

AMBASSADOR DORAEMON: JAPAN'S POP CULTURE DIPLOMACY IN CHINA AND
SOUTH KOREA

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Public Policy

By

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Washington, DC
April 12, 2012

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ABSTRACT

Despite a growing literature on Japanese soft power and public diplomacy, little research quantifies its effects or orients it in policy discussions. This paper investigates the relationship of consumption of Japanese popular culture and opinions of Japan among mainland Chinese and South Koreans. Data from the 2008 Chicago Council on Global Affairs Soft Power in Asia public opinion poll is analyzed with OLS regression methods and shows a statistically significant association between frequent consumption of Japanese popular culture and a higher opinion of Japan. This association is dependent on the age of the respondent for South Koreans but not Chinese. These results suggest that Japan should seek to expand its popular culture throughout East Asia to increase its standing in the region. Additionally, fear of Japanese military strength and having met a Japanese person are found to be statistically significant and robust predictors of high feelings towards Japan, indicating other areas where Japan may focus attention to develop better relations.

INDEX WORDS: Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, Japan, China, South Korea

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank would like to thank the following people for their help and support throughout the process. From Georgetown University, I would like to thank Dr. Barbara Schone and Dr. Adam Thomas for their comments and advice during the thesis process as well as my thesis advisor, Dr. Ward Kay, for his continued support over the last year. In addition, I'd like to thank Jesse Morris, for her support over the many years we've known each other, and Neal DeVorse, for providing a ready distraction whenever writing became too much.

This work would not be at the level it is without your support. Your contributions have made this work better; what mistakes remain are mine and mine alone.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Something unexpected has happened. Japan is beloved in Asia!”¹

“Japan’s “soft power” has its limits. Without a historical reconciliation with China and South Korea, Japan is unlikely to truly win the hearts and minds of the Chinese and Korean people[.]”²

Despite growing importance to regional and global stability as well as an expanding economic and political interdependence,³ Japan is not well-liked in East Asia. A BBC World Service Poll in April, 2010 found that only 29% of Chinese respondents viewed Japanese influence positively. Korean-Japanese relations were more positive, as a majority (64%) had a positive view of Japan’s influence, but nearly 30% of those polled still viewed Japanese influence as negative (BBC World Service Poll, 2010). Poor relations with its neighbors constrains Japan’s policy options in East Asia.

How should Japan increase its regional standing? This paper offers an analysis of one policy option—increasing Japan’s regional soft power. Soft power would allow Japan to achieve its policy goals by increasing its ability to persuade and attract other states. Specifically, culture can serve as an essential source of soft power if it is attractive to the target

¹Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 1

²Lam, 2007, p. 357

³For example, the report notes that, for Japan, imports from East Asia increased 16 percentage points (27% to 43%) and exports to East Asia increased 17 percentage points (30% to 47%) from 1990-2004. In addition, the proportion of Japanese investments in East Asia to its total overseas investments increased 5 percentage points (29% to 34%) in the period 1990-2003 from historical levels of 1951-1989. See Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), 2005, p. 13

state (Nye, 2011, pp. 21, 84). In Japan's case, its culture may be particularly potent; McGray (2002, p. 53) highlights the growing cultural appeal of Japan, noting that it is one of only a few countries whose culture easily and quickly jumps borders. One of Japan's strengths, as he puts it, is its "national cool."

Japanese pop culture is undeniably popular throughout the world. A Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) report notes that "[o]ver 60% of the animated cartoons broadcast around the world are made in Japan." Japanese numbers for comic books (*manga*), video games, and music, particularly in East Asia, are astounding (pp. 2-5).⁴ *Anime* and *manga* are popular in China, where the market was estimated to be worth 14.6 billion USD in 2008 (Cooper-Chen, 2010, p. 87). In South Korea, despite the fairly recent and gradual lift of the ban on Japanese cultural imports (beginning in 1998 and finishing fully in 2004), Japanese pop culture is popular with youth (Yasumoto, 2011, pp. 315-316; Black, Epstein, & Tokita, 2010, p. viii).

The Japanese government has made tentative steps to use Japan's cultural strength to support policy. It has promoted Japan's cultural resources, in particular its pop culture, throughout Asia as part of its broader public diplomacy efforts over the last decade. The central government reorganized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to spur cooperation between the public and private sectors in promoting popular culture abroad, established an international *manga* (comic book) award in 2007, and (perhaps only symbolically) appointed the pop culture icon *Doraemon*⁵ as Anime Ambassador of Japan in 2009 (Nakamura, 2011,

⁴In particular, the JETRO report suggests that *manga* sales in East Asia garnered approximately 80 billion yen (roughly 720 million 2005 US Dollars) in original sales, and that Japanese pop music (J-POP) remains more popular in East Asia than in the West.

⁵I find the choice of *Doraemon* to be interesting; as Iwabuchi (2002, pp. 1, 211) points out, "*Doraemon* is one of the most popular animation series in many Asian countries, but it has never become popular in Western countries." Ambassador *Doraemon* may not be an effective choice for the West, but I believe it would be a very effective one in East Asia.

p. 6; Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), 2008, 3.4; Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), 2009, 3.4).

However, there lies the contradiction. Japanese pop culture throughout East Asia is well-known and often consumed. The Japanese government has made tentative steps to use its pop culture to increase its soft power. Despite that theoretically hospitable atmosphere, relations between Japan and its neighboring states haven't notably improved over the last decade.

Is Japanese pop culture failing to increase Japan's soft power in East Asia? Or are the positive effects of Japanese pop culture masked by other factors in the relationship consumers share with Japan? Unraveling how and why and if Japanese pop culture affects Japan's standing with its neighbors can help Japan determine diplomatic and policy priorities.

If there is no effect of consuming pop culture on Japan's standing in East Asia, this would suggest that Japan should focus its efforts on other policies. On the other hand, if there is an effect, Japan should increase its efforts to expand cultural exchange and to spread its popular culture throughout East Asia.

This paper seeks to identify what effect consumption of Japanese pop culture has on how Japan is viewed by people in China and South Korea, using data from a 2008 Chicago Council of Global Affairs public opinion poll. This poll is considered to be "the most authoritative analysis of soft power in Asia to date" (Bouton & Holyk, 2011, p. 197). Multivariate regression analysis identifies potential effects of Japanese pop culture on opinions of Japan.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

2.1 SOFT POWER

Soft power, though a fairly recent academic and political topic, is human behavior that has existed since, Nye (2011) suggests, time immemorial. In short, soft power achieves policy goals and preferred outcomes by persuasion, attraction, and framing. Culture, political values, and foreign policies are the main resources of soft power. Soft power can either attract elites of a foreign country directly, or attract its people, thereby constraining the policy options of the state.

Public diplomacy is one way the state develops soft power: public diplomacy creates attraction which in turn creates an enabling environment for policies (2011, pp. 20-21, 81-105). One key distinction is that soft power can be employed by all levels of civil society (state, sub-national government, non-government actor) while public diplomacy is broadly conceived to be primarily a tool of the state.

