

The Experience of Family in Japan and the United States: Working with the Constraints Inherent in Cross-Cultural Research*

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An examination of the scientific basis of cross-cultural explanation shows that the necessary logical requirements of such explanation cannot be met with certainty. In the first place, cross-cultural comparisons require that the same thing — the same concept or behavior with the same meaning — be identified in each culture (Frijda and Jahoda, 1966). But the complex cultural context of any idea or behavior precludes any certainty of identity. In the second place, even if we could establish the identical concept in two cultures, valid cross-cultural comparison requires that this concept be equally measured in both cultures. It is virtually impossible to establish that a given set of observable behaviors — such as responses to a measurement scale — measure the target concept with the same degree of accuracy in both cultures. Thirdly, cultures evolve. They are works in progress, not static entities. So just as a study of U.S. culture from the 1950s may not be valid for understanding that same culture in the 1990s, so cross-cultural comparisons grounded in a particular historical period may decrease in relevance for comparing the cultures as time progresses (Hermans and Hertenstein, 1998).

Cross-cultural research goes forward nevertheless, in spite of its inherent uncertainty. Although investigators cannot guarantee that a concept will have the same meaning in two cultures and cannot guarantee that measurements in two cultures will be equivalent, nevertheless there are techniques by which investigators can improve conceptual equivalence and measurement equivalence. The effectiveness of these techniques derives from the duality of theory (Chafetz, 1978; Hempel, 1952; Kerlinger, 1973; Mennell, 1974). On the one hand, theory is concrete and is grounded in specific observations and lived experiences. On the other hand, theory is abstract and is composed of unobservable, inferred, universal concepts and the causal associations among them.

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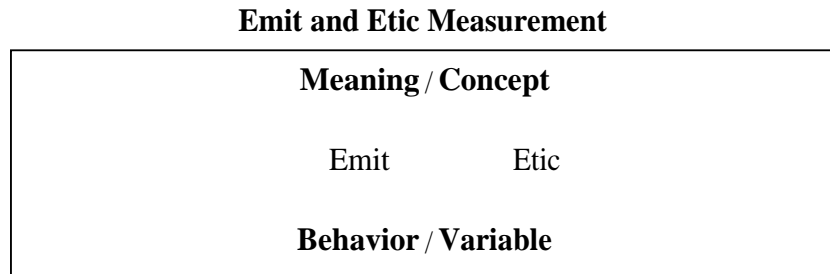
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The distinction between observed concreteness and inferred abstraction forms the basis for a fundamental duality between **emic** and etic measurement approaches. This vocabulary is used most often by anthropologists, linguists and cross-cultural psychologists (e.g., Frijda and Jahoda, 1966; Pike, 1967; Berry, 1969; Brislin, 1986). Emic is closely connected with qualitative research, etic with quantitative.

Figure 1.



Measurement involves a duality between the observed and the inferred (Figure 1). In emic measurement, a behavior is observed in its social context and its meaning is inferred. Etic measurement begins with a concept and specifies an observable indicator of the concept's meaning.

The etic concept and variable and the emic meaning and behaviors are linked by a measurement theory (Stinchcombe, 1968; see also Hage, 1972; Chafetz, 1978) or an "auxiliary theory" (Blalock, 1969). Calling the relation between a concept and its variable or between a meaning and its behavior a measurement "theory" emphasizes that the relation cannot be created by fiat. The relation must be established persuasively, whether by careful textual analysis or by a quantitative analysis of validity. A measurement theory is not the usual kind of explanatory theory: it does not attempt to explain how the world works. Instead, it persuasively explains what the investigator means by her choice of words and why a particular meaning/concept should legitimately be linked with a particular behavior/variable.

THE EMIC APPROACH TO MEASUREMENT

The emit approach derives from Malinowski (1922). It argues that "every situation be seen as a product of the culture within which it developed" (Goldschmidt, 1966: 8). In this approach, the investigator must focus on the unique history and context of a given culture. Understanding must be developed strictly within the detailed experience of that culture. It is the goal of the observer to compile the myriad details of the culture and from these details to develop a contextualized set of meanings that represent the culture and its institutions. In emic measurement, the meaning of a concept is inferred from the context of observed behaviors (Berry, 1969; Triandis and Malin, 1983). For example, Doi (1981) examines historical, linguistic, family, and normative contexts to interpret a wide range of nurturing behaviors by associating them with a meaning of active dependency (*amae*). An emic approach is finely tuned for characterization of a single culture. Emic measurement emphasizes a close familiarity with a given culture so that the meaning of a behavior can be constructed out of a full awareness of the social context of the behavior.

Most emic measurement is carried out qualitatively, based on highly textured ethnographic observation and analysis. However, a quantitative version of emic measurement is found in factor analysis. These procedures use the statistical associations among observed variables rather than the investigator's intuitive sense to detect patterns in observations. The investigator must then use her intuitive sense to give meaning to the statistical patterns detected. There is a tradition within motivational and personality psychology where the emic measurement method of Q factor analysis is labeled "idiographic" and is used to give meaning to patterns of responses by different persons (Kenrick and Stringfield, 1980; Diener and Fujita, 1995).

The very contextual nature of emic measurement means that each concept derived in a given culture will be specific to the context of that culture. Direct comparisons of emic concepts across cultures are thus fraught with confusion. If the meanings derived in two cultures are not the same, then comparison across cultures cannot be meaningful — or, to put it another way, comparisons are too meaningful because of the number of complex context-sensitive meanings within each concept. An exclusively emic approach would find that child nurturance by American parents and child nurturance by Japanese parents are not comparable because the cultures have different meaning systems for parenting. We could say that parents nurture children in Japan and parents nurture children in the United States, but "Japanese nurturance" is a concept that carries connotative and denotative meanings which differ from the concept of "U.S. nurturance." Also, the concrete behaviors reflective of nurturance in two cultures may or may not coincide, and the associations between "nurture" and other cultural elements are different. However, observation and personal experience, plus the fact that it is quite logical to assume that human (even mammalian) nurturing have some common evolutionary roots (Bell, 2001), argue for some common meanings for the term in both cultures.

