AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF


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Mary Jane Couch

This study explored perceptions of performance feedback communicated by Japanese supervisors to their U.S. subordinates in Japanese subsidiaries in the U.S. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with both Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates and their responses were tape-recorded. The purpose of the study was to assess perceptual similarities and differences held by participants in regard to appropriateness and effectiveness of positive and negative feedback.

The participants were asked to give their opinions about the functions, timing, frequency, and specificity of positive and negative feedback as well as overall appropriateness and effectiveness of feedback. Other related issues such as U.S. subordinates' feedback-seeking behavior and perceptions of the relationship quality were asked as well. The descriptions given by the participants were interpreted and then compared and contrasted within companies and across cultural groups to find similarities and differences in perceptions.

Perceived overall appropriateness and effectiveness, thus competence, of feedback reflected satisfaction or perceived appropriateness of each dimension of feedback; timing, frequency, and specificity. In addition to these dimensions, explicitness and manner of delivery emerged from the participants' responses, especially
from U.S. participants'. Japanese supervisors tended to emphasize timeliness, frequency, or specificity of their feedback to explain the overall competence of their feedback. U.S. subordinates, on the other hand, tended to focus on the extent of explicitness of feedback and manner of delivery to determine overall competence of feedback given by their Japanese supervisors.

Overall satisfaction perceived by U.S. subordinates inversely related to their feedback-seeking behavior. When U.S. participants' needs for feedback were satisfied by their supervisor, they did not seek further information about their performance. An exception was that when U.S. subordinates did not find feedback meaningful in general, they did not seek feedback, despite their dissatisfaction with feedback given to them.

Relationships were described by both Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates in terms of the extent of formality, professional quality, friendliness, and trust. Satisfaction with the relationship was positively related with U.S. participants' satisfaction with overall feedback. In relationships where communication flows continually in a transactional sense, and/or closeness and mutual trust was perceived, U.S. subordinates tended to find feedback from their Japanese supervisors to serve positive functions.

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

"You have been such a big help." "That's a very good idea. Let's talk about that." I have worked in a number of intercultural projects since I came to the U.S., and the coordinators or the managers of those projects frequently gave me informal feedback about my job. Their comments, however trivial and whether the comments carried positive or negative messages, motivated me and encouraged me very much.

A contrasting comment was made by one of my U.S. friends who had worked for a Japanese subsidiary company in the U.S.

I had worked for a real estate company for five years. The company paid me well, so I had no complaint about money. What frustrated me, though, was that my manager did not tell me anything about my job performance, never criticized me nor praised me. I thought he was mad at me because he just kept a "stone face" all day long. But after five o'clock, he would become a lot more friendly. When I was working on a project, the American staff often told me that I was doing well. So, I had a balance. Otherwise, I would have quit. I think just a word or two of positive comments can be very effective for employees.

Another U.S. friend of mine told me about his experience in Japan. He had lived in Japan for five years and been a cross cultural trainer for Japanese managers who were going to the U.S. as expatriate managers. The training included a unit of giving criticism and compliments. When my friend asked the participants to tell him the way they usually compliment their subordinates, they had a hard time coming up with
job-related positive comments because they were not used to doing so. When he asked about the way they usually criticize their subordinates, most of them used direct and strong language. They explained to him that if they were not direct, they would lose authority. This response was interesting because it seems to contradict a popular view that the Japanese use indirect communication styles to maintain harmony. When I asked him about this contradiction, he said:

Most of the participants believed that direct criticism was necessary, and they did not know how to compliment subordinates. When they deal with American workers, though, they have to know that positive comments have to precede negative comments. They have to know that U.S. workers respond better if negative comments are presented politely.

Both of my friends' comments reflect the fact that performance feedback has been long recognized in the U.S. as an essential factor in the enhancement of organization's overall effectiveness and the improvement of employee performance. In fact, performance feedback is one of the most widely researched topics in personnel psychology in the U.S. Despite the growth of international organizations, however, much of the performance feedback research focuses on supervisors and their subordinates who are from the same U.S. cultural system. Since international business is expanding and the number of international organizations is growing, it is necessary for researchers to pay attention to intercultural communication contexts.

Many of the foreign organizations making advances in the U.S. are Japanese-owned. In fact, at least 350,000 U.S. Americans are currently working for those Japanese-owned companies as a result of Japan's direct investment in the United States. Japanese managers are sent to the subsidiaries to work with U.S. workers. Despite this new intercultural phenomenon, Japanese supervisors' performance feedback to their U.S. subordinates has not been systematically studied.
Since performance feedback is an essential factor for U.S. workers' motivation and productivity, investigating performance feedback from Japanese supervisors to their U.S. American subordinates is valuable. This study explores the perceptions of informal performance feedback sent by Japanese supervisors to their U.S. subordinates. Perceptions of the supervisors and subordinates are compared and contrasted within and across companies.

Literature Review

Culture and International Management

Culture

"People cannot act or interact at all in any meaningful way except through the medium of culture" (Hall, 1966, p. 177). The pervasiveness and significance of culture has been emphasized by scholars who attempt to explain the human condition. Culture, however, has been conceptualized in a variety of ways, and to date, there is no agreement on a single definition of the concept within or across disciplines. In this section some of the major conceptualizations of culture are reviewed.

Keesing (1974) reviewed theories of culture and identified four approaches to culture in anthropology. The adaptive system approach defines culture as learned beliefs and behavior whose primary function is to adjust human societies to their environments. The cognitive system approach views culture as being composed of whatever one would need to know in order to operate in a manner acceptable to the culture's native members. The structural system approach emphasizes shared symbols and has its analogue in the structure of the human mind. The symbolic system approach defines culture as being made up of shared, identifiable, public symbols and meanings.
According to Lett (1987), although these various approaches exist, both behavior and beliefs are recognized as important concepts:

When anthropologists say that culture consists of "learned and shared behavior," they hardly are excluding the cognitive aspects of cultural transmission, retention, and identification from their definitions; behavior is learned and shared precisely because it is known and thought about (and, perhaps, most importantly, talked about). Similarly, when symbolic anthropologists say that systems of meaning are public, they mean that culture is expressed behaviorally and recognized in linguistic performance, body posture, ritual activity, artistic expression, and other observable human actions (p.58).

The concept that Lett does not specifically point out but that obviously pervades his argument and other theories of culture, is communication. In fact, various approaches and definitions of culture differ in their behavioral or mental emphasis, but they all include words such as "shared," "knowing," "learned," "transmission," and "public."

For beliefs and meanings to be shared and learned by members of a society, human beings communicate through implicit and explicit, verbal and nonverbal symbolic codes. Thus, it is essential to conceptualize culture from a communication perspective.

Barnlund (1989, p. xiv) asserts, "It is through communication that we acquire a culture; it is in our manner of communicating that we display our cultural uniqueness."

This interdependent nature between culture and communication is emphasized by a number of scholars. Collier and Thomas (1988, p.102), for example, define culture as "a historically transmitted system of symbols and meanings, and norms." Geertz (1973, p.89) views culture as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms by means of which men [sic] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attributes toward life." Similarly, Lawless (1979, p.48) conceptualizes culture as "the learned, rational, integrated, shared, patterns of behavior and beliefs that are dynamically adaptive and that depend on human social interaction for their existence."
It can be concluded, therefore, that people in a group learn beliefs, values, and norms through communication with other people, and in turn, their communication with others is based on these beliefs, values, and norms. This leads to the working definition of culture in this study: culture is the collective system of beliefs, values, and norms historically shared among members of a group through verbal and nonverbal symbols, and based on which they perceive, understand, and interact with their familiar and unfamiliar environment.

Cultural Dimensions

"Culture can refer to ethnicity, gender, profession, or any other symbol system that is bounded and salient to individuals" (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p.103). In this study, culture refers to national culture since the focus of the present study is the communication and work relationships between people from two different nations--the U.S. and Japan. Many dimensions of cultural variability are used to examine the differences and similarities across national cultures. Among those, the ones reviewed in the following sections include four dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980 & 1983) who obtained data in a large multinational business enterprise among the employees of its subsidiaries in 67 countries. These four dimensions are relevant to the present study because this study also examines subsidiaries of international business organizations. Moreover, the U.S. and Japan are found to show clear differences in cultural patterns along these four dimensions (Stening & Hammer, 1992).

Individualism-Collectivism

The first and the most fundamental dimension of cultural variability is individualism-collectivism. In individualist cultures, the "I" identity and individual
achievement are emphasized over the "we" identity and belonging to groups which are emphasized in collectivist cultures (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). The U.S. is often described as representative of an individualistic culture while Japan is frequently mentioned as a collectivist culture. In Hofstede's (1980) study, the U.S. scored 91, the highest score, and Japan scored 46 out of 100 in individualism. The mass of information in individualist cultures is vested in the explicit code (low-context communication) whereas people in a collectivist culture often communicate implicitly (high-context communication) (Hall, 1976).

Individualist cultures' reliance on low-context communication and collectivist culture's high-context communication seem to be based on the different assumptions people hold about others' ways of thinking and acting. According to Hall (1976) and Barnlund (1989), people in individualist cultures such as the North Americans have a premise that people naturally have different ideas and feelings about things, whereas people in collectivist cultures such as the Japanese believe that others feel and think the same way as they do. Barnlund (1989) states that this difference in premise, particularly between the U.S. Americans and the Japanese, is rooted in their historical and geographical differences. Geographically isolated, Japan has had no significant immigrants throughout its history and has little ethnic diversity. The U.S., in contrast, historically has had a great number of immigrants, which in turn, has created a nation of ethnic diversity. Different languages, life-styles, religions, and interactive norms necessitated people in the U.S. to be direct and articulate. The variety of nonverbal messages and interpretations may have resulted in more emphasis on the verbal parts of the message.

Differences in assumptions and premises between individualist cultures and collectivist cultures are reflected in employer-employee relationships in business organizations.
In individualist cultures, the relationship between the employee and employer is a business relationship based on the assumption of mutual advantage. Either party can terminate it if it can exchange it for a more advantageous deal elsewhere. In more collectivist cultures, the relationship between the employee and employer has a moral component. On the side of the employer, protection of the employee, almost regardless of the latter's performance; on the side of the employee, loyalty toward the employer. Changing employers is often socially disapproved of. We recognize many of these features in employment practices in Japan (Hofstede, 1984, p. 96).

Individualist cultures and collectivist cultures also differ with regard to the importance of face and harmony in work situations.

In individualist cultures, openness and directness in work relations is often considered a virtue. In collectivist cultures, the maintenance of the proper forms and of harmony is usually considered preferable over openness. In order to preserve harmony, the truth may have to be strained a bit. Disagreement may be more effectively expressed in indirect ways than in direct confrontation. Maintaining harmony consists in avoiding anybody's loss of face (Hofstede, 1984, p. 98).

**Uncertainty Avoidance**

Another cultural dimension identified by Hofstede (1980) is uncertainty avoidance. Strong uncertainty avoidance societies maintain more rigid codes of beliefs, have a high stress level, and are not very tolerant towards deviant persons and ideas. Weak uncertainty avoidance societies, on the other hand, maintain a more relaxed atmosphere in which practice counts more than principles and deviance is more easily tolerated. Hofstede (1984) states that members of high uncertainty avoidance cultures have a strong tendency for consensus, avoidance of conflict, and see loyalty to their employer as more of a virtue. Japan showed stronger uncertainty avoidance (64) than the U.S. (46) in Hofstede's (1980) study.

How might the degree of uncertainty avoidance be reflected in organizational contexts? Hofstede (1984) argues that in organizations, more formalization,
standardization, and ritualization are expected in strong uncertainty avoidance cultures than in weak uncertainty avoidance cultures.

In the process of transferring management skills, differences in the cultural need for formalization, standardization and ritualization may lead to deep misunderstandings and to the ineffectiveness of practices developed in one culture whenever transferred to another....If the sending country is relatively formal and the receiving country is relatively informal, structures and procedures may have to be loosened up before they can be expected to work in the receiving country (p. 102).

Not only the need for formal rules, but the perceptions of deviant ideas and behaviors in organizations differ depending on the degree of uncertainty avoidance. "In more Uncertainty Avoidance cultures, 'organizational man [or woman]' is not an innovator," (Hofstede, 1984, p. 105) and thus, those who have different ideas or behave differently from others may not be welcomed.

**Masculinity-Femininity**

The third cultural dimension given by Hofstede (1984) is masculinity-femininity. High masculinity societies place a high value on things, power, assertiveness, competitiveness, equity (reward is given according to performance), and distinct sex roles. On the other hand, quality of life and nurturance, cultivation of relationship, equality (reward is given according to need) and fluid sex roles are valued in low masculinity or highly feminine societies (Hofstede, 1980 & 1984). Japan was more masculine (95) than the U.S. (62) in Hofstede's (1980) study.

According to Hofstede (1980 & 1984), people in masculine cultures have a stronger motivation for individual achievement, view work as more central to their lives, and accept their company's "interference" in their private lives. This contrasts the idea that the dominant objective of work is to foster cooperation among group members by
allowing groups to function as self-contained social units (Hofstede, 1980 & 1984). As for sex roles, Japan, ranking 50 out of 50 on a masculinity scale, is referred to as an extremely rigid society where what jobs can be taken by men and what jobs by women is strictly predetermined (Hofstede, 1984).

Although Japan is found to be more masculine than the U.S. in Hofstede's (1980) study, the attributes of masculine and feminine cultures described by Hofstede do not necessarily differentiate these two national cultures when this dimension is considered in relation to other cultural dimensions, especially individualism and collectivism. For instance, Japan, despite being ranked highest in masculinity, is often viewed as more relationship-oriented country where cooperation and group work are emphasized while in the U.S. people tend to strive for individual achievement. This inconsistency, then, shall be an issue to be examined in the present study in the relationship and performance feedback communication between Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates.

**Power Distance**

The last dimension of cultural variability Hofstede (1980) identifies is power distance. People in large power distance societies accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place which needs no further justification. People in small power distance societies strive for power equalization and demand justification for power inequalities. According to Hofstede (1984), power distance is most apparent in appraisal systems in organizations. He states that appraisal systems developed in low power distance countries generally call for a superior-subordinate interview at least once a year with corresponding openness, directness, and two-way communication. This type of appraisal system contrasts to the approaches people take in large power distance countries:
...limitations have been shown for openness and directness in collectivist societies with a strong concern for face-saving and harmony. Most of these societies are large power distance as well which means that two-way communication between superior and subordinate is unlikely to occur. In this situation, the entire appropriateness of this type of appraisal system becomes doubtful...In order to avoid loss of face on the side of the subordinate, negative appraisals may have to be given indirectly... (Hofstede, 1984, p. 101).

Since the U.S. is high in individualism while Japan is oriented toward collectivism, power distance in the U.S. is correspondingly small while it is large in Japan. In Hofstede's study, however, the difference between these two national cultures was not very significant (Japan = 54; the U.S. = 40). Although U.S. Americans tend to use open and direct communication whereas the Japanese tend to prefer indirect communication and harmony, it is not empirically known if these national cultural tendencies are reflected in the relationship between Japanese supervisors and U.S. American subordinates. One of the goals of the present study is to systematically investigate this issue.

Although more investigation seems to be necessary for masculinity and power distance dimensions, all four dimensions do reveal differences in cultural patterns between the U.S. and Japan. The U.S. is oriented toward individualism, a smaller power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, and is more feminine in Hofstede's terms compared to Japan. The U.S. places values on individual goals, direct and explicit communication, equality, uniqueness, quality of life, and fluid sex roles. Japan, on the other hand, places emphasis on group goals, indirect and implicit communication, existence of power and inequality, conformity, and differentiated sex roles. How are these national cultural characteristics reflected in organizational settings? Although some implications for work situations across many countries are given by Hofstede (1984), more specific attention should be paid to the U.S. and Japan today. Also open to
question is the extent to which the cross-cultural research is applicable to intercultural communication contexts. The next section provides a brief review of cross-cultural studies done in U.S. and Japanese organizations.

Cultural Differences: U.S. and Japanese Organizations

Quite a few scholars have examined cultural differences and similarities between the U.S. and Japan. Since the present study focuses on communication in organizational contexts, the following review includes studies done in organizations. "Organization," however, can include many different kinds. Thus, a working definition of "organization" has to precede the review.

Parsons (1963) describes four distinct organizational types according to their functions: those oriented to economic production, those oriented to political goals, those oriented to integration goals, and those oriented to pattern-maintenance. In this study, organization refers to the organizations oriented to economic production, which are profit-making business organizations, which manufacture products and/or offer services for consumers.

Profit-making business organizations are organized only as long as their members are cooperating. Kreps (1989) argues:

People coordinate activities with one another to achieve their goals and ultimately to survive is the primary activity of organization, which is based on cooperation. Coordination is not always easily accomplished, however. People must be persuaded to cooperate, and communication is the tool that elicits cooperation. Through communication, people gather information from others and provide others with information. It is information that can determine whether people will cooperate (p. 4).

The effectiveness of organizations and the accomplishment of personal and collective goals in organizational life are to a great extent, if not entirely, determined by communication among people in organizations. Since the organizations examined in the
present study are Japanese companies, the following review summarizes some of the major communication features of Japanese companies compared to those of the U.S. business organizations.

**Cross-Cultural Studies**

Cross-cultural studies on organizations have consistently shown culture-bound differences between the U.S. and Japan. A number of scholars have examined overall salient attributes of the organizations, and among those, the most frequently cited is Ouchi (1981). Ouchi, in his popular book, *Theory Z*, contrasts the principal characteristics of Japanese and U.S. management styles. In addition to management policies such as lifetime-employment and non-specialized career paths, he identified communication-related features such as implicit control mechanisms, collective decision-making, collective responsibility and holistic concern (e.g. building a complete relationships between employer and employee, including the employee's non-work, personal and family matters).

From a human resource perspective, Hatvany and Pucik (1981) analyzed Japanese managerial characteristics in comparison to the ones existing in the U.S. and found three strategies used in Japanese organizations: (a) educating people to achieve a desired employee quality and inducing them to remain in the company; (b) articulating company philosophy based on concern for employee needs and cooperation and teamwork; and (c) engaging in intensive socialization. Hatvany and Pucik argue that these strategies are manifest in their emphasis on work groups, consultative decision-making, and concern for employees.

Okabe (1983) presents a number of values underlying work-related behavior in the U.S. and Japanese organizations. U.S. workers' behavior, according to Okabe, is influenced by an internalized set of rules and purposes modified by a strong sense of
self. Information is used to foster the turning of internal needs and desires into successful external action. Communication becomes self-oriented and goal-achieving, and can be often confrontational. Among Japanese workers, on the other hand, rules and purposes are more closely tied to the demands of tasks, situations, and context. The self merges into the group, and information is used to foster adaptation to the group and context.

In other cross-cultural studies, researchers took a close look at specific aspects of Japanese and U.S. management. Hirokawa and Miyahara (1986) examined specific communication strategies employed by Japanese managers to influence their subordinates and then they compared those strategies with those of U.S. American managers. They found that when attempting to convince a subordinate to perform an obligatory action, Japanese managers tended to rely more often on altruism-based strategies such as counsel ("Is there anything I can help you with?"), duty ("It is your obligation to report on time for work"), favor ("As a personal favor to me, please stop being tardy for work"), or altruism ("For the sake of the company, please report on time in the future"). In contrast, U.S. American managers tended to rely most often on punishment-based strategies such as threat ("The next time you are late, I will start docking your pay"), warning ("If you don't shape up, you won't be with our company very much longer"), ultimatum ("Shape up, or find yourself another job"), or aversive stimulation ("Until you prove to me that you can be trusted to report on time for work, I will constantly monitor your every move"). When the situation involved non-obligatory action, Japanese managers also relied on altruism-based communication, whereas American managers preferred rationale- or reward-based strategies. The similar findings are reported by a number of authors (Cathcart & Cathcart, 1976; Doi, 1973; Nakamura, 1967; and Nakane, 1967).
Howard, Shudo and Umeshima (1983) measured motivations and values of Japanese and U.S. American managers to see whether they parallel the generally accepted cultural differences such as the Japanese being group-oriented and the U.S. Americans being individualists. The results showed support of cultural characteristics generally attributed to Japan and the U.S. Ambition was manifest in different ways in the value ranking of the two national groups, with the U.S. Americans focusing on individual characteristics and the Japanese on desired end-states. The concept of "me" was negatively associated with success for the Japanese but positively related to the U.S. Americans. "Loyalty" was positively related to success for the Japanese while it had negative relation to success for the Americans. From this finding, Howard et al. suggest that attempting to increase productivity in the U.S. by foisting Japanese social values on American workers may not only be inappropriate but potentially detrimental.

These comparative studies, though their approaches and focuses may be different, consistently suggest distinct communication attributes that differ between Japanese and U.S. organizations. Those communication attributes are in accordance with cultural characteristics identified by Hofstede (1980). Japanese organizations are characterized by collective decision-making and responsibility, group norms, and concern for employees. Japanese managers employ indirect communication styles, emphasizing company goals, harmony, and loyalty. In contrast, U.S. organizations, oriented toward the individualistic, and are marked by less participative decision-making that emphasizes concrete goals, individual responsibility, and self-actualization. U.S. American managers tend to prefer direct communication styles such as threat and direct requests, emphasizing the contractual relationships with the company.

It seems to be clear that cultural differences are reflected in values people hold about their jobs and companies and beliefs about effective and appropriate communication styles. Do these cultural differences influence working relationships
between Japanese and U.S. workers? This is a question relevant to a new phenomenon--U.S. workers employed in Japanese subsidiaries in the U.S. Because of the surge in Japanese direct investment in the U.S. during the past several years, the number of U.S. workers employed by Japanese subsidiaries in the U.S is increasing. Human Resource experts estimate that Japanese subsidiaries employ 350,000 U.S. nationals, and predict that the number could grow to one million by the year 2,000 (Klein, 1992). The next section offers a definition of intercultural communication used in this study and then a brief review of research on intercultural communication among Japanese and U.S. employees.

**Intercultural Communication**

Cultural patterns become a salient issue when people from different national cultures communicate. Kim (1992) argues that cultural differences lead to difficulties in understanding each other:

> Cultural differences that enter into a given encounter introduce a high degree of unfamiliarity with each other's messages and meanings.... The gap between respective experiential background limits the interactants' ability to encode and decode messages with fidelity.... Recognition of verbal and nonverbal codes, behaviors, and interpretation of the hidden assumptions underlying those behaviors are likely to be more difficult [between people from different cultures] (p. 374-375).

These difficulties result because interactants from different cultures tend to encode and decode messages in ways that are consistent with the respective cultural group membership (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Kim, 1989). Collier and Thomas (1988) point out that individuals with their respective cultures differentiates intercultural communication from intracultural communication. A working definition of intercultural communication follows the one provided by Collier and Thomas. Intercultural communication is viewed as interaction between individuals who identify themselves as
distinct from one another in terms of beliefs, values, and norms held by their respective culture group.

In order for people with different cultural identities to understand each other and accomplish mutual goals, they have to "negotiate mutual meanings, rules, and positive outcomes" (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 108). In addition, whether an individual's behavior is perceived to be competent depends on the extent of appropriateness and effectiveness perceived (Collier & Thomas, 1988). Since what cultural meanings have to be negotiated and what behaviors are perceived to be appropriate and effective are only revealed by conducting intercultural research, it is necessary to examine the interactions between U.S. Americans and Japanese within organizations.

**Intercultural Studies**

Preliminary studies have been conducted to address communication in companies employing Japanese and U.S. employees. Peterson and Schwind (1977), for example, studied international companies with joint ventures in Japan and found that both U.S. and Japanese managers perceive a number of interpersonal problems when interacting with one another. Johnson (1977) examined Japanese-owned electronic manufacturing subsidiaries operating in the U.S. and concluded that integrating the U.S. and Japanese workers into a coherent team is very difficult.

More recently, Omens, Jenner and Beatty (1987) have investigated attributes ascribed to Japanese and U.S. employees by managers of these two national groups who are employed in situations in which they have direct, day-to-day work relationships with one another. The results showed that both the Japanese and the U.S. managers were in essential agreement in their descriptions of various attributes. The Japanese employees were rated as more industrious and loyal to the organizations than were the U.S. employees. Behind this rating, however, the two groups' perspectives on
organizational life and personal life differed. One Japanese participant stated that the U.S. employees "have to learn to consider the whole organization and not themselves" (p. 257). In contrast, a U.S. manager commented that, "They [the Japanese] need to realize that the U.S. staff does not view the organization as an external family" (p. 257). Both groups also agreed that U.S. employees are more extroverted, outspoken, assertive and less patient than the Japanese.

Laurie (1990) conducted interviews with white-collar U.S. employees in Japanese-owned companies in the U.S. with regard to productivity of the companies. Language differences, pressure of long work hours, exclusion from the decision-making process, and rotation policies were raised as issues that are perceived negatively by the U.S. workers. Overall, the majority of the interviewees perceived their relationships with their Japanese colleagues as amiable but superficial. Laurie (1990) quotes one of the participants: "The Americans and Japanese do not interact that much at work....In general, the Japanese are very cordial and very nice. But we really do not work together" (p. 137).

Another interesting intercultural study is found in Shogun Management written by Byham (1993). Byham and his research team interviewed more than 200 Canadian and U.S. managers working for Japanese companies and a smaller number of Japanese managers. Byham observed that Japanese companies in general have tried to be sensitive to the feelings of North American managers and employees, and as a result many Japanese companies have made progress in building a blended organization. However, in numerous other companies, only fitful progress has been made. Some communication issues were repeatedly expressed by the interviewees of the study. For example, North American interviewees expressed frustration because explanations of why things are done a certain way were rarely forthcoming. Many of them also felt
confused because their Japanese colleagues were reluctant to express opinions and stands on issues but say what they think other people want to hear.