It is not always easy to achieve desired results with soft power; it takes a long time to see results and may be difficult to determine the final effect of soft power. One upside is the low cost compared to a build-up of military power, allowing middle powers like Norway and pacifist powers like Japan to have larger roles internationally than they would have otherwise (Vyas, 2011, pp. 45-48). Hard power (such as the strength of the military) can support or detract from soft power depending on how it is used (Lee, 2011, p. 35; Nye, 2011, pp. 21-22).

2.2 PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

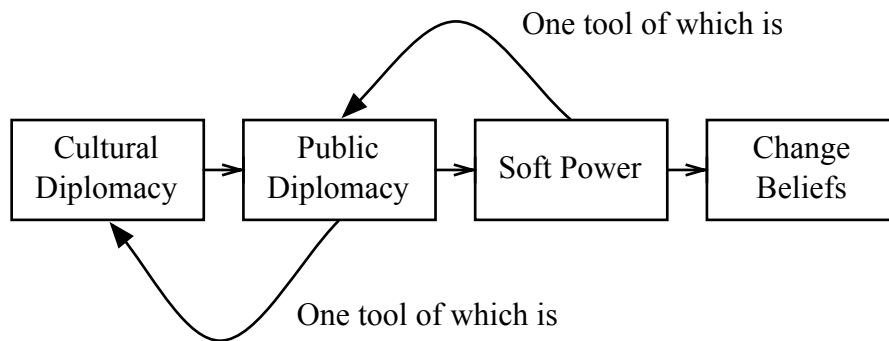
There are as many definitions of public diplomacy as there are authors on the subject. McDowell (2008, p. 7), quoting the Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy, poses the earliest definition: “the actions of governments to inform and influence foreign publics.” He further notes that public diplomacy has two necessary aspects; a role for the state and a “clear goal or message”—it is not public diplomacy without both (2008, p. 8). Lord (2005, p. 3) defines public diplomacy as communication between a state and a foreign public to make it easier to achieve the state’s foreign goals and to lessen opposition to them from abroad. Gregory (2008, p. 276) notes that though public diplomacy uses different techniques than those used by the private sector and politicians in public relations, public diplomacy relies on “thick relationships” with civil society to succeed. Regardless of the definition, two aspects are necessary: public diplomacy is undertaken by the state and it requires a clear goal.

Cultural diplomacy is slightly different. Pigman (2010, p. 181) defines cultural diplomacy as the use of cultural exchange to promote better ties that requires neither the distinct goal nor the state actor that public diplomacy does; they are “distinct...if overlapping spheres.”

In the Japanese context, cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy are often conflated. Ogoura (2009, pp. 44-45) agrees that cultural diplomacy refers to the use of culture to promote a country’s influence abroad and does not require a specific goal. However, in his definition of the role of the Public Diplomacy Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ogawa (2009, p. 278) notes that the department’s primary responsibility is cultural diplomacy. Mori (2006, pp. 20-21) suggests that accepted definitions of public diplomacy are inadequate in Japan’s case and should be expanded to include cultural diplomacy, despite its lack of clear goal.

Is the consumption of Japanese popular culture abroad public diplomacy or cultural diplomacy? The answer is not clear. As it stands, the spread of Japanese popular culture abroad is almost fully a private sector initiative, though the Japanese government, as stated previously, has made some small policy overtures. This paper defines the spread of popular culture as a *potential* public diplomacy strength for Japan and investigates whether or not it would be an effective tool.

Figure 2.1: Soft Power, Public Diplomacy, and Cultural Diplomacy



2.2.1 JAPAN'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Japanese efforts to use its cultural strengths in public diplomacy began in earnest in the late 1980s, when cultural exchange became a top priority under Prime Minister Takeshita. The Council on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy, created in 2004 by Prime Minister Koizumi, recommended that Japan seize the opportunity offered by the popularity of its pop culture overseas to broaden and deepen interest and understanding in Japan (Ogawa, 2009, pp. 276-279).

In the same year, Japan began to officially use public diplomacy with the creation of the Public Diplomacy Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) (Mori, 2006, p. 35; Ogawa, 2009, p. 228). Currently, official public diplomacy actors are MOFA and the Japan Foundation, but there are other minor actors who use public diplomacy in Japan,

including the Cabinet Office, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, and the autonomous Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO) (Mori, 2006, p. 35).

2.3 JAPANESE POP CULTURE IN CHINA AND SOUTH KOREA

2.3.1 CHINA

There are roughly 500 million consumers of Japanese *anime* and *manga* in China, a market worth roughly 14.6 billion USD. It is most popular among youth and young adults. Japanese pop culture was first allowed into modern China in 1979, seven years after the resumption of diplomatic ties (Cooper-Chen, 2010, pp. 87-88).

Pirated Japanese media is widespread, due to the delay needed for official imports to undergo censorship (Cooper-Chen, 2010, p. 89). A Japanese government report suggests that in 2000-2001, pirated Japanese pop culture products circulating in China represented an economic loss of over 17 billion USD for Japanese producers (Nakano, 2008, p. 122).

It goes without saying that China's market is huge. The broad popularity of Japanese pop culture has forced the Chinese government to limit the amount of foreign cartoons that may be shown on television, as well as to institute policies to spur on domestic production (Cooper-Chen, 2010, p. 88; Nakano, 2008, pp. 123-124; Keane, 2010, p. 14.8). Regardless, today's young adults in China have largely grown up watching Japanese cartoons (Nakano, 2008, p. 112).

There are, however, several tensions shared between China and Japan that undercut policymaking. These include how Japan's actions in World War II are represented (such as anti-Japanese riots by youth in China in 2005 when Japan revised their history textbooks), visits by the Japanese Prime Minister in the early 2000s to Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, which interments the souls of fallen soldiers, including war criminals, and a territorial dispute over the Senkaku / Diaoyutai islands (Vyas, 2011, pp. 72-73).

2.3.2 SOUTH KOREA

South Korea banned Japanese popular culture until the early 2000s, but Koreans consumed Japanese popular culture through piracy (Cooper-Chen, 2010, p. 97). The decision to ban cultural imports stemmed from anger towards the Japanese for their actions in the wartime era and a desire to keep Korea's culture distinct from Japan's (Cooper-Chen, 2010, p. 87; Yasumoto, 2011, p. 312). The ban was officially lifted in 1998. However, some content was screened in South Korea without official approval before 1998 (when the ban began to be lifted) and *anime* in particular was not permitted until 2004. The South Korean government officially allowed other Japanese media into the country during the period of 1998-2004 (Yasumoto, 2011, pp. 315-316).

However, even today, there is a focus in South Korean media on Japanese actions during World War II and the territorial dispute over the Takeshima / Dokdo islands (Epstein, 2010, pp. 01.1-01.4). China and South Korea share many of the same tensions with Japan relating to their shared wartime past.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research in the area of public diplomacy, soft power, and Japan is limited due to the relative youth of the area: the idea of soft power was only developed in the last couple of decades, and academic study of Japan as a producer of soft power only developed after McGray's article in 2002. As a result, there is a quickly growing theoretical literature but little empirical research available. Most empirical research is only from the last four years, owing in part to a lack of data that continues today.

