CHAPTER 1

"Japanese Collectivism"

In Japan, most people firmly believe that the Japanese are collectivists. In other countries as well, collectivism is a typical image of the Japanese for those who have any interest in Japan at all. In this first chapter, we review how "Japanese collectivism" has been discussed. We then examine whether "Japanese collectivism" has a reliable empirical basis or not. At the end of this chapter, we briefly review the recent discussion of "Japanese collectivism" in psychological studies of individualism and collectivism (IND/COL).

"Japanese Collectivism" in the Eyes of the West

In Western entertainment, Japanese people have often been depicted as collectivists, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. In the novel *The Edge*, British writer Dick Francis (1989) had one of his characters ask, "Why do all those Japanese go on their honeymoons together?" (p. 226).

In a Hollywood movie *Gung Ho* (Howard, 1986), a comedy set in an American automobile factory bought by a Japanese company, a morning assembly imposed by a Japanese manager on American workers is portrayed as a comic convention. In another scene, the script of this movie makes the Japanese manager stress teamwork and say that Americans are weak because they do not want to be members of a team.

In another Hollywood movie *Black Rain*, directed by Ridley Scott (1989), an American detective travels to Japan in pursuit of a young Japanese gangster who has committed murders in New York City. The Japanese detective who is chosen as his partner always acts as a member of the police organization. The script has the American detective preach to him to act as an individual; the Japanese detective finally disobeys his superior in order to assist the American detective's effort to arrest the young gangster. In a scene where the American detective meets the boss of a Japanese gang, the script has the boss tell him that selfish guys like the

young gangster have emerged because Americans imposed their values on the Japanese after World War II.

In yet another Hollywood movie *Rising Sun* (Kaufman, 1993), which was based on Michael Crichton's novel as well as *Jurassic Park*, an American detective played by Sean Connery investigates a murder case that occurred in a Los Angeles skyscraper built by a Japanese enterprise. The script has the American detective tell his colleague that a Japanese company does not stand alone but that hundreds of powerful companies form a group called *keiretsu* to wage economic war against foreign countries. We will discuss *keiretsu* in Chapter 4.

A French/Italian movie *Le Grand Bleu*, directed by Luc Besson (1988), has a scene at the world skin-diving championship. The script of this movie directs only the Japanese team to appear marching in single file with shouts, "One two, one two!"

Edwin Reischauer, an American historian who served as the American Ambassador to Japan for the Kennedy administration, wrote that "a concept widely held in the West" is that "Japan is made up of a uniform race of pliant, obedient robots, meekly conforming to rigid social rules and endlessly repeating the established patterns of their society" (Reischauer, 1988, p. 159), although Reischauer himself did not endorse this "concept."

Collectivism

Briefly speaking, collectivists are those who give priority to their group over themselves, whereas individualists are those who give priority to themselves individually over their group; collectivists are inextricably integrated into their group, whereas individualists are autonomous individuals who are independent of their group. Collectivists are said to lack individuality, to act as a group, to be willing to sacrifice themselves for their group, and so on (e.g., see Triandis, 1995). In addition, collectivists are purported to distinguish in-group ("we") and out-group ("they") strictly and devote themselves only to their in-group. The *in-group* refers to a group, to which one belongs and with which one has a sense of unity; such groups as family, school, company, and country are typically regarded as in-groups.

The word *individualism* could bear a more specific meaning depending on context, such as economy, religion, and politics. Lukes (1973/2006) specifies eleven types of individualism: *Economic individualism*, for example, refers to an individual's free economic activity without being controlled by a state. Individualism has elicited various arguments: The Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek (1949), for example, made a distinction between

"false individualism" that assumes perfect rationality for an individual and "true individualism" that assumes limited rationality. The priority placed on the individual implies individual freedom and equality. Thus, individualism is usually regarded as the basis for liberalism and democracy. The concept of *collectivism* was formed as the opposite of individualism. Thus, collectivism could be contrasted with specific meanings of individualism according to context.