THE ETIC APPROACH TO MEASUREMENT

The etic approach to measurement is based on universality (Kluckhohn, 1953; Brislin, 1986). The meanings the investigator seeks in a given culture may be meanings external to the culture, meanings that existed in the mind of the investigator before entering the culture. The etic approach assumes some commonality across human cultures. All cultures are made up of humans with a common biology and, to some extent, a common social psychology, so that at least some patterns of thought and behavior must apply to all cultures, according to this approach. For example, all humans share the same emotional circuits in the brain for self interest and for caregiving (Bell, 2001; Panksepp, 1998). In this view, the meaning of some concept is tied to theory, theory accepted or proposed by the investigator and the scientific community, not necessarily related to the detailed experience of members of the respective cultures. Certain behaviors or observable variables are then selected as indicators of the meaning/concept.

Because in principle an etic concept is defined by the investigator independently of any particular context, the concept has a universal meaning that can be applied in all contexts. An etic concept thus serves as a basis for comparisons across cultures since the meaning of the concept is in principle free of any culture (Frijda and Jahoda, 1966). Although an etic concept

is universal, its measurement is likely to be different in each culture. In the simplest case, an interview schedule item must be expressed in a different language for a different culture. But aside from language, the behaviors associated with an etic concept can be expected to be different across cultures. These differences may be obvious in an industrialized society as opposed to a hunting and gathering society, but they will also be found between more similar cultures. A measurement theory — usually implicit — must be created within each culture to tie the (universal) concept to the (local, contextual) behaviors and language within each culture.

EMIC-ETIC INTERDEPENDENCE

In the actual operation of social science (not the written sanitized presentation of it in textbooks, articles and monographs), the deductive and inductive aspects are intimately (and hopelessly) intertwined. Textbook authors still try to separate them artificially for the purpose of teaching, but this is a matter of presentation, not a description of the behavior of working scientists. In actual science, scientists use emic and etic measurement sequentially and simultaneously. Etic and emic explanation are invariably intertwined. The processes of emic induction and etic deduction are seen as a cycle where each augments and supports the other. The interdependent deductive-inductive cycle of theory development and testing has been described both by philosophers and social scientists associated with deduction (Popper, 1959; Merton, 1957) and by those emphasizing the inductive side of the cycle (Manning, 1982; Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

In a similar way, emic measurement and etic measurement are separate and yet inseparable. They are separate and disjoint because they are clearly different approaches to measurement. Yet at the same time they are overlapping and complementary. Even though etic concepts can be independent of culture, we cannot imagine having a concept that does not emerge from experience. In a parallel manner, each emic description of a foreign culture is built out of the preexisting etic categories of a particular culture's language. Emic measurement and etic measurement are thus two sides of the same coin, two aspects of a circular process of scientific understanding (Triandis, 1972). Every useful concept has both emic and etic components. We use our personal experience to understand and give meaning to each concept. And yet each concept is communicable to the extent that we have decontextualized it and expressed it in terms of universal ideas. Methodologically successful measurement depends on an integration of the emic and the etic.

MEASUREMENT AND MEANING: AN EXAMPLE

To give a more concrete description, we will focus on the interplay of emic and etic in a cross-cultural research project conducted by a cross-cultural team. One aspect of this study involved the use of a projective measure. Projective measurement techniques in which study participants respond in non-language modalities such as pictures may reduce the cultural bias of language. Projective measures also share with open-ended responses and ethnographic interviews the increased possibility of capturing information which was not previously considered by participants or researchers.

As part of a study of Japanese and American families, families were asked to create a projective picture of the family, a Family Paper Sculpture (FPS; Bell, 1986). Many interesting similarities and hypothesized culturally congruent differences emerged. The marriage was central in both cultures, for instance; Japanese fathers appeared more isolated than U.S. fathers; Japanese were more likely to include the paternal grandmother (Bell and Bell, 2000). However, there was also an interesting serendipitous finding, a difference in the number of images made in the FPS pictures. Thirty-six percent of the Japanese families created multiple images of the family, compared with only 8% of the U.S. families. This multiple vs. single images phenomenon was intriguing for us and led us into an emic phase. Through extended discussions over a number of years Japanese and American researchers discussed the finding. We studied the pictures and observed tapes of family process as the families cooperatively constructed their pictures, to try to understand the meaning behind the difference. Through these discussions, various potential explanations were identified. Here we consider four of these hypotheses.

Language

Our first and more parsimonious hypothesis about the differences in the pictures has to do with language. Although a nonverbal projective task eliminates language as an element in analysis, it does not eliminate language as an element in instructions to study participants. The greater frequency of multiple images in Japanese family FPS pictures may have resulted from nonequivalent instructions. No translation is perfect. The instructions for creating a family picture were originally written in English, translated into Japanese by a team of translators, back-translated, and pretested. However, there is no such thing as a "direct" translation (Brislin, 1986; Frijda and Jahoda, 1966; Werner and Campbell, 1979). When going from one language to another, it is impossible to capture or repeat exactly the same message. Of particular relevance here, the Japanese language does not make a grammatical distinction between singular and plural nouns. Our attempt to minimize this problem when we wrote the instructions may not have been successful (this issue is discussed in more detail below). Therefore, it is possible that the Japanese multiple images simply reflected a grammatical miscommunication of the instructions for the task.