3.1 POPULAR CULTURE IN EAST ASIA AND JAPAN

To what degree Japanese culture creates soft power in East Asia is contested. Dalot-bul (2009) notes that it may not matter whether Japanese pop culture creates soft power; Japan's policy makers already assume that it does. He suggests that Japan has consistently used culture as a way to represent Japan as non-threatening, and that the spread of Japanese (popular) culture abroad has a domestic use as well: it is used by the government to bolster confidence in the state and develop patriotic feelings (2009, pp. 257-260). If this is accurate, Japan will promote its popular culture regardless how effectively it changes beliefs.

Lam (2007, pp. 354-360) also notes that cultural diplomacy is appealing to politicians in Japan, but that it may not be as effective as considered by others. He suggests that Japanese soft power will be limited without reconciliation with China and South Korea on historical tensions. Japan lacks concrete goals for using its soft power and, should they

develop concrete goals in the future, Japan's soft power may have no effect if those goals run contrary to the interests of its neighbors.

Though Japanese popular culture in East and Southeast Asia is well-known, Otmazgin (2008, pp. 75, 92-96) suggests that this does not convert into "diplomatic power" for Japan. In a survey of over 200 university students, respondents in South Korea noted that while they enjoyed Japanese popular culture, they remained ambivalent or distrustful of Japanese policies due in part to Japan's wartime actions. This suggests that consumption of popular culture may not have a strong effect, if it has any at all.

A survey of American viewers of *Iron Chef*, a Japanese television program, suggests that consumers do not identify what is enjoyable in the show with Japan, but rather enjoy it without forming a conscious link with Japan. Japanese popular culture may be widely consumed but for the reasons above, it is difficult to suggest this creates soft power (Lukacs, 2010, pp. 414-417, 420-422). This is somewhat related to Iwabuchi's *mukokusei*, a concept suggesting that Japanese cultural products lack a sense of "Japaneseness." He suggests that consumers in East Asia may know of the Japanese origin of cultural commodities, but do not connect to Japan on a personal level as a result (2002, p. 28).

Lee (2011, pp. 19-21) identifies Japan's economic success, high level of education, culture (both ancient and modern), official development assistance, and (potentially) its status as a pacifist state as areas of Japanese soft power. However, she identifies opaque diplomacy and policymaking systems, a lack of international knowledge of Japan's role as a large donor country, lack of hard power, and most importantly, the history textbook and Yasukuni shrine issues as impediments to Japan's use of soft power. Fukushima (2011, p. 79) highlights the same concerns.

Leheny (2006, pp. 229-232) suggests that one type of Japanese soft power in Asia might be the widely held image of Japan as a modern country. Japanese pop culture showed an image of modernity that South Korean consumers aspired to as South Korea modernized.

He also cites scholars Nakano and Wu in suggesting that consumers in China might hold Japan as an example for China as it develops today. Though this might be one form of soft power, Leheny notes that it may be difficult to use this for any specific policy goal.

Katsumata (2011, pp. 8-13, 22-23) notes examples of how pop culture has affected policy decisions, suggesting that South Korean consumers enamored with pirated Japanese pop culture influenced Korean policymakers to lift the ban on Japanese cultural goods in the early 2000s. He also notes that pop culture has been particularly strong in influencing the tastes of youth and that it will drive further and continued regional integration.

3.2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH IN CULTURE AND SOFT POWER

There has been some empirical research that looks at the effect of culture on political opinions, but it remains an emerging field with few studies to date. Current research returns mixed and conflicting results as to whether consumption of popular culture or media affects one's opinion of a foreign state.

Though concerned with news media and not popular culture, Nisbet et al. (2004, pp. 25-28) find significant results in an analysis of Middle Eastern news media consumers and political opinions of the US. The authors use an OLS hierarchical regression analysis and find that gender, education, frequency of exposure to television, source of news, frequency of attention to the US, and its interaction with the source of news to be significant in predicting anti-American attitudes. Level of income and age were not found to be significant predictors. This study offers insights into influential individual characteristics, but as it pertains to news media and not popular culture, it may only be tangentially related.

Using a multivariate regression analysis of a survey of Japanese tourists in South Korea, Kim et al. (2007, pp. 1349-1350) find a statistically significant association between a positive image change of Korea and appreciation of Korean traditional culture, age, gender

and level of education. This survey suffers from selection bias, as its sample is drawn from tourists already in South Korea who are likely not representative of the population at large.

Using a study of roughly 3,000 university students from countries in Asia, Katsumata and Iida (2011, pp. 8-12) use an ordered logit regression to predict the effect of frequency of consuming popular culture from abroad on the degree of self-identification with Asia and their level of desired regional integration in Asia. They find statistically significant associations with frequent exposure to Asian pop cultures. As those who self-identify as “Asian” are likely to not have negative feelings towards other countries in Asia, degree of self-identification with Asia could be a useful proxy for feelings towards Japan. This survey suffers from some selection bias as the target is only university students, however it may suggest as well that the effects may be limited by age or education.

Two recent studies on soft power in Asia use the Chicago Council on Global Affairs poll that this paper uses. Jhee and Lee (2011, pp. 52-59) use the data to measure how each country views the soft power of other countries. They find that Japan’s pop culture (an affective dimension of soft power) is poorly perceived by China and South Korea, and suggest prejudice on the part of Chinese and South Koreans may color the results.

Bouton and Holyk (2011, pp. 197, 210-215) regress a vector of indicators of US influence on various measures of American soft power in Asia. They attempt to discover which types of soft power affect US influence in a country, as they believe that soft power causes influence rather than influence causing soft power. For both China and South Korea, cultural influence was found to be a statistically significant predictor of US influence. In addition, views of the military and contact with Americans were found to have a statistically significant association in some countries and not in others.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Measuring the effectiveness of public diplomacy programs and soft power is difficult. The usefulness of public opinion polling is limited in that it cannot concretely show the effectiveness of any particular public diplomacy program. However, public opinion polls are useful because most other methods of evaluating public diplomacy programs remain underfunded or do not exist. Longitudinal data is preferable to cross-sectional, but cost remains a prohibitive factor in developing data (Pahlavi, 2007, p. 264-266). In other words, while analyzing cross-sectional public opinion data may not be the best option, it is the best of the options open to researchers.

This paper identifies what association, if any, Japanese pop culture has with feelings towards Japan. Since this is less concerned with any actual program and more with the underlying processes, an analysis of public opinion polls may still yield useful information. In addition, it remains one of the only viable paths of analysis.

Many variables likely affect both the consumption of pop culture and one's feelings towards Japan. As noted previously, individual characteristics including age, gender, level of education, and whether one lives in a rural or urban location likely affect both (Kim et al., 2007; Kondo, 2008; Liou, 2010; Vyas, 2011, p. 56). Views of historical tensions between Japan and South Korea or Japan and China, including territorial disputes (Takeshima / Dokdo in South Korea and Senkaku / Diaoyutai in China), Japan's history textbook issue, and visits by the Japanese Prime Minister to Yasukuni shrine likely affect both variables as well (Fukushima, 2011; Vyas, 2011). Whether Japan's Self-Defense Force is viewed as a

form of hard power likely has an affect, as hard power may have an affect on forms of soft power like cultural consumption (Lee, 2011; Nye, 2011).