The term *individualism* was born in the nineteenth century, whereas the term *collectivism* emerged in the twentieth century. According to Lukes (1973/2006), the word *individualism* first appeared in 1820 as a French word, *individualisme*, in a criticism against the Enlightenment. The word *collectivism* was first used by British jurist A. V. Dicey (1914/1962) as the antonym of *individualism* but interchangeably with *socialism*. Until recently, the term *collectivism* has been used to indicate the particular type of economic system that is controlled by a state as in the Soviet Union. The American sociologist David Riesman used the term *groupism* as the antonym of *individualism* in his book *Individualism Reconsidered* (Riesman, 1954). As the term that denotes the mode of thinking and behavior opposite to individualism, *collectivism* was established only in the late twentieth century. *Groupism* is still used in some areas of academic investigation.

Japanology

"Japanese collectivism" is the central dogma of Japanology (*Nihonjin-ron* in the Japanese language), which consists of popular and academic writings on the Japanese or Japanese culture in books, newspapers, magazines, and so forth. In Japan, Japanology was the most popular theme of publication for half a century after World War II. Nomura Research Institute (1978) listed 698 books of Japanology published between 1946 and 1978. The Japanese anthropologist Tamotsu Aoki (1990) estimated that more than two thousand books and articles of Japanology had been published in the postwar period.

At the origin of this prolonged Japanology boom was *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* written by American anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1946). This book was published in the USA right after World War II; it was soon translated into Japanese and published in 1948. This book inculcated the image of "Japanese collectivism" into the Japanese public. Although it never used the term *collectivism*, because this term was uncommon when the book was written (see above), it was unmistakable for its readers that Benedict portrayed the Japanese as collectivists. She

characterized Japanese culture, for example, as "shame culture" where evil conduct is suppressed to avoid an undesirable reputation among others, whereas she characterized Western culture as "guilt culture" where evil conduct is suppressed by absolute morality based on Christianity that is internalized by each individual. The Japanese translation of this book sold more than 2 million copies and is still recommended as a respectable study of Japanese culture.

In Japan, many bestseller titles were produced from Japanology. They include the following to name a few:

James Abegglen (1958) *Japanese Factory*
Chie Nakane (1967/1970) *Japanese Society*
Herman Kahn (1970) *The Emerging Japanese Superstate: Challenge and Response*
Takeo Doi (1971/1973) *The Anatomy of Dependence*
Gregory Clark (1977) *The Japanese: The Origin of Their Uniqueness*
Ezra Vogel (1979) *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America*
Chalmers Johnson (1982). *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925–1975*

Why were so many books of Japanology published in Japan? The most plausible reason is the identity crisis of the Japanese: They wanted to know who they were. After Japan modified itself from a feudal society to a centralized modern state during the Meiji Revolution[1] (approximately from 1868 to the 1870s), the Japanese lost their identity as members of the feudal society. After their victories in the wars against China and then Russia, they acquired a novel identity as one of the major world powers. However, this transient identity was soon lost with the defeat in World War II. In addition, Japan was alone as a non-Western industrialized nation. Thus, the Japanese were eager for a solid identity of their own. It is not surprising that many bestsellers were written by Westerners given that the fate of the Japanese depended heavily on how they were perceived by Westerners especially after the start of the occupation by the US Armed Forces (1945–1952).

[1] The original Japanese word is *Meiji Ishin*, which has been translated into "Meiji Restoration" in English. The word *revolution* was avoided because *Meiji Ishin* was not regarded as a "true revolution" under the strong influence of Marxism. As a result of *Meiji Ishin*, however, the earlier social systems such as the feudal domains, feudal classes, and hereditary stipend for the warrior class were all abolished; Western systems were introduced into politics, economy, education, and so on. There seems to be no reason to avoid the word *revolution* for these drastic reformations. Originally, moreover, the Japanese word *ishin* has no connotation of "restoration"; its literal meaning is a new start or to make things new.