Contextual relativity

The second hypothesis about the greater frequency of multiple images in the Japanese family pictures is that they may have resulted from a Japanese emphasis on context. At the level of the individual, the Japanese self is a self-in-relation, a self-in-context (Lebra, 1976; Roland, 1988; Bell, 1989), a self that depends on others (Doi, 1981). When asked to say who they are, American students respond with personal attributes ("I am intelligent" or "I am athletic"). Japanese students are more likely to refer to a role in a group, e.g., "I am the third son," (Markus and Kitayama, 1994). In this relational view, social elements and relationships are critical to self definition. Americans tend to experience a unitary sense of self, a self that remains intact though time and context. Americans tend to see the person as inherently separate from others. The healthy person is whole and complete, separate and alone (Erikson, 1968; Kohut, 1971; Mahler, Pine and Bergman, 1975; Stern, 1985; Turner, 1988). American and other Western social scientists define the self as that part of us that is constant and consistent

across situations (Kohut, 1977; Kristeva, 1987; Turner, 1970). An American who behaves one way in one context and another way in a different context may question their own honesty or sincerity. "Am I being a fake?" is a relevant question.

One may hypothesize the same distinction at the level of the family. U.S. families would thus be expected to conceptualize the family as a single, unitary entity. Japanese, on the other hand, would be expected to experience the family, in the same way as they experience the individual, as more context-dependent, as naturally different in different contexts. In order to describe the whole of the family experience, the Japanese family may have needed to depict itself in different contexts. This view leads to the hypothesis that different images of the family described the family or family members in terms of different contexts, such as different topics, locations, or activities.

Individual viewpoints

Another hypothesis is that multiple images represent the different views of family members. Americans tend to expect there to be a single truth about most things (Lebra, 1976, 1992). If this view is correct, Americans would be expected to believe there is one essentially accurate way to describe a family. In this view, some images would be seen to be more accurate, or more true, than other potential images. Japanese, on the other hand, are less likely to expect there to be a single truth. Truth and morality are socially relative; both must be considered in the context of relationship (Lebra, 1976). This tendency is captured in the Japanese saying, "Even a thief may be 30 percent right." In this view, Japanese tend to be seen as less judgmental than Americans, more accepting of different individual views. Perhaps different images were needed to express different individuals' perspectives. This view leads to the hypothesis that different family members constructed or urged construction of separate images of the family. The whole family picture then described the different viewpoints of family members.

Harmony

The last hypothesis is that the greater frequency of multiple images in the Japanese family pictures may have resulted from a Japanese emphasis on harmony. Compared to Americans, Japanese are far more aware of social interaction process (Doi, 1986; Kuwayama, 1992; Tamura and Lau, 1992). Both empathy and vulnerability are heightened in Japanese relationships (Lebra, 1976). This sensitivity makes Japanese more concerned with harmony in the process of the interaction. Americans are more likely to be goal-oriented. The goal is to solve the problem, resolve the differences, get the best answer. It's OK if individuals "fight" for their points of view; it's OK for people to work to have their own opinions be the ones agreed to by the group. The goal is to achieve the best answer, which in this case is the most accurate picture.

In this view, Japanese are expected to focus proactively on harmony, to care for the feelings of each person in a discussion. The family in particular is a place where people want to be safe and secure. In such a context, it is important that everyone has a turn, that everyone is heard. The process is more important than any particular decision or outcome.

This leads to the hypothesis that multiple images were the result of a focus on harmony, so that multiple images represented the varying viewpoints of family members.

Methods

Sample

Data were collected in a cross-cultural study of the family context of adolescent development. Ninety-nine American families and 60 Japanese families participated in structured interviews in their homes. The U.S. families were interviewed in 1975-76; the Japanese families in 1986-87. The samples are described in Table 1. All of the participating families were middle class, intact families with about two or three children, at least one of whom was an adolescent at the time of the interview. All U.S. families were non-Hispanic white. U.S. families were slightly larger than Japanese families. Forty percent of Japanese families and 62% of American families had three or more children (one or two children vs. three or more, $\chi^2 = 7.30$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$). Japanese parents had more education than U.S. parents. Japanese fathers in particular had attended college more often than those in the U.S. sample (for fathers, $\chi^2 = 10.92$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$; for mothers, $\chi^2 = 3.13$, $df = 1$, $p < .10$). Parents in Japanese families were slightly older (for fathers, $\chi^2 = 8.42$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$; for mothers, $\chi^2 = 16.06$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$).

Table 1

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE PARENTS

	Fathers		Mothers	
	Japan	U.S.	Japan	U.S.
Parent education				
High school or less	12%	36%	38%	52%
College	88	64	62	48
Ages of parents				
30s	3	16	5	33
40s	72	71	86	61
50s	25	13	9	6
Family size				
	Japan	U.S.		
1 or 2 children	54	38		
3 or more children	46	62		

Task

In one activity during the interview, the entire family was asked to make a Family Paper Sculpture (FPS), a projective exercise in which colored disks (to show individuals), red and black strips of plastic (to show similarity and difference) and blue yam loops (boundaries) were used to create a picture of the family's experience or view of itself. Closeness, distance, groupings; and other aspects of physical placement gave information about relationships (Bell, 1986; Bell, Ericksen, Cornwell and Bell, 1991; Bell and Bell, 2000; Wedemeyer and

Grotevant, 1982). A photograph of the FPS, measurements from the photographs, the interviewer's drawing and written description of the FPS on the basis of the family's verbal descriptions of their picture, and the family's recorded discussion during the FPS, all provided input for the research reported here. Specific instructions for the exercise were as follows (Japanese instructions appended):

Use these materials to describe your family.

The colored disks are for people, the red and black strips are to show a relationship between two people: red is to show that people are similar in some way; black is to show that people are different. The blue yarn circles are "boundary markers." They are for showing a person who is somehow separate, or a pair or group of people who belong together. A boundary around one person may be used to show that he keeps to himself a lot, for instance, or a boundary could be used to show that two people have something special going between them — something that others in the family are not a part of.