From the point of Japanese managers, it is the North Americans' behavior that makes the organization ineffective and unproductive. In Byham's (1993) study, many of the Japanese managers commented that North Americans place so little emphasis on communication within a department and among individuals that it is difficult for them to work in group. Another point made by Japanese managers was that their North American colleagues are rigid, insisting on certain simplistic notions regarding workplace equality and fairness.

As the studies reviewed suggest, Japanese culture and the U.S. culture have more differences than similarities, and these differences are manifest in organizational contexts. None of these studies attempts to indicate that the values or beliefs of one culture are more effective or appropriate. Rather, what all these studies imply is the importance of understanding the other cultures when people from different cultural backgrounds are to work together. Ferraro (1990) argues that "the success or failure of a company abroad will depend on both its employees' job-related expertise and their sensitivity and responsiveness to the new cultural environment" (p.7).

Similarly, Hofstede (1984) points out that it is impossible to coordinate actions of other people without a deep understanding of their cultural values, beliefs, and expectations because those cultural attributes underlie people's behavior and attitudes. These are essential considerations international managers will have to have when transferring management ideas from one country to another. As stated earlier, organizational effectiveness depends on cooperation among people (Kreps, 1989) and cooperation is achieved by understanding cultures of other people through communication. Ironically, however, what and how to communicate effectively and appropriately are very much embedded in one's cultural values, beliefs, and norms.
Thus, identifying cultural values, beliefs, and norms that are manifest in communication is the key for achieving cooperation among workers, and ultimately the organizational effectiveness. An issue that is at the very core of the cultural value system in the U.S. but rather foreign in Japan is performance feedback. In the last section of literature review, major performance feedback studies are summarized.

**Performance Feedback**

Performance feedback has been one of the most widely studied topics in the area of organizational behavior and psychology in the U.S. In recent years, great attention has been given to this topic because of important implications relating to fair employment practices and because of increasing concerns about employee productivity in organizations. In this section, factors that are included in the performance feedback process are discussed.

**Definition of Performance Feedback**

In the discipline of communication, feedback is defined as a communicated response to the messages that an individual sends (Kreps, 1989). It's function is to provide the source of the messages with information about how the receiver is reacting to his or her messages. When it is applied to individuals' performance in organizations, the sender's feedback specifically comprises information about the receiver's job-related behavior in the past (Annett, 1969). Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor (1979) have done a thorough review of performance feedback literature, and concluded that performance feedback is "information about appropriateness of past performance" (p. 351).

This definition, however, does not reflect their statement that "feedback about the effectiveness of an individual's behavior has long been recognized as essential for
learning and for motivation in performance-oriented organizations" (p. 349). Since appropriate performance may not be necessarily effective, both appropriateness and effectiveness should be included in the definition of performance feedback.

Other scholars view performance appraisal as interpersonal communication between managers and their employees, providing their employees with feedback about the quality of their work (Meyer, Kay, & French, 1965; 1981; Kreps, 1989). Kreps (1989) argues that quality is an important and valued outcome of organizational activities. Thus, performance feedback in the present study refers to information about the quality, such as appropriateness and effectiveness, of individuals' performance provided by supervisors to their subordinates.

Functions of Feedback

Feedback is meaningful for at least three reasons. First, feedback serves as a learning tool (Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor, 1979). People learn from feedback and alter their performance strategies and personal goals to make them more compatible with the environment's requirements (Greller & Persons, 1992; Locke & Latham, 1990). Thus, feedback can direct individuals to clarify their roles in organizations by making specific those behaviors that should be performed. Second, feedback also serves a motivational function, implying that if changes are made there is a promise of future reward (Hachman & Oldham, 1975). Through feedback, individuals will have a clearer sense of what will lead to advancement and the extent to which their performance matches the standard. Lastly, feedback itself works as a reward or a punishment for conduct in the organization (Ilgen et al., 1979). How feedback serves these functions in intercultural relationships of Japanese and U.S. Americans has not been studied. Moreover, other reasons for and outcomes from feedback may exist when the sender and receiver are from different cultural backgrounds. U.S. Americans and Japanese may differ in their
emphasis upon and perceptions of the importance of feedback. Thus, the functions and importance of feedback will be addressed in the present study.

Dimensions of Performance Feedback

Performance feedback in organizations is a complex process because it involves many variables besides the source, messages, and the receiver. In their review, Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor (1979) identified five major factors of performance feedback. Those factors include the valence of the feedback (whether the feedback is positive or negative), timing, specificity, frequency, message and distortion, and expertise and trust perceived in the relationship. According to Ilgen et al., these are all important dimensions to the understanding of performance feedback.

Larson, Glynn, Fleenor, and Scontrino (1986) posed a question that whether the dimensions identified by Ilgen et al. (1979) are empirically distinct. Using the abbreviated versions of a questionnaire developed by Ilgen et al., Larson et al. obtained data from 360 pairs of managers and subordinates. Their analysis showed that the dimensions appear to covary so strongly that they are not empirically discriminated from each other. They also found, along with others (Herold & Greller, 1977; Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979), that managers give positive and negative feedback in distinctly different ways. Thus, timing, specificity, frequency, message and distortion, and relationship between source and receiver should be studied further.

Valence and Acceptance

The valence of the message is the most important message characteristic in terms of its impact on the acceptance of feedback (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Landy & Farr, 1983). Feedback is categorized into two distinct signs, positive and negative.
Studies consistently show that positive feedback is perceived, recalled, and accepted as more accurate than negative feedback (Feather, 1968; Ilgen & Hamstra, 1972; Ilgen et al., 1979).

One reason for the rejection of negative feedback relates to attribution theory. The source tends to perceive the recipient's behavior without paying much attention to organizational constraints on performance, whereas the recipient is perceptually attuned to the situational constraints on his or her performance and tends to externalize negative outcomes and internalize positive outcomes (Bannister, 1986; Johnson & Nawrocki, 1967). Rejection of negative feedback may also result because it is incongruent with individuals' beliefs of their performance level (Meyer, 1975) and lowers individuals' confidence in their jobs (Thompson and Dalton, 1970).

Yet another possible reason for the acceptance of feedback relates to the characteristics perceived by the recipient. It is often difficult to separate the effects of the feedback from the source (Ilgen et al., 1979). It has been found that subordinates are likely to accept the feedback from their supervisors if the supervisors are very familiar with them and knowledgeable about their performance (Greller & Herold, 1975).

The value of the feedback can only be judged subjectively from the recipient's frame of reference (Ilgen et al., 1979), but the feedback itself is dependent on the sender's subjective perceptions about the recipient's performance and the delivery of the feedback (Larson, 1989). Substantial empirical evidence suggests that employees' self-appraisals of their own performance often differ significantly from their supervisors' evaluations (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Mabe & West, 1982). Larson (1989) notes: Such discrepancies are problematic in that they can create interpersonal friction and can reduce employees' satisfaction with and acceptance of administrative decisions that are presumably based on the supervisors' ratings....These differences are rooted in the differing perspectives and motives of employees and their supervisors, and these differences are
reinforced whenever supervisors give informal feedback that does not accurately reflect their true perceptions of the employees' performance (p. 419).

Those discrepancies can be greater when the supervisor and the subordinate are from different national cultures because individuals' perceptions of behavior, whether it is appropriate and/or effective, and how it is delivered are influenced by their cultural values, beliefs, and norms. Thus, the present study compares and contrasts Japanese supervisors' perceptions of their performance feedback to their U.S. subordinates and the U.S. subordinates' perceptions of the performance feedback given by their Japanese supervisors. These comparisons are made separately for positive and negative signs.

**Timing**

Timing refers to "the interval between the individual's behavior and the receipt of the feedback about the behavior" (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979, p. 353). Empirical evidence consistently shows that supervisors are reluctant to communicate negative information (Benedict & Levine, 1988; Herold & Parsons, 1985; Ilgen et al., 1979; Larson, 1984). One of the resultant behavior of this reluctance is to delay giving negative feedback (Benedict & Levine, 1988; Ilgen et al., 1979; Larson, 1986 & 1989). Ilgen et al. (1979) note that in most work settings, negative feedback is often delayed for an extensive period of time, and supervisors perceive that it is better delayed than given immediately because it makes subordinates uncomfortable.

While there is no study that focused on the timing of performance feedback in Japanese organizations, Sullivan and Nonaka (1986) offer an interesting timing-related finding in their comparative study of organizational learning in Japanese and U.S. management. Japanese senior managers who participated in their study showed preference for allowing subordinates' poor performance to continue for a time to foster learning. According to Sullivan and Nonaka, delay of communication on poor
performance is one of the strategies Japanese supervisors use to produce uncertainty in the part of subordinates so the subordinates strive to reduce the uncertainty, which in the end contributes to making more effective and productive organization.

The performance feedback literature suggests that delay is not a problem with positive feedback in U.S. organizations (e.g. Ilgen et al., 1979). In Japanese organizations, on the other hand, Japanese supervisors may delay positive feedback to their subordinates. One possible explanation for this delay is provided by Filipczak (1992). He states that Japanese managers do give positive feedback in the office but during "tsukiai" or after-work drinks. After a manager symbolically "disembowels" an employee on the job, the manager takes the person out after work and tells him what a valuable employee he or she really is. Filipczak explains that positive feedback has to be given outside the office so that neither manager nor subordinate loses face, but U.S. workers do not attend the "tsukiai" because they want leisure time and Japanese workers speak Japanese during the after work social gathering.

Japanese supervisors may delay their negative feedback, concerned with group harmony and cultivation of employee learning behavior. They may also delay their positive feedback to save their own face and their subordinate's so both parties can play their roles in the company. However, timing of performance feedback, both positive and negative, has not been investigated systematically in Japanese-U.S. American work relationships. Thus, to what extent timing is an issue in this relationship will be examined in the present study.

**Distortion of Message**

Delivery of information is found to affect receiver's acceptance of the information (Ilgen et al., 1979). Among various delivery manners, the most frequently mentioned is distortion. In addition to delay, distortion is another resultant behavior
supervisors often use when they are required to convey negative performance feedback (Benedict & Levine, 1988; Fisher, 1978; Ilgen et al., 1979; Larson, 1989). Distortion arises from the supervisors' sensitivity toward the subordinates' feelings (Larson, 1984). Supervisors believe that negative feedback is unpleasant for the employee and performance-related repercussions might result from giving it. Distortion might also occur due to the discomfort associated with the sender's role as an appraiser (Benedict & Levine, 1988). It must be noted that distortion is a quality perceived by the receiver of the feedback (Ilgen et al, 1979). Senders of information may soften their message because they believe it to be appropriate and effective.

Perceived distortion of negative feedback might become an issue when individualism and collectivism are considered. As reviewed in the discussion of cultural dimensions, people in the U.S. are said to prefer a direct verbal style that invokes speakers' true intentions in terms of their wants, needs, and desires in the discourse process, whereas the Japanese tend to use an indirect style that conceals speakers' true intentions in terms of their wants, needs, and goals in the discourse situation (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1975; Okabe, 1983). To illustrate these differences between the U.S. and Japan, Miyahara (cited in Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988) uses an example of North American and Japanese managers:

If a North American supervisor must inform his or her subordinate that she or he is not satisfied with the sales proposal, she or he would probably use a very explicit, direct responses, such as "I can't accept this proposal as submitted. You should come up with some better ideas." A Japanese supervisor, in contrast, would say, "While I have the highest regard for your abilities, I would not be completely honest if I did not express my disappointment at this proposal. I must ask that you reflect further on the proposal you have submitted to me (p.9).

As shown in the example above, Japanese managers' concern with their subordinates' feelings may cause them to be indirect in their delivery of negative feedback. The indirectness can be interpreted by U.S. subordinates as distortion of the
manager's true evaluation of their performance. Japanese managers' tendency to use indirect criticism is also pointed out by Elashmawi (1990). He notes that criticism is considered to be rude and damaging to social harmony in Japan. Likewise, concern for "face" is emphasized by Hofstede (1984) and Byham (1993) who interviewed North American employees in Japanese organizations. In contrast, however, Filipczak (1992) claims that Japanese managers are accustomed to providing feedback to Japanese employees in a direct manner that would be demoralizing to U.S. American employees:

A Japanese salaryman may rip into a Japanese subordinate in front of other employees, tells him how stupid and incompetent he is and sometimes even strikes the employee without being criticized for it...The Japanese employee who was just raked over the coals considers himself lucky because the manager has made it obvious that he sees potential in this worker. "Japanese managers thrive on critical feedback," say Lipp. "In fact, they say, 'If I'm not being criticized by my boss, he's given up on me'" (p. 24)

While it is not empirically known what styles Japanese managers use in delivering negative information, more general findings on this issue are reported by Nomura and Barnlund (1983). They investigated patterns of interpersonal criticism in Japan and the U.S. and found that both the Japanese and U.S. Americans preferred expressing dissatisfaction in a direct way. Yet there was also a difference between those two groups in their study. The more distant the relationship, the more passive the forms of criticism that were used by the Japanese participants. The U.S. American participants, on the other hand, consistently employed active forms of criticism, and thus, the type of personal relationship did not affect their preferred forms.

Nomura and Barnlund's (1983) research findings imply that the forms of negative feedback Japanese supervisors use with their subordinates may depend on the relationship. Thus, not only the influence of cultural characteristics such as individualism-collectivism and high-context/low-context communication, but the type of
relationship should be examined in performance feedback study when it involves Japanese participants.

Distortion of positive feedback is not found to occur in U.S. organizations as in the case for delay, because it does not cause any discomfort for the people involved (e.g. Ilgen et al., 1979). On the other hand, some anecdotal evidence shows that in Japanese organizations, Japanese supervisors are reluctant to give positive feedback to their U.S. subordinates. Elashmawi (1990), for example, explains that Japanese supervisors are conservative in giving positive feedback to U.S. workers because they are afraid of making inappropriate comments in a language in which they are not fluent.

Language may be one reason, but the more fundamental reason for the reluctance seems to be found in Japanese cultural expectations. Japanese managers in Byham’s (1993) research commented that they feel very awkward in praising and enhancing someone’s self-esteem open and directly because it seems to be illogical flattery in Japanese culture where modesty is viewed as virtue. Because of this cultural expectation, Japanese subordinates do not expect nor desire praise. Another Japanese participant in Byham’s interview said that "an employee who is praised unexpectedly would feel uneasy...Instead of feeling good about the praise, the employee would probably think the manager was being ironic and that he was using that irony to criticize the employee's performance" (p. 99). Byham found that it is still common that Japanese supervisors could be even hard on their subordinates when they are satisfied with his or her job so the employee continues to do better.

Cultural expectations are quite different in the U.S. where explicit and constant positive feedback is believed to be essential for maintaining high self-esteem which is a key for higher morale and productivity. Thus, when the subordinate is from the U.S. culture, it is very possible that Japanese supervisor's modest and implicit praise is perceived as inappropriate distortion. If they are given negative comments despite their
good work, U.S. subordinates' dissatisfaction will be even greater. Whether praise should be expressed explicitly or implicitly and whether the explicitness or implicitness is perceived to be a distortion seem to be determined by what cultural expectations the individual holds. It is this very reason that the present study attempts to empirically address how performance feedback is perceived by Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates.

Specificity

Studies on signs of performance feedback show that supervisors are likely to use more specific terms with negative performance feedback than with positive feedback. Larson (1986), for example, suggests that supervisors' reluctance about giving negative feedback might cause them to convey the feedback in as specific a manner as possible in order to convince the subordinate that the evaluation it implies is not capricious. Some scholars argue that positive feedback should be specific as well. They remark that positive feedback should be detailed enough to allow for setting specific goals (French, Kay, & Meyer, 1966; Ilgen et al., 1979). Specific goals have been found superior to general goals (Steers & Porters, 1974).

Specificity of negative and positive feedback has not been studied in the relationship between Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates. However, Byham's (1993) research indicates that Japanese supervisors may choose to be specific in communicating positive feedback to their U.S. subordinates. He found that Japanese managers in training sessions showed a preference to be very specific in order to overcome their reluctance to praise others and because they believe that nonspecific or vague praise can be viewed as insincere. Whether this preference is actually practiced is a different matter. Moreover, how specific Japanese supervisors might be in their
negative feedback, and how the degree of specificity of positive and negative feedback is perceived by U.S. subordinates are not explored yet. These issues will be examined in this study.

**Frequency**

In the absence of strong organizational pressure for giving performance feedback, supervisors might give feedback about poor performance less frequently than feedback about superior performance (Larson, 1986; Meyer, 1976). According to Meyer (1976), this is because the presentation of negative feedback to subordinates is an unpleasant task. Other studies on feedback frequency point out that the amount of feedback positively correlates with subordinates' subsequent performance (Heckman & Oldham, 1976; Steers, 1975; Greller, 1978). Steers (1975) found that the higher an individual's need for achievement, the greater the desire for frequent feedback.

How frequently are negative and positive feedback are communicated in Japanese organizations? Byham's (1993) Japanese interviewee commented that "We focus on pointing out mistakes; to Americans, that makes us seem negative all the time, although we are only trying to get people to look at problems logically and thoroughly" (p. 98). Rehfeld (1990), from his work experience with the Japanese, concludes that giving praise is not practiced by the Japanese because they see doing good job is just a part of "kaisen" or a continual process of refining. Kelley (1991) also points out that recognizing, rewarding, or praising employees is almost unheard of in most Japanese companies, even based in the U.S., but these are the key factors that drive many salespeople in the U.S. to perform better. He quotes an American sales manager's comment. "It's not just a business thing. It's a way of life" (p.30).
From the Japanese viewpoint, positive feedback does exist although it is often nonverbal. Byham (1993) notes that

Japanese managers often say they really find out if they're doing well by the numbers of challenging special assignments they receive. Less-capable managers get routine tasks of dwindling importance and might eventually be reduced to virtual irrelevancy with no subordinates or authority (p. 139).

Task as a form of feedback is not unique to Japanese organizations. In fact, task is one of the sources identified in studies conducted in U.S. organizations (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Ilgen et al., 1979). Working on the task itself serves as feedback to the recipient along with their own judgment of their performance and other individuals such as supervisors, co-workers, and customers (Herold & Greller, 1977; Herold & Parson, 1992; Greller, 1992).

As discussed previously, it is also possible that Japanese supervisors do communicate praise verbally, but it may be too subtle for U.S. subordinates to recognize. What can be concluded from these studies and arguments is that frequency of negative and positive feedback is also culture-bound. Japanese supervisors' emphasis on negative feedback, coupled with their subtle praise or giving assignment instead of verbal praise may be appropriate and effective in Japanese culture, but quite possibly resented by U.S. subordinates, because frequent negative feedback is not likely to enhance their self-esteem, but rather be detrimental (Ilgen et al., 1979) and they respond better to constructive criticism when it is balanced with some thanks and compliments (Rehfeld, 1990). Thus, in the present study, frequency of positive and negative feedback will be investigated from the perspectives of both Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates.
Feedback-Seeking

Larson (1980) argues that while supervisors provide performance information to their subordinates, the feedback they actually deliver during casual, day-to-day interactions is sometimes distorted by factors that have little to do with the employee's objective performance. One such factor Larson raises, is the employee's own feedback-seeking behavior.

Ashford and Cummings (1983) have found that employees are likely to use two distinct feedback-seeking strategies; monitoring and inquiry. Inquiry is when the employee becomes actively involved in generating the informational cues. For example, the employee might directly ask his or her supervisor about his or her performance. Monitoring is when employees attend to naturally occurring information cues. An employee, for instance, may draw inferences about how his or her supervisor evaluates his or her behavior based on the supervisor's unsolicited reactions to his or her behavior. However, their reactions are often based on what their respective culture perceives to be appropriate and effective (Kim, 1992). Respectively, U.S. subordinates' interpretation of the reactions are likely to be influenced by their cultural backgrounds. Thus, the whole process of supervisor's reactions and subordinates' monitoring of the reactions should be examined in relation to the cultures of people involved.

In an attempt to discover why and when these strategies are used by employees, Larson (1989) examined the factors that influence their feedback-seeking behavior. His analysis indicated that the most important factor is the presence of a deep-seated motivation to maintain a positive self-esteem. This motive is likely to influence the employee's initial decision about whether or not to use an inquiry strategy and his or her subsequent choices about the timing, form, and content of the inquiry. Larson argues that self-esteem maintenance considerations may cause employees to prefer self-
verifying forms of inquiry and/or to provide information that mitigates against personal attributions of responsibility and blame. This, in turn, may elicit less negative supervisory feedback.

Informal performance feedback, therefore, is a dynamic process between supervisors and subordinates. The content, frequency, and timing of performance feedback are determined not only by supervisors but whether subordinates seek to elicit the feedback as well. U.S. subordinates' active feedback-seeking behavior, however, can be perceived negatively by Japanese supervisors when the existing cultural expectations (Byham, 1993) are considered. Japanese supervisors may not be familiar with the seeking behavior because reassuring self-esteem is uncommon for them. By increasing/reducing assignments, they may expect their U.S. subordinates to know how they evaluate their subordinates' performance. Since these are no more than guesses at this point, if and what feedback-seeking strategies are used by U.S. subordinates, and how Japanese supervisors respond to them should be examined.

 Relationship between Source and Receiver

The relationship between source and receiver is important, and one critical factor in the formation and maintenance of a relationship is trust between them. Perceived trustworthiness of the feedback source and the acceptance of the feedback are found to have a positive correlation. Joblin (1979) and Ilgen et al. (1979), for example, suggest that as trust decreases, then, so does the impact of information conveyed during communication between a supervisor and a subordinate. Herold and Greller (1977) found that the closer the relationship between source and receiver of feedback in the workplace, the higher the impact of feedback results.
In regard to working relationships between the Japanese and the U.S. Americans, Laurie (1990) commented that U.S. workers may perceive their relationships with their Japanese colleagues as amiable but superficial. This may be a reflection of a Japanese collectivist cultural tendency to draw a sharp distinction between ingroup and outgroup. Rehfeld (1990), who worked for large Japanese electronic companies as a part of upper level management, comments that "no matter how long a non-Japanese works for a Japanese company, he or she is still considered an outsider. It's a black-and-white issue with nothing in between" (p. 172). When Japanese people do not perceive closeness, they tend to use passive forms of criticism as found by Nomura and Barnlund (1983). Japanese managers' use of passive style may lead U.S. subordinates to feel their relationship with their Japanese bosses is distant. This, in turn, may result in rejection of feedback.

Japanese expatriate managers' difficulty building trusting relationships with their U.S. staff may also relate to uncertainty avoidance. Coming from a high uncertainty avoidance culture, Japanese managers may feel uncertain about dealing with non-Japanese subordinates. Stening and Hammer (1992) examined the adaptation of U.S. American managers to Japan, Japanese managers to the U.S. and both U.S. American and Japanese managers to Thailand. Their study results indicated that the perceived effectiveness in communication and developing satisfying intercultural relationships was significantly lower for Japanese managers both in the U.S. and Thailand, perhaps related to a higher discomfort with uncertainty.

While some anecdotal evidence suggests that both Japanese managers and U.S. employees may perceive difficulty in building trusting relationships with each other, little empirical evidence is available on this issue as well as the issue of perceived expertise. In addition, subordinates' feedback-seeking behavior and perceived appropriateness and effectiveness of the behavior may be affected by the quality of the
relationship between them. Since acceptance of feedback may not be achieved when
the relationship between sender and receiver is dissatisfying, the quality of the
relationship perceived by both the sender and the receiver should be researched.

Research Questions

As reviewed, performance feedback is a complex process that involves various
factors such as timing, directness, specificity, and frequency. These factors are
differentiated in terms of the valence of the feedback and influenced by the dynamic
interactions and relationships between source and receiver. Substantial empirical
evidence suggests that employees' self-appraisals of their own performance often differ
significantly from their supervisors' evaluations (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Mabe &
West, 1982; Steel & Ovalle, 1984; Thornton, 1980). Thus, the perceptual similarities
and differences have to be considered in the analysis of performance feedback. The
present study poses the following research questions to compare how Japanese
supervisors perceive their performance feedback to their U.S. subordinates and how the
U.S. workers perceive the performance feedback given by their Japanese supervisors.
Except for the first research question, each research question consists of two questions,
"a" and "b." "a" corresponds to a question for Japanese managers, and "b" for U.S.
subordinates respectively.

1.: How important do Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates believe
positive and negative feedback to be?

2.a.: How appropriate do Japanese supervisors perceive the timing of positive
and negative feedback to their U.S. subordinates?

2.b.: How satisfied are U.S. subordinates with the timing of positive and
negative feedback from their Japanese supervisors?

3.a.: How appropriate do Japanese supervisors perceive the frequency of
positive and negative feedback to their U.S. subordinates?
3.b.: How satisfied are U.S. subordinates with the frequency of positive and negative feedback from their Japanese supervisors?

4.a.: How appropriate do Japanese supervisors perceive the specificity of positive and negative feedback to their U.S. subordinates?

4.b.: How satisfied are U.S. subordinates with the specificity of positive and negative feedback from their Japanese supervisors?

5.a.: How effective do Japanese supervisors view overall performance feedback they communicate to their U.S. subordinates to be?

5.b.: How effective do U.S. subordinates view overall performance feedback from their Japanese supervisors to be?

6.a.: How appropriate do Japanese supervisors perceive overall performance feedback they communicate to their U.S. subordinates to be?

6.b.: How appropriate do U.S. subordinates perceive overall performance feedback from their Japanese supervisors to be?

7.a.: How appropriate do Japanese supervisors perceive their U.S. subordinates' feedback-seeking behavior to be?

7.b.: How appropriate do U.S. subordinates perceive their feedback-seeking behavior to be?

8.a.: How satisfied are Japanese supervisors with their relationship with their U.S. subordinates?