These bestsellers all depicted the Japanese as collectivists. As a result, collectivism has become the firm self-image of the Japanese. "Japanese collectivism" is often regarded as Japanese ideology (e.g., Befu, 1987; Yoshino, 1992). In his administrative policy speech at the beginning of 2000, Japanese prime minister Keizo Obuchi stated that Japan was a society where individuals were embedded in organizations or groups and that Japan had to become a society in which "each individual would coruscate with the increased individual power" ("The full text," 2000). This speech revealed that collectivism was generally recognized not only as the character of Japanese society but also as the undesirable character that had to be overcome.

Specifics of "Japanese Collectivism"

The common view in Japanology asserts that collectivism characterizes Japanese culture and the mentality of the Japanese. In this section, we will enter into the specifics of this assertion. Their validity will be examined later in Chapters 2 through 4.

"Impersonality"

According to the common view, Japanese individuals are firmly integrated into a group, lacking individuality and autonomy. They are supposed to always act as a group. After foreign currency restrictions on sightseeing were loosened and then abolished in the 1960s, it became possible for ordinary Japanese to travel abroad. As a result, group tours of Japanese came to be frequently mentioned as the visible symbol of "Japanese collectivism." The above quotation from Dick Francis's *The Edge* ("Why do all those Japanese go on their honeymoons together?") is one of its instances.

It is believed that Japanese place sovereign value on their own group and thus do not hesitate to sacrifice themselves for the group. After World War II, the symbol of Japanese self-sacrifice was suicide attacks (*kamikaze*) by Japanese military planes against American warships. After the high economic growth of the 1960s, Japanese self-sacrifice was represented by the word *karoshi*, which means death from overwork. *The Chicago Tribune* reported that many Japanese "corporation soldiers" died from overwork (Yates, 1988). In 2002, news media such as *CNN* and *BBC* reported that this Japanese word (*karoshi*) had been added to the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The presence of a word specialized in denoting death from overwork was taken as the unquestionable evidence of "Japanese collectivism."

Besides *karoshi*, Japanese words that have no exact correspondents in English have often been interpreted to manifest the peculiarities of Japanese culture. The best-known instance is *amae*, which signifies dependence on others. This word is usually used to denote an infant's attachment to parents but also used to denote an adult's expectation that a selfish desire will be approved by others. The Japanese psychiatrist Takeo Doi (1971/1973) argued that the presence of the word *amae* testifies that Japanese are dependent on one another in a group.

Linguistic performance was also used to prove "Japanese collectivism." The most frequently mentioned instance is the omission of a first-person singular pronoun. In the Japanese language, it is possible to say "I like apples," but most Japanese usually say "Like apples" (*Ringo ga suki*) omitting the first-person singular pronoun. Many Japanologists argued that this omission reveals that the Japanese do not have the individual sense of self (e.g., Araki, 1973; Kimura, 1972).

Japanese are alleged to have no individual characters because they merge into their group. Westerners often comment that Japanese people are indistinguishable from one another. For example, Peter Wickens who served as a director in a Japanese automobile company (Nissan Motor UK) told a Japanese newspaper that the Japanese all look alike, lacking individuality ("Peter Wickens," 1988). The Italian anthropologist Fosco Maraini (1957/2009) maintained that in most cases an individual does not exist in Japan. During World War II, it was claimed that all Japanese are similar to one another just like photographs printed from the same negative: This comment was made in the film *Know Your Enemy: Japan* (Capra, 1945) produced by the US Army Service Forces and directed by Frank Capra who won an Academy Award for directing three times. This claim was made again in the US–Japan trade friction in the 1980s and 1990s, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Japanese Society

The common view asserts that harmony (*wa* in Japanese) within a group has overriding priority in Japan. As its evidence, the following three phrases have been repeatedly quoted: First, a Japanese proverb "The nail that stands out gets pounded down," which is interpreted to mean that a person who stands out with an ability or accomplishment is oppressed by other group members to avoid disharmony in the group. Second, a phrase ascribed to Shingen Takeda, one of the warlords in the Age of Civil Wars (approximately 1467–1615): "People are the castle, people are

the stone wall, people are the moat." This phrase is usually interpreted to stress the importance of harmony among people in the territory as a military resource. Finally, "Harmony is to be valued," which was the first provision of the first Japanese legislation supposedly promulgated in 604 (*Jushichi-Jyou No Kenpo*).