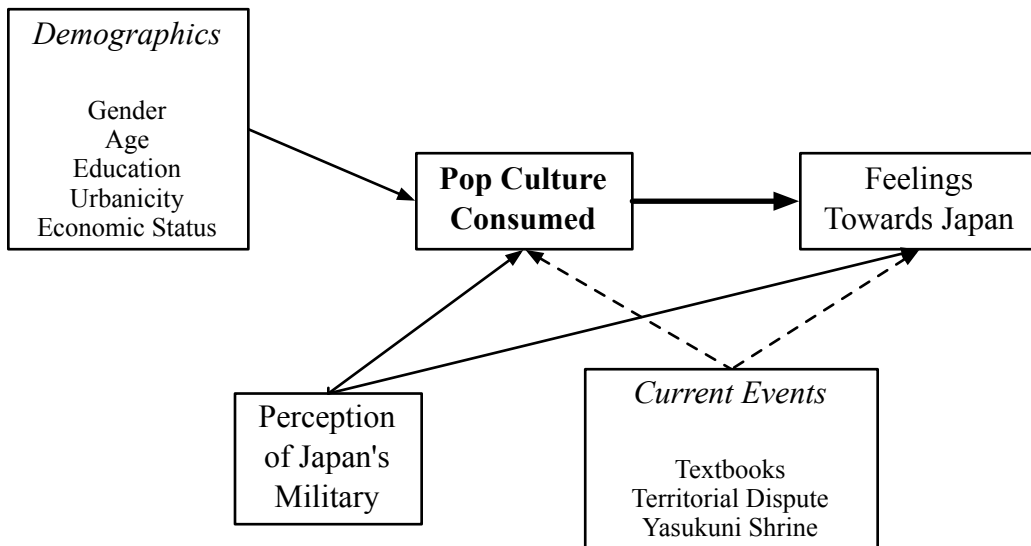
One enduring aspect of popular culture's relationship with opinions towards Japan is that its effect on youth is strong. As mentioned previously, many of China's young adults grew up with Japanese cartoons as children, and Japanese popular culture was only officially allowed into South Korea within the last decade. In addition, popular culture such as *anime* and J-POP are likely more popular with younger consumers than with older. It is very likely that the effect of popular culture changes with age. Interacting consumption of popular culture with age could show this effect. In addition, no research yet uses such an interaction.

This paper hypothesizes that higher consumption of pop culture is associated with better feelings towards Japan and that this effect is different for people of different ages. To prevent the confounding effects of other variables (as outlined above), control variables should be included for individual characteristics, views of current tensions, and military strength. In short, the model this paper estimates is:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i + \beta_2 D_i + \beta_3 X_i D_i + \beta_4 W_{1i} \dots \beta_k W_{ki} + \epsilon \quad (4.1)$$

where Y_i is a measure of opinion towards Japan, X_i is a measure of consumption of Japanese pop culture, D_i is the age of the respondent, and $W_{1i} \dots W_{ki}$ are control variables as described above. The estimated effect that we estimate pop culture may have on opinions of Japan will be represented by the quantity $\beta_1 + \beta_2 + \beta_3$, as the effect will differ between ages. Figure 4.1 on page 15 shows the model in full.

Figure 4.1: Conceptual Model



CHAPTER 5

DATA AND METHODS

5.1 DATA SOURCE

The data for this paper comes from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs' Soft Power in Asia poll, accessed via the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. This poll interviewed individuals in the US, Japan, China, South Korea, Vietnam, and Indonesia, though this paper only uses responses from China and South Korea. Respondents were polled during January and February 2008. There were 2,266 total respondents, with 1,237 in China and 1,029 in South Korea.

5.1.1 METHODOLOGY

Chinese respondents were chosen by a stratified, multistage sampling process, weighted to represent the 2005 census in terms of community size. Respondents (adults 18 years or older) were interviewed in Chinese by international polling firm GlobeScan.

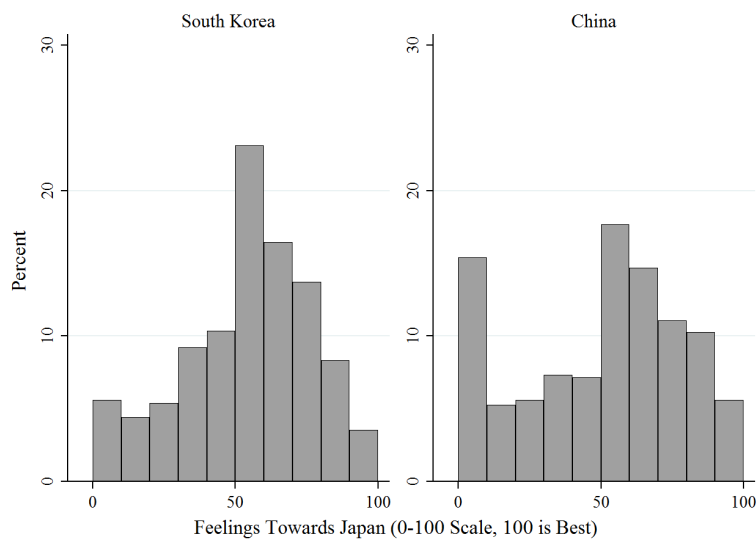
South Korean respondents were chosen by a multistage quota sampling of all South Korean administrative divisions, excluding Jeju Island. The sample is weighted based on region, gender, and age. Respondents (adults 19 years or older) were interviewed face-to-face by Han-Kook Research Company for the East Asia Institute and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

5.2 VARIABLES

We are most interested in how people feel about Japan, how much Japanese popular culture they consume, and how old they are. The data provide a way to measure each of these characteristics.

Each respondent was asked how they felt about Japan on a scale of 0-100, 0 being the worst feeling and 100 being the best.¹ Both Chinese and South Korean respondents reported an average feeling towards Japan of 45-50 points, though respondents in South Korea had a higher average feeling and lower standard deviation (22.82 for South Korea and 28.23 for China).

Figure 5.1: Distribution of Feelings Towards Japan by Country

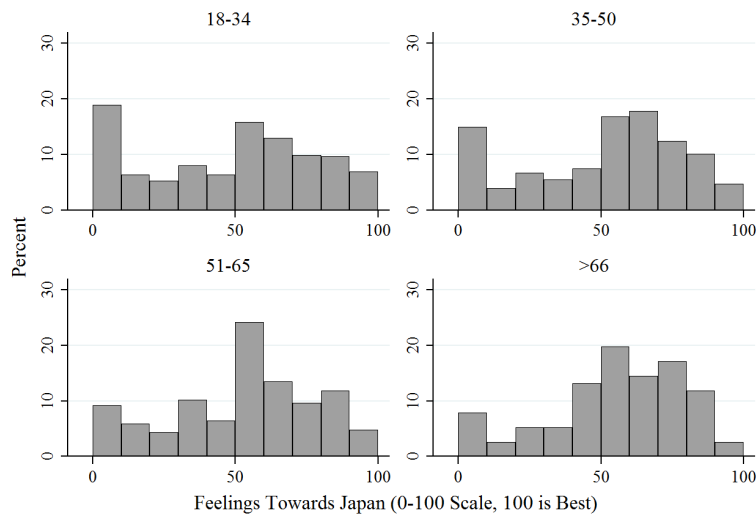


For South Koreans, feelings towards Japan have a relatively normal distribution. For Chinese data, however, there is a large spike in people reporting negative views of Japan (values of 0-10). This difference is explained by the age of respondents in China; younger

¹Question Text: “Please rate your feelings toward the following, with one hundred meaning a very warm, favorable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling, and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold.”

people reported very low values for this question more frequently than older respondents. Values for feelings towards Japan are plotted over four age groups (18-34, 35-50, 51-65, and over 66) for only Chinese respondents in Figure 5.2. There is a general trend across all age groups of a spike at the 0-10 section, a pattern that is repeated even in the South Korean data. Yet for younger respondents in China this effect is pronounced—nearly 20% of respondents aged 18-34 in China reported a value of 0-10 for this question.