Choose a disk for each family member. Place them on the board any way you wish. Use the red and black strips and the blue boundary markers any way that feels right to you in order to describe your family. You may choose NOT to use them at all.

You may wish to include on the board relatives or close friends of any or all of you.

The only rule is that you are not to write on the board. Work at your "picture" until it feels right. There is no right or wrong way to do this

Do it together; we want your combined picture of your family.

The Japanese language, unlike English, does not make a grammatical distinction between singular and plural nouns. When creating the Japanese translation, we approached this issue by trying to make the "pull" of the instructions equal in the two versions of the instructions. The English instructions, third paragraph, said "Choose a disk for each family member." In the last paragraph we referred to "your picture." Because the Japanese language does not have a singular/plural distinction, it was impossible to make these instructions identical. In pretests we tried instructing families to "Choose a single disk for each family member." We felt, however, that this was a very strong direction to the families, much stronger than the English. In the end, we decided to say "Choose disk(s)" in the third paragraph and then "work together as a family" in the last paragraph.

Measurement of family views

Each photograph of a family FPS was coded on several variables, including number and color of disks representing individuals, the closeness between disks, how relationships were described using red and black lines and boundaries. Most relevant to the question addressed here, they were measured for the number of family images. An image was defined as a complete view of family members in relation to one another, a view in which everyone in the family was represented. A picture was coded for one image if there was only one complete

view of the family. The picture was coded for two or more images if there were two or more complete views of the family.

Families' discussions while making the FPS were taped, and the interviewer made a drawing before taking a photograph of the FPS. The interviewer asked the family to describe and explain the picture; these explanations were used to annotate the drawing.

For the U.S. families, which were audio-taped, L. Bell reviewed all tapes with multiple images. Videotapes of Japanese families who made multiple images were reviewed by H. Dendo, Y. Nakata and L. Bell, working as a team. Using annotated drawings as well as observations of family interaction process, family pictures were coded for organization and meaning.

Organization. Was there a consensus?•Did the whole family create the whole picture or did different individuals create different images? If different people created different images was that (a) because the family was unable to reach a consensus on one image, or (b) because family members simply described different views without attempting to reach a consensus or agreement on one image?

Meaning. What was the family trying to show with the multiple images? In addition to individual viewpoints, three patterns were identified:

- (a) Different areas of interest (family images showing how the family felt about sports, music, earning money, or other topics);
- (b) Different contexts (family images showing the family in the car, on weekends, on vacation, at home, or in other locations or activities);
- (c) Different personal characteristics (family images showing similarities and differences in personality, behavior, blood type, appearance, character, temperament, or gender).

Results

To illustrate the ways that multiple images were used by families, examples of U.S. and Japanese pictures are given in Figures 2-6. Figure 2 shows a picture made by a U.S. family. There is one image in this picture, with some extra disks representing individuals. The family used only red lines to depict relationships, showing the similarity between each family member. The dog was placed on the board four times so as to be close to each family member, and the younger daughter placed herself on the board a second time, next to her big sister, to show they were close. The family placed the (alcoholic) grandfather who lived with them on the board four times, specifically on top of the boundary because "He disturbs our boundary." Figure 3 shows a multiple image picture made by a U.S. family. Each family member made their own image. Connection is shown by the boundary around the whole set of images. Dad said,

"I am the nucleus of the whole family," to explain why he placed his chip on top of the family boundary.

Figure 2.

Single Image (U.S.)

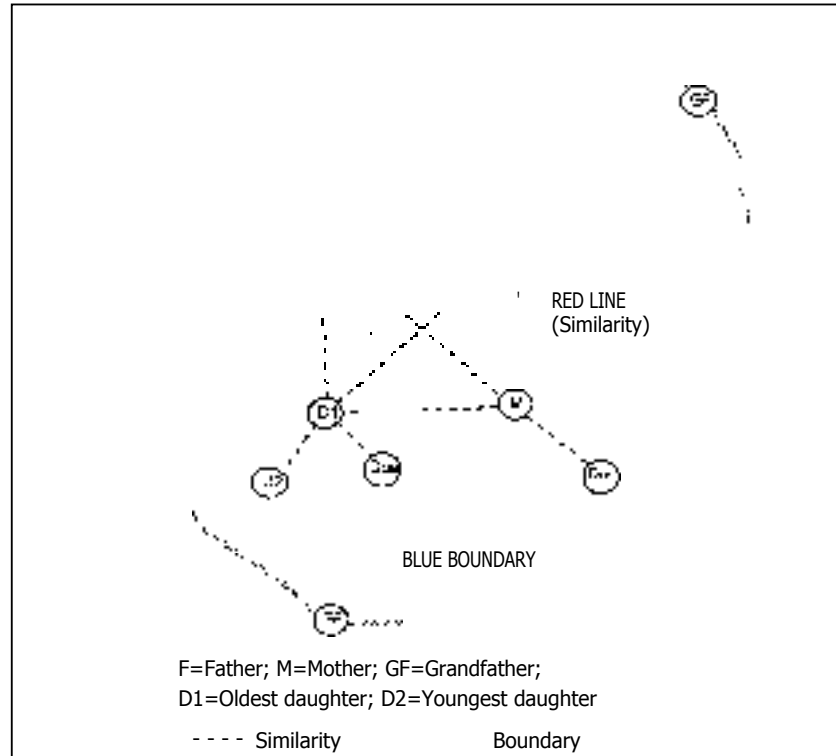
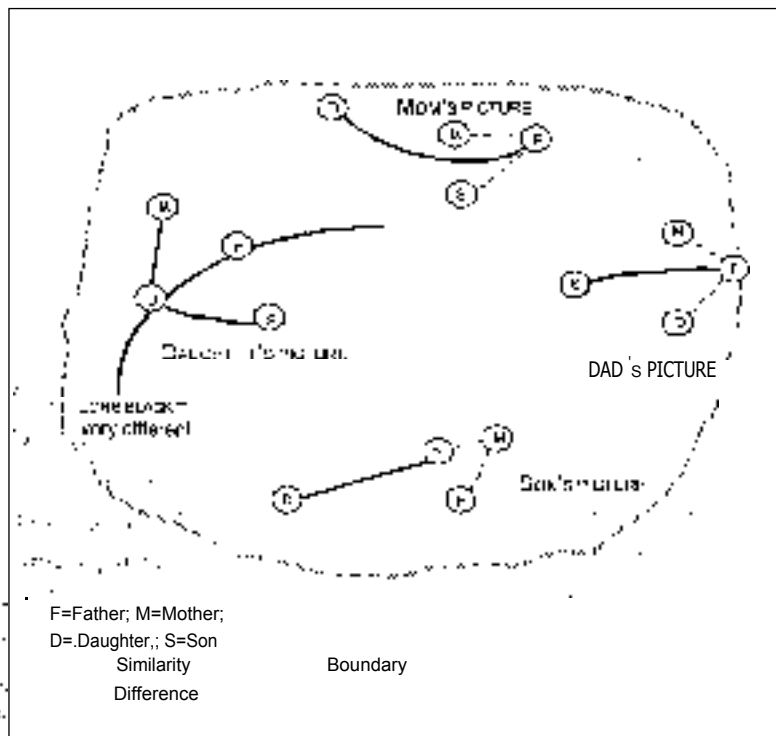