Individualism is usually regarded as the basis of democracy as seen earlier. As the opposite of individualism, collectivism is usually considered to produce a nondemocratic totalitarian society. In her book *Japanese Society*, Japanese anthropologist Chie Nakane (1967/1970) maintained that Japan is a "vertical society," in which the superior dominates the subordinate while the subordinate supports the superior. The original Japanese version of this book, *Human Relationship in the Vertical Society* (Nakane, 1967), sold more than 1 million copies and is still recommended as a proper characterization of Japanese culture.

The notion of the "vertical society" nicely fitted in with the image of Japan that prevailed among Westerners during World War II: the totalitarian society governed despotically by the emperor. This notion was also consistent with the belief entertained by many Japanese that the feudal society before the Meiji Revolution and the wartime regime during World War II represented the "true" nature of Japanese society, whereas democracy was nothing but a superficial imitation of Western societies. In twentieth-century Japan, it was widely believed that Japan should return to the totalitarianism of the past, if not supervised by the USA.

Accounts of Social Phenomena

In Japan, innumerable social phenomena have been explained in terms of "Japanese collectivism" in books, magazine articles, newspaper columns, and the like. For example, school bullying was claimed to be a social phenomenon peculiar to the collectivistic Japanese society which attempts to exclude those who do not merge into a group. A school uniform was criticized as a coercive method for stressing the unity of students in a school. This alleged property of Japanese society was also invoked to explain why Japanese teenagers born and/or raised in foreign countries (*kikoku-shijo*) were not easily accepted by Japanese classmates.

In Japan, the crime rate is generally lower than that in Western countries. This lower crime rate was also attributed to "Japanese collectivism": It was claimed to be difficult for a Japanese to commit a crime because an individual Japanese could not act freely while being tightly bound to the individual's own group (Bayley, 1991; Leonardsen, 2004).

The most frequently mentioned instance of "Japanese collectivism" was Japan's high economic growth (1954–1973). When World War II ended, most Japanese cities lay in ruins under US bombings; many Japanese were starving. After ten years, Japan's economy began to grow at a mean rate of 9.1 percent per year in GNP (real economic growth rate in Gross National Product). This economic growth was called the "Japanese miracle." In 1968, Japan's GNP overtook that of West Germany, becoming the second largest in the capitalist camp. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it became clear that Japan's economy was the second largest in the whole world. The cause of this rapid economic growth was attributed to "Japanese collectivism": it was argued that Japanese workers sacrificed themselves by working so long and hard for their companies that such a rapid economic growth was made possible. We will examine this argument in more detail in Chapter 4.

Japanese militarism was also explained in terms of "Japanese collectivism." During the wars against China (1937–1945) and later against the USA (1941–1945), Japanese politics was strongly influenced by the military. This militarism was claimed to be the consequence of "Japanese collectivism," which was supposed to result in a totalitarian political regime inevitably.

In the heyday of Japanology, Japan was inferior to Western countries in many ways. "Japanese collectivism" was invoked to explain these weaknesses of Japan. Few Japanese athletes, for example, could compete with Western athletes at that time. This inferiority was explained in terms of "Japanese collectivism" as follows: Japanese athletes cannot fully exert their physical potential because they lack individual autonomy while being tightly integrated in their respective groups (Araki, 1973).

After World War II, the defeat of Japan was often attributed to its inferiority in scientific technology. It was argued that Japanese scientists cannot be creative because only autonomous individuals possess creativity (e.g., Nettle & Sakurai, 1989). John Sculley, who became the CEO of Apple Inc. after Steve Jobs was expelled, told a Japanese newspaper that software must be created individually, whereas Japanese culture is not organized to develop individual creativity (Ohmichi, 1998).

