

# Is misfortune a result of past misdeeds or compensated for in the future? - Cultural difference in justice reasoning -

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IACCP 2016

## Abstract

While research on justice reasoning has progressed extensively, the findings have been mainly limited to the Western cultures. This study investigated cross-cultural differences in immanent and ultimate justice reasoning about others' misfortune. Participants from the United States and Japan were asked to read a scenario in which a target person's misfortune was described. The target person's moral value was manipulated as either respected person or thief. After reading the scenario, they responded to questionnaires about immanent and justice reasoning. The result revealed that Japanese tended to engage in immanent justice reasoning more than Americans when the target person's moral value was low. It was also found that Americans engaged in more ultimate justice reasoning regardless of the target person's moral value than Japanese. The necessity of examining cultural differences as well as the role of religious faith is discussed in relation to extending and strengthening the theory of justice reasoning.

## Introduction

### Two types of justice reasoning

- **Immanent justice reasoning** refers to the perceived causality between a target's outcome (mostly a misfortunate event) and their prior misdeeds, although such causation is neither logically or physically possible. For example, one might think that a person has a car accident because he is a thief.
- **Ultimate justice reasoning**, in contrast, refers to the attribution that injustice in the present will be recovered at some point in the future. For example, people tend to think that misfortune will be ultimately compensated or recovered with positive outcomes in the future (Hafer & Begue, 2005; Maes, 1998; Maes & Schmitt, 1999).

### Moral value and justice reasoning

- Studies have consistently found that when the moral value of a target person is low, misfortune is attributed to the person's past misdeeds (i.e., immanent justice reasoning), while when the moral value of the target person is high, it is believed that the misfortune will be compensated in the future (i.e., ultimate justice reasoning) (e.g., Callan et al., 2006; Callan, Ferguson, & Bindemann, 2012; Harvey & Callan, 2014a, 2014b).

### Cultural difference in justice reasoning - a replication study by Murayama & Miura (under review) -

- We tried to replicate results in the study by Callan et al. (2013), by using Japanese participants.
- The results revealed that for immanent justice reasoning, a "bad" person's misfortune was attributed more to their past misdeeds than a "good" person's misfortune.
- Regarding ultimate justice reasoning, it was found that a good person's misfortune was connected more to future compensation than a bad person's.
- These results are consistent with Callan et al (2013), however, there was no significant effect of religiosity or goal focus on justice reasoning, which had been said as to strengthen the engagement in justice reasoning.
- Direct cross-cultural comparison should be done to understand this inconsistency.

### The aim of this study is :

- (1) to directly compare and contrast engagement in two types of justice reasoning between Japanese and American participants.
- (2) to test the concept of negative reparation in the future as another type of ultimate justice reasoning.
- (3) to investigate the role of religious faith in justice reasoning more precisely.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

- 88 Japanese (Male = 44, Female = 44,  $M_{age} = 41.9$ ,  $SD = 11.8$ ) and 88 Americans (Male = 44, Female = 44,  $M_{age} = 40.8$ ,  $SD = 14.5$ ) participated in the study. (for Americans, 66 are Caucasians, 10 African Americans, 3 Native Americans, 7 Asians, and 2 Others)
- Participants were randomly assigned to one of 2 (moral value: respected or thief) conditions.
- They were asked to read one of two types of fictional local news article. After reading the news article, they were asked to answer to questions.

### Experimental Design

- 2 (country: Japanese or American)  $\times$  2 (moral worth: respected or thief) between-subject design

### Fictional local news (scenario)

"On Tuesday morning, a roadside tree was suddenly uprooted in front of a railway station in the City and a car drove by (Bob Stewart / Tetsuo Sakurai), aged 37, was crushed under the tree. He was seriously injured. The tree directly hit the part where the windshield connects with the roof of the car and the front seat compartment was totally crushed. Ambulance crews rushed to the scene of the accident, and managed to remove the driver from the car and transport him to the city's general hospital. He is still in critical condition.

\*\*-----manipulation for moral worth begins from here-----\*\*

- **"bad" person condition:** [(Bob Stewart / Tetsuo Sakurai) is a high school teacher. It recently came to light that he had snuck into clubrooms and locker rooms and looked for and stole personal belongings of students while they were attending afterschool club activities. He was indicted for theft without arrest and is waiting for the decision of the court.]
- **"good" person condition:** [Bob Stewart / Tetsuo Sakurai is a high school teacher. He always prepares for classes adequately and works hard as a coach of an afterschool club. He is respected by the people around him. ]

## Measures

- **Immanent justice reasoning** (from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*strongly agree*)). 3 items (e.g., "I feel that it is worth considering that this accident might have been a result of his conduct as a high school teacher") ( $\alpha = .95$ ; Callan et al., 2013).
- **Ultimate justice reasoning**
  - **Future compensation** (from 1 (*not at all fulfilling/meaningful/purposeful*) to 6 (*very fulfilling/meaningful/purposeful*)). 3 items (e.g., "To what extent do you think he will find his existence fulfilling later in his life as a result of the accident/losing the lottery?") ( $\alpha = .92$ ; Anderson, Kay, & Fitzsimons, 2010; Harvey & Callan, 2014a).
  - **Negative reparation in the future** (from 1 (*not at all fulfilling/meaningful/purposeful*) to 6 (*very fulfilling/meaningful/purposeful*)). 3 items (e.g., "To what extent do you think he will find his existence difficult later in his life as a result of the accident?") ( $\alpha = .83$ )
- **Religious affiliation and Religiosity** (from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*)). 4 items (e.g., "How often do you attend religious services?") ( $\alpha = .85$ ; Sullivan, 2001)).