Figure 3.

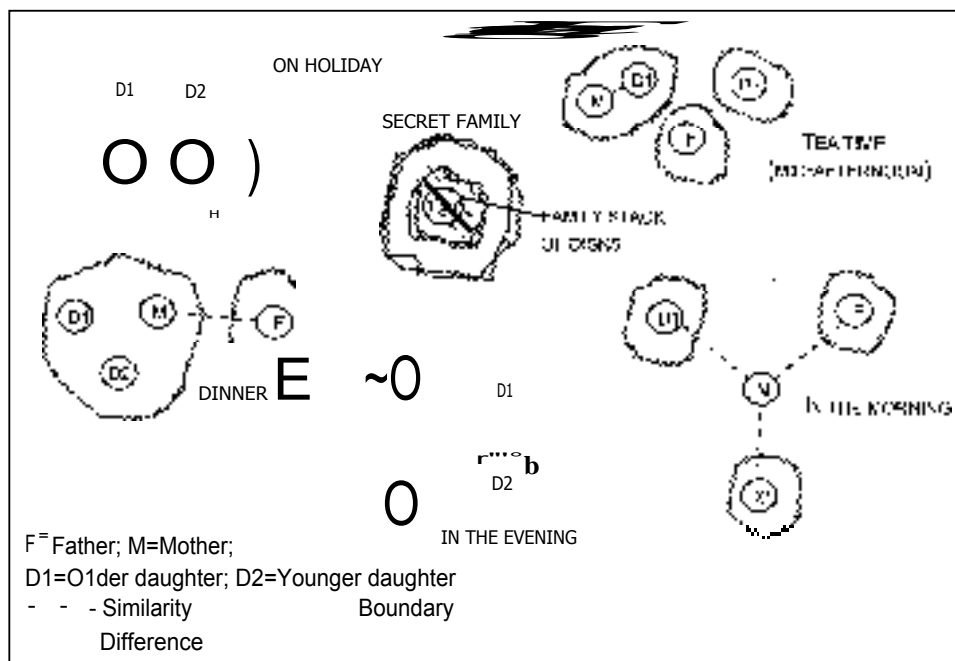
Individual Views (U.S.)



Figures 4, 5, and 6 depict multiple image pictures made by Japanese families. Figure 4 shows a family in different contexts. The central image is a stack of chips with the father on the bottom (because he's the foundation or base of the family; he supports the family). Two boundaries show strong unity. The family all live together, alike and different (two red, one black line on top of the stack). Each has their own character, but they have unity. Other images show the family in different activities. On holiday, family members travel together. At mid-afternoon tea time, they are involved in separate activities. At dinner time on weekdays, Father is usually not at home. Figure 5 shows a family in terms of different characteristics: personality, behavior and character, constitution (liking or not liking hot food), and how early people get up in the morning Figure 6 shows a family in terms of their multiple interests.

Figure 4.

Family in Different Contexts (Japan)



Kinds of pictures (in terms of number of images) made by Japanese and U.S. families are tabulated in Table 2. Pictures made by Japanese families were more complex in terms of number of images than pictures made by American families ($p < .001$). U.S. families were more likely than Japanese families to make a simple picture using one image. Japanese families were more likely to include multiple images.

Table 3 gives the results of coding pictures with multiple images made by U.S. families and Japanese families. Coders examined annotated drawings and the family discussions during the creation of FPS pictures. Because of the small number of multiple-image pictures, statistical tests are not appropriate. For five of the eight U.S. families who made multiple images, the images described the different viewpoints of family members. The individual images were made after attempts to work together broke down. There was one Japanese family in which individuals made their own images. In this case, the process seemed to be chaotic, everyone working at once with very little verbal communication. However, the

Figure 5.