The validity of these arguments will be examined in Chapter 3.

Two Distinct Features of "Japanese Collectivism"

In most arguments on "Japanese collectivism," the following two features are conspicuous: permanency and negativity.

First, permanency. It is often assumed that collectivism is an essential feature of Japanese culture, which is invulnerable to change. The Japanese anthropologist Chie Nakane (1964) wrote about the "vertical" human relationship as follows: "This is always flowing in the blood of the Japanese. Although it may manifest itself extremely or not depending on conditions, we must recognize that it is deep-rooted" (p. 76).

The Japanese scholar of English literature Hiroyuki Araki (1973) took the view that "Japanese collectivism" had been established under rice cultivation. Although the percentage of agricultural workers to the whole population of Japan was only 11 percent when he published his book *The Behavior Pattern of the Japanese* in 1973, he nevertheless insisted that the Japanese were still collectivists.

The Japanese diplomat Ichiro Kawasaki (1969) wrote, "there is a built-in collectivism in the Japanese people" (p. 41) and "there is a sort of inbred collectivism in the Japanese people" (p. 139). *The Economist* (1962) also wrote, "there does seem to be a sort of inbred collectivism in the Japanese people" (p. 794). These statements suggest that they considered "Japanese collectivism" unchangeable just like a hereditary characteristic.

Second, negativity. For most Westerners, collectivism is an undesirable property. For the Japanese as well, collectivism has a negative connotation. The militarism and school bullying have been discussed as undesirable social phenomena by Japanese mass media. If a particular Japanese is described as lacking individuality or autonomy, this Japanese will certainly feel insulted or disdained. In the above-cited administrative policy speech as well, the prime minister stated that the collectivistic feature of Japanese society had to be overcome.

The high economic growth and the low crime rate may appear to be exceptions because both of them are socially desirable. However, critics point out that these desirable outcomes are products of undesirable social properties. In the US–Japan trade conflict, Japan's high economic growth was severely criticized on the basis of the claim that it was made possible by "unfair" economic system of Japan where people were forced into inhuman labor (see Chapters 4 and 7). In his book *Japan as a Low-Crime Nation*, Leonardsen (2004) wrote, "Little crime might be an expression of harmony and social integration in a society, but it could as well indicate something negative about that society" (p. 184). As the instances of "something negative," he enumerated death from overwork (*karoshi*), death from school bullying (*ijime*), negation of autonomy, suppression of freedom, and so on in the alleged vertical society.

"American Individualism"

"Japanese collectivism" is usually contrasted with "Western individualism." Americans, especially, have been regarded as the most individualistic nation in the world. The British sociologist Ronald Dore (1991) argued that the British were more individualistic than the Swedes, and went on to say, "Some manifestations of individualism in the United States, for instance, make the British look like arrant collectivists" (p. 35).

It is sometimes pointed out that individualism may lead people to lose interest in public affairs and thus open the door for autocracy to creep in. However, French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville (1835–1840/2000) observed that individualism functioned well in America because of its community self-government and the tendency to form associations to cope with social problems. His arguments have been frequently cited in later discussions of American society and politics (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985; Putnam, 2000; Riesman, 1954). Most Americans are proud of their individualism. Lukes (1973/2006, p. 37) observed:

> It was in the United States that "individualism" primarily came to celebrate capitalism and liberal democracy. It became a symbolic catchword of immense ideological significance, expressing all that has at various times been implied in the philosophy of natural rights, the belief in free enterprise, and the American dream … . It [individualism] referred … to the actual or imminent realization of the final stage of human progress in a spontaneously cohesive society of equal individual rights, limited government, *laissez-faire*, natural justice and equal opportunity, and individual freedom, moral development and dignity.

"Japanese collectivism" has been contrasted primarily with this "American individualism" and its concomitant values.