## Results & Discussion

### (1) Effects of Moral Value and Culture on Immanent Justice Reasoning

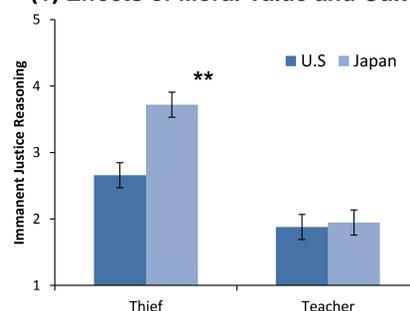


Fig. 1. Means of immanent justice reasoning for each condition

➤ A 2 (country: Japanese or American)  $\times$  2 (moral worth: respected or thief) ANOVA showed significant main effect of country,  $F(1, 172) = 8.95$ ,  $p < 0.1$ , and moral worth,  $F(1, 172) = 45.77$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , as well as a significant interaction effect between the two,  $F(1, 172) = 6.92$ ,  $p < 0.1$ .

➤ Japanese tended to engage in immanent justice reasoning more than Americans do, but this is obvious especially when the target person's moral worth was low.

### (2) Effects of Moral Value and Culture on Two Types of Ultimate Justice Reasoning

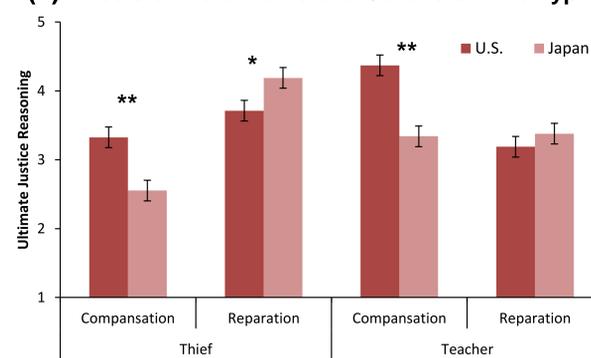


Fig. 2. Means of two types of ultimate justice reasoning for each condition

➤ A 2 (country: Japanese or American)  $\times$  2 (moral worth: respected or thief)  $\times$  2 (types of UJR: compensation or reparation) mixed ANOVA showed a significant main effect of country,  $F(1, 172) = 11.54$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and interaction effects between moral worth and types of UJT,  $F(1, 172) = 40.55$ ,  $p < 0.01$  as well as between country and UJT.

➤ Americans tended to expect future compensation more than Japanese, regardless of the target person's moral value.

➤ Japanese tended to expect future negative reparation more than Americans when the target person's moral value was low.

### (3) Relationship to religiosity

- Overall, Americans were more religious than Japanese.
- We conducted mediation analyses with dependent variables of IJR and UJRs separately, and found that only for future compensation, religiosity mediated the relationship with country.

Table 1 Breakdown of religious affiliation in each country

What is your current religious affiliation?	U.S.		Japan	
	N	%	N	%
1 Buddhism	1	1.1	19	21.6
2 Christians	55	62.5	0	0.0
3 Islam	1	1.1	0	0.0
4 Jewish	2	2.3	0	0.0
5 Shintoism	0	0.0	0	0.0
6 Other	5	5.7	0	0.0
7 Atheists	4	4.6	2	2.3
8 Agnostics	6	6.8	3	3.4
9 no religion	11	12.5	60	68.2
10 Do not want to answer	3	3.4	4	4.5
	88	100.0	88	100.0

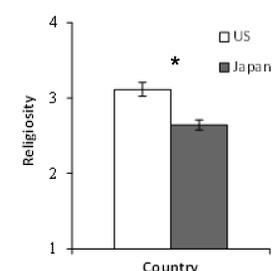


Fig. 3. Means of religiosity in Japan and U.S.

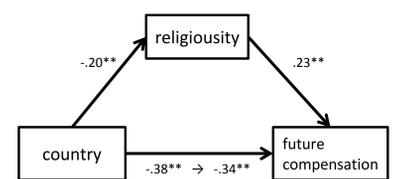


Fig. 4. Relationship among country, religiosity, and expected future compensation

- It could be said that "religiosity" works for helping people to expect positive event in the future.
- Japanese did not engage in future compensation much: this might relate to why they engage in IJR more than Americans.

## Conclusions & Future Directions

- Overall, misfortune is reasoned as a result of past misdeeds strongly when the person's moral value is low, while future compensation is expected strongly when the person's moral value is high in both countries.
- Our results also showed cultural difference in two types of justice reasoning, and religiosity partially explains this difference.
- Future research is needed to understand where the cultural difference in immanent justice reasoning derives from.