8.b.: How satisfied are U.S. subordinates with their relationship with their Japanese supervisors?
CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive and interpretive in nature. Despite the vast attention paid to performance feedback in the U.S. in the fields of applied organizational behavior (Latham & Wexley, 1981) and personnel psychology (Pearce & Porter, 1986), little research has focused on the situation where the sender and the receiver of the performance feedback are from different national cultural backgrounds. The goal of this study, therefore, is to explore perceptions held by a small group of Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates about performance feedback. Because perceptions are subjective and not directly observable (Mader & Mader, 1993), accounts or individuals' stories about their patterns of interaction (Gudykunst, Sudweeks, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1986) are means of eliciting the various ways individuals perceive their world. Shotter (1985) explains the interconnectedness of accounts and perceptions as follows.

Accounts can be distinguished from theories in the sense that an account of an action or activity is concerned with talking about the action as the activity is. It is an aid to perception, functioning to instruct one as to how to constitute an otherwise indeterminate flow of activity as a sequence of recognizable events, events of a kind already known about within a society's way of making sense of things (p. 451).

To better understand how performance feedback is perceived by Japanese supervisors as senders and U.S. subordinates as receivers, it is important to examine both sides' interpretations, conceptions, and explanations of performance feedback.
Interview Guides

Interview Guides for Japanese and U.S. Participants

The data of this study was gathered by conducting face-to-face individual interviews with the participants. Mueller (1986) points out that face-to-face interaction between interviewer and interviewee provides benefits.

People are often more willing to share their opinions orally than in a written format. ...The interviewer can also clarify ambiguous questions where elaboration or clarification of a response is required. Even gestures, tone of voice, hesitation in responding, and facial expression can provide insight to nuance and act as cues for further probing (p. 88).

Face-to-face interviews are best suited for this exploratory study, because in order to collect participants' accounts on performance feedback, any ambiguous questions and responses need to be clarified, explained and elaborated.

Two different guides were prepared for the interviews; one for U.S. subordinates and the other for Japanese supervisors (see Appendices A and B). These guides contained the same open-ended and closed-ended questions for both groups except that the wording of questions was adjusted appropriately for each group, and some of the demographic questions differed. The combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions was included in the guide because participants' description of their experience was necessary for some parts, and for other parts questions could be answered by simple responses.

Demographic questions were asked at the beginning of each interview. Both Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates were asked their age, sex, title held in the company, and the number of years they worked for the company. In addition, some questions such as previous intercultural management training were included in the
interview guide for the Japanese supervisors. Questions pertaining only to U.S. subordinates, such as their working experience in U.S. companies, were included in the interview guide for U.S. subordinates.

After the demographic questions, Japanese participants were asked some questions about performance feedback. All of the following questions about performance feedback were asked in terms of positive and negative feedback separately. At first, they were asked to recall and describe a recent situation where they gave feedback to their U.S. subordinates regarding the subordinates' job performance. U.S. participants were asked the same question but from the point of receiver. A recent situation was asked for because, as Spradley (1979) points out, some people may find it difficult to describe general situations but can easily describe a recent specific event. For the participants who had difficulty in recalling a recent situation, the researcher asked them to talk about typical performance feedback they gave (received) to their U.S. subordinates (from their Japanese supervisors).

Then, the researcher asked the Japanese participants about their U.S. subordinates' reactions to the feedback. In the interviews with U.S. subordinates, the researcher asked how satisfied they were with the feedback experience. Their responses included their opinion about timing and the ways the feedback was communicated.

Next, the participants were asked to provide their opinions about frequency and specificity of performance feedback they gave (received) to their U.S. subordinates (from their Japanese supervisors). U.S. participants were asked about their satisfaction with the frequency and specificity. Japanese participants were asked how satisfied their U.S. subordinates were perceived to be with the frequency and specificity of their feedback. The researcher then asked them to talk about the overall appropriateness and effectiveness of the feedback. This question was asked of both Japanese and U.S. participants.
The last question regarding performance feedback concerned the participants' opinions about importance of positive performance feedback as receiver and sender. Studies on performance feedback in U.S. organizations have shown consistent results about the significance of performance feedback for receivers (e.g. Florin-Thuma & Boudreau, 1987; Gusso, Jette, & Katzell, 1985; Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Kopelman, 1986; Landy, Farr, & Jacobs, 1982). However, past studies reflect only receivers' perspectives. The senders' values and perceptions of performance feedback may affect timing, frequency, specificity, and the manner in which it is communicated. Moreover, Japanese workers are found to place little value on giving and receiving positive feedback (Byham, 1993).

The next question addressed the issue of feedback-seeking. U.S. participants were asked if they had asked their Japanese supervisor about their job performance. With the U.S. participants who had the experience, the researcher asked them to describe the experience, including the supervisor's reaction to them. Japanese participants were asked if their U.S. subordinates had asked them about their job performance. With the Japanese supervisors who could recall subordinates' feedback-seeking behavior, the researcher asked their opinions on the behavior in terms of appropriateness and effectiveness. Because subordinates' feedback-seeking behavior could influence other factors of performance feedback such as timing and frequency (Larson, 1989), it was necessary to include their experience and opinions about feedback-seeking.

The last series of questions in the interviews was concerned with relationship. First, the participants were asked to describe the kind of relationship they had with their U.S. subordinates (Japanese supervisors). Then, they were asked to talk about their satisfaction with, and appropriateness and effectiveness of the relationship.
Japanese Version of the Interview Guide

In conducting cross-cultural and intercultural research, researchers must be concerned with the issues of equivalence of instruments. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) caution that when the language of research instruments and the native language of participants differ or when the participants are not bilingual in the language, the resultant data lacks equivalence. The lack of equivalence, in turn, leads to low validity (Olebe & Koester, 1989). Because the current study involves U.S. Americans and Japanese whose native languages differ, it is essential to establish translation equivalence.

First, two types of interview guides, one for U.S. subordinates and the other for Japanese supervisors, were created in English by the researcher who is Japanese but bilingual in English and Japanese. Then, the researcher translated the guide for Japanese supervisors into Japanese. It was, then, back-translated from Japanese to English by Mr. Erik Masuyama who is a Japanese national and a teacher of Japanese culture at Oregon State University. The original guide, the Japanese version of the original, and the back-translated guide were compared by Mr. Masuyama and the researcher, and some minor changes were made so the Japanese translation conveyed meanings as close to the original as possible.

The modified Japanese translation and the original English guide were further compared and contrasted by Professor Nancy Rosenberger from the Anthropology Department at Oregon State University. She is a U.S. American who speaks fluent Japanese and has done extensive research in Japan. At this point some modifications were suggested by Professor Rosenberger regarding the nuance of key terms, "positive feedback" and "negative feedback." The meanings of Japanese terms were closer to "praise" and "criticism," which Dr. Rosenberger pointed out may not be the same as "positive feedback" and "negative feedback." Because no concrete definition was
offered in literature of performance feedback, there two words remained as they were translated, but explained in interviews. Along with the original English guide, the Japanese translation with final modifications was prepared for interviews with Japanese supervisors (see Appendix C).

Selection of Interviewees

Interviewee selection began by selecting companies. Because the purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of performance feedback communicated by Japanese supervisors to their U.S. employees who work for Japanese subsidiaries in the U.S., the target companies were limited to Japanese subsidiaries in the U.S. First, the researcher acquired a list of Japanese organizations operating in Oregon that were listed in Oregon Trail Magazine (Spring, 1992). Then, the researcher called those companies to find the contact person's name and to learn whether they have Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates working together on an everyday basis. Nearly half of these companies were eliminated at this point due to the fact that they did not have any Japanese supervisors who regularly work in the Oregon offices.

For the companies that satisfied the specific setting for this study, the researcher prepared a letter that briefly identified the researcher and explained the purpose of the study, the interview method, confidentiality and anonymity of the information the interviewees would provide. A few days later the letter was mailed, the researcher called the contact person of each company and asked about the possibility of conducting interviews with one of their Japanese supervisors and two U.S. subordinates who work directly with the Japanese supervisor. Interviewing at least two subordinates from each company was necessary because views of performance feedback from a supervisor may be different from one subordinate to another.
Of twenty five companies contacted by the researcher, only one company agreed to participate in the study. Some of the supervisors contacted through telephone expressed discomfort and became defensive about their subordinates' participation in the study. The supervisor who agreed to be interviewed allowed the researcher to interview his U.S. subordinates only if their agreement was acquired. The researcher obtained agreement of two subordinates. This first selection method resulted in interviews at one company only.

The alternative method the researcher applied was to identify other Japanese supervisors, interview them first and at the end of the interviews ask them for their permission to interview their U.S. subordinates. For this second method, another list of Japanese companies was obtained from Oregon Economic Development Department. This list included the office managers' name and the number of the employees in the offices. Of these companies, the researcher selected the ones with Japanese names for the office managers, and this time, instead of writing a formal letter to them, the researcher called the companies and asked for their office managers. Out of eight companies the researcher contacted, five of them were available for the brief telephone conversation that included the purpose and procedure of the study. All of these five managers agreed to be interviewed.

At the end of the interviews with them when rapport was established between the researcher and the interviewees, the researcher asked them for their permission to interview any two of their U.S. subordinates. Four out of five Japanese supervisors accepted the request, and the researcher called their U.S. subordinates and obtained their agreement. Two subordinates were interviewed from each of three companies and one subordinate was interviewed from one company where there was only one U.S. employee.
With three companies where Japanese managers were not available for interviews due to business trips or meetings, the researcher talked to U.S. subordinates, and asked them if they were available for face-to-face interviews. Thus, three U.S. subordinates, each from a different company, also agreed to participate in the study.

Participants and Demographics

Participating Companies

A total of nine companies (A through I) participated in the study (see Appendix D). The types and sizes varied from one company to another. Company A is a trading company with about ten employees. Company B is a financial organization with 23 employees. Company C is a construction-related company with three employees. Company D is a trading company with about 70 employees. Companies E and F are shipping companies and both of them have about ten employees. Company G is a construction-related company with about ten employees. Company H is a manufacturer of electronics products and has about 50 workers. Finally, company I is a trading company with about 80 employees.

Participants

A total of six supervisors and twelve U.S. subordinates were interviewed in the study (see Appendix D). Because performance feedback is a part of their organizational experience, background information helps the reader better understand their description of performance feedback experiences. In addition to basic demographics such as their age and positions, they were asked to talk briefly about cultural and communication similarities and differences between Japanese and U.S. workers they have noticed.
Although their opinions varied, some cultural and communication characteristics were described by several participants. U.S. subordinates' directness and explicitness were mentioned by some Japanese supervisors while status differences, indirectness and conservativeness of Japanese in Japanese organizations were noted by some U.S. subordinates. Japanese participants were also asked about their experience with and opinions about intercultural communication training. None of them had extensive training, and all, except for one supervisor, responded that training was not necessary.

**Company A**

The Japanese supervisor of company A (A-J) is a male in his 40's. He was transferred to the subsidiary company a little over a year ago. He had not received any intercultural communication training, and he does not think it was needed except for brushing up his English. With regard to differences between Japanese and U.S. subordinates, he stated that his U.S. employees do not hesitate to express opposite ideas and complaints to their supervisors. As for similarities, he felt that young Japanese workers and U.S. employees clearly separate working time from their private time.

Both of the U.S. participants from this company are young females. They have been working under the current Japanese supervisor for about a year since he came from Japan. Employee 1 (A-U.S.1), is in her early 20's and has been working in the company for about a year. She has worked in a number of U.S. companies part-time when she was in a college. When asked about communication differences and similarities, she commented that communication tends to be indirect in her current Japanese company, whereas U.S. companies give their employees more feedback and incentives than Japanese companies do. Another U.S. participant (A-U.S.2) has been working for the company for three years. She replied that she cannot give any specific examples but one general difference is that communication tends to be indirect and
through the "grapevine" in this Japanese company and more direct in U.S. companies. Neither U.S.1 or U.S.2 thought that particular cultural and/or communication similarities exist between Japanese and U.S. organizations.

**Company B**

The supervisor of company B (B-J) is a male in his late 40's. He came to the subsidiary company four years ago. He stated that he did not have any training nor did he need any. He commented that he did not worry about working with U.S. employees because people have something in common as human beings, which he learned when he had worked in an office in Europe before. He, however, stated that there are many differences between U.S. and Japanese workers as well. One of them was that U.S. workers have a stronger concentration on their work compared to Japanese workers. He also described that Japanese people have a stronger sense of connection with their company than U.S. people do. The most significant difference he noticed was communication styles. From his experience, he felt that he needs to be frank with U.S. subordinates while he can be understood by his Japanese subordinates although he verbalizes very little to them.

Both of the U.S. subordinates from this company are females who have been working with their supervisor for the last four years since he was transferred to the subsidiary. One of them (B-U.S.1) is in her late 20's and has been working for the company for almost ten years. She holds a supervisory position in the company. This company was the only company she has ever worked for, and thus the question regarding similarities and differences between Japanese and U.S. companies was not applicable to her. Another U.S. participant (B-U.S.2) is in her mid-30's and has been working in the company for four years as an accountant and administrative clerk. She could not think of any similarities between the U.S. company she worked in the past
and the Japanese company she currently works for because they are in different types of business. One communication difference she noticed was that Japanese workers are conservative in expressing ideas and feelings compared to their U.S. counterparts.

Company C

Company C's Japanese supervisor (C-J) is a male in his early 40's. He has been working in the U.S. subsidiary for five years since it was founded. With regard to training, he stated that the parent company required that he go to an English language school to improve speaking and listening. He added that he read some books about U.S. communication styles and culture, which he felt helped him with better and faster understanding of U.S. culture and people. He described some similarities and differences between Japanese and U.S. employees. One common quality he noted was that both U.S. and Japanese employees he has supervised try to modify and improve what they have learned rather than merely imitating what he taught them. As for differences, he commented that U.S. workers accept the idea that human beings make mistakes and put their energy in practical problem-solving, whereas the Japanese would be embarrassed by the mistakes and spend more time and energy on apologizing and wondering why it happened. "I think it's a matter of spiritual need. For the Japanese, this need has to be satisfied prior to fixing the problem" (C-J).

Both of the U.S. participants from this company have been with the company since it was founded, and thus working with their current Japanese supervisor for five years. One of them (C-U.S.1) is a male in his early 50's, and the other (C-U.S.2) is a female in her late 20's. U.S.1 held a manager position and U.S.2 was in charge of administration. Both people stated that they could not think of anything particularly
common between Japanese and U.S. companies. For differences, they both felt that the relationship between employees in general is more formal in Japanese companies than their U.S. counterparts.

Company D

The supervisor of company D (D-J) is a male in his late 30's. He was transferred to the subsidiary six months ago. With respect to training, he replied that he did not have any. He noted that direct experience is the best way to learn because training or seminars tend to be general and often do not meet each individual's need. He did not describe any particular differences between Japanese and U.S. workers.

The U.S. participants from this company have been working with the supervisor since he came from Japan. Both of the U.S. subordinates were in positions in which they assisted in locating prospective customers. One of them (D-U.S.1) is a female in her early 40's and has been with the company for seven years. She stated that she cannot compare the U.S. company she had worked for previously with this Japanese company because their business fields are different. In general, however, she felt that managers are more respected in Japanese companies. The other U.S. participant (D-U.S.2) is a male in his mid-20's and has been working for the company for six months. In general, he felt that Japanese companies may be more secretive in that the relationship of each project with a larger picture or final outcomes is not always clearly presented.

Company E

Company E's supervisor (E-J) is a female in her late 30's. She came to the U.S. because she got married to a U.S. American, which is different from other Japanese supervisors in the study. She began working for the subsidiary twelve years
ago. She worked in a company in Japan for about two years. Recalling her experience in the company and with the upper management of the current company, she commented that in Japanese companies, communication tends to be indirect and ambiguous and performance reviews are typically one way communication from a manager to his or her subordinates.

One U.S. female employee (E-U.S.) participated in the study from this company. She is in her early 50's and has been working for the company and with the supervisor for four and half years. She held a supervisory position in the company. The salient difference between Japanese and U.S. companies she noticed was that Japanese organizations are slower and more accommodating in decision-making than U.S. organizations. She did not think that there were any similarities between them.

Company F

One U.S. male subordinate (F-U.S.) was interviewed from this company. He is in his late 20's and has been with the company and his current supervisor for three years. He was a supervisor in the company. He did not find anything in common between this company and U.S. companies he had worked for in the past because they are in different fields. On the other hand, he found many differences between them. He described that in Japanese companies communication tends to be slower, more reserved, and more formal and rigid between persons with different status. He also felt that the commitment expected of employees is stronger in Japanese companies than it is in U.S. companies.
Company G

One U.S. male subordinate (G-U.S.) participated in the study from this company. He is in his early 50's and has been working for the company and with his supervisor for 11 years. He was in the upper management in this company, and his supervisor is the company's president. He stated that this company has an American environment in that employees are more relaxed and status differences are not as distinct as other Japanese companies he has been associated with.

Company H

The last U.S. participant is a female in her 40's. She has been with the company for six and half years and with her current supervisor for two years. She is a manager in two different departments of the company. She stated that this company cares more about people, is more open and honest than U.S. companies she worked for in the past.

Company I

One male Japanese supervisor was interviewed from this company. He is in his early 30's and came to the subsidiary company as a rotating staff about one and half years ago. When asked about cultural communication training, he replied that there was a short seminar on working with U.S. employees. In this seminar, he was informed of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in U.S. organizational contexts, including potential problems such as sexual harassment. He did not feel the necessity to have any other training because he had been using English in his work with non-Japanese people when he was still in Japan. One difference between Japanese and U.S. employees he
described was that he needs to be very clear and frank about what he really wants them to do while he did not have to give detailed instructions to his Japanese employees.

Demographics

The participants' demographic characteristics varied. Japanese supervisors' ages ranged from early 30's to late 40's, and U.S. subordinates' ages ranged from early 20's to early 50's. Meyer and Walker (1961) found that older persons use feedback less than younger ones. They argue that experience and age have a positive correlation, and the greater the experience, the more likely individuals may tend to use their own past experience as a source of feedback and the more likely they should be to reject feedback from others. In addition, Japanese supervisors may be reluctant to give feedback to their U.S. subordinates who are older than them. Thus, both Japanese and U.S. participants' responses need to be examined with consideration to age.

Respondents' sex is another variable that may affect participants' perceptions of feedback. Most of the U.S. respondents had a male Japanese supervisor. Coming from a masculine culture, the way Japanese supervisors treat their subordinates may differ depending on the subordinate's sex. Also, the U.S. subordinates' position in the company may influence the amount and quality of feedback Japanese supervisors give and U.S. subordinates need. U.S. subordinates' sex and position have to be considered together in the analysis. Japanese supervisors, for instance, may feel awkward in dealing with a U.S. female manager because it is still uncommon for female workers to hold a managerial position in Japanese organizations.

How long the Japanese supervisor and his/her U.S. subordinates have been working together may affect the participants' responses. If the supervisor-subordinate relationship is relatively new, the amount and variety of feedback perceived by participants may not be as large as that reported in another longer relationship.
The general cultural differences perceived by participants were consistent with national cultural attributes found in past studies. Japanese workers were viewed as more conservative, implicit, and indirect in expressing their ideas and opinions than U.S. workers. These differences were consistently reported by several Japanese and U.S. participants. These perceived general differences may influence the way participants view performance feedback, and thus have to be considered in the analysis of their responses.

Interview Procedure

The time and place of the interviews were scheduled at the interviewees’ convenience. Some participants were interviewed in their offices during their office hours, some preferred to be interviewed after work in their offices, and others chose to meet the researcher after work outside their offices such as at a nearby restaurant or a hotel lobby. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher introduced herself, handed an informed consent form to the interviewee, and explained the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and anonymity of the study. Then, the researcher asked them if they were comfortable with the interview to be tape-recorded although it was already explained and agreed to during the initial telephone conversation with them.

After the interviewees agreed to have their responses tape-recorded and signed the informed consent, the researcher handed them an interview guide and asked them to read through the questions on the guide. For Japanese supervisors, the researcher prepared both an original guide written in English and the one translated into Japanese so they could choose either one. All interviews began with demographic questions so some degree of rapport could be established between the interviewees and the researcher. Spradley (1979) argues that rapport, or a harmonious relationship, is essential in interviews to the extent that it helps develop a basic sense of trust that allows
for the free flow of information. Since this study concerns individual perceptions, which could be known only through self-disclosure, it was important to create an informal and friendly atmosphere before proceeding to central issues.

When all demographic questions were covered, the researcher asked the interviewees about their experience with positive and negative performance feedback. Then, some questions on feedback-seeking experience, and their perceptions of their relationship with their U.S. subordinates (their Japanese supervisors) followed. During the interviews, some questions were not well understood by the interviewees. Face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to clarify or rephrase the questions and ask the interviewees to elaborate on their responses. Interviews lasted for thirty minutes to an hour depending on the interviewee. Interviews which took place after work tended to be longer because the interviewees were able to devote more time to the interview.

Transcription of Data

All of the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Because all of the Japanese participants chose to respond in Japanese, all of their responses were first transcribed in Japanese, and then translated into English by the researcher. The translated transcriptions were checked by another Japanese student who is a Ph. D. student at Oregon State University and has lived in the U.S. for seven years. A few parts of the tape-recorded interviews were not clear enough to be transcribed, and thus left blank. These blank portions consisted of no more than ten seconds total, and four seconds on average, for three interviews.
Analysis of Data

The transcribed data obtained from Japanese and U.S. participants was interpreted and categorized by the researcher who acted as a coder. In coding qualitative data in intercultural studies, the coders' experience with participants' cultural backgrounds becomes critical because it can increase or decrease cultural validity (Collier, 1991). Although the researcher is a Japanese, she has lived in the U.S. for five years. Her cultural experience in both Japan and the U.S. qualified her as a coder for the study.

To analyze the transcribed data, first the researcher assigned an alphabetical letter to each company and a number to each participant. For example, "A-U.S.1" refers to U.S. employee 1 of company "A," and "B-J" corresponds to the Japanese supervisor of company "B." Because only one Japanese supervisor represented each company, no number was assigned to them. No number was assigned to the U.S. participants from companies E through G for the same reason.

Next, various coding sheets were compiled summarizing the interview responses. The researcher organized employees' responses according to issues of timing, frequency, specificity, and importance of performance feedback. Responses were separated for positive and negative feedback. Feedback-seeking and relationship issues were also organized for each participant. Then, all Japanese participants' responses were listed on a separate sheet for each of the above main issues (timing, frequency, specificity, and importance of feedback) so their responses as Japanese supervisors were compared and contrasted. The same procedure was used for subordinates.

More specifically, for Japanese supervisors' perceptions of timing of positive feedback, two categories of responses emerged: "when a job is completed" and "depends on the situation." The comments each participant made about timing were also
recorded on each sheet. A similar sheet was created for U.S. participants. "During annual review" and "no positive feedback" emerged as additional categories from some of the responses, and thus were added as the third and fourth category. Also, U.S. participants' satisfaction with the timing of positive feedback was categorized either "yes" or "no," which was followed by reasons for the answer. (see Appendix E and F for examples of Coding Sheets.)

For frequency of feedback, the researcher classified answers into "1" (never), "2" (rarely), "3" (sometimes), "4" (often), and "5" (very often). In addition, Japanese supervisors' opinions about their U.S. subordinates' satisfaction with the frequency were categorized into either "yes" or "no," which was followed by reasons for the answer. The same was done for the responses from U.S. participants.

The responses from Japanese supervisors about specificity were sorted into three groups, "yes," "no," and "the event is specific." This last category means that the feedback wasn't detailed but was understood because the event as a referent was specific. Their opinions about whether their U.S. subordinates were satisfied with the specificity were divided into either "yes," or "no" and reasons for the answers were recorded as well. This categorization was similar to the one used for frequency. The U.S. participants' answers were categorized into "yes," "no," and "no positive feedback" and reasons for the answers were listed on the sheet.

Regarding importance of performance feedback, the responses from Japanese participants were categorized into either "yes" or "no" and followed by the reasons for the answers. For U.S participants, the same format was used but another type of answer, "nice to have, but not necessary," was found in participants' responses and therefore included in the summary sheet. The reasons were then grouped into several categories such as "morale," "own growth," "self-esteem," "maintenance of good relationship," and so on.
Japanese answers for effectiveness and appropriateness of overall performance feedback were also categorized into "yes" or "no," and accompanied by reasons. U.S. subordinates' responses necessitated an "other" category besides "yes" and "no," because some participants felt that performance feedback from their Japanese supervisors was not exactly appropriate or effective, but did not equal inappropriate or ineffective either.

The researcher made a summary sheet for feedback-seeking as well. For Japanese participants' responses, the sheet included columns to record the presence or absence of feedback-seeking behavior by their U.S. subordinates. Because all of the Japanese respondents said that their U.S. subordinates seek performance feedback, the summary sheet also included their opinions about the appropriateness of the behavior. The answers from U.S. respondents regarding feedback-seeking were sorted either into "yes" or "no." The reasons why they had sought or had not sought feedback were also recorded on the sheet because the content and reason differed from one respondent to another.

