

# Hofstede's Masculinity/ Femininity Dimension and the Pregnancy of Princess Masako: An Analysis of Japanese and International Newspaper Coverage

by Tomoko KANAYAMA  
Anne COOPER-CHEN\*

## Introduction

In the world's most masculine society (Hofstede, 2001), a baby girl is shaking Japan's very foundations. On December 5, 2001, Princess Masako gave birth to her first child—a daughter, Aiko. All Japanese celebrated the happy news that, after eight years of marriage, the future emperor and empress of Japan at last had a child. The media unanimously reported it as a nation's brightest news event of the year.

Masako's pregnancy garnered attention not only from the Japanese media, but also from foreign media, partly because of issues surrounding the succession of the world's oldest monarchy system, which is rooted in Shinto religion. Moreover, Japan needed some good news—a bright spot in the social malaise caused by a long economic recession. In addition to these reasons, Masako herself attracts media as perhaps the most popular female public figure or celebrity in Japan. Ever since Masako, who was a commoner but a brilliant, successful former diplomat, became a member of the world's most traditional monarchy, Japanese people have expected her to open up the royal family and promote gender equality in Japanese society.

## *News Coverage of the Imperial Family in Japan*

All matters related to the imperial family are taken charge of by the Imperial Household Agency. In Japan, each governmental administration has its own press club, called a "kisha club," in which only members of each club can get official information and resources relevant to matters of the administration. The kisha club system, which has been institutionalized for more than a century, is one of

\* Tomoko KANAYAMA is Associate Professor at the Institute of Media and Communications Research, Keio University, and Anne COOPER-CHEN is Professor at E. W. Scripps School of Journalism, Ohio University, USA.

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the most salient and controversial characteristics of journalism in Japan (Hayashi, 1999). Major news media, including newspapers, news services, and broadcasters, are members of the clubs, but magazine, freelance and, until recently, foreign journalists are excluded from the clubs.

Only members of the kisha club attached to the Imperial Household Agency can get official information and resources related to the imperial family matter. As such, the agency has had the power in controlling such information to news media over time (Kamei, 1990). In July of 1958, due to the overheated media reporting on the current empress's engagement, the reporting agreement between the agency and news media was established to prevent aggressive or adversarial reporting. As a result, most news media in Japan, in spite of freedom of the press ([www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)), are not able to report imperial family matters until the Imperial Household Agency allows them to do so. Japanese news media also have cautiously reported the news related to the imperial family in order to avoid the agency's criticisms as well as protests by rightist organizations. Their articles thus are often neutral or positive to the imperial family, avoiding defamatory contents or critical comments (Kamei, 1990). In addition, since the current emperor has succeeded to the throne, media have been freed from using special honorific words for members of the imperial family (Tsuchiya, 1999). However, with the guidance of the agency, the media still have to use such words in certain situations to show politeness toward the imperial family.

The reporting agreement has caused ironic results, however. In November of 1958, *Newsweek* scooped the name (Michiko Shoda) of the bride of the current emperor, since most foreign newspapers, being excluded from the kisha club, were freed from the agreement (Kamei, 1990). In January of 1993, the *Washington Post* also scooped the fact that Masako Owada would be the prince's future bride (Reid & Togo, 1993). Such bitter experiences eventually led to a domestic scoop on Princess Masako's first pregnancy, which was made by the *Asahi* newspaper in December of 1999. *Asahi* broke the agreement because it would bring discredit on Japanese media if this national news, again, had been scooped by foreign counterparts (Whyman, 1999). News of Masako's first pregnancy subsequently led to a media frenzy, which was criticized as exacerbating her miscarriage.

### *Purpose*

Masako's pregnancy presents a rare opportunity to study international news coverage of a Japanese human-interest case study, since most research on Japan focuses on business, economic, and political issues (Breen, 1985; Cooper-Chen & Kanayama, 1998). The study will explore whether a country's ranking on Hofstede's (2001) Masculinity/Femininity dimension, which indicates extreme gender differentiation, is related to the volume and nature of its newspaper coverage of

Princess Masako's pregnancy.