Family in terms of different characteristics (Japan)

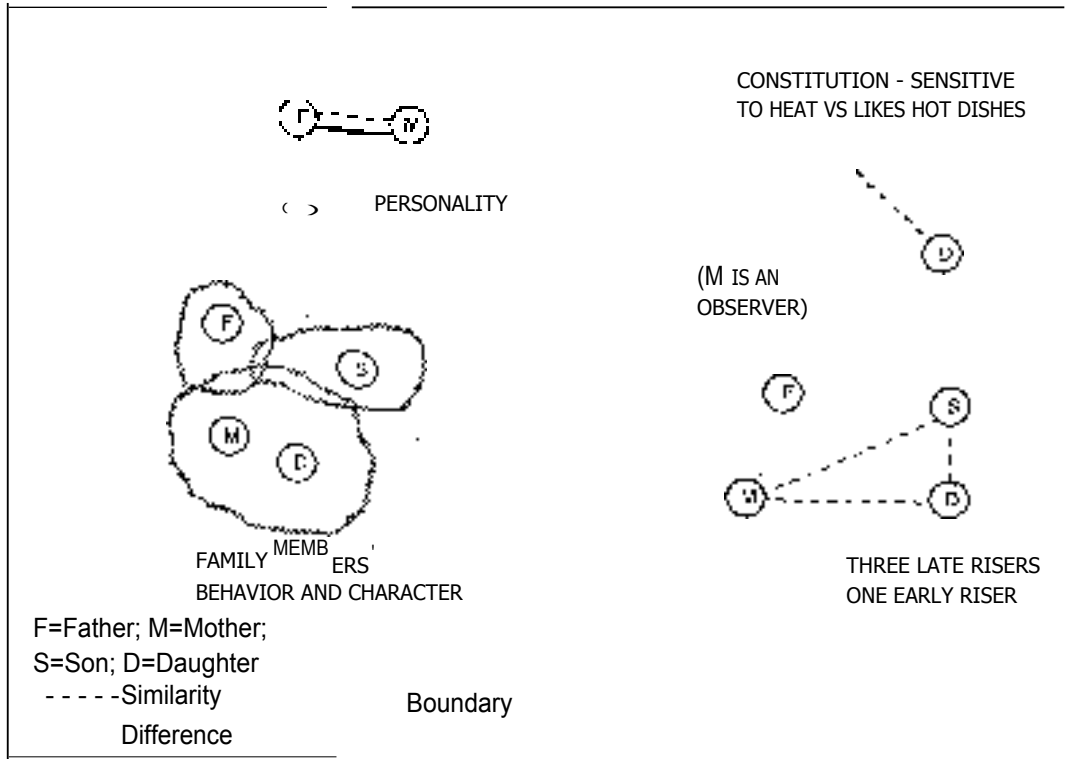


Figure 6.

Family Interests (Japan)

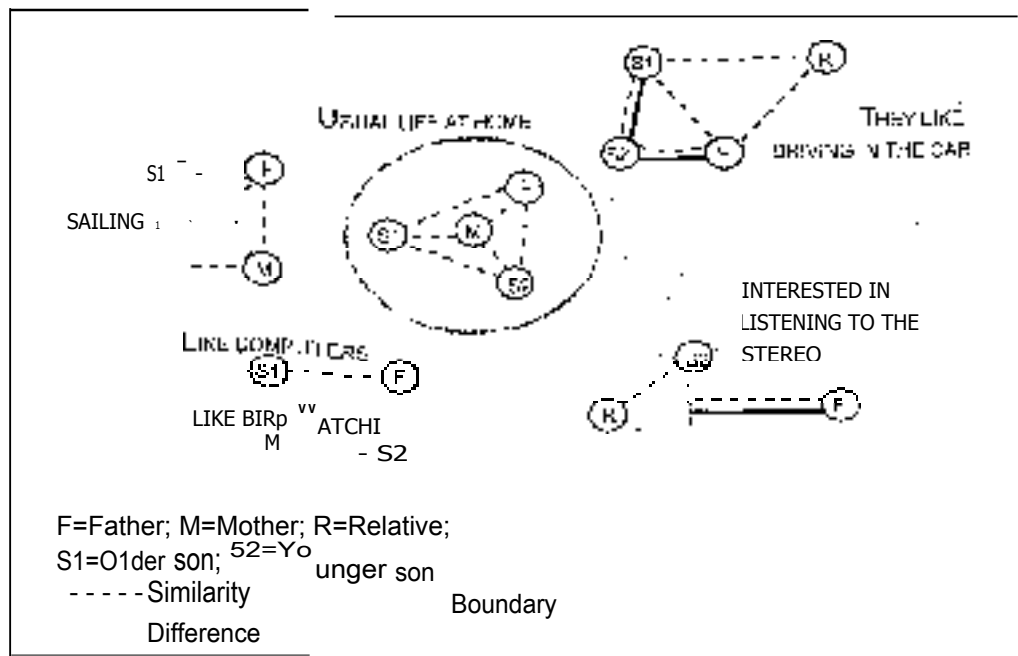


Table 2

FAMILY PICTURES OF JAPANESE AND U.S. FAMILIES

	JAPAN (N =)	U.S. (N=99)
One Image	63%	92%
Two Images	3%	2%
Three to Six Images	33%	6%

Country by Images, (One image vs More than one): chi-square = 21.35, df = 1, p < .001

coders observed that the other Japanese families who made multiple images seemed to be working together; they did not show signs of discomfort or conflict while working on the FPS. There was harmony in these family discussions. The family agreed on the different images — as if the multiple images were needed to express their consensual view of the family. Compared with U.S. family pictures, Japanese pictures had more multiple images describing different contexts of family activities, or personal characteristics that varied among family members. In other words, Japanese family pictures with multiple images more often showed different aspects of the family, while U.S. family pictures with multiple images more often showed different individual views of the family because the family was unable to reach agreement on a common image.

Table 3

PICTURES WITH MULTIPLE IMAGES: PROCESS AND CONTENT

	JAPAN N=24	U.S. N=8
Individual pictures by family members	4% (1)	63% (5)
Family grouped by interests	33% (8)	25% (2)
Family grouped by context (family at home, on vacation, on weekend, etc.)	33% (8)	0% (0)
Family grouped by characteristics (appearance, personality, gender, behavior, generation, character, etc.)	50% (12)	13% (1)

Note: A family's picture could be scored in more than one category, making totals higher than 100%.