Lastly, relationship issues were summarized on a sheet with five columns. The first column listed the types of relationship. The second column concerned the appropriateness of the relationship. Their responses were grouped into either "yes" or "no" concerning appropriateness and reasons for the answers were recorded. Since some respondents discussed appropriateness separately in terms of appropriate for the company and others talked about their personal opinion of what was appropriate, the distinction between these two were made on the sheet. The third column listed their yes/no answers for satisfaction and reasons for the answers. The same format was used for the forth column, whether the relationship helped achieve their goals in the company. The fifth and last column was used to summarize the respondents' suggestions for improving the relationship if necessary.
Categorized responses for each issue were compared and contrasted from two angles. First, the researcher took a close look at each company and compared the responses from the Japanese supervisor with the ones from their U.S. subordinates. In this process, U.S. subordinates' answers were also compared so the extent of perceptual similarities and differences regarding their Japanese supervisor's feedback could be assessed. Second, the overall U.S. subordinates' responses were compared to the overall Japanese supervisors' responses to find if any themes emerged. Consequently, each company was analyzed separately first to identify any peculiarities within companies, and then all supervisors and subordinates were compared.
CHAPTER 3

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored perceptions of performance feedback in Japanese subsidiary companies in the U.S. Performance feedback communicated by Japanese supervisors to their U.S. subordinates. The ideas and opinions about feedback were described from the point of both Japanese supervisors as sender and U.S. subordinates as receiver. The data was obtained about importance of performance feedback and main factors of performance feedback which include timing, frequency, and specificity. Other related issues such as subordinates' feedback-seeking behavior and relationship between Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates were addressed as well. In the following sections, first, perceptual similarities and differences between sender and receiver of feedback within companies were reported and discussed. Then, responses were compared and contrasted among senders and among receivers.

Importance

Importance of Positive Feedback

Research question 1 addressed importance of positive feedback. All of the supervisors in this study stated that giving positive feedback to U.S. subordinates is important. Their reasons for this consistent response varied, however, and some supervisors gave more than one reason. The reasons included: maintaining the relationship, morale/motivation, confirming self-evaluation, improvement/growth, recognition, and sense of accomplishment. On the U.S. subordinates' side, two people stated that it is nice, but not necessary to receive positive feedback. The rest of them,
however, claimed that positive feedback was important. Their reasons included the ones given by Japanese supervisors. In addition, better attitude toward the company, advancement and sense of support were given as reasons by the U.S. participants. The details of their responses are reported below, beginning with company A.

The supervisor of company A stated that positive feedback is important for a better relationship between his subordinates and him.

I think it's necessary to praise them from time to time, and it's true for Japanese subordinates. Praise is one of the ways to maintain and improve human relationship. If subordinates are always criticized and given no praise, they will hate their supervisor. And if they hate the supervisor, they will have a lot of complaints in their work and about the company. Then, everything will suffer because of it. (A-J)

The first U.S. employee of this company commented that positive feedback is important for morale and better attitude toward the company.

I think it helps with your morale and the way you feel about working for the company. And it makes you want to do better if your boss tells you good things about what you are doing...just to make you feel needed. (A-U.S.1)

U.S. employee 2, on the other hand, stated that she does not need positive feedback although it is nice to have positive comments from her supervisor.

It's just nice to have, but I don't really need it. I'm a strong person and I know I do a good job. And I get it through other people. But you are there everyday. So you like the things that are a little more between you and your boss than just the job and paycheck. But that's the way I feel with him. (A-U.S.2)

The comments of U.S. employees in this company may imply that positive feedback can help achieve a better relationship with their supervisor and/or the company. Employee 2's response is worth noting in that she says feedback from her supervisor is not essential but can contribute to the relationship. Also she notes that she receives feedback from people other than her supervisor and has her own judgment of
her performance. These additional feedback sources are identified by scholars of performance feedback research (i.e. Ashford, 1992; Greller, 1992) to have positive results on climate.

The supervisor of company B felt positive feedback is important for employees' improvement.

I don't praise them everyday, saying "You did good today,"... Only sometimes when they did better than I expected, I would praise them for it. I think it's necessary to praise them when their work is actually good because they need to know what was good about their work so they can improve themselves even more. This is an expectation I have, even though I don't say it when I praise them. (B-J)

Employee 1 of this company felt positive feedback is important for her growth and better attitude toward the company, and that her supervisor's feedback helps her to achieve both.

He helps me to grow. It has helped me to be better employee...he is always seeing good parts, and yet expects me to grow. (B-U.S.1)

The expectation held by the supervisor was recognized by this employee. Her comment demonstrates that her need for positive feedback is satisfied by her supervisor. The other employee replied that she does not need positive feedback because her work is routine and she knows that she is doing fine. She commented that there is no sense to praise the work that she does everyday over years. Whether an employee sees some values in positive feedback may depend on his/her personality, and ability to evaluate his/her own work, and the type of job an employee has. Whether the job involves different projects or it is routine, may also affect how much he or she needs positive feedback.

In company C, the supervisor and both employees felt that positive feedback is important. The supervisor believed that subordinates need positive feedback for motivation and confirming their own evaluation of their work.
For one, I think it's important in that it will satisfy [a] psychological need. Positive feedback will reinforce motivation. For another, I think everybody, including myself, wants to make sure they did a right thing. (C-J)

Growth and morale were mentioned by employee 1 as the reasons for the importance of positive feedback. The other employee remarked that positive feedback is extremely important for her morale.

Without communication, you can't get anything accomplished. I need to feel good about what I'm doing, and if I'm having no feedback about the good things I'm doing, then I feel lousy and I go home feeling lousy, and I would leave. (C-U.S.2)

Regardless of the position, morale was brought up by everybody in this company as a reason for importance of positive feedback. Morale or motivation is one of the major functions of performance feedback discussed in the research literature (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979).

All participants from company D also perceived that positive feedback is important. The supervisor stated that it is important for learning and confirming subordinates' own evaluation.

I praise their work because I sincerely think so. So, if an employee's work is really good, the supervisor should communicate that to the subordinate. Then, the person would know what part of their work was good, comparing how they think their work was. It's good for them in the end. (D-J)

Employee 1 of this company felt that she needs positive feedback so she can confirm her own evaluation. Thus, her response was similar to the one given by her supervisor. She noted that in the past, with her previous Japanese manager, it was hard for her to determine if she could proceed because he did not give her clear positive feedback.

In their review of performance feedback literature, Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor (1979) include other individuals and the individual whose performance is evaluated as
the sources of feedback. However, they do not discuss the relationship between the sources. Employee 2's comments suggest that positive feedback from supervisors and other individuals can serve as learning and directional function by confirming the subordinate's own evaluation of his or her performance. Employee 2 replied that positive feedback motivates him because it serves as a cue for expected advancement.

It's motivational. I think when you are working very hard and when you are not a manager, you want to please your supervisor because of hopes of advancement. So, it's very important for me to know how I'm doing. (D-U.S.2)

In company E, recognition was given by the supervisor as the reason for importance of positive feedback.

Through positive feedback, employees are able to tell if their supervisor is recognizing their work. For American employees, recognition is considered to be important. They need to hear their job was good. In Japan, both supervisors and subordinates would think it's strange to praise employees. I don't think I had ever had any praise from my supervisors when I was working in Japan. (E-J)

She realizes U.S. workers' need for being recognized as an individual (Hofstede, 1980; Howard, Shudo & Umeshima, 1983; Kelley, 1991; Okabe, 1983) and for explicit communication (Barlnlund, 1989; Hall, 1976). Her subordinate in company E mentioned "confirmation of own evaluation" as the reason for her need of positive feedback. She commented that she believes it is important to evaluate oneself, but to know if one's evaluation is correct, a certain amount of positive feedback is necessary from others, especially from one's supervisor. Thus, learning and directional function of positive feedback offers receiver an opportunity to compare self-evaluation with the evaluation of other significant individuals, particularly their supervisor.
Recognition of work was also pointed out by the supervisor of company I. He described a cultural difference he experienced with regard to the importance of recognizing subordinates' work and providing them with verbal positive feedback.

When I gave a report to my supervisor in Japan, he would just say, "Hum, hum, hum." He wouldn't tell me what he thought about my report. To a certain degree, Japanese subordinates would understand what you think even though you don't say.... But American subordinates expect you to say that. They need to feel that their job is worth doing. Praise is needed for everything from the sense of achievement and motivation to a better relationship. I don't think I need to exaggerate, but I do feel that I should give them feedback verbally. (I-J)

The subordinates of companies F, G, and H all agreed that positive feedback is important for themselves and employees in general.

It's like energy for the operation of the whole office, or everyone to feel better, work better, and have better attitude. (F-U.S.1)

Any human being needs to be told when they do a good job...for support. (G-U.S. 1)

It's important for anybody to hear that they are doing a nice job, to be told thank you or to be appreciated for what they have done. Especially when you have accomplished a very difficult task. (H-U.S.1)

These comments reveal their need for verbal positive feedback, which are consistent with the ideas and findings stressed by scholars previously mentioned.

To conclude findings on the importance of positive feedback, two points have to be mentioned. First, in addition to motivational and learning functions, relationship emerged as a function of performance feedback. This function was mentioned by both Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates. Positive feedback was perceived to be useful for maintenance and improvement of relationships between supervisors and subordinates and between employees and their company. Thus, not only subordinates but also supervisors benefit from giving positive feedback.
Second, some U.S. subordinates and Japanese supervisors mentioned verbalization and explicitness in their responses about importance of feedback. They stressed that positive feedback has to be communicated verbally and explicitly in order for the feedback to be meaningful. U.S. subordinates' preference for explicit communication is consistent with a general idea that U.S. Americans prefer explicit code. Japanese supervisors emphasized verbalization probably because they were aware, from their experiences, that verbal communication is preferred by their U.S. subordinates.

**Importance of Negative Feedback**

All participants in this study, both Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates, perceived negative feedback to be important. The reasons given by Japanese supervisors included "for employees' growth," and "mistakes should be corrected." These two responses are consistent with the learning/directional function (Ilgen et al., 1979) in that they help people to learn and revise their performance to achieve their goals. In addition, "for the company's success" and "for employment practice" were given by the Japanese participants. The answers from U.S. subordinates included the first two types of responses given by Japanese participants.

The Japanese supervisor of company A commented that it was important for the company to be successful.

I criticize their work because they did a wrong thing. But from the employee's stand point, they did it because they believed they were right. So, I don't think they were comfortable with criticism. But criticizing their poorly done work is necessary for the company to keep going. (A-J)

U.S. employee 1 from company A stated negative feedback is important in order for her to know what is expected of her and what her boundary is. U.S. employee 2 discussed the importance from a relational stand point.
When it's [a problem] really there, and it's affecting other people's work. Sometimes you have to work as a team. Each depends on the abilities of the co-workers. And if those abilities are not productive, it hurts everybody else. So, if employees don't realize that already, they have to be told that it's not working. (A-U.S.2)

While all three thought that negative feedback is important, they had different reasons depending on their position in the company. The supervisor's reasoning came from the management perspective. Employee 1 seemed to focus on her own need as an employee, whereas employee 2's reasoning reflected her concern for all employees as a team. Thus, negative feedback is not only meaningful for employees but for the company as a whole. Values attached to negative feedback can vary depending on one's position and responsibilities.

All participants from company B agreed that negative feedback is necessary simply because "wrong directions and mistakes should be corrected." Thus, negative feedback serves a learning/directional function for them. The supervisor noted the importance of giving negative feedback verbally to U.S. workers.

Among the Japanese, to some degree you can understand each other without saying anything. For example, if a Japanese subordinate did something wrong, I don't have to criticize the subordinate because the person would easily notice that I'm not happy about it. But with American employees, I have to frankly tell them what's good and what's bad. Of course we are all adults. I'm not their teacher. So, I don't feel it's necessary to say negative things about small matters, but when the problem is serious, it should be corrected. So, I criticize them if it's necessary. (B-J)

Both employee 1 and 2 stated that negative feedback is necessary because errors should be corrected right away. Employee 1 also noted that her supervisor tends to present negative feedback with positive feedback and that it makes her feel good because her supervisor is not merely pointing out poor performance. The effect of mixed feedback has not been researched in detail in the study of performance feedback. It may be,
however, an important strategy supervisors can use because positive feedback can soften the impact of negative feedback on their subordinates.

The supervisor of company C stated that his negative feedback is usually about small mistakes and that those mistakes should be pointed out because it affects the entire company. Both of the employees of this company stated that they need negative feedback for their growth or improvement. As discussed earlier, negative feedback can have different meanings depending on responsibilities and concerns. The supervisor, as a part of management, may put more focus on the company while employees are concerned with their personal goals in the company. Employee 2 added that the feedback has to include explanations and suggestions.

Negative feedback is just as important as positive feedback because I want to know what's wrong so I can improve it. So, when he was going through one of those quiet times, I would like some verbal feedback so I know what is going on.... Some suggestions because he's a mentor as well as the boss. I think everybody should feel that way about their bosses. (C-U.S.2)

When subordinates monitor their supervisors' reactions to their performance, they try to make sense out of the reactions. Because interpretations of given messages tend to be culture-bound (Kim, 1992), supervisors' reactions can be understood in ways different from they are intended. While silence is traditionally said to be a virtue in Japanese culture, it may cause discomfort to U.S. subordinates who tend to prefer feelings and ideas to be verbalized (Barnlund, 1989). The employee's comment above illustrates that for negative feedback to be meaningful for her, explanations and suggestions need to be presented.

Explanations and suggestions as important parts of negative feedback were consistently mentioned by the participants of company D.

If they are going in a wrong direction, they should be corrected. But when it happens, there must be a reason why what they are doing is wrong, so in the attempt of correction, they should be given explanations that they can
understand. But I don't criticize them. Instead, I give them suggestions, thinking how they can do their work better. (D-J)

I don't know how you are defining "negative," but I like the way he gives me instructions. And instructions are important because we all need to grow. And you can't have growth if you don't know. Everybody's direction has to be changed periodically. (D-U.S.1)

If you see negative feedback as direction or as correction, I think it's important because it helps achieving you goal in the given project. But I think it's also important to know the way it's presented. If it's presented openly, if it's presented in a mild tone, or corrective way, I think it would be fine. (D-U.S.2)

They stressed that in order for employees to grow or achieve their goal, negative feedback is important but the feedback has to be suggestive or instructional. Hence, not only verbalization but also presentation of specific directions seemed to be preferred by subordinates. Both of the U.S. employees of this company talked about definitions of negative feedback and alluded to the importance of the tone or relational message. The comments of subordinates above suggest that whether a recipient perceives feedback as negative seems to be partly determined how the feedback is presented and how instructional and suggestive it is. Even if the feedback is corrective or constructive, it is perceived to be useful.

The supervisor of company E presented a reason for the importance of negative feedback from a perspective of employment practice in the U.S. She commented that it is important to give negative feedback and keep a record of it because in the U.S., it is unacceptable to fire an employee without a clear reason. The subordinate of this company gave the same reason for negative feedback as she had for positive feedback, stating that it is important for the better evaluation of the situation because she can compare her own performance expectations with the expectation her supervisor has for her performance. Thus, negative feedback serves a learning and directional function by presenting information necessary to learn and adjust her performance.
Company I's supervisor commented that negative feedback is needed because employees need to realize what is wrong with their work. As the supervisor of company D, he also noted that negative feedback has to include specific explanations and suggestions because subordinates would not feel it is fair if they are not given any specific rationale. His idea was similar to the one given by company D's supervisor.

The U.S. participant from company F stressed the importance of the delivery of negative feedback.

Correcting is important, not negative. Negative feedback is like... It's of course how you present. Negative feedback is something that makes you feel depressed. That's what I consider negative. No direction. A lot of times my boss doesn't give me any direction. He thinks, "O.K. This is my job. I'm forced to do this" and just tells me what is bad. I don't react well to that kind of feedback. I need specific reasons when he wants to criticize me. (F-U.S.1)

The subordinate of companies G and H claimed that negative feedback is important because employees need to realize what is wrong about their performance. Company G's subordinate also stated that it helps employees to know what their bosses expect of them.

Overall, all of the participants felt negative feedback is important. Many of the reasons were consistent with the directional and learning function identified in the past studies (i.e., Ilgen et al., 1979). No participant, however, described negative feedback in terms of reward/punishment, the third function found in those studies. Several findings were common to both negative and positive feedback. First, a learning/directional function was included as a reason for the importance for both positive and negative feedback.

Second, verbalization and explicit feedback was stressed for both positive and negative feedback. This was pointed out by Japanese supervisors as well as U.S. subordinates in the present study, whereas it is not mentioned in the research done in the U.S. organizations. When a supervisor and his or her subordinates are from the same
culture where explicitness is emphasized, verbalization of feedback may not be a matter. However, when the supervisor is from a culture where messages are often communicated implicitly, verbalization may become a more salient issue for his or her subordinates from explicit culture. Third, meanings and values of feedback could be discussed among supervisors and subordinates not only for the benefit of employees but also for the effectiveness of the company.

Some other findings were specific to negative feedback. Some of the Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates believed that negative feedback has to provide specific explanations and suggestions. This was not mentioned in their responses for positive feedback. Their responses suggest that mere verbalization does not make negative feedback meaningful. Because negative feedback involves employees' learning specificity seems to be an essential factor. Second, the manner of delivery of negative feedback was found to be an important consideration for U.S. subordinates to decide if they were likely to accept negative messages. In addition, presenting negative information with some positive information was pointed out by a U.S. subordinate as an effective delivery manner. The last two issues pertain to relationship quality. If negative feedback is presented with a concern for the other and working relationship, it can serve a number of positive functions.

To conclude, both positive and negative feedback were perceived important by both Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates as necessary, except for two U.S. subordinates who stated that positive feedback was not a necessary condition for them. Similar reasons for needing feedback were provided by both cultural groups, although supervisors probably perceive importance of feedback from their managerial standpoint. To what extent are those values and preferences reflected in their descriptions about actual performance feedback? It will be discussed in the following sections.
With regard to the timing of positive feedback, all Japanese participants stated that they give it "when a job is completed." This timing was also perceived as appropriate by all of the Japanese participants because they try to give it "as soon as possible within the specific situation." U.S. subordinate participants also agreed that positive feedback should be communicated as soon as possible. Six of them responded that they usually receive positive feedback from their Japanese supervisors when a particular job is finished, and that they are satisfied with the timing because it is "soon enough." However, the other six people had different opinions. Two of them said that they were not satisfied with the timing because it's given too late, and the other four said that they have never received any positive feedback from their Japanese supervisor. The following is a brief comparisons of responses within each company are as follows.

The supervisor of company A responded that his positive feedback is timely.

I don't praise them for everyday work that they are supposed to do. But when some problem occurs and if they solve it well, I surely praise them for it right then because it's better to give it soon. I don't recall any praise that I gave later. (A-J)

One of his subordinates agreed that his timing is fine because it is soon enough. She, however, felt that the tone of voice and the way it is communicated is "condescending."

The other U.S. participant from this company claimed that the timing of positive feedback is late and she was not satisfied with the timing.

It's late because he doesn't say good things unless it's a review. And it's minimum and grudgingly given. (A-U.S.2)
As the supervisor claims, he may be providing positive feedback when a job is done, but it is not acknowledged by the subordinate. Modesty as a cultural norm (Byham, 1993) may be limiting the supervisor’s expression of positive feeling and causing him to be rather implicit and indirect (Hall, 1976) in his communication of positive feedback. Delivery of positive feedback is in fact negatively described both of the subordinates in terms of "condescending tone" and "grudgingly." Because information cannot be isolated from the way it is delivered (Ilgen et al., 1979) or the content and relational qualities of the message are interdependent, messages with a negative tone may not be acknowledged as praise by U.S. subordinates.

With regard to the timing of positive feedback, the supervisor of company B expressed similar ideas to the supervisor of company A, saying that he praises his subordinates when they do something more than they are expected and that its timing is appropriate because he tries to give it as soon as the job is done. This timing was perceived similarly by employee 1, but not perceived by employee 2 who stated that she had never received any positive feedback from him. Interestingly, however, she felt fine with no positive feedback. According to her, it is not necessary to praise her jobs which is very much routine.

The supervisor of company C stated that he communicates his positive feedback when a job is done.

I praise them right then because it's better than later. It maybe very short, though. If I don't praise them right then in the specific situation, it becomes more difficult for me to praise them because I have to explain what I am praising about. If I do that right then, it can be short. (C-J)

The supervisor also stated that he does not say much to employee 1. Because the employee holds a title of an export manager, the supervisor felt that he should give more responsibility and authority over his own jobs and therefore his feedback should be
minimum. However, he added that his positive feedback to this employee is immediate when he does give positive feedback to him.

Employee 1 said that he does not recall any clear performance feedback, neither positive nor negative, given by his supervisor. He felt that it would be nice to have good comments from his boss for motivation although he became used to the lack of positive feedback. Employee 2 of this company perceived his positive feedback to be always late, and she expressed her dissatisfaction with the timing in her specific example.

The last time I received feedback from him was when we were discussing my departure. At that time, he gave me some positive feedback. The company is getting smaller, and soon he would basically need a secretary, and I don't want to be a secretary. I said I was a lousy secretary; I want responsibility. He told me that I was a wonderful secretary and a very important part of this company. He was sad that I was going to leave, but at the same time, he said that he understood. I felt very good about the feedback I got, but I felt that it was too late. The feedback I have gotten was always late. (C-U.S.2)

Thus, the immediacy of the feedback described by the supervisor was not perceived by either of his employees. In the interviews, they both described their supervisor as a "quiet person." It may be possible again that his praise is not recognized by his subordinates because of a modest style or shortness of the message.

When asked about the timing of positive feedback, the supervisor's response of company D was a little different from the ones given by supervisors of companies A, B, and C.

I try to give it as soon as possible, but appropriateness depends on the situation. There are cases I can praise them right then, but there are also cases when I have to wait. For example, if our customer is with us, I can't praise my subordinates. In this case I would praise them during the meeting after the customer left. And sometimes I praise them after work after five. Yet, some other times I give them good comments when we eat lunch together. (C-J)

The appropriate timing to praise subordinates depended on each situation in his case.

Both of his subordinates in the study were very satisfied with the timing.
Last week we were having a dinner with our potential client. And it turned out to be very good. And I could tell he was very happy. He told me "good job" two days later. I knew he would anyway. (C-U.S.1)

He responds to my good work immediately. "Good job. Let's go forward." He is very up front and forward. And he is very candid about saying "good job," and he is very positive. Some of the other managers aren't like that. They are more reserved. They don't show much expression or excitement. (D-U.S.2)

Nonverbal feedback was mentioned by both employees. They both talked about appropriate timing and appropriate open expressions of positive feeling. Their comments support the idea that the source, message, and its delivery are interrelated (Ilgen et al., 1979). When the manner of delivery fits with what people believe to be appropriate and effective, the message communicated is likely to be recognized and accepted, especially when the feedback is also given as soon as possible.

Both the supervisor and subordinate in company E perceived the timing of positive feedback to be "when a job is completed." The supervisor felt that the timing of her positive feedback was appropriate because she would try to give it "as soon as possible after a job is completed." The subordinate perceived the timing to be prompt and satisfied with it. Thus, in this relationship, no discrepancy was found with regard to timing of positive feedback.

The Japanese supervisor of company I stated that he tries to communicate his positive feeling about his subordinates' work as soon as possible when each project or report is done, but the good time to do it depends on each situation. Thus, his response was similar to the one given by the supervisor of company D. He praised them in his office, or at their desk, but in other situations he told them something positive about their job during lunch or dinner.

Three more U.S. subordinates were interviewed from companies F, G, and H. The U.S. subordinate of company G stated that absence of positive feedback used to bother him very much. He is still not satisfied with the situation but he became used to
it because it has been so long. The subordinate of company F also expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of positive feedback.

I want to hear from him when I do a good job. But he doesn't like to speak English. He has been here several years, but he is more comfortable in speaking Japanese. When we have a meeting, he speaks in Japanese because everybody else except for me is Japanese. Other workers translate for me. (G-U.S.1)

The last U.S. participant from company H expressed her satisfaction with the timely and constant positive feedback she receives from her Japanese supervisor.

As presented, immediate positive feedback was perceived to be appropriate/satisfactory while delayed feedback was not. Differences in perceptions between Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates emerged with regard to perceptions of the timing of feedback that is actually employed in their relationship. Delay was perceived by some of U.S. subordinates, but not the supervisors.

One explanation for this discrepancy could be that Japanese supervisors are actually sending positive feedback right after a job is done, but because of the way it is communicated, it is not interpreted by U.S. subordinates as the source meant. Some U.S. participants noted that feedback was "grudgingly given," with "minimum words," "no facial expression," and "condescending tone." These were all viewed as inappropriate and ineffective. Byham (1993) comments that Japanese managers feel awkward in using direct and open expressions to praise subordinates because modesty is believed to be virtue in Japanese culture. Perhaps the supervisors' comments were not perceived by subordinates to be explicit enough to fall into the category of feedback. Another possible reason for the discrepancy could be a language barrier (Elashmawi, 1990). In this study, while Japanese participants did not express any reluctance to praise others, some U.S. subordinates perceived a lack of praise. Self-perceived ineffectiveness in communication (Stening and Hammer, 1992) or discomfort with
speaking English may be manifest in minimum praise and a tendency to speak Japanese when possible, as some of the U.S. subordinates described.

In order for feedback to be meaningful, timeliness is an important issue. With regard to the importance of positive feedback, participants responded that positive feedback is needed for directional checks and balances or learning (Ilgen et al., 1979), relationship definition and hope of advancement. Despite the source's intentions, if the recipient does not perceive the feedback to be timely, these positive functions will not occur. Even when Japanese supervisors believe that their positive feedback is appropriate because it is soon enough, they may need to be more expressive verbally and nonverbally.

**Timing of Negative Feedback**

Three different types of responses came from Japanese supervisors about the timing of negative feedback. The major answer was, "when I noticed the problem." This came from five of six participants. The second type, "after a while," was given by one participant who also included the first type in his response. The last type of response, "no negative feedback," was given by one supervisor. The responses from U.S. subordinates also included, "when my manager found a problem," which was given by eight out of twelve participants, and "no negative feedback," which came from three participants. In addition, one person stated that negative feedback is "given during a review."

In company A, the supervisor stated that he communicates negative feedback right when he found out a problem and that he believes it is an appropriate timing.

I tell them right away. If I tell them, "you did such and such on that month of last year...it wasn't good," it wouldn't be effective. It is too late. If I don't say anything about their bad performance, they would assume that it's O.K. to
continue the bad performance, and the same problem would occur again. So, employees' job-related problems should be corrected right a way. (A-J)

His U.S. subordinates had different opinions about the timing of negative feedback. Both of them claimed that he communicates negative feedback about simple work-related mistakes immediately, but delays feedback about overall performance too long.