Figure 5.2: Distribution of Feelings Towards Japan by Four Categories of Age in China

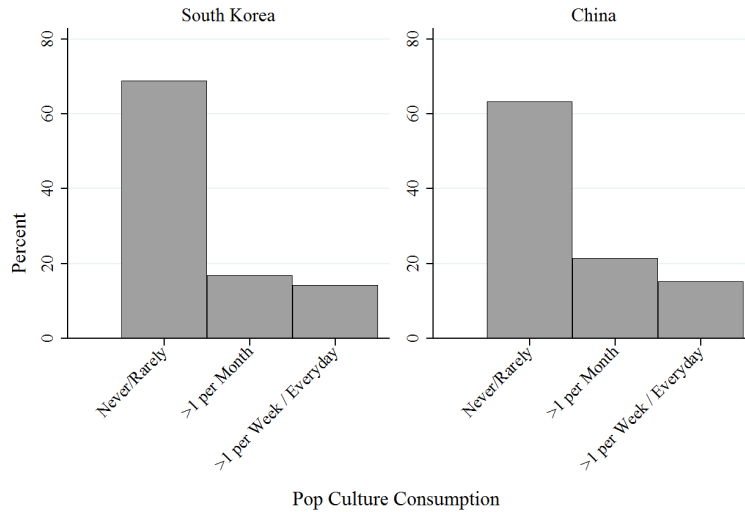


Our independent variable of interest is how much popular culture from Japan respondents consume. Each respondent was asked how much Japanese pop culture they consumed in general.² Respondents answered in one of five categories: Never, Rarely, More than Once per Month, More than Once per Week, or Every Day. Due to the low amount of observations who reported consuming Japanese pop culture every day (24 observations in China and 34 observations in South Korea), this value was combined with those reporting consumption of More than Once per Week. In addition, as there were few significant differences between

²Question Text: “How often do you watch movies and television, or listen to music from Japan?”

those who reported Never and Rarely, those values were also collapsed into a single value. Three values remain: Never, More than Once per Month, and More than Once per Week.

Figure 5.3: Distribution of Consumption of Japanese Popular Culture by Country

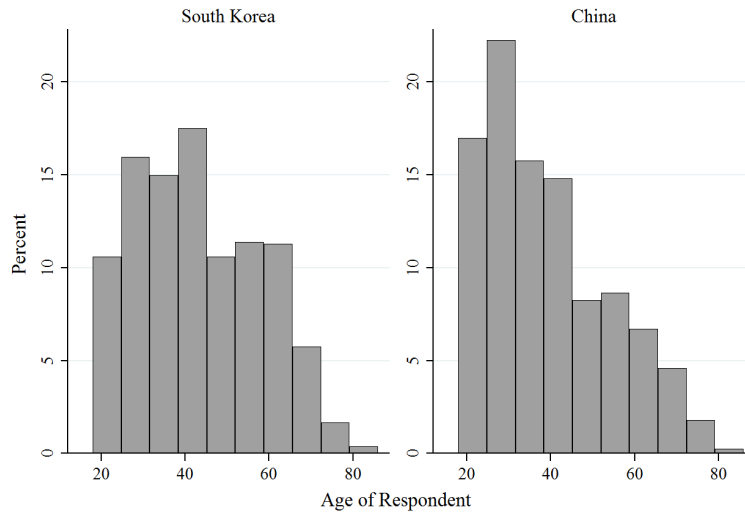


These values are plotted by country in Figure 5.3. The majority (roughly 60%) of respondents in both countries never or rarely consumed Japanese popular culture. Those who consumed Japanese popular culture more than once a month and less than once a week, or those who consumed popular culture more than once a week are roughly split with 20% each of respondents.

The other variable of interest is the age of the respondent, a straightforward measure. The average age was 43 years for South Korean respondents and 39 years for Chinese respondents. Both countries had standard deviations of roughly 15 (14.7 for South Korea and 15.0 for China). Figure 5.4 on Page 20 plots the distribution of age by country. Both are relatively normal distributions that are skewed to the right.

In addition, there are a number of control variables used to eliminate any confounding factors. These include variables for personal characteristics (gender, level of education, income, urbanicity) as well as for other opinions that might affect feelings towards Japan

Figure 5.4: Distribution of Age by Country



and the amount of popular culture consumed (namely, opinions of the Japanese military and whether or not the respondent has a negative view of current tensions in international relations between Japan and their home country). A list of the questions that provided this data can be found in Appendix A. Some of the variables were transformed to better fit the model, as detailed below:

Education Education responses are collapsed into four categories: less than high school degree, high school degree, any college to college degree, and any postgraduate education.

Urban This poll does not ask respondents whether they live in an urban area or not. We proxy for this by using residence in a directly administered province (Beijing, Shanghai, and Chongqing in China and Seoul, Pusan, Daegu, Incheon, Kwangju, Daejon or

Ulsan cities in South Korea). Kyong'gi Province, which encircles Seoul and is highly urbanized, is considered urban as well.

Income Though this poll provides a measure of income for each country, we require a unified measure to allow us to pool data. As China and South Korea differ in how developed they are, it is difficult to measure income by socioeconomic class. We create a variable measuring if the respondent's income was higher than the average income for that country and year. Values for average income (GDP per capita) for China and South Korea in 2005³ were found in the CIA WorldFactbook (2005). This text lists average income in US dollars, which were converted back into their original currencies using the annual exchange rate offered by the IRS for 2006.⁴⁵ Further, roughly one-fifth of values in the Chinese data were missing. Missing values were imputed using the average income for urban or rural respondents—those in urban areas were assigned the average income for those living in urban areas and vice versa.

International Disputes with Japan There are several ongoing disputes in Sino-Japanese and Korean-Japanese relations, namely visits to Yasukuni Shrine by the Japanese Prime Minister, territorial disputes, and Japanese history textbook reforms. Though respondents are asked their opinion of each of these events, none of these questions are asked of the entire sample due to split sampling. Overall response to these international challenges is measured by pooling the responses from each question. Respondents were coded as having strong opinions on these tensions if they answered in any one (or more) of the following ways: that their country should strongly protest, even if it disrupts ongoing cooperation, a visit by the Japanese Prime Minister to Yasukuni Shrine; that their country should not be willing to compromise over their

³Questions regarding income in the poll refer to 2005 income

⁴Data on exchange rates in 2005 was not available.