## Related Studies

### *Theoretical Approaches to International News*

A number of scholars and researchers have developed theories of news to explain various influences on international news coverage (e.g., Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Hester, 1973; Kariel & Rosenvall, 1984; Ostgaard, 1965; Shoemaker, Chang, & Brendlinger, 1986; Stevenson & Shaw, 1984; Stevenson & Thompson, 1981; Westerstahl & Johansson, 1994). Chang, Shoemaker, and Brendlinger (1987) categorized the conceptual dimensions of these explanations into two main theoretical approaches: context-oriented and content-oriented (see also Chang, 1998; Chang & Lee, 1992).

The context-oriented approach focuses on extrinsic factors such as “the origin of an international news event and its relationship with such contextual variables as trade relations, cultural relevance, political involvement and geographical proximity” (Chang & Lee, 1992: 555). Various scholars have looked at trade (Rosengren & Rikardsson 1974), cultural and historical affinities (Hester, 1973), cultural proximity (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), and geographical proximity (Rosengren, 1977) as extrinsic variables.

The content-oriented approach looks at “the characteristics inherent in the international event itself regardless of the external setting” (Chang & Lee, 1992: 556). This intrinsic factors approach particularly concentrates on newsworthiness of the international event, including timeliness, prominence/consequence, human interest (including celebrities' lives), conflict, and deviance (see Chang & Lee, 1992; Cooper-Chen, 2001).

Few multi-nation studies have looked at females who are intrinsically newsworthy in order to see what extrinsic factors might be affecting coverage. One, a multi-nation study of Princess Diana's death (Cooper-Chen, 2001), revealed that neither geographic nor cultural proximity could explain international news coverage. While the Diana story had strong intrinsic newsworthiness, the subject matter was not about feminist issues, but about Diana's death. The intrinsic nature of the Masako story, by contrast, encompasses various personal, cultural, historical and political issues related to women. An extrinsic factor such as Hofstede's Masculinity/ Femininity dimension might shed light on a woman-centered story as reported in various countries.

### *Hofstede's Masculinity/ Femininity Dimension*

Gender differentiation strikes anyone who visits Japan or who studies the Japanese language, which decrees that men use different speech patterns and words (for example, *boku* or *ore* for “I”) from women (who say *watashi* or *atashi* for “I”). Hofstede (2001) has confirmed this observation empirically. Hofstede originally developed four dimensions of cultural variability through analysis of a survey of 116,000 IBM employees in 40 countries, in 1968 and 1972. He later added a fifth dimension, new data and an additional 10 nations (plus three regions). The dimensions—for which each nation can be scored—can show patterns of cultural distances in any given group of nations.

The newest dimension, **long-vs. short-term orientation** refers to “the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular, perseverance and thrift” vs. “virtues related to the past and present” (Hofstede, 2001: 359). **Power distance** refers to societies' responses to inequalities of prestige, wealth or power, since “different societies put different weights on status consistency” (Hofstede, 2001: 79); subordinates' efforts to reduce distance from superiors balance with superiors' efforts to increase that distance. **Uncertainty avoidance** refers to the laws, religions, rituals and technologies that societies develop to cope with “uncertainty about the future”; the score relates to anxiety and the need for security (Hofstede, 2001: 145). **Individualism vs. collectivism** refers to “the relationship between the individual and the collectivity,” whereby “individualism is seen as a blessing [or] . . . as alienating” (Hofstede, 2001: 209). **Masculinity vs. femininity** refers to societies' decisions about “what implications the biological differences between the sexes should have for the emotional and social roles of the genders” (Hofstede, 2001: 279).

Japan ranked highest in the world, with a 95 Masculinity (MAS) score, while Norway (8) and Sweden (5) scored lowest. “Masculinity stands for a society in which social gender roles are clearly distinct” (Hofstede 2001: 297). In high masculinity (MAS) countries, we find small families in wealthy countries; segregation of the sexes in higher education; and lower percentages of women in professional and technical jobs. High MAS societies pay women less, even though a large percent of women may work. Hofstede (2001: 318), in a chart on workplace differences, lists as the first trait of low MAS countries that people “work in order to live,” whereas in high MAS countries, people “live in order to work.”