Timing is fine. It's right away so you can fix it before it's too late. But he makes a big deal of insignificant things like I spelled someone's name wrong. It's just like he wants to pick on something. And when it comes to important things like employees' directional changes, he waits until a review. And he says, "Remember, you did this." (A-U.S.1)

If there is a mistake, he doesn't blame anybody. You just fix the problem. That's what I like about it. But in a situation where a behavioral problem is involved, I know that he is very hesitant to give feedback because he doesn't like confrontation. Something happens and he doesn't talk about it until a review four months later. So, sometimes these reviews are surprising. Even if it's something that could be handled right then, he would keep it up [then]. Other Japanese in the company are the same way. They don't like confrontation. That's my sense of it. (A-U.S.2).

U.S. employee 2 also pointed out the timing of his negative feedback depends on which national culture the employee belongs to.

There are three Americans in the office right now. He can come to us more directly. But we have an Indonesian...and she makes a lot of repeated mistakes. But he didn't do anything about it, so I tried to change that by telling her because we were frustrated with her. Then, later he told me that the way I handled the situation was too aggressive. I don't know if it's a culture thing, but he seems to think he can't do anything about her attitude because it's the culture that causes her to behave like that. But even so, she should adapt to the culture where she lives in, and he should do something to change her. (A-U.S.2)

As above comments indicate, U.S. subordinates in this company felt that the timing of their Japanese supervisor's negative feedback depends on the nature of the problem. As far as the problem is a simple work-related error, their view of the timing of negative feedback was consistent with their Japanese supervisor's. However, when it comes to feedback on employees' directional and behavioral changes, they both believed that he
delays feedback. It is interesting to note that U.S. subordinate 2 also felt the timing of his negative feedback varies depending on the national cultural background of employees.

The supervisor of company B described the timing as "usually right when I found out about a problem." However, he admitted that in some cases he had missed the timing and waited until the same problem happened again. He thought the timing of feedback is something he has to reflect on because avoiding problems lead nowhere. The delay was not perceived by his subordinates, however. Two U.S. subordinates agreed that his negative feedback is communicated right away when a problem occurred and felt the timing was good.

The supervisor of company C also described that he communicates negative feedback right when he noticed the problem because if it is not corrected right away, it can affect the entire company.

I don't say many negative things, but when I do, it's immediately done. And it's always about work-related mistakes because in many cases one person's error can affect others' work. But I don't blame the person, and make it more general. I say "this is our mistake, and it cost us this much. We all have to be more careful not to make the same mistake." Maybe the person has made a mistake but everyone has to take responsibility for it because one's work is related to others'. (C-J)

The U.S. subordinates in this company did not perceive the timing as similar to their supervisor. One claimed that he has never received any sort of performance feedback. While he expressed his need for positive feedback, he was satisfied with the lack of negative feedback because he believes that it indicates his supervisor's satisfaction with him. The other employee in company C perceived a delay in the timing, and she was not satisfied with it.

When he is angry with me, he is quiet, and I hear about it next year in the review. I much prefer if an incident happens, and he is upset about it, I want to talk about it out then. If there is another side to the issue, and everything is out
in the open, we can build from it. But it's just too difficult to sit down once a year.... This year he did try to describe particular times, but I could not remember that far back. So the validity...the value of the feedback just goes a way downhill. You can't get much from that late feedback. (C-U.S.2)

As described, the supervisor and his U.S. subordinates in this company perceived the timing of negative feedback differently. Silence is not perceived by U.S. Americans to be a comfortable nonverbal cue. In her response about importance of negative feedback, she noted that she would like to have suggestions instead of getting silence.

The participants from company D had consistent opinions about the timing of negative feedback. The supervisor responded that he doesn't really say anything negative about his subordinates' job performance. In the discussion of positive feedback, this supervisor stated that he sometimes praises his subordinates after work when they have dinner or drinks together. The researcher asked him this is also true for negative feedback.

No, I don't do that. In Japan, some salarymen like to preach when they are drunk, aren't they? But I'm not that type...I'm concerned about others' feelings. So, when I say something about their work during the social time, I would say something like, "Maybe you could try this way, too" or "Now you are capable doing this. So why don't you try this one next?" I would give this advice so the person can do their work better. (D-J)

His concern for his subordinates is well understood by his subordinates. They commented that their supervisor gave them advice and additional instructions, but they couldn't remember any negative feedback given by him.

The supervisor and subordinate of company E also agreed with each other about the timing of negative feedback. The supervisor commented that if a problem or mistake occurs in her subordinate's work, she tells him or her as soon as she finds it because errors directly cause trouble to the company's clients. The subordinate described that she doesn't receive much negative feedback from her supervisor, but if it's given, the timing is fine because it is always communicated right away.
The supervisor of company I had ideas consistent with the other four supervisors about the timing of negative feedback. He claimed that he gives negative feedback usually right when he finds out about a problem because problems need quick attendance.

"When my supervisor found a problem" was also the standard response given by the U.S. participants from companies F, G, and H. The participants from companies G and H felt satisfied with the timing because problems should be solved as soon as possible. The subordinate from company F, however, was not satisfied with prompt timing, and noted that he often gets negative feedback about prioritizing jobs.

He tells me something negative everyday. He takes small jobs like changing business cards or something more seriously. There are more important jobs. He doesn't have the same rules of priority as I believe. So, he keeps pushing me whenever he thinks there is a problem. But it's not fair because he doesn't see how busy I am. Well, maybe he knows that, but he just wants to show that he is the boss and he has the power. (F-U.S.1)

Compared with other U.S. participants, this subordinate's perception of timing was different. With other U.S. subordinates, the sooner the negative feedback was given, the more satisfied they were with the timing. This particular subordinate, however, was not satisfied because he felt that his supervisor gave him negative comments too regularly even when he was busy with important matters. In fact, negative perceptions of prioritizing jobs was mentioned by a U.S. subordinate in company D in her discussion of her previous supervisor.

Overall, many of the supervisors and U.S. subordinates perceived the timing of negative feedback to be when a problem is identified. This timing was claimed to be appropriate by the supervisors. On the U.S. subordinate's side, many of them also agreed that the immediateness was appropriate and satisfying because mistakes and errors must be corrected as soon as possible. Ilgen et al. (1979) argue that negative feedback is delayed in most work settings and that delaying it is perceived to be better
than giving it immediately because negative feedback is uncomfortable for subordinates. This was not the case found in the present study because U.S. subordinates expressed satisfaction with most negative feedback which was promptly given.

In two out of five companies where data was obtained from both supervisors and subordinates, some of the subordinates reported delay of negative feedback while no delay was perceived by their supervisors. Two subordinates of the same company agreed that their supervisor's negative feedback is delayed when the feedback concerns overall performance. This may reflect the supervisor's concern for the feelings of his/her subordinates (Larson, 1984) and discomfort as the sender of negative feedback (Benedict & Levine, 1988). From a cultural perspective, it may stem from Japanese supervisors' concern for harmonious relationship and tendency to avoid conflict (Hofstede, 1980 & 1984). When a supervisor is from a culture where group harmony and group members' face are emphasized, and criticism is considered to be detrimental (e.g., Byham, 1993; Elashmawi, 1990; Hofstede, 1984; Okabe, 1983), negative feedback that may cause discomfort and loss of face may be delayed by the supervisor.

The supervisor of company C reported that he uses a general but timely approach in his delivery of negative feedback (see the description of company C). However, this was not recognized as negative feedback by his subordinates. One of them stated he had never received negative (or positive) feedback and the other claimed that his negative feedback is too late. The Japanese supervisor's general approach could be attributed to Japanese people's preference for an indirect style (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1975; Miyahara, 1984; Okabe, 1983; Byham, 1993) or high-context communication (Hofstede, 1980). However, when the supervisor was asked about the reason for speaking generally, he explained that it was because responsibility for mistakes should be shared by everyone because everyone's work is related to each another. Thus, his approach could stem from the belief in collective responsibility.
(Hatvany & Pucik, 1981; Ouchi, 1981). Such general feedback, however appropriate a supervisor may believe it to be, cannot be effective when it is not acknowledged as appropriate by his or her subordinates.

From the examination of the timing of negative feedback, some conclusions can be drawn. Depending on the nature of feedback such as simple mistakes, behavioral changes, the timing of negative feedback can vary at least from the point of U.S. subordinates. Correcting larger mistakes or criticizing one's job priorities can also affect whether the immediateness of negative feedback is perceived as satisfactory by subordinates. In addition, depending on the delivery and relational tone used in negative feedback, subordinates may miss the feedback or define it as positive. Thus, the timing of feedback needs be examined in relation to the nature and the delivery of feedback.

Frequency

Frequency of Positive Feedback

Among Japanese supervisors, frequency of positive feedback varied from 1 (never) to 4 (often). All six supervisors reported that they "sometimes" give positive feedback to their U.S. subordinates. In addition, one supervisor stated that frequency of his positive feedback can be "never" or "rarely" in addition to "sometimes" depending on the subordinate. Similarly, another supervisor answered that frequency can be either "sometimes" or "often" depending on the situation. When asked about their subordinates' satisfaction with the frequency, four supervisors believed that their U.S. subordinates were satisfied with it, and one supervisor thought they were not. Two other supervisors answered that they did not know.
The responses from U.S. subordinates varied from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Four U.S. participants claimed that they had never received any positive feedback. "Rarely" was chosen by three people, "sometimes" was given by one person, "often" was reported by three people, and "very often" was the response given by one person. In terms of satisfaction with the frequency, some were satisfied, some were not, and yet one person thought his satisfaction level could not be categorized as either.

The supervisor of company A stated that the frequency of his positive feedback can be categorized into "never," "rarely," and "sometimes" depending on the subordinate. He thought that his subordinates were not satisfied with the frequency because they tended to forget positive experiences after a week or so but kept only negative experience in their memory. Despite the dissatisfaction of subordinates, he claimed the frequency to be appropriate.

Maybe it's O.K. to be partial to one subordinate in Japan, but in the U.S. because there are many different people, if I praise one employee too much or too often, it may be interpreted as racial discrimination or sexual discrimination. So, I think it is best to praise employees only when they successfully deal with a difficult situation, and don't praise them for everyday work. (A-J)

On the subordinates' side, both of his U.S. subordinates described the frequency to be "rarely;" neither of them was satisfied with the frequency.

Maybe once a month. Even when he says nice things, he can't even look in your eyes. They [comments] are kind of quick and short, and he doesn't spend much time. So, it doesn't mean anything. I think we should have more reviews more often if that's the only way he gives any feedback. (A-U.S.1)

I would say rarely. It's late and grudgingly given. It's strange. From my point of view and from others, he doesn't give enough positive feedback. He is kind of likes to acknowledge as minimum as possible. (A-U.S.2)

These responses reveal their dissatisfaction with the frequency of positive feedback. In addition, their comments on the delivery of feedback suggest that the delivery of feedback affect the extent of satisfaction with the frequency.
In company B, the supervisor responded that the frequency was "sometimes." He determined this frequency to be satisfying for his subordinates.

I don't praise them when they do what they are expected to do. But when their job is better than I expected, I think I should praise them for it and I want to do so. But the frequency I praise them is only "sometimes." So, when they are actually praised. I think it means something to them. (B-J)

One of his subordinate who was a supervisor in Accounting, was satisfied with the frequency. She commented that in everyday situations the frequency of positive feedback is "sometimes," and it is usually mixed with some negative. However, in reviews that she has twice a year, his evaluation of her performance is often very positive and higher than her self-evaluation. The other employee stated that the frequency is "never," but she is fine with the absence of positive feedback from her supervisor.

I never thought about that, but I don't think so. It doesn't mean that we have a bad relationship. It's because all the things I do are all the same things I do everyday. What to praise about? It's not like a big project or anything. (B-U.S.2)

Although this subordinate's perception of frequency differed from her supervisor's, both subordinates of this company were satisfied with the frequency. Employee 2's comment was worth noting because it shows that an employee's satisfaction with positive feedback is not necessarily consistent with a high frequency. Her response regarding frequency was consistent with what she felt about the importance of positive feedback.

Company C's supervisor described the frequency to be "sometimes," but he noted that he gives positive feedback to one subordinate more frequently than he does to the other.
I think the female employee who does administrative work is satisfied with the frequency. But I don't know about the other employee because I try not to say much about his work. He holds the title of manager, so I don't think it appropriate to tell him whether his way is good or bad. (C-J)

As the supervisor anticipated, the employee who is a manager did not think he had received any positive feedback. He stated that he is not satisfied with the lack of positive feedback because it would be nice to have support from his supervisor. In response to the question regarding importance of positive feedback, he commented that it is needed for his motivation.

He does not say any negative things about my work. But I take it as his satisfaction with my job because he says negative things to another employee from time to time. I think he is satisfied with me. (C-U.S.1)

The other employee perceived the frequency to be "rarely," and she was not satisfied with it.

Once a year in a review basically. But even when he gives me positive comments in a review, I cannot remember how I was doing something right. It is just like a hidden myth...I have to just keep going and doing what I think is the best and hopefully at the end of the year, he'll say, "Oh, yeah, good job." No, I need it more than once a year. (C-U.S.2)

Different from the supervisor's expectation, this subordinate did not perceive the frequency to be appropriate nor satisfying.

The supervisor of company D described the frequency of his positive feedback as "sometimes." In response to the question about his subordinates' satisfaction with the frequency, he commented that he did not know although he did not think they feel negatively. His subordinates, both of them, perceived the frequency to be "often," which was higher than the supervisor's rating. They agreed that he is a very positive person and very candid and forthright about praising people. One of the subordinates also noted that in addition to his personality as a positive person, he knows how to
motivate people because he has experience in personnel in a Tokyo office where he was in charge of training young employees.

The frequency ratings given by the participants from company E were the same as those of company D. The supervisor's rating was "sometimes," and her subordinate's rating was "often." The supervisor commented that she was not able to recognize every good piece of work her subordinates do because everyone, including herself, has his or her specialty and clients, but her subordinates would be satisfied the frequency because when she recognizes good jobs, she would certainly praise them. As she expected, her U.S. subordinate was satisfied with her recognition of her performance, and thought the frequency was actually "often."

The last supervisor who was from company I answered that the frequency varies between "sometimes" and "often" depending on the situation because sometimes he receives good reports everyday and other days he does not find anything to praise about in his subordinates' reports. He thought this frequency to be appropriate because he would praise them for work that he honestly believed to be good. He thought his subordinates were satisfied with the frequency as well because the way they interact with his is very positive.

The U.S. subordinate from company F stated that he could tell that his supervisor relies on him by the increase of responsibility. Nevertheless, he felt that verbal feedback is important. He was not satisfied with "rarely" given verbal positive feedback.

When I do a good job, I usually get more feedback from my workers, people under me. I like to work like an engine...car engine. You need all parts to get you going. And communication is very important. If I did a good job, I want to hear it especially from my boss. When my workers do a good job, I tell them because I think it's important for the engine. (F-U.S.1)
Being assigned new tasks is reported as a form of feedback in past studies (i.e. Ashford, 1992; Byham, 1993; Greller, 1992). However, being an operations supervisor, he recognizes the importance of verbally given positive feedback for motivating people and improving the company's effectiveness.

A U.S. participant from company G also described the frequency to be "rarely," and he was neither satisfied or dissatisfied with the frequency. He commented that it used to bother him, but not anymore. The last U.S. participant who works for company H chose the highest number on the frequency scale. She described that positive feedback is the most frequent and spontaneous among the bosses she have ever worked for. Since she has worked for U.S. companies in the past, her "bosses" include both U.S. and Japanese supervisors. She described her current supervisor as a "very open, honest, people-oriented person."

The analysis of the frequency of positive feedback lead to several interesting findings. First, the manners of delivery, verbalization, specificity, and timing of the feedback were mentioned in the participants' responses regarding their satisfaction with the frequency of positive feedback. When one or more of these factors was/were not perceived as appropriate and/or effective, the frequency of feedback was not perceived as satisfactory either. This interdependent nature among factors gives support to Larson et al.'s (1986) findings.

Another factor emerged with regard to the frequency of positive feedback was the personality of source perceived by receiver. As Ilgen et al. (1979) emphasized, the more positively source was perceived, the more satisfied receiver was with the feedback sent by the source. Lastly, types of job and the U.S. subordinate's ability to evaluate their own performance were likely to play roles in the acceptance of feedback. Absence of negative feedback could be perceived as satisfactory by subordinates because of
routinized jobs or confidence in their own evaluations. These factors are not discussed in past studies, and thus have to be paid more attention in future studies of performance feedback.

**Frequency of Negative Feedback**

The frequency of negative feedback given by Japanese supervisors ranged from "rarely" to "very often." Two chose "rarely," three people thought it was "sometimes," and one person claimed that the frequency was between "often" and "very often." As for subordinates' satisfaction with the frequency, three Japanese supervisors thought their subordinates were satisfied, one person responded that his subordinates would not be satisfied but understood. The other two supervisors answered that they did not know.

The answers of U.S. subordinates varied from "never" to "very often." Three of them said that they did not recall any negative feedback given by their Japanese supervisor, four people stated that the frequency is "rarely," four other people thought it was "sometimes," and one last person responded that his supervisor gives him negative feedback "very often." In terms of satisfaction with the frequency, nine U.S. subordinates stated that they were satisfied and the rest, three participants, claimed that they were not satisfied with the frequency.

The supervisor of company A stated that the frequency of his negative feedback would be either "often" or "very often." He did not think his subordinates are satisfied with the frequency. However, he thought they would understand it because he explains his motives for the feedback. The U.S. subordinates of this company rated as less often than the supervisor. One of the subordinates, who chose "sometimes," was not satisfied with the frequency because the feedback was often about very trivial matters.
It's just sometimes. When he says negative things, it's about insignificant things like I accidentally sent a fax to a telephone number and it didn't complete the fax, so we had some trouble with that. Or spelling someone's name wrong. Little things he wants to be perfect. Just natural human mistakes, and he makes a big deal. (A-U.S.1)

The other subordinate stated that the frequency is "rarely," and she was satisfied with this frequency. She explained that she has not made many mistakes in her work and the infrequent negative feedback is fair. In this company negative feedback was perceived by subordinates less frequent than the supervisor thought. Nevertheless, one of the subordinates was not satisfied with it because the feedback was about trivial matters. If the feedback contained more important information, her satisfaction with the same frequency could be different. Thus, frequency needs to be examined in relation to the nature of feedback.

The participants of company B all agreed that the frequency of negative feedback is "sometimes." The supervisor believes that his subordinates are satisfied with the frequency because he gives negative feedback only when there is a problem and he always explains why the problem should be corrected. As he believed, his subordinates are satisfied with the frequency. One subordinate commented that she usually understands his side because her supervisor brings up good points when he says something negative. The other subordinate stated that frequency of his negative feedback is fine because it corresponds to the frequency of mistakes she makes and his manner is very polite.

The supervisor of company C stated that he "rarely" gives negative feedback to his subordinates concerning their mistakes.

I think it's closer to "rarely" than "sometimes" because I'm satisfied with my subordinates' performance except for small mistakes. For one of the employees, I try not to say anything because he is a manager. (C-J)
He stated that he does not know whether his subordinates were satisfied with the frequency, but felt that they may want to have more negative feedback because they ask him to tell them what's wrong about their work. The frequency his subordinates perceived was different from his. As mentioned in the discussion of timing, one of his subordinates stated he has never received any negative feedback and he was satisfied with it because he believes that the absence of negative feedback reflects his supervisor's satisfaction with his work. However, the comment the supervisor made reveals a different reason for giving little feedback to the subordinate, the subordinate's status in the company.

The other subordinate answered that the frequency is "rarely" for oral feedback, but "sometimes" if she includes written comments.

It's rarely...it happens pretty much once a year. But it's worthless except that it makes you feel bad. You can't do anything about the review. Usually he gets quiet when he is upset, and in that case I will try to talk to him, but sometimes it's just not possible. And maybe he was not angry with me at all.... Frequency can be "sometimes," though, because when I give him things I do, and if they are not correct, he marks them all up and gets it back to me. I guess that's feedback, too. But I much prefer words and suggestions rather than, "Fix it." (C-U.S.2)

In this company the responses for frequency revealed that the subordinates and supervisor hold different beliefs about the degree of the supervisor's satisfaction with subordinates' work.

In company D the supervisor's rating of frequency of negative feedback was "rarely." He commented that he was unsure about how his subordinates feel about the frequency because there were cases where he did not realize problems were occurring until the team leader reported those to him. Despite his anticipation, his subordinates commented that he is a very positive person and they could not recall any negative feedback they received from him.
It's hard to say because negative feedback isn't really negative feedback because of the way he handles it. He gives me additional instructions because we are doing new things. He guides me through the winding path. He is like a teacher to me. (D-U.S.2)
I'm very pleased to work with him. I guess I can't think of any specific instances where he holds me from a wrong direction, but if he has, it's been very politely. I have a very good relationship with him. I can clarify situations with him. (D-U.S.1)

In their comments, both of the U.S. subordinates mentioned the way their supervisor delivers negative information. What they point suggests that the way a supervisor communicates a negative message can determine if it is interpreted as negative feedback and if his or her subordinates are satisfied with the feedback.

The supervisor of company E stated she "sometimes" communicates negative feedback. She felt that her subordinates are satisfied with the frequency because when she communicates a negative message, it is always when there is actually some problems and she explains it to them. Her subordinate who participated in the study perceived the frequency to be "rarely," which is lower than she thought. The subordinate was satisfied with the frequency of negative feedback and the way her supervisor approaches problems, by standing behind the subordinate and others.

It is very rare, but in certain instances where something went wrong, I always felt that she stood behind me. When a problem is there, she is there to back me up. (E-U.S.1)

The supervisor of company I also perceived the frequency of his negative feedback to be "sometimes." He concluded that his subordinates were satisfied with the frequency.

I believe American people prefer to be told if there is anything wrong. It's been only a year and half since I came here, but I can feel that. So, I tell them frankly and specifically when I notice something to be corrected in their work. As far as the frequency goes, they don't complain or ask me for more, so I guess they are satisfied with it. (I-J)
The subordinate from company F claimed that his supervisor tells him something negative everyday. He was not satisfied with it because he felt that his supervisor gives him negative feedback to remind him that he has more power. Other U.S. participants from companies G and H chose "rarely" and commented that they were satisfied with the frequency.

I believe it happened only four or five times in the past eleven years. All of these times, he and I were able to talk it out. (G-U.S.1)

It is very infrequent. But if there is any problem, he communicates it in a very nice manner. (H-U.S.1)

Overall, some similarities and differences emerged in participants' perceptions of negative feedback frequency. When they believed that their subordinates were satisfied with the frequency, the supervisors had similar reasons for their responses. Their reasons included fairness and providing explanations; negative feedback was given only when there is actually a problem and problems are explained specifically. U.S. subordinates agreed with some reasons and disagreed with others. When responses were examined within companies, some U.S. subordinates felt that frequency was fair for the reasons given by the Japanese supervisors. In addition, those who were satisfied with the frequency mentioned that the manner of delivery being polite, instructional and supportive was appropriate. The delivery seems to be important because it not only enhances subordinates' acceptance of the feedback, but also it may determine whether feedback is perceived to be negative or not.

Other U.S. subordinates were not satisfied for various reasons. A low frequency of negative feedback was not satisfying if explanations and suggestions were not provided. Silence was negatively perceived by a subordinate. In addition, when the frequency of negative feedback was perceived to be related to a reason other than the actual problem (i.e., power), the feedback may not be accepted.
Lastly, frequency of negative feedback was often discussed in relation to other factors such as timing, specificity, and delivery of feedback. This is consistent with past findings (Larson, Glynn, Fleenor, and Scontrino, 1986). As pointed out by some participants, other factors such as nature of the problem and perceived motives for the feedback may also influence subordinates' satisfaction with the frequency of negative feedback.

**Specificity**

**Specificity of Positive Feedback**

Four different types of responses were given by Japanese supervisors in the study regarding specificity of positive feedback. One supervisor believed that it was "usually specific," and three supervisors claimed that "their message may be simple, but it is given about a specific event." These supervisors believed that their subordinates were satisfied with the specificity. Another supervisor responded that it was "sometimes specific and other times it was not," and he did not know if his subordinates were satisfied with it. Another person thought it was "non-specific," which he did not think his subordinates were satisfied with.

Responses given by U.S. subordinate's also included perceptions that positive feedback was "usually specific," "non-specific," and "simple, but given in a specific event." Their response and satisfaction with the specificity covaried as was the case for Japanese supervisors. Two out of twelve subordinates thought it was "usually specific," and three stated that it was "simple, but given in a specific event." Those subordinates were satisfied with the specificity of positive feedback. Four responded that it was "non-specific," and they were not satisfied with it. In addition to these
responses, three subordinate's claimed that they had never received any positive feedback from their Japanese supervisor.

Company A's supervisor was one of those who perceived their positive feedback to be "simple, but given in a specific event." This answer corresponded to his description of timing, "when a job is completed." He stated that he uses words such as "good" and "good job" in his oral and sometimes written feedback. His subordinates, however, viewed his positive feedback as "non-specific."

It's not specific because even when he says nice things, they are kind of quick and short, and he doesn't spend much time on it. He can't even look in you eyes. So, it doesn't mean anything to me. (A-U.S.1)

A bonus. That's how he gives positive feedback. Salary raises. He expects us to appreciate him for that. But then in American culture, money and increases are expected. We don't consider that praise. Maybe that's where cultural differences come in. If he ever says something positive by words, the words are minimum and grudgingly given. So, I don't feel he really means it. (A-U.S.2)

In the discussion of timing, Employee 1 agreed with him about timeliness of his positive feedback, and thus she recognized that his feedback is given in a specific situation. Yet, when positive feedback was given through only a few words, it was not perceived as meaningful. The specificity of the message, and also the way it was said was mentioned by both U.S. employees as an important determinant of their satisfaction with positive feedback. Employee 2 also brought up that positive feedback may not necessarily given through words but some other ways.