⁵Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2005), Internal Revenue Service (2012)

territorial dispute with Japan; or agreed that Japan, China, and South Korea should have a common history textbook, which suggests that they are unhappy with Japan’s current history textbooks.⁶

Some of these control variables are binary in nature—either the respondent fits into the category or not. Table 5.1 shows the percentage of respondents who fall into those categories.

Table 5.1: Summary Statistics for Binary Variables

	China	South Korea
Is Male	51.74%	49.56%
Lives in Urban Area	16.01%	69.19%
Above Average Income	33.71 %	77.96%
Has Met Japanese Person	19.94%	39.49%
Tensions Towards Japan	56.87%	59.68%

Other variables are categorical—respondents could choose one of several values. Table 5.2 shows the modal response for both countries, while the full response frequencies can be found in Appendix B.

Table 5.2: Summary Statistics for Categorical Variables

	China	South Korea
Level of Education	High School Degree (50.49%)	Some College/College (39.81%)
Military Threat	Somewhat Worried (40.66%)	Somewhat Worried (46.08%)

⁶The text of these questions may be found in Appendix A.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS

We estimate four versions of the model we laid out previously.¹² Each model regresses respondents' feelings towards Japan on how much popular culture they consume, their age, the interaction of those terms, and the set of control variables. In Model (1), we pool the data from China and South Korea together. In doing so, we assume that the relationships in the model are the same between countries. Age, amount of Japanese popular culture consumed, and feelings towards Japan in this model are significantly associated.

In the other models, we assume that there might be differences within each country that may affect the relationship in the model. Model (2) includes a dummy variable for whether the data was from South Korea or China to capture whether the effect changes broadly

¹Several other functional forms were tried and were insignificant. There is a large spike in negative feelings among youth in China towards Japan. One way to compensate for this distribution is to use a logit or probit model with a new dependent variable (coded 0 if the respondent had a feeling towards Japan of 0 and coded 1 otherwise). As with the other models, our variables of interest remained statistically significant suggesting that the unique distribution has no appreciable effect. It was not reproduced for space considerations. In addition, it might be possible that the effect of age itself might differ at different ages—as one gets older, for example, they may have more and more negative feelings towards Japan. Including quadratic age terms in each of the models would show this relationship if it existed. The quadratic age terms were insignificant and drove down the predictive power of the models, suggesting that they do not fit our data well. These results are not reproduced for space considerations.

²In addition, we treat the dependent variable (feelings towards Japan) as an interval / ratio scale while it might be more accurately modeled as an ordinal scale. An ordinal scale would require the use of an ordered logistic model over OLS. As the results were roughly similar in terms of statistical significance and magnitude, OLS was chosen over an ordered logistic model for ease of interpretation.

between countries. This variable is insignificant, suggesting that there are not unobserved characteristics in one country or the other that would bias the results.³

In Models (3) and (4), we stratify the results by country. Model (3) uses only Chinese data and Model (4) only South Korean. In both models, we continue to find that the association between our variables of interest remains statistically significant.

However, we find that a test of joint significance for the interaction terms is weakly significant ($p < 0.10$) in Model (4). In addition, the interaction term of consuming popular culture more than once per week and age is significant at standard levels. This suggests that in South Korea including the interaction itself increases the predictive power of the model over a model without interactions. The effect of frequent popular culture consumption differs significantly with age in South Korea.

In each specification, the joint significance of consumption, age, and their interaction is highly significant ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that the full interaction of consumption of pop culture and age is different from zero at greater than the 1% level.

These results support the hypothesis that popular culture consumption and age are positively correlated with higher feelings towards Japan. Though many of the individual coefficients are not significant, the joint tests of significance suggest that as a whole, the relationship is significant.

While only Model (4) shows that including the interaction terms alone is significant, the concern of this paper is whether the addition of the entire group of variables, not just

³Another option was to interact the Chinese data variable with all other variables and test the joint significance of the interacted terms—this would tell us which, if any, of the variables in our model differed significantly by country and, if in general, running separate models added to the predictive power of the model. Many of the interacted terms were found to be insignificant individually and the joint test of significance failed as well. This suggests that there are few, if any, statistically or substantively significant differences between China and South Korea in regard to our model. These results are not reproduced for space consideration.

the interaction itself, is significant. In that measure, finding that including both independent variables is consistently significant result supports our hypothesis.

These results can be found in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Ordinary least squares regression of feelings towards Japan (0-100 ordinal scale) on consumption of Japanese pop culture, age, and background characteristics

	Combined Data		China	South Korea
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Consumption of Pop Culture				
> 1 per Month	9.113** (4.47)	8.820** (4.48)	8.626 (5.74)	11.496* (6.89)
> 1 per Week	17.962*** (4.96)	17.585*** (5.00)	13.568* (7.40)	24.047*** (6.92)
Age	0.102* (0.05)	0.090* (0.05)	0.143* (0.08)	0.015 (0.08)
Interaction Terms				
> 1 per Month * Age	-0.019 (0.11)	-0.008 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.14)	-0.144 (0.16)
> 1 per Week * Age	-0.228* (0.12)	-0.215* (0.13)	-0.09 (0.17)	-0.440** (0.19)
F (Interaction Terms)	1.672	1.471	0.252	2.928*
F (Consume, Age, Interaction)	10.593***	10.688***	6.918***	5.736***
Japanese Military Threat				
Somewhat Worried	7.160*** (1.51)	7.070*** (1.51)	7.378*** (2.34)	6.928*** (1.95)
Not Very Worried	9.162*** (1.74)	8.938*** (1.75)	7.290** (3.07)	9.995*** (2.13)
Not Worried At All	6.341*** (2.16)	6.579*** (2.18)	5.401** (2.75)	9.360** (3.86)
F (Military Threat)	10.602***	10.124***	3.624**	7.624***
Education				
High School Degree	4.948*** (1.78)	4.892*** (1.78)	5.541** (2.40)	2.699 (2.50)
College	4.181** (1.90)	3.936** (1.90)	3.434 (2.46)	2.349 (2.94)
Post-Graduate	9.964*** (3.07)	9.503*** (3.10)	12.580* (6.42)	7.940** (3.95)
F (Education)	4.286***	4.001***	2.481*	1.594
Other Controls				
Met Japanese Person	5.867*** (1.26)	5.716*** (1.26)	6.143*** (2.19)	5.864*** (1.54)
Tensions	-0.926	-0.956	0.409	-1.863

	(1.16)	(1.16)	(1.83)	(1.45)
Urban Area	3.510***	2.493**	3.068	2.608*
	(1.28)	(1.35)	(2.66)	(1.53)
Above Average Income	-1.613	-1.955	-3.344*	0.107
	(1.34)	(1.40)	(2.01)	(1.93)
Male	1.680	1.697	4.036**	-0.249
	(1.15)	(1.15)	(1.83)	(1.47)
Chinese Data		-1.506		
		(1.50)		
Constant	27.682***	29.544***	24.118****	34.569***
	(3.30)	(3.68)	(4.32)	(5.72)
N	2097	2097	1126	971
R²	0.078	0.079	0.075	0.089
F (Full Model)	10.053***	9.465***	4.881***	6.646***

Heteroskedastic-robust standard errors in parenthesis. Omitted variables are “Never Consume Pop Culture” for Consumption of Pop Culture, “Very Worried” for Japanese Military Threat, and “Less Than High School Degree” for Education.