### *International News Coverage of Japan*

Most comparative news studies of Japan have concentrated on reciprocal information flows between Japan and other nations, particularly the United States (e.g., Cooper-Chen & Kanayama, 1998; Flournoy, Mason, Nanney & Stempel,

1992; Kitagawa, Salwen & Driscoll, 1995; Takeichi, 1991). For instance, Kitagawa et al. (1995) found that there were four U.S. stories on Japanese TV news for every single Japan story on U.S. news. The study of Cooper-Chen and Kanayama (1998) also showed similar results (a 5 to 1 Japan: U.S. ratio for TV news). These studies thus demonstrated unbalanced news flows between Japan and the United States.

In terms of topics covered by international news, Okabe (1991) found that economics stood out as far and away “the” Japan story on CBS news. Breen (1985) and Cooper-Chen and Kanayama (1998) also discovered that international news coverage of Japan were more likely to highlight business, economic, and political issues.

While previous studies have contributed to the understanding of international news flow between Japan and other nations, research gaps still remain. First, cultural, historical, social, and religious events in Japan have seldom been probed in previous studies. As a result, there has been lack of understanding of how non-economic, -business, or -political issues of Japan, such as the princess’s pregnancy, were covered by international news. Second, as Chang et al. (1996) point out, about half of comparative news studies compared two countries, similarly, many studies of international news coverage of Japan have compared Japan and a developed country, such as the United States and Canada. Multi-nation comparative studies of news coverage of Japan are still rare.

### *Research Questions*

Edelstein, Ito, and Kepplinger (1989) noted that a single news story generally incorporates various dynamics. Thus the intrinsic nature of the Masako pregnancy story interacts with various nations’ unique cultural, historical, and social contexts. This paper examines the volume and substance of coverage of Masako’s pregnancy by both Japanese and foreign media. The higher MAS countries may give more coverage to Masako’s pregnancy story than lower MAS countries because gender differentiation emphasizes women’s traditional roles as mothers/nurturers. The following research questions are based on the literature review and Hofstede’s masculinity/femininity dimension:

- 1a. *Do higher Masculinity (MAS) countries give more coverage to Masako’s pregnancy than lower MAS countries?*
- 1b. *Do higher Masculinity (MAS) countries portray Masako as more traditional than lower MAS countries?*
- 2a. *Does Japan (95 MAS index—the highest in the world) emphasize particular aspects of the Masako pregnancy story?*
- 2b. *Does the MAS index affect emphasis of particular aspects of the Masako’s pregnancy story?*
3. *Given the rarity of high-profile, woman-centered international stories, do*

*non-Japanese media compare Princess Masako to Princess Diana?*

4. *Does the Masako pregnancy story reveal any portent of change in Japan's culture?*

## Method

### *Sample*

In order to examine international news coverage of Princess Masako's pregnancy, this study set the following time frames (taking into consideration time differences between Japan and other countries):

- 1) *Time frame1 (December 9, 1999 ~ January 2, 2000)*: The *Asahi* newspaper first revealed the princess's pregnancy on December 10, 1999. On December 31, 1999, the princess suffered a miscarriage. On January 1, 2000, *Asahi* officially apologized for causing a frenzy by the media, which were publicly castigated by the Imperial Household Agency.
- 2) *Time frame2 (April 15, 2001 ~ May 9, 2001)*: The Imperial Household Agency publicized the symptoms of the princess's second pregnancy on April 16, 2001. This unprecedented announcement was made to prevent another tragedy (miscarriage) and media frenzy.
- 3) *Time frame3 (May 10, 2001 ~ May 31, 2001)*: The Imperial Household Agency officially announced the confirmation of the princess's pregnancy on May 10, 2001.

The researchers did not study coverage from June 1, 2001, through December 4, 2001, because a check of the Lexis-Nexis database revealed few and only occasional "progress of pregnancy" stories. No clearly defined news event occurred between the agency's announcement in May and the birth of Aiko on December 5, 2001. Moreover, the September 9, 2001, U.S. tragedy and its aftermath dominated news until the end of the year.

