often is described as having a dual economic structure because of the coexistence of symbiotically linked enterprise sectors made up of large enterprises, on the one hand, and medium and small enterprises on the other (Broadbridge, 1966; Cole, 1971; Dore, 1973, Hollerman, 1972). The common stereotype of Japan's employment system and organizational behavior includes practices, such as "lifetime employment," most characteristic of the large enterprise sector. It is noteworthy that recent analyses point to greater diversity within the large enterprise sector than the popular image indicates (see, for example, Cole, 1979, and Levine, 1983, for a discussion of labor mobility.)
2. Silin (1976: 8-9) discusses the process by which intellectual and interpersonal contradictions in organizations, caused by conflicting norms within a society, "force participants to solidify their positions in ways that make them easier for an outsider to understand." He argues that "when confrontations occur, premises that normally go unstated are frequently articulated in attempts by each party to make clear the basis of their position." While Silin is not speaking specifically of contradictions growing out of an intercultural setting, the principle he describes equally applies to cross-cultural differences in norms.
3. In her discussion of "Occupying the Proper Place," Lebra (1976: chapter 5) focuses on the term bun which in Japanese means "part" or "fraction" and, in the jargon of social science, simultaneously "status" and "role." The term frequently is used idiomatically as in "bun o mamoru," meaning "to adhere to one's bun." The implications of the term derive from the Confucian conceptualization of society as an organic whole: an individual is viewed as a fraction of society; bun-holders are interdependent; and every member of society (or social group) should be a bun-holder (1976: 67-69). It is interesting that, in addition to shikaku, another informal term designating the formal ranks (tokyu) in Mr. Yamanaka's company is mibun. The mi ideograph represents the concept of "person." Mibun in general usage refers to "social position."
4. Large white-collar organizations, such as trading companies or banks, predominately hire university graduates. This is particularly true with regard to male employees. Manufacturing firms hire many lower school graduates but, as Dore (1973) describes, they are on a separate career track from the university graduates. In all companies, the career path of men and women is different, with women having limited opportunity to reach even the lowest ranks of management.

5. At LASCO, I observed considerable overlap in assigned responsibilities in the areas of marketing, sales, order processing, and new product development. The organization of the firm into work groups was influenced by the structure of the parent company where individual groups encompass some aspects of each function and close coordination among work groups is required. My impression is that other firms in the Southern California sample exhibit a similar tendency to diffuse these various activities but I do not have enough data to generalize.
6. Japanese companies rarely send unmarried men to overseas branches and subsidiaries for extended assignments, at least to countries where the standard of living is high and their family is expected to accompany them. Married men, reportedly, are more stable and productive than young unmarried men. (There is pressure on men from superiors and peers to marry by their late 20's.) As a general policy, women are not assigned overseas.
7. The normal U.S. assignment is roughly five years, although some companies are lengthening the time for key personnel in important subsidiaries or branches. Headquarters personnel departments fear that long stays in the U.S. will make employees too "Americanized" for comfortable reentry into Japanese corporate life. Most men try to avoid unusually long overseas assignments. Besides fearing that they will lose touch with headquarters politics, they are afraid their children will lose both their Japanese cultural identity and their ability to succeed in the highly competitive Japanese school system.
8. A number of factors besides frustration over cultural differences contribute to feelings of superiority. Some Japanese managers come to binationals that, in the initial hiring, were unable to recruit the most talented Americans; therefore, they find some comparatively unproductive employees. Moreover, the recent literature touting Japanese management and production techniques has convinced many of the superiority of "Japanese style" management. Finally, most managers have graduated from the top schools in Japan and, subsequently, joined elite companies; some are inclined to feel better educated and qualified than their American counterparts.

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