* $p < 0.10$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

6.1 INTERPRETATION

In general, the following trends are shared between the models. For those who never consume Japanese pop culture, each model predicts a gradual increase in feelings towards Japan as people get older. For those who consume pop culture more than once per month, we expect a relatively level increase across all ages compared to those who consume no pop culture as the magnitude of the interaction term is often so small that there is little change in age’s effect.

For those who consume pop culture more than once per week, however, we predict that people who are young will have higher feelings towards Japan, but those who are older

will have lower feelings when compared to those who never or rarely consume Japanese popular culture.

In addition, we find some differences in the significance of control variables between models: having a high school degree, being above average income, and being male are found to be significant in China but not in South Korea, while living in an urban area is found to be significant for the South Korean respondents but not for the Chinese respondents. These differences are expected to a certain degree; college education is usual in South Korea while not yet so in China, there are many more people below average income in China than in South Korea, and so on.

In other words, these differences are significant because of the large portion of the sample that falls into those categories: in South Korea, 69% of respondents lived in an urban area versus 16% in China, for example.⁴ This suggests that the differences in control variables between the countries may be driven by demographics—with a large enough sample size, we would expect most relationships to become statistically, if not substantively, significant.

The significance of being male in China is puzzling, however. The effect of gender on feelings towards Japan is highly significant ($p < 0.05$) and large in magnitude when compared to the same value for the South Korean data. In addition, there is little difference between the number of men in either country (51% of the sample in China and 49% in South Korea). This might suggest a difference between the two countries due to culture, not to demographics.

In short, results for China and South Korea differ in two distinct ways. Gender is a significant factor in China but is not so in South Korea. However, the relationship of interest

⁴In addition, 77% of South Korean respondents were above average income while only 33% of Chinese respondents were, and having a high school degree was by and far the largest education level in the Chinese data.

(that the effect of consuming popular culture has a different effect on feelings towards Japan over age) seems to be stronger, or at least more significant in South Korea but not China.

Two other variables are significant and robust across the various models, suggesting that they play large roles in predicting feelings towards Japan. Feelings towards the military is found to be highly significant throughout the model, suggesting that hard power is still a strong predictor of public opinion.

Additionally, having met a Japanese person is significant in each model and is predicted to increase feelings towards Japan by roughly 5 points. This suggests that person-to-person exchanges may be highly important in improving feelings towards a given country, though we should be careful about extending these results outside of the countries involved.

6.2 PREDICTED EFFECTS

Due to the presence of interaction terms, we cannot interpret our variables of interest as level effects. For example, consider the predicted effect for those who consume Japanese pop culture more than once per week in Model (1). It seems that those who consume Japanese pop culture more than once per week are predicted to have a roughly 18 point higher opinion of Japan than those who never or rarely consume Japanese pop culture. However, this interpretation is only correct for a respondent with an age of 0.

In contrast, consider a respondent who is 20 years of age. The model predicts that the effect of consuming Japanese pop culture more than once per week is an increase of roughly 15 points over a respondent of equal age who never or rarely consumes Japanese pop culture. This relationship changes as the age of the respondent increases. Table 6.2 uses estimated coefficients from Model (1) and shows the predicted change in feelings towards Japan due to consumption of pop culture at age 20, 40, and 60, holding all other

control variables constant at zero.

Table 6.2: Predicted Effects of Different Levels of Pop Culture Consumption at Ages 20, 40, and 60 from Regression Model (1)

Age of...	20	40	60
Never / Rarely	2.04	4.08	6.12
> 1 per Month	10.77	12.43	14.10
> 1 per Week	15.44	12.92	10.40

It may seem to run contrary to theory for feelings towards Japan to increase with age at two of the three levels of pop culture consumption. However, these are effects absent the influence of other control variables. For example, if we take the average respondent who is 20-30 years old⁵ and the average respondent 60-70 years old⁶ for Model (1), we estimate the predicted feeling towards Japan to be 40.20 for the younger person (at 20 years old) and 40.03 for the older person (at 60 years old). Even though the predicted effect of age might suggest that older people have higher feelings towards Japan, this effect is mitigated by the fact that the average older person has different demographic characteristics than the average younger person.⁷

⁵Somewhat worried about the Japanese military, has a college education, has not met a Japanese person, has tensions with Japan, does not live in an urban area, is above average income, and is male

⁶Somewhat worried about the Japanese military, has less than a high school degree, has not met a Japanese person, has tensions with Japan, does not live in an urban area, is below average income, and is female

⁷That said, the raw data suggests that older people in South Korea and China are likely to have higher opinions of Japan in general: the average feeling towards Japan for South Koreans is 51 if they are younger than average and 47 if they are older, while the average feeling towards Japan for Chinese is 43 if they are younger than average and 48 if they are older. Standard deviations remain roughly the same between the four groups as well. At least with regard to this data, the image of older people in China and South Korea having highly negative views of Japan may not be entirely correct.

6.3 LIMITATIONS

There are some major limitations to the models. The first is that it may not describe a causal relationship – it may simply pick up situations where people who already like Japan consume more Japanese pop culture, not that consuming more Japanese popular culture leads to a higher opinion of Japan. In short, the model may suffer from endogeneity. A more advanced model could identify a causal effect, but OLS is the only option with our limited data.

The second limitation deals with omitted variable bias. If there are other variables that we are not explicitly controlling for that are correlated with our variables of interest and feelings towards Japan, then our estimates are biased. Some examples of variables that might bias our results include a measure of how much media a person consumes in general, their general level of nationalistic feelings, or general interest or knowledge of international affairs, past feelings on Japan, and others.

Another variable that might change our results significantly is whether or not the respondent has children. Particularly in China, children's television shows tend to be primarily imported from Japan—if an adult respondent has children, they may be consuming Japanese popular culture, but for their child's enjoyment, not their own. It seems likely that in those circumstances, some adults may be consuming Japanese popular culture daily, but not consuming it in a meaningful way. If this is widespread, our results might be biased downwards.

In addition, there are measurement issues as well. Our measurements of consumption of Japanese pop culture, income, urbanicity, and tensions with Japan are crude. Assuming that the measurement error is not systematic, we would expect it to cause the standard errors of our regressors to be inflated. The estimates would not be precisely estimated and would

seem insignificant when they are not. There is little to be done except to collect more data in the future.

CHAPTER 7

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The effect of consuming popular culture on opinions of another state is still debated. However, the statistically significant results presented here, even considering its limitations, suggest that consuming Japanese popular culture may increase ones opinion of Japan. These results contrast some current research.