In order to isolate the MAS dimension as much as possible, four Western nations were chosen, rather than a mix of Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin and African nations. The four represent a range of MAS rankings: the United Kingdom, 66; the United States, 62; Canada, 52; and Finland, 26. Geographically, none of the four was located close to Japan, to overcome newsworthiness due to geographic proximity.

For Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, coverage of Princess Masako's pregnancy in the above time frames was chosen from the Lexis-Nexis database; that search resulted in articles from newspapers listed in Appendix I. For Finland, the country's four main newspapers were searched: *Helsingin Sanomat*,

largest paper in the nation, quality, authoritative; *Aamulehti*, Tampere-based, largest regional paper, quality; *Ilta Lehti* and *Ilta Sanoma*, evening tabloids, national, emphasis on celebrities, sports, crime (Robert Picard, personal communication, February 2004).

For Japan, the first author looked at every issue of Japan's three national daily newspapers (*Yomiuri*, *Asahi* and *Mainichi*) in these time frames, since no publicly available database exists for Japanese newspapers. Because these rank as the world's three largest-circulation newspapers (14.5, 12.7 and 6 million copies daily, respectively), they represented newspapers coverage more fully than a larger selection of papers in nations without a national press. This study selected all articles related to Princess Masako's pregnancy from the three newspapers.

### *Coding Categories*

Each Japanese article was coded for primary, secondary, and tertiary focus. Based upon pre-testing topics in news coverage of this event, this study used 26 possible topics, which were eventually grouped into four focus areas, as follows:

- 1) *Pregnancy*: including "sign or confirmation of pregnancy," "medical concern," "fertility issue," "personal comments on pregnancy news," "miscarriage," and "other related to pregnancy."
- 2) *The imperial family*: including "the princess's background," "role as princess," "the princess's comments/speeches," "other related to the princess," "history of the imperial family," "story about current imperial family," "public interest toward the imperial family," and "traditional ceremonies of the imperial family."
- 3) *Birth- social effects*: including "the succession of the imperial throne," "imperial family law issue," "other related to the throne," "economic effects," "reversing the low birth rate," "lifting up social gloomy mood," and "Japanese women in society."
- 4) *Media coverage*: including "Japanese media coverage of the news," "international media coverage of the news," "Imperial Household Agency's press release," "privacy/human rights," and "other related to media."

Three Japanese graduate students coded a representative sample of the Japanese-language news coverage. Intercoder reliability for focus of the story was about 87%, based on percentage of agreement.

The first author also checked each story for presence/absence of a reference to Princess Diana. If even one such reference appeared, that story was counted as a comparison. To determine portrayal, certain key phrases describing Masako were searched for. MODERN encompassed such terms as "cosmopolitan," "Harvard-

educated,” “career diplomat,” “multilingual,” “international mind” and “modern.” TRADITIONAL encompassed such terms as “demure woman,” “Japanese wife,” “traditional” and “walking three steps behind her husband.”

To search for signs of possible changes in Japan’s highly differentiated gender roles, upon which many hoped Masako would have an effect, the first author checked headlines for all the Japanese-language stories. Special honorific words, or *keigo*, are traditionally used in connection with members of the royal family; the 2002 Correspondents’ Handbook for the Kyodo News Service (2002: 556), for example, encourages the use of these words. Masako could be referred to as *hidenka* or *hi* traditionally; or, if using the polite form of address for non-royals, she could be called Masako *sama*. The usage of these terms was compared with usage in the past to see if changes are occurring.

## Results and Discussion

A total of 158 articles in 37 newspapers were analyzed, which fell into the following time frames:

Table 1: Distribution of Masako Pregnancy Stories  
by Time Frame, 1999-2001

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Total
Japan	30	14	19	63
US	16	12	14	42
UK	11	11	8	30
Canada	6	3	4	13
Finland	1	6	3	10
	64	46	48	158

Of the 158 articles, 95 (60%) were international stories about Masako’s pregnancy from four countries: the United States, 42 (44.2%); the United Kingdom, 30 (31.6%); Canada, 13 (13.7%); and Finland, 10 (10.5%). The 37 newspapers are listed in Appendix I. (The leading paper in Canada, *Toronto Globe and Mail* carried no Masako stories at all.)