The supervisor of company B stated that he most often uses words such as, "Thank you" and "Good job." He thought that his subordinates may be satisfied with his "non-specific" feedback. Both of the subordinates from this company were satisfied with the specificity. One subordinate noted that words may be simple, but they were specific enough to know what was meant because the feedback was given in a specific situation. The other employee stated that she had never received any clear positive
feedback but it's fine because there is no point of praising routine work. Thus, specificity was viewed differently between the source and recipients and between individual recipients, but the recipients were more satisfied with it than the source anticipated.

In company C, the perception of specificity also differed among all three participants. The supervisor responded that his positive feedback is simple, but given in a specific instance. He was not sure if one employee (employee 1) is satisfied because he tries not to "poke his nose" into a manager's performance, but he felt that the other employee (employee 2) was satisfied. He described an instance that demonstrates his response.

Yesterday, I praised her, saying "well organized." She is going to leave this company, so I have to hire another person to replace her. I had her make appointments with candidates for the position. Yesterday morning, she gave me files that contained the names and times of interviews. Their resumes were also in the file, and it was very easy for me to know who's coming when. So, I told her that she is well organized. She smiled and said "Thank you." (C-J)

Employee 1 said that he was not able to give any comment about specificity of positive feedback because he had no basis for evaluation. Employee 2 agreed with her supervisor in that she saw his words as simple, but she claimed that those words were not given in specific situations.

It's a one word answer like, "Fine," or "Everything is O.K." He is getting better but the feedback I have gotten was always late. Basically once a year." So, again I have no example for what was fine. I always have to ask him to explain it. (C-U.S.2)

While the supervisor believed that his comments were given in a specific instance, it was not recognized by the employee in this company.

Company D's supervisor stated that he gave short messages such as "good job," "helpful," or "good meeting" during work and makes more specific comments when
just two of them were having a meeting or when they were having lunch or a drink outside the office. He commented that he is not sure if his subordinate is satisfied with the specificity. When asked about the specificity, both of his subordinates recalled short messages that they received from him.

When he says "Good job," I know exactly what he is talking about because he says that in a specific project. His attitude is very positive. So, it's sort of mixed in. (D-U.S.1)

Usually we are discussing one particular account. So, his words may be short, but I know what he is talking about. And his attitude is very positive and up front. I can tell that he is happy because he shows excitement. (D-U.S.2)

In this company the supervisor's positive feedback was successfully recognized by his subordinate. The nonverbal part of the message and timeliness both seem to play roles in this successful case.

In company E, both the supervisor and her subordinate perceived positive feedback to be specific and satisfactory.

In American culture, I know that employees expect clear and direct verbal praise. In Japan "Good job. Thank you" may be enough, but here we have to say more specific things like "Thank you for doing this and that," or "You did good job on this. This work shows well how much you've been learning and experiencing." In my experience in Japan, praise I was given by my boss was typically "Good job" and that's all. So, I had to think of what he was talking about by myself. I try not to do the same to my subordinates here. (E-J)

Her subordinate in this study commented that when it comes to specific jobs or overall performance, she receives very specific feedback, which is usually very positive. The supervisor noted that she consciously verbalized her positive feelings about her subordinates' performance, and her effort was acknowledged by her subordinate in this study.

Company E's supervisor responded that his positive feedback was simple, but given for each project. He felt that his subordinates' satisfaction with the specificity was manifest in the positive ways they interact with him.
Among other U.S. participants, the employee of company F was not satisfied with non-specific positive comments from his supervisor. He commented that "Good" or "Fine" does not explain anything. The participant from company G replied that he was not able to talk about specificity because he did not recall any positive feedback given by his supervisor. The subordinate of company H stated that her supervisor is always specific in his positive feedback and explains why her work is good.

In conclusion, the responses given by the participants for specificity of positive feedback included similar points brought up in the sections of timing and frequency. When Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates perceived the feedback to be specific, satisfaction resulted on the part of subordinates. This supports past findings that detailed positive feedback is better than general feedback because it leads to specific goals (French, Kay, & Meyer, 1966; Ilgen et al., 1979; Steer & Porter, 1974). Second, subordinates' satisfaction with the specificity was often correlated to perceived appropriateness and effectiveness of timing, frequency, and manner of delivery. In a case when a subordinate perceived her job as routine, satisfaction resulted even when she did not recall any positive feedback.

Among U.S. subordinates who were dissatisfied with the frequency, their reasons included perceived inappropriate timing, manner of presentation, and frequency. Even when positive feedback was given in a specific event, if the feedback is short and/or the nonverbal part of the message was not positively perceived by U.S. subordinates, dissatisfaction may result. The importance of verbalizing positive feedback was also pointed out by some U.S. subordinates. When positive feedback was given in a form other than a verbal message (i.e. salary raise), it was not considered to be positive feedback.
Specificity of Negative Feedback

All Japanese supervisors stated that their negative feedback was specific and that they believed that their U.S. subordinates were satisfied with the specificity. On the other hand, the responses from U.S. subordinates varied. Five of them thought their supervisor's negative feedback was specific enough and accordingly they were satisfied with it. Three people claimed that it was not specific and expressed dissatisfaction. One person stated that the events themselves were specific. The other three participants perceived no negative feedback and were satisfied with that. Different perceptions about specificity of negative feedback within each company are discussed below.

In company A, the subordinates had different opinions about specificity from their supervisor who claimed that he presented specific explanations when he gave negative feedback. Employee 1 commented that although the feedback is not specific, she is fine with it because the mistakes are usually specific. Employee 2 stated that negative messages are not specific. She had two different opinions about specificity depending on the nature of feedback. As for simple mistakes, since they were corrected right when they occurred, she agreed with the first person and felt fine with the specificity. However, when the feedback was regarding behavioral problems, she felt that her supervisor's non-specific negative feedback was not satisfactory.

He told me that the way I handled a situation was too aggressive. But when I asked him for suggestions before I take any action, he didn't give me any. And even when he said I'm too aggressive, he gave me any specific advice or instruction. (A-U.S.2)

All participants from company B perceived the feedback to be specific enough and thus, appropriate and satisfactory. The supervisor stated that when he has something negative to say about his subordinates performance he tells them how it
should be changed and what should not be done and so on. Both of the subordinates who participated in the study concurred.

In company C, the subordinates’ perceptions of specificity were different from their supervisor who stated that his negative feedback was specific. As mentioned in the discussions of timing and frequency, employee 1 did not recall any negative feedback and he was satisfied with it. Employee 2, however, did not think her supervisor's negative feedback was specific enough.

It's mainly generalization. [During] my last review six months ago, he told me that I was ignoring important things. ...just twice, I sent documents to Japan late, and they were important documents. I'm not saying that the error was unimportant. The error was important, but to say that generally my organization is bad, and generally say that I'm ignoring important things, I thought it was very unfair because the errors occurred twice. (C-U.S.2)

Her dissatisfaction resulted because his evaluation itself was a generalization and not specific to a particular instance. Whether the message itself refers to a specific instance or generalization of performance based on a few instances may be an important issue to be discussed when dissatisfaction results on the side of recipient.

The supervisor of company D stated that he did not really give any negative feedback to his subordinates. However, when his subordinate's performance was not good, he gave specific advice or explained why his or her performance should be corrected.

I would give them reasons why their direction is wrong. If they do not recognize and understand what was wrong, it leaves an unpleasant aftertaste between us. So, I think it is an absolutely necessary condition that the person recognizes and admits the problem before any correction is made. (D-J)

As it was reported in the discussion of frequency, neither of the U.S. subordinates from this company thought they have received any actual negative feedback.
To me it's not negative. It's my doing it wrong way, so he is very forthright and explains to be why it should be done in a different way. Usually something that I asked him. Let's do this way. And he'll say "no," and finally I'll say "O.K., I won't." And that's the negative. But it's not negative. It's more of discussion. (D-U.S.1)

It's not much of negative. It's instructional and it's pertaining to specific instances. His instruction is always very specific and if I have to clarify situations, I can openly do so with him. (D-U.S.2)

Their comments indicate that the supervisor's beliefs about the specificity of negative feedback are consistent with the subordinates' views of what he meant. The comments of the subordinates also illustrate that their communication with their supervisor is not one way but transactional. In fact, other U.S. participants mentioned this point in the interviews. Whether subordinates are encouraged to communicate back to their supervisor may be an important issue to be examined to assess subordinates' satisfaction with performance feedback.

The supervisor and subordinate of company E agreed that the supervisor's negative feedback was specific. The supervisor stated that she took time to discuss details and gave her subordinates the opportunity to talk about their ideas and opinions. Her subordinates perceived the same things.

It is very rare to receive negative feedback, but when my supervisor has something to say, she always explains it clearly and openly. Also she welcomes my opinions and encourages me to talk about how I think. (E-U.S.2)

In addition to specific explanations, being able to discuss the problem with the supervisor was an important factor of this subordinate's satisfaction.

The supervisor of company I also perceived his negative feedback to be specific. He noted that he often used written forms to communicate his negative feedback.

Positive feedback can be communicated by very simple words like "Good job." For negative ones, it is better understood if I write what's lacking or what I want them to do. I try to write down my message as far as I have time to do so. My spoken English might not be perfect, and I don't want them to say, "I can't
do a good job because your English is poor." And also I don't want them to be confused because what I say is unclear. So, I give them negative feedback in written form. (I-J)

He also noted that being clear in his communication is something he consciously does with his U.S. subordinates because he believes U.S. Americans prefer clarity.

Japanese people communicate praise and criticism in a very ambiguous manner like "That's not what I want you to do. Do it again." Subordinates are expected to revise things without any specific instructions. I think this is very common in Japan. From one point of view, it is true that this ambiguity contributes to a harmonious relationship. But that's not the way it should be here in the U.S. The Americans prefer clear and direct comments. So, I try to be specific as much as I can. (I-J)

Enough specificity was perceived by U.S. subordinates of companies G and H. The subordinate from company G stated that his supervisor is specific and straightforward in his negative feedback. He explained that his supervisor has lived in the U.S. for a long period of time and thus knows what American ways are. The participant from company H noted that her supervisor's negative feedback is presented with good reasons, and he lets her talk about her ideas. The U.S. participant of company F claimed that his supervisor is not specific in his negative feedback.

His comment is a couple of words, "Good," or "No," very short. I don't consider that feedback, but he thinks that's good enough. Maybe that's because of language barrier. Maybe it's something to do with his assumption that people understand him. But his feedback doesn't explain what I want. (F-U.S.1)

Overall both Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates perceived specificity as more important in negative feedback than in positive feedback. U.S. subordinates showed more satisfaction with detailed explanations and suggestions than short comments. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the specificity were described in
relation to timing and manner of presentation. In addition, whether supervisors were open to subordinates' ideas and opinions also influenced their acceptance of the negative feedback.

Dissatisfaction was reported by a subordinate in terms of generalization. Even when specific explanations were made, subordinates may feel dissatisfied with the specificity if the message itself is a generalization about their performance.

Japanese supervisors in the study were aware that being detailed with U.S. subordinates was important. However, their responses did not support Larson's comment (1986) that supervisors' reluctance to communicate negative feedback might cause them to be as specific as possible so they would not have to give feedback over and over again.

Appropriateness and Effectiveness

Participants were asked to assess overall appropriateness and effectiveness of performance feedback separately. However, appropriate feedback was perceived to be effective, and the reasons they provided were similar for these two dimensions. Thus, appropriateness and effectiveness of feedback are discussed together in the following sections on positive and negative feedback.

Appropriateness and Effectiveness of Positive Feedback

All Japanese supervisors perceived their positive feedback to be appropriate and effective overall. Although their reasons varied, frequency and timing were mentioned in their responses. Some of them stressed their conscious effort to give verbal feedback to their U.S. subordinates. Among U.S. subordinates, five people stated that their Japanese supervisors' feedback was appropriate and effective while four people stated
that it was not. Other people thought it is "O.K." but not exactly appropriate or effective. Some people provided answers in terms of both the company's and personal perspectives.

Frequency was mentioned by the supervisor of company A as the determinant of appropriateness and effectiveness of his positive feedback. He stated that he praises his subordinates only sometimes when they handle a difficult situation well. He continued that if he praises them often for ordinary work, it will not be meaningful after a while. While the supervisor perceived his positive feedback to be appropriate and effective, his subordinates did not feel his positive feedback is neither appropriate or effective. Employee 1 stressed that his positive feedback was not frequent, specific, nor given in a genuine manner.

No, I don't think he knows how to manage people. And he doesn't give you enough positive feedback. Even when he says nice things, he can't look at your eyes. Feedback is kind of quick and short, and he doesn't spend much time on it. So, it doesn't mean anything to me. (A-U.S.1)

Employee 2 pointed out the infrequency and the ineffective delivery of her supervisor's positive feedback. "Minimum acknowledgment" and "grudgingly given" were used in her discussion. She also claimed that her supervisor expects that employees would define a raise and bonus as praise but American people do not consider them as praise. Frequency and specificity were perceived differently between the supervisor and his subordinates, and this difference directly related to the incongruent views of overall appropriateness and effectiveness of positive feedback between them. In addition, nonverbal part of feedback appeared as an important determinant of appropriate and effective positive feedback as seen by the recipient.

Company B's supervisor mentioned frequency in discussing why his positive feedback was appropriate and effective. Similar to company A's supervisor, he stated that it was not necessary to praise his subordinates when they are just doing what is
expected of them but that it is meaningful to praise them when they perform better than he expected. Employee 1 did not specifically refer to any dimensions, but discussed the appropriateness and effectiveness of her supervisor’s feedback by comparing her own and his evaluations of her performance.

I'll look at my faults, and he'll say I'm doing an excellent job. Either he doesn't know my faults, or he just looks at the positive and looks at what he wants me to grow into. But his evaluation of my work is always better than my own. It makes me feel very proud that he believes in me so much. It makes me feel I want to be what he believes. (B-U.S.1)

Employee 2 was the person who stated that she does not recall any positive feedback given by her supervisor. She, however, thought it was fine because her job is so routine that there is nothing to praise about. This opinion was reflected in her response to appropriateness of positive feedback; she thought it is appropriate that her supervisor does not praise her work. As for effectiveness, she said that the lack of praise is neither effective nor ineffective but it did not bother her. In her discussion of the importance of positive feedback, she also commented that she does not feel positive feedback is significant for her because she knows she is doing fine. Thus, when a subordinate determines his or her job as routine, and does not hold much value in positive feedback, the absence of positive feedback can be perceived as appropriate. Individuals' personalities and confidence in their own evaluations may also play roles in their judgments of appropriateness and effectiveness.

Company C's supervisor also felt that overall his positive feedback was appropriate because when he thinks his subordinates' performance is good, he always communicates his positive feeling to his subordinates, at least to one of them. He also stated that he has made a conscious effort to praise his subordinates verbally because U.S. Americans will prefer clear communication. Employee 1 stated that the absence of positive feedback did not bother him but was not appropriate or effective. He stated that overall his supervisor is fine compared to a previous Japanese supervisor he had in
another Japanese company. Employee 2 stated that she does not think her supervisor's positive feedback is appropriate nor effective because none of the three factors, of timing, frequency, or specificity, is satisfactory. Even when supervisors believe that they are consciously adjusting the frequency and their style of giving positive feedback, if their subordinates determine that the effort is not reflected in their feedback, the overall feedback is not likely to be perceived as appropriate or effective.

Similar to the other supervisors discussed above, the supervisor of company D emphasized overall appropriateness in terms of frequency. As for effectiveness, he felt that his positive feedback is working because of the kind of response he receive from his subordinates.

They praise me sometimes. They've also told me that they are happy to be working with me. And I don't think they are flattering me because they want to get promoted or get a higher salary. They thanked me for letting them try new things that they couldn't do before. In return, I would tell them that I'm the one who has to thank them because they have been very helpful. So, there were some situations of this kind where we confirmed our give-and-take relationship. (D-J)

His subordinates consistently stated that, overall, his positive feedback was both appropriate and effective. Frequency was one factor they mentioned. "Enough of an amount" and "enough recognition" were used in their responses. What both subordinates emphasized, however, was his manner of giving positive feedback. They used "clear," "a lot of excitement," "attentive," and "forthright" to describe his manner. Timing, frequency, and specificity were found to be important dimensions of feedback in past studies (i.e. Ilgen et al., 1979), however, in intercultural settings, nonverbal parts of the message and delivery manner may be a more critical dimension to determine the appropriateness and effectiveness of feedback.

Timeliness, specificity, and effort in verbalizing were stressed by the supervisor of company E in her reasoning about appropriateness and effectiveness of her positive
feedback. These factors were recognized and perceived by her subordinates to be appropriate and effective as well. The subordinate commented that when everything was considered, her supervisor's style was fine and that she always feels encouraged by the positive feedback she received from her supervisor.

The supervisor of company I also mentioned his conscious effort to give clear verbal positive feedback. He repeatedly stressed that a Japanese ambiguous communication style is not appropriate in U.S. culture where people prefer clear and direct communication. He stated that his positive feedback is overall appropriate and effective because his U.S. subordinates' attitude toward him is very positive.

The U.S. participant from company F discussed this issue both for the company and for himself personally. He commented that personally he thought that his supervisor's positive feedback was inappropriate and ineffective because of inappropriate timing, frequency, specificity, and his reluctance to speak English. However, he noted that this supervisor's style may be fine for the company because all other employees are Japanese.

The subordinate of company G was another person who claimed that he has never received any positive feedback from his supervisor. He also provided his opinions in terms of both the company and personal preference. He stated that personally he feels it was not appropriate or effective but did not bother him because he is used to the absence of positive feedback. For the company, he thought it was fine.

It is fine for the company because we are small. But I think everybody needs positive comments every once in a while. We hired my son two years ago, and I give him verbal support sometimes because I think it's important. When this company gets bigger, I will take care of the business instead of him. (G-U.S.1)

Company I's subordinate perceived all the factors, including timing, frequency, and specificity, of her supervisor's positive feedback as satisfactory. This satisfaction was reflected in her response to overall appropriateness and effectiveness of the
feedback. She commented that her supervisor's constant and clear positive feedback makes her feel that her work is well recognized by him.

Responses given about overall appropriateness and effectiveness—hence competence—corresponded to perceived appropriateness and effectiveness of timing, frequency, and specificity. Thus, these dimensions are important in the analysis of positive performance feedback. One important factor emerged in overall competence is the manner of delivery. The nonverbal style used by supervisors communicating positive feedback was often mentioned by the U.S. respondents. The manner of delivery was also a part of many respondents' answers given for each dimension. Tone of voice, facial expression, politeness, and overall attitude of their supervisors influenced their satisfaction with their supervisor's positive feedback. Another factor that influenced U.S. subordinates' overall satisfaction was whether feedback was clearly verbalized. When U.S. subordinates felt that positive feedback was articulated, they tended to express satisfaction. Thus, not only timing, frequency, and specificity, but nonverbal cues and verbalizing positive feedback need to be included as dimensions of positive feedback.

**Appropriateness and Effectiveness of Negative Feedback**

All Japanese supervisors perceived their negative feedback to be overall appropriate and effective—competent—except that one person also stated that timing has to be changed because he delayed his negative feedback. The reasons they provided included the appropriateness and effectiveness of timing, frequency, specificity, manner of delivery, and the place where the feedback was given. Most of the supervisors discussed competence in their negative feedback in relation to subordinates' views, but two of them also mentioned those issues from the company's perspective. Among U.S. participants, seven people described their supervisor's positive feedback is appropriate
and effective and other five people perceived it was not. Some of the U.S. participants commented about specific instances as well as general positive feedback they received from their supervisors.

The supervisor of company A thought his negative feedback was appropriate and effective because he outlined specific reasons for changes in his feedback. On the other hand, both of his subordinates focused on the timing and frequency of his feedback and felt that appropriateness and effectiveness depended on the topic or type of performance being addressed. Employee 1 felt that it was not necessary to criticize her and other employees about trivial matters such as spelling mistakes and tardiness. She also objected to the relational tone and his manner of delivery.

I feel the tone of voice and the way it is done is kind of condescending. ...if I left, they would know that office wouldn't be able to survive.... When he tells me something negative, I don't really feel that he appreciates me enough because of the way he does it. I'd like to see it improved. (A-U.S.1)

Employee 2 commented that this supervisor's positive feedback was fine when the feedback was about work-related mistakes because. However, when the problem is about employees' personal behavior such as laziness or making repeated mistakes, the supervisor was reluctant to communicate negative feedback and tended to delay it. She did not feel this reluctance was appropriate and effective because behavioral problems can then affect others' work. Interestingly, the supervisor perceived the timing and frequency, along with specificity, as appropriate. However, when these factors are not viewed as appropriate and effective by subordinates, their perception of his overall competence was somewhat negative. The manner of delivery seems to be a factor that needs more attention in company A.

The supervisor of company B perceived his negative feedback as both appropriate and effective except for the timing. He stated that he has sometimes avoided a problem until it happened again or until he could not bear it because he was
uncomfortable in dealing with it. He felt that delaying negative feedback was something he has to work on because it is not good for employees nor the company. Other than timing, he commented that his negative feedback is fine because he explained his motives and encouraged them to say if they had something to protest. His subordinates felt that his positive feedback was appropriate including the timing, frequency, specificity, and manner of delivery. "Straightforward," "right a way," "good reasons," and "presented with some positives" were used in their description of appropriateness and effectiveness. Employee 1 also liked the way he encouraged her to speak up.

Sometimes he will encourage me to tell him what I'm thinking. So, he'd prefer that I discuss thoroughly even I argue with him so that we both understand it. Mostly I just wind up understanding his side.... But a lot of times, he just sees my expression and says, "tell me what you are thinking," and I feel very comfortable with that. (B-U.S.1)

Along with factors discussed earlier, another factor emerged for appropriateness and effectiveness of negative feedback. When a supervisor is open to his or her subordinates' idea or opinions regarding his or her feedback, the feedback is more likely to be accepted by the subordinates.

Timeliness and the manner of presentation were listed as key factors in negative feedback by the supervisor of company C. With regard to his manner of feedback, he stated that he does not blame a particular employee, but blame everybody including himself. He felt that it is appropriate because as a small company, all employees' work are somewhat related to each other's. He also felt this is effective because employees are able to solve problems without feeling too guilty. This holistic approach was not recognized by his subordinates. Employee 1 did not recall any negative feedback given to him, but he recognized negative feedback sometimes given to the another employee. He felt that the absence of negative feedback to him was fine with him because he believed it showed his supervisor's satisfaction with his work. Employee 2 did not
perceive her supervisor's negative feedback to be competent. She described the delay, generalizations about her performance, and the lack of suggestions and instructions as problematic. In addition, she mentioned his unfamiliarity with the situation she was in.

When he told me that I was ignoring important things, he was talking about a couple of mistakes I made. ... I don't think it's fair to generalize my performance because of the mistakes. During that time period, I was in charge of moving the entire office. He was just packing and unpacking his things. He was not fully aware how busy I was in moving and doing my own work at the same time. (C-U.S.2)

In company D, both the supervisor and subordinates agreed that the supervisor's positive feedback was appropriate and effective. The supervisor stated that he does not have to give negative feedback because his subordinates constantly consult with him about their projects before the projects are over. However, when he has to communicate negative messages to them, he stated that he tried to give specific suggestions. He felt merely scolding them or preaching to them is not effective. Consistent with the supervisor, his subordinates responded that they do not recall negative feedback given by him. They pointed out that the information might be negative, but because of the way he presents it, negative feedback serves a positive function. "Good reasons," "instructional," "good advice," and "polite" were mentioned as reasons for their satisfaction with their supervisor's manner of delivery. In addition, they both mentioned that their supervisor is very open to their ideas.

It's not one way, but rather a discussion. I ask him a lot of questions, and he gives me a lot of freedom. If our ideas are different, we can talk about it until we both agree. (U.S.1)

I ask him advice often to avoid misunderstandings. I feel comfortable asking him for advice and when there is any misunderstanding, I can clarify situations with him. (C-U.S.2)

Supervisors' openness to subordinates' opinions was a factor contributing to the absence of negative feedback in this company. Transactional communication, mutual
exchange of information was also important, only for performance feedback, but for overall appropriateness and effectiveness of a supervisor's management of his or her subordinates.

Consultative style was given as the key reason for perceived appropriateness and effectiveness by the supervisor of company E.

I don't like to scold my subordinates unsparingly. I tell them, "I think this part of your performance can be improved. Do you have any good idea for improving that? Let's think about that together." This way, I think it's easy for them to tell their opinions. We all sometimes need to hear others' opinions because there are some things that we don't realize. I think giving suggestions and thinking about problems with employees are more democratic than merely scolding them. It's better for the relationship in the long run. (E-J)

Her subordinate did not specifically mention her consultative style. However, she commented that her supervisor's negative feedback, if there was any, was appropriate and effective because of the timeliness and specificity. She stated that when there was a problem in her work, her supervisor always encouraged her.

In his discussion of overall competence in giving negative feedback, the supervisor of company I referred to the style he uses in giving the feedback. He stated that he tries to write down negative comments as far as his time allows, and explain to his subordinates what is written. He commented that negative feedback needs to be specific but he may not be able to be specific enough if he gives it orally. Realizing that U.S. subordinates prefer clear verbally communication, he felt that his style made his negative feedback more appropriate and effective.