Reliability of Japanology

Criticism of Japanology

Although "Japanese collectivism" is usually considered an unquestionable reality, its academic foundation was severely questioned by Japanese sociologist Yoshio Sugimoto and American sociologist Ross Mouer (Y. Sugimoto & Mouer, 1982; Mouer & Y. Sugimoto, 1986). In their criticism, the following three contentions appear to be particularly important.

First, heavy reliance on episodic instances. They pointed out that Japanology rarely presented academic evidence while heavily relying

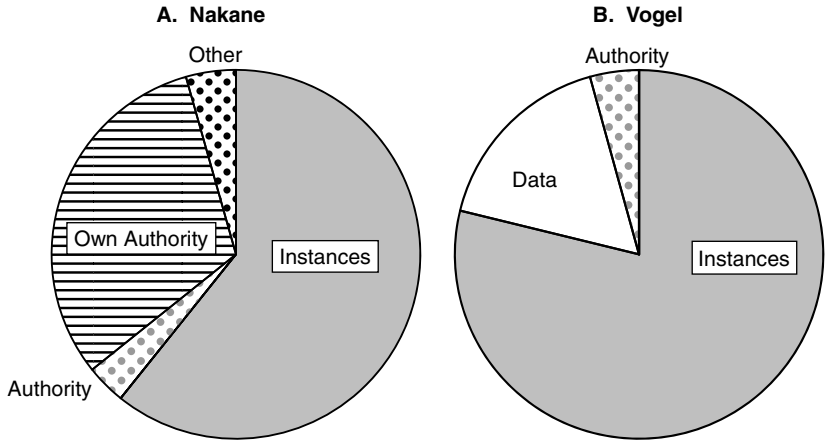

Figure 1.1 Classification of evidence for statements about Japan
Note. The classification of evidence for descriptive statements about Japan in Nakane (1970) and the Japanese translation of Vogel (1979) when the evidence was presented. Based on Table 10.3 in Y. Sugimoto and Mouer (1982).

on episodic instances such as personal observations, anecdotes, hearsay information, and proverbs. They selected four representative books of Japanology to see what evidence was provided for their descriptive statements about Japanese culture (e.g., "Employees of a Japanese company are destined to stay in their group"). These researchers found that a substantial proportion of the statements were endorsed by no evidence at all: for example, 69 percent in Nakane's (1970) *Japanese Society*, and 47 percent in Vogel's (1979) *Japan as Number One* (see Table 6.3 in Mouer & Y. Sugimoto, 1986). When evidence is presented, it often lacks an academic basis. Y. Sugimoto and Mouer (1982) classified the presented evidence according to type. In the case of Nakane (1970), no research evidence was presented (see Figure 1.1A); its descriptive statements were based mostly on episodic instances (61 percent) and the author's own authority (e.g., "the knowledge acquired from the author's long experience": 32 percent) in addition to the words of other authorities (4 percent). In the case of Vogel (1979), episodic instances occupied 79 percent of the evidence although some research data were presented (17 percent: see Figure 1.1B).

Mouer and Y. Sugimoto (1986) argued that the arbitrary choice of episodic instances as seen in Japanology could "prove" anything, even "Japanese *individualism*." They presented a number of instances that might be taken to prove "Japanese *individualism*": They wrote, for example,

"Japan's traditional sports are those which pit one person against another in a manner which produces a clear winner: *sumo*, *judo*, *kendo*, *kyudo*, …," whereas "the most popular sports in the West have been team-oriented: soccer, rugby football, basketball, baseball, …" (pp. 204–205).

Second, lack of comparison. To specify the peculiarities of Japanese culture, it is indispensable to compare Japanese culture with other cultures. Nevertheless, Japanology tends to focus only on episodic instances of Japan without making appropriate comparisons (see Chapter 2 for specifics of the "appropriate comparison"). In most statements about Japanese culture, Japanology fails to specify which country or culture is compared with Japanese culture: for example, 88 percent in Nakane (1967/1970) and 69 percent in Vogel (1979) (see Table 6.5 in Mouer & Y. Sugimoto, 1986).