*Question 1a. Do higher MAS countries give more coverage to Masako's pregnancy than lower MAS countries?*

**NO.** Table 2 shows that, in raw numbers, the higher masculinity (MAS) countries, the United Kingdom and the United States, gave more attention to Masako's pregnancy than the lower MAS countries, Canada and Finland. However, Finland and Canada have fewer newspapers—i.e. a smaller newshole—than the higher MAS countries. Thus a better indicator is the average level of interest. Table 2 shows that the higher-MAS U.K. newspapers gave space to three stories on average—exactly the same as the lower-MAS Finnish papers. The similarity of coverage (about 3 stories) may mean that the intrinsic newsworthiness of three events (Time1, Time2, Time3) prevailed over the extrinsic MAS traits of each nation.

Table 2: Relation of MAS Index to Number of International Masako Pregnancy Stories

Country	Masculinity Index	# of Stories	# papers with stories	# stories/ papers
UK	66	30 (31.6%)	10	3
USA	62	42 (44.2%)	16	2.7
Canada	52	13 (13.7%)	4	3.25
Finland	26	10 (10.5%)	4	2.5

*Question 1b. Do higher MAS countries portray Masako as more traditional than lower MAS countries?*

**YES.** As expected, Table 3 shows that the higher MAS countries (the United Kingdom and the United States) portrayed Masako more often as “traditional” than the lower MAS countries (Canada and Finland). Since Masako, educated at prestige schools on three continents (Harvard, Oxford, and Tokyo University), had been a successful career diplomat in the Japanese Foreign Ministry, no newspaper could omit these modern aspects of her life. Moreover, cell sizes for Canada and Finland are too small to draw definite conclusions.

Table 3: Relation of MAS Index to Portrayals of Masako

Country	MAS	# total.stories	Traditional	Modern
UK	66	30	9 (31.0%)	14 (46.6%)
USA	62	43	5 (11.9%)	17 (40.5%)
Canada	52	13	0 ( 0.0%)	8 (61.5%)
Finland	26	10	1 (11.1%)	1 (11.1%)
Total		95		

Some examples of the theme of a cosmopolite thrust into a traditional role are below:

Masako has not turned out to be a role model for the modern Japanese woman, as some expected when she and Naruhito married in 1993. The Harvard-educated diplomat, who many thought would transform the staid imperial family much as Princess Diana had done in Britain, has played the role of traditional wife - walking demurely behind her husband, speaking little in public, and keeping her eyes on the ground. (*The Boston Globe*, 2001, April 20: A10)

The multilingual Oxford and Harvard-educated former diplomat was seen as an independent and internationally minded career woman who could complement the traditional role of her husband, who spent his time at Oxford studying 18th-century commodity transport on the Thames. (*The Guardian*, 2001, April 18: 4)

*Question 2a. Does Japan (95 MAS index—the highest in the world) emphasize particular aspects of the Masako pregnancy story?*

**YES.** Table 4 shows that there were differences in subtopics in Japanese newspapers. Japanese newspapers were most likely to focus on the “pregnancy” (42.7%) and focused least on the “birth-social effects” (12.1%). As in the Western higher-MAS countries, Japan’s emphasis is on the “unique” traditional gender role, pregnancy, rather than other aspects of the story. But “birth-social effects” is probably low not solely due to gender issues. To be safe and accurate, Japanese newspapers heavily rely on information that the Imperial Household Agency gives them. Naturally, the agency does not dwell on hypothetical (might the law of succession change?) or negative (is Masako’s late pregnancy a symbol of why Japan’s birthrate is falling?). Even the few published social effects articles take a mild tone, quoting people who talk about their hopes regarding the pregnancy.