Understanding the differences

Our first and most parsimonious hypothesis about the differences in the pictures had to do with language. Since U.S. families were instructed to make "a picture" of the family, they may have taken this as an instruction to construct a single image. Since there is no distinction between singular and plural in Japanese, Japanese families may have taken the instructions to mean they were to make "[one or many] picture[s]." Although we tried to make the "pull" of the instructions equal in the two versions of the instructions, the lack of strict comparability between the instructions in the two languages may account for some of the difference in the pictures. However, we feel it cannot account for it all, particularly given the nature of the differences in Japanese and U.S. family pictures.

Of the other hypotheses, we found consistent culture-specific support for one. The second hypothesis, that multiple images within a family picture would be produced because family members conceptualized the family contextually, was supported for the Japanese families. When we looked at the conversation during the family task, Japanese families were much more likely than U.S. families to discuss various aspects of the family — the family in different contexts (morning, evening; at home, on vacation) and to describe the family in terms of multiple characteristics (appearance, personality, behavior). These aspects were represented by the multiple images in the Japanese pictures.

The third hypothesis, that multiple images would represent individual members' viewpoints, was partially supported for the U.S. families. When we looked at the family conversations of U.S. families who made pictures with multiple images, the typical pattern was for different family members to each create their own views of the family. This pattern was associated with apparent conflict and usually followed a failure of family members to reach agreement on one image.

The fourth hypothesis, that multiple images represented an emphasis on harmony and an avoidance of conflict was not supported. Japanese family discussions were harmonious, but we believe the contextual images were because family members perceived the family as contextual, not because they were avoiding disharmony. And multiple images in the U.S. pictures reflected an inability to resolve differences rather than a positive focus on maintaining harmony.

It is important to note that we are describing a relative, not absolute, difference. Cross-cultural research tends to overemphasize differences even when similarities are strong (Bell, Bell, Nakata and Bell, 1996; Bell and Bell, 2000; Hermans and Kempen, 1998). In addition, we must remember the historical context. Both cultures are continually evolving, perhaps becoming more alike (Matsumoto, Kudoh, and Takeuchi, 1996). Within the Japanese experience there is a separate "*I*" (*jibun*), but it is more private and inner, and not the whole or the primary aspect of how one experiences self (Lebra, 1976,1992). Furthermore, the self is not the whole for U.S. people either. American women are more relationship aware than American men (Bell, Bell, Nakata and Bell, 1996; Fullinwider-Bush and Jacobvitz, 1993; Gilligan, 1982), but even American men experience themselves, to some extent, as part of a larger something, be it family, company, athletic team, or religious group. Thus the differences are more in emphasis than in essence: When constructing an "I," the emphasis is more on the self-in-relation in Japan, a self which is different in different contexts. Americans, on the other hand, have a stronger tendency to conceptualize the self as inherently separate, as constant and consistent across situations.

The data presented here suggest a parallel experience for families. For Japanese (compared with U.S. families), the family experience is more likely to be that of a family-in-context. Thus one image cannot always capture the essence of "our family" in Japan. Describing multiple contexts or multiple aspects gives a clearer description of the family's experience of itself. American families, on the other hand, almost always created one image to represent the family. When U.S. families created multiple images, it was primarily because they could not agree, and then each person created their own picture.

In this cross-cultural study reflecting both emic and etic research approaches, we found both cultural differences and cross-cultural consistencies. The Bells, who initiated the research in Japan as a replication of a U.S. study, began with the etic approach, bringing to Japan an instrument designed in the United States to measure theoretical concepts from family systems theory, concepts such as closeness and distance, boundaries, and coalitions. The research team had some hypotheses based on their understandings of Japanese and U.S. cultures, e.g. that Japanese would include more grandparents (especially paternal grandmothers) in their pictures, that U.S. pictures would highlight husband-wife coalitions, Japanese pictures, mother-child coalitions. The use of a protective instrument, the FPS, and the creation of a cross-cultural research team brought in a strong emic influence.

A projective instrument allows participants to bring their own "maps" to the exercise, increasing chances of the discovery of previously unexamined concepts, patterns or hypotheses. The team was diverse in several ways including culture, gender and discipline. Family therapists, psychologists, and sociologists from both cultures were on the team. When results included a difference in the numbers of images in the family pictures made by Japanese and Americans, the research entered a period of emic exploration involving multiple discussions among team members. Eventually these emic explorations led to some etic constructs that resulted in specific cross-cultural comparisons.

In the end the research team could not rule out the effect of language, as the inherent singular/plural distinction in English grammar probably increased the number of single-image pictures by U.S. families. In addition, more than half of the Japanese families constructed single-image pictures. We found, however, that descriptions of contextual relativity were common in Japanese pictures with multiple images, but they were rare in U.S. images. Results were consistent with a U.S. emphasis on self and family conceptualized as unitary and consistent, and a Japanese emphasis on self and family as multiple and contextual.

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING VALIDITY IN CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH

Pointing out the problems is easier than providing workable solutions, but it's worth a try! Useful suggestions have been offered by many, including Hermans and Kempen (1998), Werner and Campbell (1970) and Brislin (1986). Here are our suggestions:

Build a cross-cultural team based on equality and mutual respect

Mahn and Marin (1991), writing from the perspective of investigators who operate ⁱⁿdependently as culturally sensitive outsiders in another culture, argue for the cultural ⁱmersion of researchers and for the use of key informants. This approach is unavoidable when there are no professionals in the target culture, or when investigators are unable to form affiances with such professionals. In this case the investigator is constrained to become ^{an} outside expert on the target culture, relying on informants for an expanded emic perspective. When it is feasible, the establishment of a team of equals, with professionals from both cultures, supports in-depth understanding as all team members contribute to both emic and etic processes, and creativity is nurtured by the struggle. .