Finally, inconsistency with empirical evidence. Many assertions of Japanology are inconsistent with empirical evidence. In particular, the assertion that Japan is a society of harmony contradicts a lot of historical and sociological evidence: The Japanese-American anthropologist Harumi Befu (1980) pointed out, for example, that some 1,600 peasant uprisings were recorded during the Edo period (1603–1868) and that an average of 3,274 peasant disputes was recorded annually between 1920 and 1941. Mouer and Y. Sugimoto (1986) pointed out that the frequency of violent social disturbances was 385 in Japan (1952–1960), whereas it was 163 in France (1950–1960).

Limitations of the Criticisms

Although these criticisms were quite reasonable, "Japanese collectivism" has still been widely believed until now. Why? The following three factors seem to have worked against these criticisms most strongly.

First, the effect of preconception. The long tradition of Japanology has created the situation where "Japanese collectivism" is a preconception for everybody: not only Japanese people but also those foreigners who have any interest in Japan at all. In psychology, it is well known that we have strong cognitive biases to sustain preconceptions, as will be seen later in Chapter 5. In the case of "Japanese collectivism," it is all the more difficult to overcome this preconception because it is shared by virtually everybody.

Second, the relatively small amount of counterevidence. "Japanese collectivism" has long been taken for granted and used to explain a whole variety of social phenomena not only in Japanology but also in many areas

such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, religion, and especially economy. Although a large portion of the supporting evidence presented in those areas was occupied by anecdotal instances, as discussed above, its total amount is overwhelming. It would not be surprising if the amount of counterevidence presented by the above critics looked trivial. In general, moreover, no theory is free from critics. The criticisms by a couple of researchers may well be considered a matter of course. Right after their criticisms were published, the US–Japan trade friction intensified (see Chapter 7) and "Japanese collectivism" was widely discussed and fiercely blamed as the essential feature of the Japanese economy. Unfortunately, the criticisms by Befu (1980) and Mouer and Y. Sugimoto (1986) contained virtually no discussion about the Japanese economy. This might well have impaired their impact. Therefore, we will devote Chapter 4 to a careful examination of the Japanese economy.

Finally, the reason for the widespread acceptance of "Japanese collectivism." Why was "Japanese collectivism" widely accepted as common knowledge if it is not true? The above criticisms did not provide the answer to this question. It is natural for most people to reason that "Japanese collectivism" must have become common knowledge because it is true. To discuss the validity of "Japanese collectivism," therefore, it is indispensable to elucidate why and how it was created and established as the common view. This is the focus of Chapter 5.

From Japanese to Non-Europeans

Hofstede's Study

At the same time as the above criticisms of "Japanese collectivism" were raised in Japanology, the contrast between the West and Japan was extended in psychology to the contrast between the West and the rest of the world. This extension was triggered by Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede's book *Culture's Consequences* (Hofstede, 1980). He conducted a large-scale survey of work-related values between 1968 and 1972 by delivering questionnaires to IBM employees all over the world. He submitted a subset of his data to a factor analysis and found two factors, one of which he named the "individualism factor." He created the "individualism index" based on its factor score. He ranked forty countries according to the values of this index (see Hofstede's Figure 5.1, p. 222). The USA ranked first, followed by English-speaking countries (i.e., Australia, Great Britain, and Canada). The top twenty countries were all from the West (including New Zealand and

Israel). At the bottom were the "developing countries" (e.g., Venezuela, Colombia, and Pakistan). Japan was ranked twenty-second.

This ranking fitted in nicely with the prevailing image of "national characters" concerning individualism: The top was the USA, which was usually considered the most individualistic nation, although the bottom was not Japan which was usually considered the most collectivistic nation. This finding led to a burst of cross-cultural or cross-national questionnaire studies on individualism and collectivism; many psychologists expected that cultures could be reliably compared along this dimension. This flourishing research trend made it possible to test the validity of "Japanese collectivism" empirically, as will be seen in the next chapter.