Table 4: Relation of Japan’s MAS Index to Subtopics of Domestic Pregnancy Stories

	Japanese news coverage		International news coverage	
	N	%	n	%
Pregnancy	53	42.7	62	26.5
Media coverage	32	25.8	50	21.4
The Imperial Family	24	19.4	19	8.1
Birth-Social effects	15	12.1	103	44.0
Total	124	100.0	234	100.0

Chi-square = 40.929; *d.f.* = 3;  $\rho < .0001$

*Question 2b. Does the MAS index affect emphasis of particular aspects of the Masako pregnancy story?*

**NO.** As shown in Table 4, international newspapers focused most on “birth-social effects.” In order to examine whether or not the MAS index affected foci by each country, all three foci (primary, secondary, and tertiary) were aggregated by each country. Table 5 shows that “birth-social effects” was the most frequent focus in international pregnancy stories, except Finland. “The imperial family” was the least (or tied with another topic) covered by all international newspapers. The difference in the relative frequency of each topic group among each countries was statistically significant (chi-square = 20.413; *d.f.* = 9;  $\rho < .005$ ) and there was no correlation between the MAS index and the volume of each subtopic. Given such results, the countries outside Japan in this study showed strong interest in the social effects of the baby’s birth on Japanese society.

Table 5: Relation of MAS Index to Subtopics of International Pregnancy Stories

	Birth-social effects	Pregnancy	Media coverage	The Imperial Family	Total
UK	33 (44.6%)	17 (23.0%)	13 (17.6%)	11 (14.9%)	74 (100%)
US	47 (48.0%)	26 (26.5%)	23 (23.5%)	2 ( 2.0%)	98 (100%)
Canada	17 (53.1%)	9 (28.1%)	6 (18.8%)	0 ( 0.0%)	32 (100%)
Finland	6 (18.8%)	10 (33.3%)	8 (26.7%)	6 (20.0%)	30 (100%)

Chi-square = 23.413; *d.f.* = 9;  $\rho < .005$

*Question 3. Given the rarity of high-profile, woman-centered international stories, do non-Japanese media compare Princess Masako to Princess Diana?*

**YES, ESPECIALLY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.** Table 6 shows that eight articles (8.5%) compared Princess Masako to Princess Diana in their stories, accounted for by the U.K., U.S. and Canadian newspapers. The largest portion understandably was 16.7% in Britain.

Table 6: Comparison of Masako to Diana in International Pregnancy Stories

Country	# total stories	# of Diana refs
UK	30	5 (16.7%)
USA	42	2 ( 4.7%)
Canada	13	1 ( 7.7%)
Finland	10	0 ( 0.0%)
Total	95	8 (8.4%)

Comparisons of Masako to Diana, as noted below, touched on similarities and differences in terms of roles, behaviors, appearances, and intelligence. Since Diana was a royal celebrity who sold the most *Time* copies ever when she appeared on its cover, a comparison of Masako to Diana (the known) might help Western readers understand Masako (the unknown). There was no such comparison of the two princesses in Japanese news stories—nor would one be expected.

The contrasts between the two [Masako and Diana] are irresistible. Both Princesses were ‘commoners’ who married the heir to a throne and into royalty weighted down by the burden of traditions...For a start, both princesses would have certainly had to undergo intimate medical examinations and tests before being allowed to marry their Princes, ostensibly to ensure their good health but more importantly to check that they could bear children....It is believed that the inner circle in the imperial Palace is determined that Princess Masako will not become another Princess Diana, more popular and the focus of more attention than her husband.” (*The Scotsman*, 2001, April 18: 6)

*Question 4. Does the Masako pregnancy story reveal any portent of change in Japan’s culture?*

**YES.** The results show that 31 of the 63 Japanese news stories used the personal name in their headlines. Princess Masako appeared in 30 headlines (47.6%), whereas one headline (1.6%) named the crown prince. Because Masako is the primary actor of this story, this high number is not surprising. However, when considering that female members of the imperial family are less likely to be covered in news media, the large number of headlines using Masako’s name only points to Masako’s popularity as well as a strong interest in her as the mother of the baby (not in the prince as the father).