The U.S. subordinate of company F was not satisfied with any of the dimensions of negative feedback given by his Japanese supervisor. As for overall appropriateness and effectiveness, he especially mentioned his dissatisfaction with specificity. He claimed that his supervisor's non-specific negative feedback made him feel depressed but led him nowhere. He also mentioned that negative feedback should be communicated in private which his supervisor did not do in the past.
He used to tell me bad things in front of others. But I'm a supervisor of other employees, too. If my boss criticizes me in front of them, it could cause a lot of friction.... We should discuss what is going on between us, and pass it on to the workers. That may not be a Japanese way, but that's the way I feel. So, I told him to make it private. (F-U.S.1)

The importance of giving negative feedback in private was described by the subordinate of company G as well. He stated that giving negative feedback in public is not acceptable.

My boss has never done that, but I've seen other Japanese supervisors do that. I felt embarrassed for the person. If it ever happened to me, I wouldn't be here. I would walk out the door and never return. People have self-esteem. It's important that negative things are said in private. (G-U.S.1)

The above comments support the idea that self-esteem is considered to be very important in U.S. culture. The Japanese supervisors in this study were aware of their subordinate's self-esteem and consistently stated that they communicate serious negative feedback in private. Most of the U.S. participants acknowledged their Japanese supervisors' sensitivity to the issue and expressed satisfaction.

The subordinate of company G felt that the infrequent negative feedback he received was neither appropriate nor effective. As he stated in his response to the appropriateness and effectiveness of positive feedback, he commented that he will make sure he is the one to give any performance feedback to other employees when the company becomes bigger. The subordinate of company H listed, "specific reasons," "calm and nice manner," and "lets me talk about my ideas" as her reasons for her perceptions that her supervisor's positive feedback was competent.

The responses given about overall appropriateness and effectiveness of negative feedback were consistent with given perceptions of timing, frequency, specificity, and a supportive manner of delivery. When feedback is directional, suggestive, or consultative, it was perceived to be less negative or not negative at all, and higher
acceptance resulted. Hirokawa and Miyahara's (1986) findings suggest that Japanese supervisors tend to prefer altruism such as counsel. The findings of the present study suggests that U.S. employees may also prefer more altruism-based styles to punishment-based styles that are found to be used by U.S. managers. Some Japanese supervisors also emphasized their consultative their openness to their subordinates' opinions. Although Japan ranked higher than the U.S. on power distance dimension (Hofstede, 1984), two-way communication was encouraged by these supervisors in the present study. Thus, power distance may not be a salient dimension in the relationship between Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates.

Two other factors emerged for overall evaluation of negative feedback. Supervisors' flexibility and openness to subordinates' ideas and opinions were mentioned by some U.S. subordinates in their reasons for their perceptions of the competence of the negative feedback given by their Japanese supervisor. Another issue was the context in which negative feedback was given. U.S. participants showed a preference for private settings. Concern for self-esteem and their relationship with other employees were mentioned by some U.S. subordinates as the reasons for the preference.

Overall, Japanese supervisors perceived their performance feedback, both positive and negative, to be appropriate and effective. However, when responses were compared within companies, the responses given by U.S. subordinates were not always consistent with their Japanese supervisor's perceptions. Feedback which was perceived by Japanese supervisors to be timely and specific was not always perceived to be timely and specific enough. Cultural differences in norms for the degree of directness and explicitness, need for praise for individual achievement, and the importance of nonverbal communication (Barnlund, 1989; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980; & Okabe, 1983), may be evident here.
Feedback-Seeking

The responses given by U.S. subordinates regarding their feedback-seeking showed some relationship to values they hold about feedback and with their overall satisfaction with performance feedback given by their Japanese supervisor. In summary, those who were generally satisfied with both the positive and the negative feedback, did not seek feedback about their performance. On the other hand, those who were not satisfied with the feedback given to them, directly inquired about their performance. However, there were two exceptions. One subordinate did not seek performance feedback even though she was not satisfied with feedback she received. She did not see much value in receiving feedback, so her dissatisfaction with feedback from her supervisor did not cause her to seek more information about her performance. Another exception was when a subordinate felt feedback was important and she was not satisfied with feedback given to her, yet she did not seek feedback due to a negative experience she had in the past.

Eight out of twelve subordinates who were satisfied overall with the feedback they received did not seek information about their performance. Five kinds of justifications were given by these participants. Some of the participants had several reasons. The major reason was that they were satisfied with the overall performance feedback given by their Japanese supervisor. Another type of answer was that they knew their performance is fine. Some subordinates who replied that they had not received much positive and negative feedback perceived the lack of feedback as the supervisor's satisfaction with their performance. One of them commented that,

We have a saying among us here that "no news is always good news" because we never hear about positive things. We hear about the negative things. (G-U.S.1)
A third type of answer was given by two subordinates of the same company. They stated that they do not have to ask about their performance after a job is done not only because they are satisfied with the amount of feedback they receive, but also because they ask a lot of questions and for advice when they are still working on the job. Thus, by the time one specific job is over, they know how their performance was.

Two other types of answers were provided by one participant.

He gives me an indication of his perception of my performance. And that's positive. I can tell by the way we interact, the jobs he gives me, and the projects I'm working on. (D-U.S.2)

Thus, a desire to meet his responsibility, and concern for the relationship between his supervisor and him were his reasons for not seeking feedback. Although he may not directly ask his supervisor, he seems to monitor (Ashford & Cummings, 1983) his supervisor's reaction to see how his own performance is being evaluated.

Among those who were not satisfied with feedback given by their Japanese supervisor, two stated that they have sought feedback. Both of these people consistently showed dissatisfaction with positive and negative feedback. Because both of them felt that receiving feedback was important, they needed to seek more information to satisfy their needs. In their attempt to seek feedback, they both used direct inquiry (Ashford and Cummings, 1983).

I asked him for my first review because he did not give me any indication of how he thinks about my work. Based on my asking, he realized that it was typical to have performance reviews at least on a yearly basis. What I ended up doing was that I asked him questions, and he would respond to me. At first it was just one word answer. So, I put together a work sheet and asked him to think about these things. And I gave him the work sheet. I wanted to do that because it was important to me that I am a valuable member of this company, and I'm doing the best possible job I can for the company. First, he was uncomfortable with it. This year I had the most feedback I ever have. (C-U.S.2)
This employee noted that her feedback seeking behavior was appropriate because she needed that for her morale and his role was a "mentor as well as the boss." The other person who sought feedback stated that he did so quite often in the past, but he quit seeking.

I asked him quite a bit before...it's a waste of time. So, I don't do that anymore. Before, I used to ask him, "How is my performance?" and, "Is there anything we can do better?" And his reaction was a couple of words, "Good," or "No." I don't consider that as feedback. But he considers that's good enough. When I asked him further, he kind of mumbled. So, I just decided to forget it. I give myself feedback now. (F-U.S.1)

This employee also believed that his feedback seeking behavior was appropriate because feedback, both positive and negative, is "energy" for people to do better.

The other two people who were not satisfied with their feedback replied that they have never sought feedback on their performance. They were from the same company. One of them felt that it was unacceptable to ask because when she requested something of him, he showed discomfort and reluctance. The other employee had not sought performance because feedback is not necessary for her. She did not see much value in feedback itself. Her dissatisfaction did not affect her as much as other people who feel the need for feedback.

Overall, when subordinates are satisfied with feedback given by their supervisor, they are not likely to seek further information. Those who did seek feedback were the people who were not satisfied with the feedback given to them. These people used direct inquiry (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). They both felt feedback is important for morale and improvement. Thus, their motives for feedback-seeking had some similarity with Larson's (1989) finding that people are motivated to maintain self-esteem. The employees who did not seek feedback despite their dissatisfaction with feedback, had different reasons. However, whether employees see values in feedback itself seems to affect their need to seek feedback.
On the Japanese supervisors' side, two of them responded that their subordinates sought feedback from them. One of them was the supervisor of the employee who made up a review sheet. He did not mention the review sheet, but stated that his subordinates sometimes ask him to tell both positive and negative parts of their work. He thought their feedback seeking behavior to be appropriate because it showed their attitude to "improve themselves." The other supervisor also felt that it was appropriate for subordinates to seek feedback.

They sometimes do, and I think it's good. I have several people under me, so I can't see everything they do. So, if they ask me about their work, it helps me to realize what part of their performance I need to pay attention to. (E-J)

Her comment suggests that it is not only the subordinates who benefit from feedback-seeking but also supervisors can learn to better evaluate their subordinates' performance. Different from Byham's (1993) remarks, the Japanese supervisors in this study thought it is appropriate for their U.S. subordinates to seek feedback on their performance, understanding the subordinates' preference for directness and desire to improve themselves.

Other supervisors replied that their subordinates ask questions and advice but not about performance. Asking questions and advice were perceived very positively by the supervisors because they help clarify situations and prevent confusion and misunderstanding. One of the supervisor commented,

My subordinates here report to me what's going on with their work very frequently. I myself didn't do that, but they do. So, it's very easy for me to oversee how they are doing. Sometimes they ask, "I want to do this. Is it all right?" I rarely turn down their request, though. (D-J)

His subordinates are the ones who commented that they ask a lot of questions and advice. It seems that the frequent and open communication between the supervisor and his subordinates contributes to the subordinates' satisfaction with their supervisor. In
fact, they showed satisfaction with all factors, timing, frequency, and specificity, of both positive and negative feedback given by their supervisor. In the last section, to what extent the relationship between Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates was reinforced is discussed.

Relationship and Performance Feedback

Satisfaction with relationship was positively correlated to perceived overall appropriateness and effectiveness of performance feedback. Japanese supervisors perceived their overall positive and negative feedback to be appropriate and effective. They also perceived their relationship with their subordinates to be satisfactory and appropriate except for one person who thought that his relationship with his subordinates was appropriate but not satisfactory.

A positive correlation was found for U.S. subordinates as well. Those who perceived their supervisor's performance feedback to be appropriate and effective also expressed their satisfaction with their relationship with the supervisor. Responses given by participants indicated the important role the relational messages play in the whole process of performance feedback.

The supervisor of company A described his relationship with his subordinates as "professional supervisor-subordinate, but friendly." He commented that he sometimes talks with his subordinates about personal matters such as weekends and holidays. He perceived the relationship as appropriate and satisfactory for the current company but something that may need to be changed in the future.

Our company has a very friendly atmosphere and it is appropriate. I'm satisfied with it now. Friendliness helps them when they have to work as a team, but may be ineffective because they chat too much. In the future, when the company gets bigger, we may need to clarify who is the supervisor and who is the subordinate. We may need to educate our subordinates to respect their supervisors to show more respect. (A-J).
Employee 1 stated that the relationship between them is "formal and professional, and [there is] no talk about personal life." She thought the relationship was appropriate for the company but not for her personally.

[Appropriate] for the company, yes because we don't talk. So, for the company, it's productive. We don't talk about what we did last night or make friends to go out together. Personally, I don't feel like they trust anyone, and I think it's nice to be friends with the people you work with, to be able to do things outside of work. I think it helps everyone to get more comfortable. But they never did anything like that. (A-U.S.1)

She was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied because she was there "for business."

Employee 2 described her relationship with her supervisor as "very formal and distant." She did not perceive the relationship to be appropriate nor effective because it did not facilitate communication flow in the company. She also noted that she did not feel that her supervisor respected her work. Thus, while the supervisor felt that the relationship was too friendly, both of the employees claimed that it was formal and they were not close to him. These subordinates' responses give a support to Herold & Greller's (1977) finding that perceived closeness has a great impact on the acceptance of performance feedback. Neither of the employees in this company perceived their supervisor's performance feedback to be appropriate or effective.

The supervisor of company B felt that the relationship between him and his subordinates was basically "formal, professional, supervisor-subordinate." However, he commented that he respected them as individuals.

I think what the company expects of us and my personal ideas are a little different. Personally, I think basically we have to have professional, supervisor-subordinate relationships. But we are human beings. We have to have a certain degree of personal relationship, beginning with the morning greeting. I think it is a necessary condition for an organization to keep going. (B-J)
He, thus, perceived the relationship to be appropriate and satisfactory. Employee 1 described her relationship with him as "comfortable formal." She was satisfied with the relationship, stating that the relationship has helped her to grow because he gave her enough positive feedback and yet expected her to do better. She was also appreciative of his openness to her opinions and ideas. Employee 2 stated that her relationship with her supervisor was "formal but open." She commented that he knew how to work with people because he gave her directions when they were needed and he is open to his subordinates' opinions. Both employees of company B were satisfied with the type of relationship they have with their supervisor. This satisfaction corresponded to their perception of his overall feedback. The support and encouragement they have received were appreciated.

The supervisor of company C described his relationship with them as "professional trust."

I don't think our relationship includes friendship and trust on the private level because I try not to poke my nose in their private life. But when I say professional trust, it's not limited to their works, but it includes the person's whole character as a human being. I can trust them although they make mistakes because they never try to cheat or cover up their mistakes. They are hard workers and very sincere and honest. I'm very satisfied with them. (C-J)

Despite his satisfaction with their character, he replied that he was not satisfied with their relationship.

I want to have a more personal relationship with them to be honest, to have some drinks after work. We go to lunch together once a month, but I want to do that in the evening. If I say, "Let's have dinner instead of lunch this month because Christmas is coming up." they would say, "Then we should bring our families, too." Then I feel it's too much trouble. This is the part I brought from Japan. Japanese workers socialize a lot with their colleagues, but do not include their families. Maybe I should be more attentive to their needs. (C-J)

Employee 1 thought his relationship with his supervisor was "formal, professional" which was limited to the office. He was not satisfied with this relationship because he
felt that the relationship was not very relaxed and did not allow them to socialize outside the office. He also commented that communication with his supervisor was very infrequent although they sat next to each other. Employee 2 described her relationship with her supervisor as "friendly, but formal." She was not satisfied with this relationship because of poor communication and little authority given to her.

I would like more communication. I want to feel like a team. ...to bring that formality down to a certain level...being more concerned about the person I am and the activities I do would help. It's a lot of work for me to ask all the questions and try to be on my toes, and be asking all the time. If he communicates better on those levels, then it would make me feel more comfortable. Also, sometimes I feel that he doesn't trust me because everything I do goes to him. I'm not allowed to sign purchase orders which I create. But when there is a problem, I'm the one who takes the responsibility. So, I'm not given a balance of authority and responsibility. That bothers me. (C-U.S.2)

As described, both the supervisor and subordinates felt that they wanted a more personal relationship. The subordinates pointed out that communication seemed to be the key in their relationship. Their dissatisfaction with the relationship was reflected on their dissatisfaction with performance feedback. Employee 1 repeatedly stated that he was not getting positive and negative feedback. Employee 2 consistently responded that she needed more timely, frequent, and specific feedback.

The supervisors of companies D and I are the only ones who said that they socialize with their subordinates outside the office in their private time, while other supervisors stated that their relationship with U.S. subordinates are limited to working hours. When asked about U.S. workers' reaction to going to dinner or drinks after work with him, D-J said, "American workers don't sacrifice their time if they have other things to do or if they don't feel like going. But when they can go with me, they seem to be having a good time."

The supervisor of company D responded that his relationship was "friendly, trusting, and professional." He was satisfied with the relationship because it allowed
him and his subordinates to have active and cooperative participation that was needed for their department and field of business. Employee 1 described her relationship with him as "professional trust."

He trusts me a lot professionally. He has immense knowledge and contacts with Tokyo and other corporations. And he is sort of helping me tap into his knowledge because he can't handle his work load. He is helping me to succeed in the corporation. So, he is like a teacher to me. I'm surprised with the responsibility I have. (D-U.S.1)

The other subordinate felt that he had a "casual, friendly" relationship with his supervisor, and he was very satisfied with it.

He has facilitated me achieving my goals, moving me in the direction that I want to go. (D-U.S.2)

The responses given by the U.S. subordinates in company D regarding feedback consistently showed their satisfaction with their supervisor. Both subordinates felt positive about the way the supervisor guides them in the company. From the supervisor's perspective, his subordinates' constant reports and questions have helped him to supervise their work. This transactional communication seemed to contribute to a better relationship.

The supervisor of company G described her relationship with her subordinates as "Open, friendly, and trusting at a professional level." She replied that the relationship was satisfactory because open communication helped her to be efficient and to be better in managing people. Her subordinate felt that her relationship with her supervisor was "trusting and friendly." She noted that her supervisor has helped her achieve her goals in the company because she gives her enough responsibility and yet was always there to support her. She also mentioned that the relationship could not be the same if her supervisor was a male because she would not be able to feel close to the supervisor. This subordinate was also satisfied with all the factors of positive and
negative feedback. The mutual trust in the relationship was positively reflected in her perceptions of feedback given by her supervisor.

The supervisor of company I felt that his relationship with his subordinates include various types because it is established not only in the company but outside their professional interactions.

In the office, it is of course mainly professional, but we personally do go camping, have B-B-Q together, and do other things, too. I don't consider myself as their boss. I'm younger for a boss. An American manager working under me is about 40 years old, and he has been in this company since it started. So, I don't feel that he is my subordinate, and I don't think he regards me as his boss. So, our relationship is more like colleagues. I think this relationship suits best for the current size of this company because it helps with open and direct communication. But we may need more formal relationship when we get bigger in order for the streamlining of the company. (I-J)

Thus, he perceives the relationship to be appropriate and effective for now, but not necessarily for a bigger company.

The subordinate of company F also used the words, "formal, professional trust," to describe his relationship with his supervisor as many other subordinates did. However, he was not satisfied with the relationship.

He trusts me up to just a professional level. But we have to have trust at more personal level. So, I would recommend better communication, being interested in your workers, talk to them not only for working conditions, but how they feel about each other or even about him. Better communication is more access to resources. If there is a problem, you don't have to feel bad or to be afraid to talk. If you have a strong relationship, you can be more free to show your feelings. (F-U.S.1)

He was one of the U.S. participants who consistently showed dissatisfaction with the factors of performance feedback given by his supervisor. The need for communication was mentioned by him several times in his responses to the questions about feedback as well as his descriptions of the relationship quality.
The subordinate of company G was satisfied with his "trusting relationship at both professional and personal levels." He noted that he and his supervisor have been working together for many years and the trust built in their relationship is very important to him. In his answers regarding feedback, he stated that he does not receive much feedback, either positive and negative, but he was satisfied because he has a lot of trust in his supervisor and he knows his supervisor trusts him. Mutual trust existing in the relationship was inversely related to the need for verbal feedback in this case.

The U.S. participant from company H described her relationship with her supervisor as "very informal, friendly, and trusting." She stated that she felt very appreciative of him for trusting her ability and yet leading her to be better. She was one of the participants who consistently showed satisfaction with all factors of performance feedback given by her supervisor. Trust in the relationship and the way the supervisor treated her in the company resulted in her satisfaction with feedback.

Overall, the responses from the participants regarding their relationship revealed a positive relation between satisfaction with positive/negative feedback and satisfaction with their relationship. The more satisfied the U.S. subordinates were with the quality of relationship with their supervisor, the more satisfactory they felt with performance feedback given to them. Thus, the present study showed support for the findings in Herold and Greller's (1977) study. The extent of trust perceived in the relationship was a common factor raised by participants in this study and impacted overall relationship satisfaction as Joblin (1979) and Ilgen et al. (1979) argue. An interesting finding was that when mutual trust was perceived, subordinates may feel less needs for receiving feedback from their supervisor. Overall satisfaction with the communication in the relationship also affected whether U.S. subordinates are satisfied with feedback.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

Overall Summary

Functions of Performance Feedback and Feedback-Seeking

Performance feedback, both positive and negative, was perceived to have valuable functions in the study. All of the Japanese supervisors perceived both positive and negative feedback to be important. Their reasons for the importance of positive feedback included maintaining a positive relationship, morale, confirming self-evaluation, improvement, recognition and sense of accomplishment. Most of the U.S. subordinates also felt that positive feedback was important, and their reasons were similar to the ones given by the Japanese supervisors.

Reasons given by the participants revealed that both Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates viewed positive and negative feedback to be beneficial for employees, serving as a learning function. In this function, feedback was used as a gauge of what adjustments were necessary and rewarded. The importance of performance feedback was also discussed by the supervisors for the company's effective operations. These benefits are noted in past studies as well.

Japanese supervisors' reasons for giving negative feedback included: for employees' growth, to correct mistakes, for the company's success, and for employment practice. The U.S. subordinates thought that negative feedback was necessary because they need to grow and mistakes should be corrected, which were similar to the first two reasons given by the Japanese supervisors. Subordinates' perceptions of the necessity of negative feedback were, thus, more individually-based
rather than based upon a desire to improve productivity or enhance the success of the company.

Other functions, relationship reinforcement and corporate advancement, were specific to positive feedback. Filipczak (1992) pointed out that Japanese subordinates hope to be criticized by their bosses because criticism means that their bosses see potential in them. For U.S. subordinates, corporate advancement was associated with positive feedback rather than negative feedback. It is, therefore, important to note that criticism can have completely different implications according to each cultural group.

The participants talked about the importance of positive and negative feedback serving multiple functions in relation to such other issues as specificity and manner of delivery. For both positive and negative feedback, whether feedback is verbalized and how it is delivered were important determinants of the value of feedback perceived by U.S. participants. For negative feedback, the specificity of the message and content of suggestions and/or directions were important factors for U.S. subordinates' determinants of feedback appropriateness and effectiveness. The more specific the feedback, the greater the likelihood of the changes being implemented, and the individual improving his/her performance.

In both cross-cultural and intercultural future studies, functions of performance feedback should be examined separately for positive and negative feedback because some functions seem to be sign-specific. For instance, positive feedback were perceived to serve better relationships and morale, whereas negative feedback was perceived to be useful for employees' performance improvement. Perceived importance of feedback should also be explored in relation to the types of employees' jobs and self-evaluation of their own performance. For example, an employee who has a position calling for repetitive, minimum skill tasks may require less feedback than one coordinating several projects. In future intercultural studies between Japanese
supervisors and U.S. subordinates, verbalization and manner of delivery need more attention as well. Detail may be more appropriate in certain positions, and different relationship tones, proxemics and kinesic cues may be warranted given various supervisory styles or corporate climates.

Interestingly, some U.S. subordinates did not perceive positive feedback to be essential. Personality, job duties and position, and confidence in their own evaluation emerged as possible explanations for this finding. These factors were influential in subordinates' decisions to seek feedback. Some subordinates who did not find feedback very meaningful did not seek further information even when they were not satisfied with feedback given by their supervisors. Perhaps two of the most important characteristics in feedback seeking are the subordinates' perceptions of their need for feedback, and their view of appropriateness of relational messages from the supervisor in which the supervisor is higher power and controlling.

Those who replied that they had sought feedback from their Japanese supervisors used direct inquiry. They perceived that it was appropriate to ask their supervisor about their performance because feedback given by their supervisors was not enough for them to satisfy their need. Japanese supervisors perceived their U.S. subordinates' feedback-seeking behavior to be appropriate as well because it helped subordinates to grow, and also it made them realize what parts of subordinates' performance they need to pay more attention to. This feedback seeking may be based on a desire to improve individual performance and a definition of the relationship as equals.

Interrelated Dimensions of Feedback

The results of this study suggest that the relationship among timing, frequency and specificity are complex in addition to perceptions of the functions of positive and
negative feedback differing between groups. Timing, frequency, and specificity of feedback were interrelated in the present study as Larson (1986) found. Although participants were asked separately about each dimension, their opinions about appropriateness of and satisfaction with each dimension were described in relation to their reactions to other dimensions. Non-specific positive feedback, for example, was perceived to be satisfactory when the feedback is given quickly.

Overall, Japanese supervisors perceived the timing, frequency, and specificity of positive feedback that they give to their U.S. subordinates to be appropriate and effective. They claimed that they praise their subordinates as soon as a specific project is done. As for frequency, the major answer was "sometimes." They described that the frequency might be only sometimes, but they make sure to praise their subordinates when they do a good job. Both specific and non-specific feedback were perceived to be appropriate; some supervisors stated that their positive feedback was not specific, but appropriate because the feedback was given within a specific situation.

U.S. subordinates differed in their views regarding timing, frequency, and specificity. Generally, the U.S. subordinates who were satisfied with one dimension of feedback (i.e. timing) were satisfied with other dimensions as well.

Negative feedback which was shared, was perceived to be appropriate and effective by all Japanese supervisors. Their overall views were consistent in that they said negative feedback was given only when there was actually a problem, immediately given, and specific explanations were included in their negative feedback. On the other hand, negative feedback given by Japanese supervisors was not always perceived to be appropriate and effective by U.S. subordinates. For timing of negative feedback, some U.S. subordinates perceived that negative feedback was often delayed which was dissatisfying. U.S. subordinates were also dissatisfied when feedback had to be given about behavioral problems long after the behavior occurred. On the other hand,
Japanese supervisors' immediate negative feedback about prioritizing jobs was perceived to be inappropriate in most cases. Perhaps such feedback was interpreted as a face threat rather than a comment about behavior which could be easily changed.

Cultural dimensions such as collectivism-individualism and face concerns may explain the different perceptions of timing. Perhaps U.S. subordinates are concerned with their own "face" and individual credibility, and thus prefer immediate negative feedback which can help them eventually succeed in the company. Criticism about prioritizing tasks and general behavior problems may be perceived as a face-threat and question about their overall ability to do the job. The Japanese supervisor may think he/she is protecting self and the other's face by waiting to present negative feedback, preferring to allow the subordinate to figure out what to change on his/her own. Such a strategy would be common in Japan. In future studies, the nature of the problem needs to be paid close attention to because it is likely to affect the timing of negative feedback.

An interesting finding about perceptions of appropriate frequency for feedback was subordinates' satisfaction with a lack of positive and negative feedback. Type of job being performed, clarity of self-evaluation, and subordinates' interpretations of the absence emerged as reasons for their satisfaction. What became interesting here is that some subordinates interpreted the lack of feedback as a signal of supervisor satisfaction, when that was not always the case. This suggests that supervisors need to know that misinterpretation may result from lack of feedback.