Hofstede's (1980) study attracted much attention in business economics and politics as well. A profit corporation named Hofstede Insight was even established; it has been operating in several countries including the USA and Japan. In *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, American political scientist Samuel Huntington (1996) cited Hofstede's study and contrasted individualistic Western civilization with the other collectivistic civilizations, especially, East Asian civilizations.

Self-Construal Theory

Ten years later, American developmental psychologist Hazel Markus and Japanese social psychologist Shinobu Kitayama proposed the self-construal theory (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), which made a distinction between two types of self-construal: independent and interdependent. The independent construal considers the self "an independent, self-contained, autonomous entity" (p. 224) that exists by itself independent of others, whereas the interdependent construal is "seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship" (p. 227) and considers the self to exist only in relation to others. The independent self-construal is supposed to be the psychological basis of individualism, whereas the interdependent self-construal is supposed to be that of collectivism. This theory dichotomized the whole world: The independent self-construal was claimed to be dominant in those cultures that originated in Western Europe and in "White, middle-class men with a Western European ethnic background" (p. 225) inside the USA. The interdependent self-construal was claimed to be dominant in all the other cultures including Japanese culture.

This self-construal theory was soon accepted widely in such sub-areas of psychology as social psychology, developmental psychology, and personality psychology; Markus and Kitayama (1991) have been cited in

innumerable articles and books. This theory became the standard theoretical framework for cross-cultural comparisons in psychology. It is worth noting that their article was published at the apex of the US–Japan trade friction where the alleged collectivistic economy of Japan was fiercely criticized and aroused the resentment of Americans (see Chapter 7).

Undoubtedly, this theory owed much to Japanology as shown, for example, by a lot of Japanology literature in the reference list of Markus and Kitayama (1991). This article opened with the contrast between American and Japanese proverbs: "In America, 'the squeaky wheel gets the grease.' In Japan, 'the nail that stands out gets pounded down'" (p. 224). The claim that the self of a Japanese comes into existence only in relation with others had been frequently made in Japanology (e.g., Araki, 1973; Kimura, 1972). Thereafter in psychology, the largest number of empirical comparisons focused on Americans and Japanese because Markus and Kitayama were primarily concerned with the comparison of these two nations.

In Short: What Has Been Said about "Japanese Collectivism"?

"Japanese collectivism" has been considered an indisputable reality by virtually all those who have any interest in Japan including Japanese themselves. Collectivism refers to the attitude that places priority on one's own group, whereas individualism refers to the attitude that places priority on oneself. In Japan, an extraordinary number of Japanology books were published; their central thesis was "Japanese collectivism," which was explicitly or implicitly contrasted with "Western individualism." Americans, especially, have been considered the most individualistic nation in the world. In Japanology, it has been repeatedly maintained that Japanese are integrated into their groups, lacking individuality, autonomy, creativity, and so forth. "Japanese collectivism" has been used to explain whatever conspicuous phenomena found in Japanese society, such as *ijime* (school bullying), *karoshi* (death from over work), and the high economic growth of the 1960s. Although a couple of critics pointed out that Japanology relied heavily on episodic instances such as personal experiences and proverbs and that the alleged harmonious society of Japan contradicted historical and sociological facts, the notion of "Japanese collectivism" remained unshaken. In the 1980s, Hofstede's (1980) worldwide survey was interpreted to support the prevailing "national character" arguments on individualism and to suggest that world cultures could be

compared meaningfully along the individualism/collectivism dimension, which produced a large number of cross-cultural questionnaire studies related to this dimension. In the 1990s, Markus and Kitayama's (1991) self-construal theory based on the notions of "Japanese collectivism" and "American individualism" became the standard theoretical framework for cross-cultural comparisons in psychology.

So, is "Japanese collectivism" true?