All of those articles used only *sama* as a polite form attached to her given name, “Masako-sama,” or title, “Kotaiishi (the crown princess)-sama.” As mentioned earlier, *sama*, a general term which indicates respect or politeness, is not a special honorific term connected to the imperial family. In addition, except for the word “*sama*,” almost no honorific words were used in the Japanese news headlines. Although the media would never resort to using the given name only when referring to a member of the royal family, the absence or the very low usage of honorific words demonstrates that the royal family has become less remote. This study also supports previous findings that media usage of honorific words such as *denka* (your royal highness) has dramatically declined since the Showa emperor, Hirohito, died in 1989, and by the late 1990s had almost disappeared (Tsuchiya, 1999).

Moreover, 15 headlines (23.8%) presented how Japanese people felt about Masako’s pregnancy. Many of these headlines used quite ordinary conversational

expressions: “We want to tell her congratulations” (*Mainichi*); “Take care of yourself” (*Mainichi*); “Enjoy the growth of the baby” (*Yomiuri*), and “Happy news” (*Asahi*). The Masako pregnancy story in Japanese newspapers thus shows familiarity with or affection for Princess Masako as well as a growing openness regarding the imperial family.

The relation of these examples of change to the MAS dimension is hard to judge. If, for example, half of the headlines named the crown prince but referred to him formally, while half of the headlines named the crown princess but referred to her informally, we would see strong evidence of gender differentiation—as predicted by Japan’s high MAS score. However, the stories offer no such control group. Suffice it to say that pregnancy itself is the ultimate example of gender differentiation.

## Conclusions

### *Summary*

This project demonstrated the usefulness of Hofstede’s Masculinity/Femininity dimension in cross-national studies of woman-centered news coverage. The study also contributed to the literature on news flows between Japan and the rest of the world, illuminating how other nations view a non-economic aspect of the world’s No. 2 economic power.

The study examined how domestic and international newspapers covered 158 stories about the Japanese crown princess’s pregnancy, 1999-2001. It looked at coverage of Masako by Japan and four Western nations — chosen for their varied MAS rankings: the United Kingdom, 66; the United States, 62; Canada, 52; and Finland, 26. Results revealed that the higher MAS countries gave virtually the same amount of coverage as the lower MAS countries. Regarding content, the highest MAS country, Japan (95), showed a clear focus on pregnancy as a topic; further, the higher MAS Western countries tended to portray Masako more traditionally than the lower MAS countries. Thus MAS levels do not appear to affect volume of coverage, but may, along with other factors, affect the substance of coverage.

The study also found a tendency in the West, especially in Britain, to compare Masako to Princess Diana. Finally, the study found a low use of honorifics in Japanese headlines, indicating that Masako’s pregnancy had a role in bringing the royal family closer to the Japanese people.

### *Limitations and Cautions*

The Lexis-Nexis database does not include all U.S., U.K. and Canadian

newspapers. Thus the volume of stories studied may not reflect the volume of stories actually published, so the results of this study ought to be interpreted with caution. The roster of stories from Finland, by contrast, was complete.

Regarding any differences between Japanese and Western newspapers, one must be careful about interpretations related to the Masculinity dimension alone. Constraints (formal and informal) imposed by the Imperial Household Agency prevent Japanese newspapers from reporting on taboo topics, such as fertility interventions and negative public opinion. (A study of the more free-wheeling magazines in Japan would yield different results.) Foreign newspapers, however, can state, as did one U.K. headline, “Japanese princess’s baby may be first test-tube emperor” (*Independent on Sunday*, May 2001), while one in Finland stated, “Japanese first test-tube royal” (*Ilta Lehti*, April 24, 2001).

### *Future Research*

Recently Masako has disappeared from public view. In July 2004, the Imperial Household Agency “acknowledged that Crown Princess Masako is on antidepressants and in counseling for depression and an ‘adjustment disorder’” (Schulz 2004: 40). Coverage of the crown princess’ mental illness symbolizes the fact that “mild depression has gained traction in Japan,” where sales of antidepressants quintupled 1998-2003 (Schulz 2004: 40). Do Japanese media frame the illness as caused by pressure on Masako to produce an heir (for the collective good)? Do Western media emphasize the pressure to adjust to traditional customs, suppressing her individuality? Another Hofstede (2001) dimension, Individualism, on which the United States scored high (91) and Japan scored quite low (46), could be combined with the Masculinity dimension; a content analysis based on two dimensions might yield better explanations than one dimension alone.