Feedback and Perceived Relationship

There were two issues that stood out in U.S. subordinates' responses to questions about satisfaction with timing, frequency, and specificity. The manner of delivery such as the use of a pleasant tone and other nonverbal cues, and whether feedback was verbalized clearly were critical determinants of U.S. subordinates'
satisfaction with overall feedback. For the U.S. subordinates, the above two issues seemed more important than timing, frequency or specificity.

In short, the salient factors for overall appropriateness and effectiveness may differ between Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates. This may be due to a difference between sender and receiver, differential status, or cultural background may also influence what they focus on. Japanese have higher power distance than U.S. Americans (Hofstede, 1980) and are higher context as well (Hall, 1976). Perhaps, in a relationship between supervisor and subordinate, Japanese place the responsibility for decoding messages on the subordinate. In contrast, U.S. American subordinates look for explicit language which reinforces more equality in the relationship. Also Japanese may expect supervisors to have more authority and perceive higher power distance between subordinate and supervisor as appropriate. Thus, they may perceive that indirect criticism given in higher frequencies is best, while U.S. Americans prefer direct and timely criticism. Further research has to be conducted on this matter.

With regard to descriptions of the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, Japanese supervisors' descriptions included formality, professional, professional trust, friendliness, and openness. They claimed that their communication with their U.S. subordinates included both business and personal matters, which they believed was appropriate. U.S. subordinates' view of relationship with their Japanese supervisor was consistent with their Japanese supervisors in some cases but not in other cases. Their perceptions of the relationship were; very formal, comfortable and formal, formal but open, professional trust, casual, friendly, and personal trust.

Some subordinates responded that they talk about personal matters and they socialize with their supervisors outside the company, and others claimed that they associate with their supervisor only in the company and their communication does not involve any personal concerns. When mutual trust, informality, casualness, and
friendliness were perceived in the relationship, the U.S. subordinates perceived the relationship to be appropriate; when rigidity and formality were perceived in the relationship, U.S. subordinates tended to view the relationship to be inappropriate. The extent of appropriateness and satisfaction perceived in the relationship had a positive correlation with all participants' perceptions of feedback. This correlation was especially true for U.S. subordinates.

Hence, when performance feedback is seen from a larger organizational perspective as a part of interaction between supervisors and subordinates, it becomes clear that satisfaction with the type of relationship and kinds of communication messages in the relationship were themes in U.S. subordinates' satisfaction with the overall performance feedback. In a relationship where transactional communication is encouraged and mutual trust is established, subordinates are more likely to ask their supervisor for advice and suggestions, which, in turn, leads to more positive performance feedback and less resultant negative feedback. Even when negative information was presented in some relationships here, it was less likely to be perceived as negative probably due to trust and mutual regard in the relationship. Building this type of relationship is not easy especially when supervisors and subordinates are from different national cultural backgrounds. However, as in this study, it not only leads to more satisfaction and acceptance by subordinates, but to ultimate effectiveness and productivity in international organizations.

Consequently, the relationship may be a key factor in interpreting performance feedback. The nature of the feedback, manner of delivery, and desire for equality in feedback presentation and subordinate verbalization of opinions are all examples of the quality of the relationship expected by U.S. subordinates. U.S. subordinates may desire a different kind of informal relationship with their Japanese supervisors.
Supervisors may prefer a more formal relationships or prefer informal relationship but not demonstrate the ability to enact an informal, equal relationship.

Although most of the supervisors stated that they did not need any intercultural communication training, dissatisfaction with the relationship and performance feedback were repeatedly expressed by some U.S. subordinates. Perhaps one way to reduce dissatisfaction is to provide opportunities to U.S. subordinates and Japanese supervisors to express their experience, ideas and suggestions for better supervisor-subordinate relationships, and this is where intercultural communication training becomes valuable.

Implications and Applications

Most of the past studies on performance feedback focused on the recipient of feedback. For example, past research investigated how the feedback affect the recipient and in what situations he/she accepts the feedback. The present study went beyond those studies to include the perceptions of both the sender and the recipient. Although the recipient is the one who determines whether the feedback given to him or her is satisfying, it is often the sender who decides what to say and when to give feedback to the recipient. When there is a discrepancy between the sender and the receiver in viewing about what feedback is appropriate and effective, feedback may be misinterpreted or may not be accepted by the receiver.

This study presented a comparison of subordinate and supervisor views of supervisors' feedback. Such a comparison presents both sides' perspectives of intercultural feedback communication processes. Validity rests upon the accuracy of the compared perceptions, and the range of positive and negative examples provided by respondents. Given the range of examples, and detail in the examples, validity was deemed acceptable.
Although the sample was small, the study presented insightful conceptions and interpretations that U.S. subordinates and Japanese supervisors hold. The responses given by the participants suggest that there are some discrepant perceptions between the supervisors and the subordinates regarding performance feedback communicated between them. In some cases, for example, the supervisors claimed that his feedback was timely and specific enough. However, his subordinate did not perceive the timeliness and specificity in the feedback. When overall competence of feedback was examined, it became clear that the important aspects of the feedback somewhat differ between supervisors and subordinates. For subordinates, manner of delivery and hence quality of the relationship was critical in deciding whether the feedback was appropriate and effective. This was not stressed in the past feedback studies done in U.S. organizations. Further, a lack of feedback had different meanings for supervisors and subordinates.

All these findings will be useful for both supervisors and subordinates to be more competent in their communication in their companies. The information presented here may help Japanese managers in revising their communication or in preparation to work with U.S. employees. U.S. employees who currently work or expect to work at Japanese companies may use the study findings as a reference to better understand their current and future Japanese bosses.

This study was an empirical description of an intercultural encounter rather than a cross-cultural comparison of two national cultural styles. It was important to identify to what extent Japanese supervisors were similar or different to one another, and whether they approached feedback consistently with previous research on cultural dimensions evident among traditional Japanese, or cultural dimensions more consistent with U.S. American styles, or whether the Japanese supervisors conduct exemplified some combination of styles. Research on cultural dimensions has been criticized
recently as overgeneralized and overly simplified descriptions. It was important to measure empirically the extent to which the dimensions emerged in the self-described conduct of the Japanese supervisors and the evaluation of the conduct by the U.S. Americans. The results were contradictory.

The present study raised questions about the application of cultural dimensions to intercultural studies. Cross-cultural research on Japanese and U.S. organizations argues that four cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980 & 1984) and the context dimension identified by Hall (1979) are found to be true for Japanese and U.S. employees. U.S. employees in the study did show needs for explicit codes, individual recognition and individual improvement, lending some support for U.S. Americans being individualistic and low context. Japanese supervisors supported these needs in varying degrees. However, despite a general view that Japanese people do not like direct confrontation, the supervisors in the study welcomed direct inquiry and opinions from their subordinates. This finding contradicts predictions of preference for low context messages and higher power distance.

Some Japanese supervisors intentionally tried not to interfere with their subordinates' private time, while U.S. subordinates expressed that they wanted to spend more time with colleagues and supervisors outside the office to make friends with each other so they can work more harmoniously. This would suggest collectivism rather than individualism and femininity (Hofstede, 1984). Cultural dimensions found in cross cultural research, therefore, did not necessarily apply to the present intercultural study. It is important for researchers to look at each context before any generalization is made. The supervisors in the study are Japanese but have been working with U.S. subordinates and living in the U.S. for some time. Their experiences might have made them more open to U.S. employees' patterns of thinking and acting. In addition, Japanese have been described as flexible and adaptive. Therefore, the type of
encounter, context, relationships and adaptive abilities may all affect ultimate conduct and evaluation of the conduct. Assuming that Japanese and U.S. Americans who work together in the U.S. will enact conduct styles which are consistent with previously identified cultural dimensions is not valid. Interpretations based on the national cultural dimensions alone are also open to criticism.

Limitations and Future Research

The goal of the present study was interpretive description of performance feedback perceived by Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates. The descriptions given by participants and resulting interpretations by the author only present one explanation of what exists in the small sample. Because the numbers of the participating companies and participants from each were small, much more research has to be conducted if the findings in the present study are to be applied to other U.S. subsidiaries of Japanese organizations. In addition to the sample size, many other variables may have affected the descriptions given by the participants. First, the organizational limitations were not addressed in this study. For example, the business fields and the number of the subordinates a supervisor oversees may have had some influence on the frequency of feedback.

Other variables, such as personality, age, sex, and extent of intercultural experience may have also affected their responses. Overall, age differences did not appear to affect perceptions of feedback appropriateness, nor did sex. The one female manager was perceived as appropriate as the males. Subsequent research is needed in these areas. Also, the U.S. participants in the study were the people who chose to work for Japanese companies. It is possible that their perceptions were different from other U.S. employees who had already quit. Comparison of those two groups' views about feedback would be useful for Japanese supervisors.
Moreover, responses could have been distorted by recall bias or uncertain memory of performance feedback experience. For instance, negative feedback may have been recalled by subordinates more easily than positive feedback because of the salience and impact on the subordinate. The supervisors may have forgotten or withheld negative feedback experiences to maintain their positive image as a manager. Nevertheless, the range of negative examples suggests that a positive recall bias was minimal. The instrument and procedures used in the interviews are also a possible threat to validity. The wordings of the guides itself could have limited validity of the responses. In order to assess competence of feedback, both appropriateness and effectiveness were asked of participants. However, the fact that Japanese supervisors generally believed their feedback to be appropriate may be a result of their tendency to present a positive image to others. Examination of appropriateness may need to be done through other research methods rather than self-report. Conducting a pilot study for a validity check would be useful in future studies.

Translation equivalence is an important issue. Because the interview guide was originally created in English, efforts were made to ensure that the Japanese translation of the guide presented meanings equivalent to the original. In the transcription process, the recorded-interviews with Japanese supervisors had to be translated into English. It is possible that meanings were changed in these translation steps.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted between the researcher and each participant. Face-to-face interviews brought many advantages such as clarification of questions and responses and eliciting detailed descriptions from participants. On the other side, however, the researcher's race, gender, age, and perceived friendliness may have influenced the participants' responses (Fray, Botan, Friedman, and Kreps, 1991). For example, U.S. participants may not have disclosed their true opinions to the researcher who is a Japanese. The Japanese supervisors may not have disclosed as
much negative face-threatening information to a younger Japanese female. In addition, tape-recording of the interviews may have caused the interviewees to withhold some information. Again, however, the validity and frequency of examples given by participants suggests that validity was acceptable.

Despite these limitations, extensive and detailed responses were given by the participants. Not only the positive but negative information about themselves and their supervisors/subordinates were disclosed in the interviews. Although limitations of the study method were mentioned above, the participants appeared comfortable with the questions, interviewer and recording method. Many of the participants, both Japanese supervisors and U.S. subordinates, expressed their interest in the study and commented that this type of study is needed. One Japanese supervisor commented that questions asked in the interview provided a chance to think about his relationship with his subordinates. Some U.S. subordinates were pleased just to be able to express their feelings that were not understood by their friends who work in U.S. companies.

Because an important goal of research is to provide useful information to these people, future research has to be conducted to further examine the issues addressed in the study. Findings in this exploratory study are only the starting point in the study of performance feedback in intercultural relations in international organizations.
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Appendix A: Interview Guide for U.S. Participants

The following questions will be asked of you during the interview session of approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Please read the questions, and if you come across any ambiguous words, please ask for clarification.

**Demographic questions**
1. What is your position in the company?
2. How long have you been working for the company?
3. How long have you been working under the current Japanese supervisor?
4. If you have working experience in U.S. companies, please describe similarities and differences you noticed between Japanese companies and U.S. companies in terms of culture and communication characteristics.
5. Age

**Questions about positive feedback**

1. Recalling the recent event
   Please describe a recent situation in which you were given positive performance feedback by your Japanese manager. Please include the following information.
   (1) How soon did you receive the positive feedback after your performance? Was the timing appropriate? Why or why not?
   (2) Where were you (i.e., office, cafeteria, etc.)?
   (3) Who were you with?
   (4) What did he/she say?
   (5) What did he/she do?
   (6) How did you feel as a result of the positive feedback?

2. Frequency
   (1) How often does your Japanese supervisor give positive feedback to you about your job performance?

   1 (Never) 2 (Rarely) 3 (Sometimes) 4 (Often) 5 (Very often)

   (2) How satisfied are you with this frequency of positive feedback?
3. Specificity
   (1) How specific is the positive feedback you receive from the supervisor?
   (2) How satisfied are you with this specificity of positive feedback?

4. Satisfaction, Appropriateness, and Effectiveness
   (1) How satisfied are you with your Japanese supervisor's positive feedback?
   (2) How appropriate is your Japanese supervisor's positive feedback?
   (3) How effective is your Japanese supervisor's positive feedback?
   (4) If the positive feedback was not appropriate and/or effective, what do you recommend to your Japanese supervisor as more appropriate and/or effective ways of giving positive feedback to his/her subordinates?

5. Importance
   Do you think receiving positive performance feedback from your supervisor is important? Why or why not? Please explain.

Questions about negative feedback

1. Recalling the recent event
   Please describe a recent situation in which you were given negative performance feedback by your Japanese manager. Please include the following information.
   (1) How soon did you receive the negative feedback after your performance? Was the timing appropriate? Why or why not?
   (2) Where were you (i.e., office, cafeteria, etc.)?
   (3) Who were you with?
   (4) What did he/she say?
   (5) What did he/she do?
   (6) How did you feel as a result of the negative feedback?

2. Frequency
   (1) How often does your Japanese supervisor give negative feedback to you about your job performance?
       1 (Never) 2 (Rarely) 3 (Sometimes) 4 (Often) 5 (Very often)
   (2) How satisfied are you with this frequency of negative feedback?
3. Specificity
   (1) How specific is the negative feedback you receive from the supervisor?
   (2) How satisfied are you with this specificity?

4. Satisfaction, Appropriateness, and Effectiveness
   (1) How satisfied are you with your Japanese supervisor's negative feedback?
   (2) How appropriate is your Japanese supervisor's negative feedback?
   (3) How effective is your Japanese supervisor's negative feedback?
   (4) If the negative feedback was not appropriate and/or effective, what do you recommend to your Japanese supervisor as more appropriate and/or effective ways of giving negative feedback to his/her subordinates?

5. Importance
   Do you think receiving negative performance feedback from your supervisor is important? Why or why not? Please explain.

Feedback-Seeking
   Have you ever asked your Japanese supervisor about your job performance? If so,
   (1) Please describe the situation.
   (2) How appropriate was the feedback-seeking behavior?

Questions about relationship issues
   1. Please describe the quality of your relationship with your Japanese supervisor (for example, do you have a formal, professional relationship? trusting? friendly?;etc.)
   2. How appropriate is this type of relationship for your company?
   3. How satisfied are you with this type of relationship?
   4. Does your relationship help you achieve your goals in the company? Why?
   5. If this type of relationship is not appropriate and/or effective, what would be a more appropriate and/or effective relationship?
Appendix B: Interview Guide for Japanese participants - English

The following questions will be asked of you during the interview session of approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Please read the questions, and if you come across any ambiguous words, please ask for clarification.

Demographic questions
1. What is your position and how long have you been at the position?
2. How long have you been working for the company?
3. How long have you been in the U.S.?
4. Before/after you left Japan, did you have any intercultural and/or communication training on working with U.S. workers? If yes, please answer the following questions:
   (1) Please describe what training you had and where.
   (2) Was the training helpful?
5. If you did not have any training, do you think some training was needed? Please explain.
6. Please describe similarities and differences between Japanese subordinates and U.S. subordinates you noticed in dealing with them.
7. Age

Questions about positive feedback
1. Recalling the recent event
   Please describe a recent situation in which you gave positive feedback to a U.S. employee you supervise. Please include the following information.
   (1) How soon did you give the positive feedback to the subordinate after his or her performance? Was the timing appropriate? Why or why not?
   (2) Where were you (i.e., office, cafeteria, etc.)?
   (3) Who was/were there with you besides the U.S. employee to whom you were giving positive feedback?
   (4) What did you say?
   (5) What did you do?
   (6) What was the subordinate's reaction to your positive feedback?
2. Frequency
   (1) How often do you give positive feedback to U.S. employees about their job performance?
      1 (Never) 2 (Rarely) 3 (Sometimes) 4 (Often) 5 (Very often)
   (2) How appropriate was this frequency?

3. Specificity
   (1) How specific is the positive feedback you give to your U.S. subordinates?
   (2) How appropriate is the specificity?

4. Satisfaction, Appropriateness, and Effectiveness
   (1) How satisfied do you think your U.S. subordinates are with your positive feedback?
   (2) How appropriate was your positive feedback? Why? Please explain.
   (3) How effective was your positive feedback? Why? Please explain.
   (4) If your positive feedback was not appropriate, what will be more appropriate ways of giving
       positive feedback to your subordinates?

5. Importance
   Do you think giving positive feedback to your U.S. subordinates is important? Why or why
   not? Please explain.

Questions about negative feedback

1. Recalling the recent event
   Please describe a recent situation in which you gave negative feedback to a U.S. employee you
   supervise. Please include the following information.
   (1) How soon did you give the negative feedback to the subordinate after his or her
       performance? Was the timing appropriate? Why or why not?
   (2) Where were you (i.e., office, cafeteria, etc.)?
   (3) Who was/were there with you besides the U.S. employee to whom you were giving
       negative feedback?
   (4) What did you say?
   (5) What did you do?
   (6) What was the subordinate's reaction to your negative feedback?
2. Frequency
   (1) How often do you give negative feedback to U.S. employees about their job performance?
      1 (Never) 2 (Rarely) 3 (Sometimes) 4 (Often) 5 (Very often)
   (2) How appropriate was this frequency?

3. Specificity
   (1) How specific is the negative feedback you give to your U.S. subordinates?
   (2) How appropriated was this specificity?

4. Satisfaction, Appropriateness, and Effectiveness
   (1) How satisfied do you think your U.S. subordinates are with your negative feedback?
   (2) How appropriate was your negative feedback? Why? Please explain.
   (3) How effective was your negative feedback? Why? Please explain.
   (4) If your negative feedback was not appropriate, what will be more appropriate ways of giving negative feedback to your subordinates?

5. Importance
   Do you think giving negative feedback to your U.S. subordinates is important? Why or why not? Please explain.

Feedback seeking
   Have your U.S. subordinates asked you about their job performance? If so,
   (1) Please describe the situation.
   (2) How appropriate and/or effective is for the U.S. subordinates to seek information about their job performance? Please explain.

Questions about relationship issues
   1. Please describe the quality of your relationship with U.S. subordinates you supervise (for example, do you have a formal, professional relationship? trusting? friendly? etc.)
   2. How appropriate is this type of relationship for your company?
   3. How satisfied are you with this type of relationship?
   4. Does the relationship help you achieve your goals in the company? Why?
   5. If this type of relationship is not appropriate and/or effective, what would be a more appropriate and/or effective relationship?
インタビューガイド

以下の質問について約30分から40分のインタビューをおこないます。質問に一通り目を通し、意味がはっきりしない言葉がある場合は尋ねてください。

会社での役職、経験等について
1　あなたの会社での役職は何ですか。また、その役職についてどのくらい経ちますか。
2　会社に勤めてどのくらい経ちますか。
3　このアメリカの支社に赴任してどのくらい経ちますか。
4　日本を発つ前、またはアメリカに来てから、アメリカ人と共に働く上で、カルチャー、コミュニケーションに関するトレーニングを受けましたか。もし受けたなら、次の質問に答えてください。
（1）どこでどんなトレーニングを受けたのか具体的に説明してください。
（2）そのトレーニングは役に立ちましたか。
5　もしトレーニングがなかったなら、あなたが良かったと思いますか。また、どんなことについてトレーニングを受けたかったと思いますか。
6　アメリカ人部下と日本人部下両方と接してきた、あなたが気づいた共通点、相違点があなたが説明してください。

7 年齢

アメリカ人部下を褒めた時の状況について
1　最近褒めた時のことを、以下の質問に対する答えを含んで説明してください。

（1）あなたがそのことを伝えたタイミングはどうでしたか。（例：その仕事の進行中、終わってすぐ、だいぶ後になって、など）。また、そのタイミングは適切でしたか。

（2）場所はどこでしたか（例：オフィス、レストラン、など）。

（3）その部下の他の人に誰がその場にいましたか。

（4）仕事が良い出来だったことをその部下本人にどのような言葉で伝えましたか。

（5）また、どのような態度で示しましたか。

（6）あなたが言ったことに対し、その部下はどのような反応を示しましたか。
2 頻度
(1) 部下の仕事が良い出来だった時、それを実際にその本人に伝える頻度はどのくらいですか。

1 (一度もない) 2 (殆どない) 3 (時々) 4 (頻繁に) 5 (かなり頻繁に)

(2) その頻度は適切でしたか。説明してください。

3 具体制
(1) 部下の仕事が良い出来だったことをその人に伝えるときどの程度具体的に話しますか。

(2) その度合は適切でしたか。

4 重要性
部下の仕事が良い出来だった時、それをその人に伝えることは大切だと思いますか。
説明してください。

アメリカ人部下の仕事の出来が満足のいくものでないことを本人に伝える時
1 最近の状況を、以下の質問に対する答えを含んで説明してください。

(1) あなたがそのことを本人に伝えたタイミングはどうでしたか。（例：その仕事の進行中、終わってすぐ、大分後になって、など）。また、そのタイミングは適切でしたか。

(2) 場所はどこでしたか（例：オフィス、レストラン、など）。

(3) その部下の他に誰がその場にいましたか。

(4) その仕事が満足のいくものでないことをその部下本人にどのような言葉で伝えましたか。

(5) また、どのような態度で示しましたか。

(6) あなたが言ったことに対し、その部下はどのような反応を示しましたか。

2 頻度
(1) 部下の仕事が満足のいくものでない時、それを実際にその部下本人に伝える頻度はどのくらいですか。

1 (一度もない) 2 (殆どない) 3 (時々) 4 (頻繁に) 5 (かなり頻繁に)

(2) その頻度は適切でしたか。説明してください。
3 具体制
（1）あなたの仕事が満足のいくものでないことをその部下本人に伝えるときどの程度具体的に話しますか。

（2）その度合は適切でしたか。

4 満足度、適切さ、効果
（1）あなたが仕事の出来を褒めることに対し、アメリカ人部下はどの程度満足していると思いますか。

（2）全体的に見て、あなたの褒めする行為は適切だと思いますか。説明してください。

（3）また、その行為は効果的だと思いますか。説明してください。

（4）もし、適切、または効果的でなければとしたら、どのように褒めたらより適切、または効果的になると思いますか。

5 重要性
部下の仕事が満足のいくものでない時、それをその部下本人に伝えることは大切だと思います。説明してください。

部下が自分の仕事の出来について聞いてきた時
アメリカ人の部下が仕事の出来についてあなたに尋ねてきたことはありますか。もしあるなら以下の質問に答えてください。

1 その時の状況を説明してください。

2 部下の方からそのように尋ねるというのは適切なことだと思いますか。

アメリカ人部下との関係について
1 あなたとアメリカ人部下との関係は一般にどのような感じですか。 （例：会社での上司と部下のみの関係、個人的に信頼できる関係、友達のような関係、など）。

2 そのような関係は適切ですか。説明してください。

3 そのような関係にどの程度満足していますか。

4 あなたが仕事上の目的を達成するのに（働きやすい職場、能率を上げる、など）、そのような関係は助けになっていますか。

5 今のそのような関係に改善の余地があるとしたら（より適切、またはより効果的に）、説明してください。
Table 1: Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Code</th>
<th>Business Field</th>
<th>No. of Employees</th>
<th>Japanese Supervisors</th>
<th>U.S. Subordinates</th>
<th>Yrs Working Together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Trading</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>A-J M 40-45</td>
<td>A-U.S.1 F 20-25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A-U.S.2 F 26-30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Financing</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>B-J M 45-50</td>
<td>B-U.S.1 F 20-25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B-U.S.2 F 26-30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>C-J M 40-45</td>
<td>C-U.S.1 M 20-25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C-U.S.2 F 26-30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Trading</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>D-J M 35-40</td>
<td>D-U.S.1 F 20-25</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D-U.S.2 M 26-30</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>E-J F 35-40</td>
<td>E-U.S. F 50-55</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>F-U.S. M 25-30</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>G-U.S. M 50-55</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>H-U.S. F 40-45</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Trading</td>
<td>75-80</td>
<td>I-J M 30-35</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Coding Sample - Japanese Participants

**POSITIVE: Specificity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Event is specific</th>
<th>Appropriateness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-J</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>My words are simple, but I praise them for a specific project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-J</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I simply say &quot;Good job&quot; or &quot;Thank you.&quot; Maybe too short.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-J</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>My words are simple, but about a specific project. For an employee, a manager, I don't know because I don't make comments on his job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-J</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes specific, and other times it's just a few words &quot;Good meeting&quot; and &quot;Helpful.&quot; I don't know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-J</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I explain clearly what was good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-J</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>They don't question me about my positive comments. Their attitude toward me is positive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Coding Sample - U.S. Subordinates

**POSITIVE: Specificity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code No.</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Event is specific</th>
<th>No positive feedback</th>
<th>Satisfaction w/ Specificity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-U.S.1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-U.S.2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-U.S.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-U.S.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-U.S.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-U.S.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-U.S.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-U.S.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-U.S.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-E1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reason**

- Very quick and short. No excitement is expressed.
- Need to be more specific or should be given right then so I know what he is talking about.
- Usually he uses simple words, but in a specific situation.
- My job is routine. So, the absence of positive feedback is fine with me.
- No basis for evaluation.
- Mainly generalization. No specific examples are provided.
- We work on a specific account at a time. So, I know what he is referring to.
- We work on a specific account at a time. So, I know what he is referring to.
- She explains specific points that were good.
- No basis for evaluation.
- No basis for evaluation.
- He explains to me what was good and why it was good.