For example, Lam (2007) and Otmazgin (2008) suggest that Japanese soft power developed through cultural products is limited by Japan's wartime past. However, once other demographics including education, gender, age, income, and view of the Japanese military are controlled for, the predicted effect of historical tensions is statistically insignificant and near zero in magnitude. If our analysis is valid, this suggests that these tensions are less responsible for low feelings towards Japan than demographic characteristics. Alternatively, these tensions may be so correlated with certain demographic characteristics that it makes little sense to consider them separately. Regardless, our results suggest that wartime tensions may have a more complicated effect than thought previously.¹

¹However, when we pool the data and run each model with each variable that constituted our tensions control variable separately, we find some contrasting evidence. In particular, we find that feelings towards visits to the Yasukuni shrine, one of the measures of the wartime past, remain highly significant and negative in magnitude—unsurprisingly, someone who believes their country should protest strongly against a visit to Yasukuni shrine is expected to have lower feelings towards Japan in general. However, the other two aspects of Japanese wartime past are less clear: having a strong opinion of how one's state should respond to territorial disputes between their home country and Japan is insignificant and low in magnitude, while those who believe that China, Japan, and South Korea should jointly draft a history textbook are predicted to have higher feelings towards Japan in a significant fashion. Each of these models were run controlling for other variables as in other models. Results are not reproduced due to space considerations.

In contrast, Kim et al. (2007), Katsumata and Iida (2011), and Jhee and Lee (2011) suggest that cultural exports are correlated with increased feelings towards the export country. Kim et al. (2007) further suggests that age, education, and gender are significantly associated. This paper's research supports these authors while suggesting that the relationship between popular culture consumption and feelings towards the export country may change by age in some cases as well.

We find age to be consistently significant, while education is significant when data is pooled between country and weakly significant when the Chinese data is stratified. Gender is only found to be significant when the Chinese data is significant as well. This suggests that the role of specific demographic characteristics may differ between countries.

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

There are three main relationships that have implications for Japanese public diplomacy: that of consumption of Japanese pop culture, age, and feelings towards Japan, the perception of the Japanese military to feelings towards Japan, and the role of person-to-person interaction in changing opinion towards Japan.

The first is simple to understand: this paper finds a statistically and robustly significant association between consumption of Japanese pop culture, age, and feelings towards Japan. Though this relationship may not be causal due to endogeneity in the model, it suggests that one of three relationships may exist. Either consuming Japanese pop culture increases feelings towards Japan, people who already like Japan tend to consume more Japanese pop culture, or both relationships are at play. In any case, these effects are predicted to be stronger for younger than older consumers.

One policy response available to Japan that uses the relationships above is to increase the amount of popular culture that young people in China and South Korea consume. If the

first or third relationships are at play, higher rates of popular culture consumption should improve Japan's standing with China and South Korea over time. If these relationships do not exist at all, the action might still not be wasteful. Promoting popular culture would increase an already large market in East Asia, and therefore have beneficial economic effects outside of any political ones.

However, this may not be an easy option. China, for example, has recently passed laws limiting the amount of entertainment television programs on prime time television, which may indicate that the government is wary of some of the effects that entertainment and popular culture may have at large (Kotok, 2012).

Two policies Japan may wish to also approach is how its military is viewed in East Asia and increasing opportunities for person-to-person exchanges in China and South Korea. Those who are less worried about the Japanese military and have met a Japanese before are predicted to have a better opinion of Japan, an association that is statistically significant and robust across each model.

In short, this research shows that Japan has three options available to increase its standing in East Asia. It may choose to promote its popular culture, to engage in efforts to lower apprehension towards its military, or to increase exchange programs, giving people in East Asia the chance to meet Japanese people.

APPENDIX A

TEXT OF SURVEY QUESTIONS

Variables were formed from the following questions:

Degree of Military Threat “How worried are you, if at all, that Japan could become a military threat to South Korea in the future?”

Tensions in Current Relations This question was based from three different questions. They are as follows:

Yasukuni “In regard to the Japanese Prime Minister visiting the Yasukuni Shrine to honor the military leaders buried there, do you think South Korea should: 1) strongly protest even if it disrupts cooperation in other spheres, 2) protest, but in a limited way so as to not undermine overall relations, 3) not protest.”

Common History Textbook “Do you agree or disagree that China, Japan and South Korea should have a common history textbook? 1) Agree very much 2) Agree somewhat 3) Disagree somewhat 4) Not at all agree.”

Territorial Disputes “In regard to the conflict with Japan over Dokdo (Diaoyutai for Chinese survey) do you think South Korea should or should not be willing to compromise? 1) Should be willing 2) Should not be willing.”

APPENDIX B

DISTRIBUTION OF CATEGORICAL VARIABLE DATA

Figure B.1: Distribution of Level of Education by Country

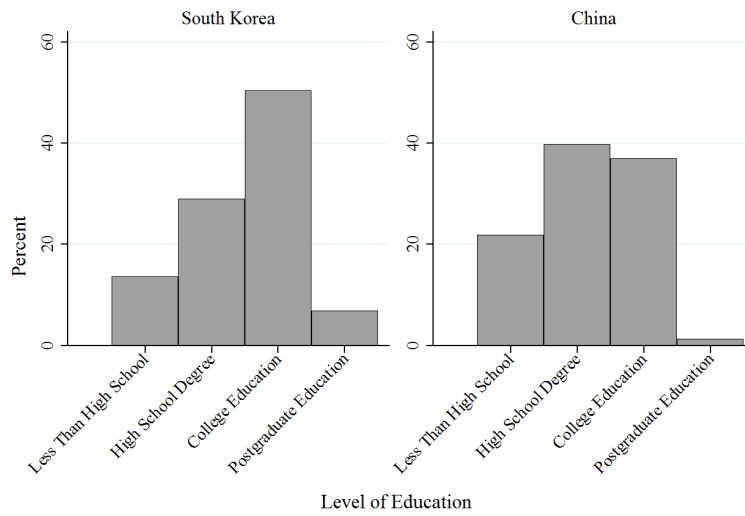
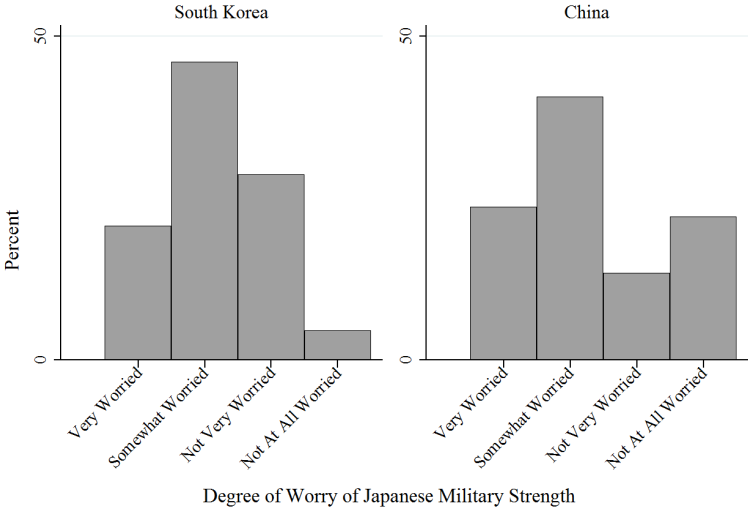


Figure B.2: Distribution of Worry of Military Threat by Country



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Paper presented at the Sixth Biennial Conference of the Korean Studies Association of
Australasia, The University of Sydney, Australia.