Future research on the pregnancy story could include worldwide media other than newspapers. Is Masako, like Diana, a celebrity who breaks into the pages of various nations’ *People*-type magazines? A larger newspaper study with more, lower MAS Western countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark) and more extremely high MAS countries (Austria, Italy, Switzerland) could discover whether cultural dimensions truly affect coverage. Collaboration among scholars in various countries would be fruitful.

Many of the newspapers studied showed a strong interest in the implications of the baby’s gender—for example, this May 16, 2001, story in the *Los Angeles Times*:

Even if the sex of Masako’s child has not been determined, there may be enough doubt that officials decided the law should be changed now. It took nearly a decade for Masako to get pregnant, she’s 37 years old, and there’s a good chance this will be her only offspring. The prospect of a female ruler

raises several questions. If she married, would her husband be expected to walk three steps behind her—as wives of the emperor and crown prince must do? And if the law were changed but a boy came later, would the younger male be first in line?

A future study could examine how international media covered the baby's birth on December 5, 2001. As noted above, it was a girl.

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## APPENDIX I

### Japanese newspapers

Asahi Shimbun

Yomiuri Shimbun

Mainichi Shimbun

### U.S. newspapers

Atlanta Journal & Constitution

Boston Globe

Buffalo News

Chicago Sun Times

Christian Science Monitor

Houston Chronicle

Los Angeles Times

New York Times

Newsday

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

St. Louis Post Dispatch

St. Petersburg Times

San Diego Union Tribune

Seattle Times

Wall Street Journal

Washington Post

### U.K. newspapers

Daily Telegraph

Financial Times

Glasgow Herald

Guardian

Independent

Independent on Sunday

Scotsman

Scotsman on Sunday

Sunday Telegraph

Times

### Canadian newspapers

Gazette

Ottawa Citizen

Toronto Star

Toronto Sun

### Finnish newspapers

Aamuhleti

Helsingin Sanomat

Ilta Lehti

Ilta Sanoma

## APPENDIX II

### Coding Sheet --- News coverage of princess Masako's pregnancy

1. Article number .....	1-3
2. News paper : .....	4-5
3. Origin of the paper .....	6-7
1= Japan    2= Canada    3=UK    4=USA    5=Finland	
4. Date of publish(yyyy/mm/dd).....	8-15
5. Length (words) :.....	16-19
6. Byline 1: (Foreigner=1; Japanese=2).....	20
7. Byline 2: (Foreigner=1; Japanese=2).....	21
8. Byline 3: (Foreigner=1; Japanese=2).....	22
9. Contributors: (Foreigner=1; Japanese=2) .....	23
10. Headline : .....	
11. Sources : .....	24
Own=1; News agency=2 (name:                    ); Others=3 (name:                    )	
12. Focus of the Story: (Primary focus=1; secondary focus=2; Tertiary focus=3)	
Pregnancy	
Sign or confirmation of pregnancy.....	25
Medical concern (e.g., , high aged pregnancy, cautions to miscarriage, doctor).....	26
Fertility issue (e.g., failure/IVF treatment) .....	27
Personal comments on the news (e.g., celebration/concern from public)....	28
Miscarriage .....	29
Other related to pregnancy (specify:                    ).....	30
Imperial Family	
Princess's background.....	31
Role as princess (e.g., expectation/struggling/pressure to produce a heir).....	32
Princess's comments/speeches.....	33
Other related to the princess (specify:                    ) .....	34
History of Imperial family (e.g., origin/ before & after WWII/symbol of Japan)....	35
Story about current imperial family (e.g., prince & princess's marriage) .....	36
Public interest toward the imperial family (e.g., taboo to talk about IF) .....	37
Traditional ceremonies of the imperial family.....	38
Birth-Social Effects	
The succession of the Imperial throne .....	39
Imperial Family Law issue.....	40
Other related to the throne (specify:                    ) .....	41
Economic effects (prediction/GDP/stock market) .....	42
Reversing the low birth rate .....	43
Lifting up social gloomy mood.....	44