It is our belief that the most important quality for promoting successful cross-cultural research is respect among members of the research team. It is vitally important that team members be open to one another, to work past unspoken (and usually unrecognized) biases, prejudices, sensitivities and expectations (Frijda and Jahoda, 1966). Furthermore, there is no reason to assume that all emic understandings and potential sources of confusion are at the country level. Gender and the interaction of gender and country cultures are major potential sources of emic understandings that need to be recognized and explored. Social class, ethnicity, and historical cohort are also important (Sue, 1999). Our research team contained one Japanese psychologist with significant life experience in pre-war Japan, and another born after the war. Each brought a different perspective to the construction of meaning. Finally, professional disciplines have their own cultures, their own emic elements that can create confusion and conflict when people from two disciplines try to work together. Cross-disciplinary consensus is not, in fact, easy to accomplish, as any sociologist knows who has tried to work with a psychologist—or vice versa.

Team members from both cultures must have equal status. Equal status is necessary to see the team through difficult non-understandings which the higher-status members may attribute to the lesser sophistication of the lower-status member. There must be a climate of mutual respect, and an openness and willingness to listen and/or to confront in communication. This requires, in addition to equal status, the development of personal trust. In most cases, this means that much time must be devoted to establishing and maintaining personal as well as professional relationships between team members.

Recognize the impossibility of doing exactly the same study in both cultures

Measurement theories must almost invariably be different between the two cultures in an attempt to measure the same etic concept. The cultural context of concepts and of their measurement through variables makes the certainty of equivalence unattainable. Instead, the design of cross-cultural research instruments are as much art as technology: "comparability becomes a matter of intuitive judgment instead of objective standardization" (Frijda and Jahoda, 1966: 118). The investigators must be able to argue persuasively for conceptual identity and measurement equivalence (Jacobsen, 1954).

In fact, the goal should be comparability rather than equivalence. Even careful emic analysis in designing the research is likely to fail in significant ways in achieving exact equivalence. In some cases, the entire structure of the interview may be incommensurate between cultures. We set out to carefully replicate the U.S. family interview in Japan. We conducted a marital exercise followed by a family exercise and then another family exercise — the same exercises in the same order in both cultures. This procedure is consistent with the American family model, where the marital bond is seen to constitute the core of the family. But in Japan, children, or the mother-child bond is more likely to be considered to be the core of the family. Thus, interviewing the marital couple first may have seemed far less natural to the Japanese couples than to the American couples.

Recognize the cultural constraints of human resources

Comparability is important not only in written research instruments, but also in the human

instruments of the research: the interviewers and coders. The process of training research assistants is intended to make them all comparable. But when assistants come from different cultures, a few hours of training may not have much of an effect. This issue is particularly acute in the case of coders. In our case, family interaction process was coded on global scales describing family structure and climate (Bell, Cornwell and Bell, 1983; Bell, Cornwell and Bell, 1988). Obviously coders who have experienced life in an American family system will bring different expectations than coders who have experienced life in a Japanese family system. In our research, as in most, it was a practical impossibility to use the same coders to code tapes from both cultures. However, we were able to employ coders in both countries with training in family therapy. By using coders with similar professional training (family systems theory and family therapy) we were able to assure some level of cross-cultural consistency in the meaning, if not the anchoring, of the coding.

The reason for using coders trained in family therapy was to improve the cross-cultural validity in the coding of family behaviors. However, it raised an important issue: would Japanese coders, trained in the Western-derived discipline of family therapy, retain their sensitivity to the nuances of Japanese family experiences? In a separate study, we found evidence that Japanese family therapists did not differ in their perceptions of families from Japanese non-therapists (Bell, Bell, Nakata and Bell, 1996).

Use indirect measures

A protective measure, as used in the study above, is one way to ease the constraints of language. Another indirect approach to describing the structure of relationships is to look at response patterns, e.g. the percent of agreement between two people on some questionnaire, rather than at the responses themselves. Instead of comparing responses directly (e.g., do Japanese families score higher on expressiveness than American families), we can look for differences among family members (e.g., are Japanese daughters' responses more similar to their fathers' responses than to their mothers', while American daughters' responses are more similar to their mothers' than to their fathers'). By looking at patterns of agreement among family members, we minimize the importance of cultural differences in the nuance of meaning for particular items. We have used this approach to study the relationship between triangulation of an adolescent daughter in a family, and that daughter's personal development (Bell, Bell, and Nakata, 2001; Bell and Bell, 1984).

Identify the process

It is invitingly tempting to compare the cultures directly—e.g.; comparing the ego development of Japanese and American adolescents. This approach, however, can be considerably more misleading than informative. The sorts of simple group differences in means that we rely on in single culture research may be almost meaningless in cross-cultural research. One must, as it were, hypothesize interaction effects rather than main effects. If you propose and find that Japanese families are more cohesive than American families, you will never be sure if the differences found reflect differences in amount of cohesiveness, or if they are an artifact of the general level of social desirability of the items in one translation, or if cohesiveness has a different behavioral function—and thus meaning—in the two cultures.

If you hypothesize and find an interaction (e.g. in Japan verbal expression of feelings in families is associated with lower ego development for adolescents, but in the U.S. it is associated with higher ego development) then this is probably a more valid difference than a simple difference in mean level of verbal expression.

In other words, it is fruitful to focus on the process by which high levels of ego development are achieved in each culture. The investigation of process is usually carried out by the measurement of intervening variables. This is often seen as optional in single-culture research, where we find the nature of the process to be less problematic because of the presence of culturally legitimated theoretical orientations or paradigms (such as learning or exchange). But in cross-cultural research, the etic equivalence of theoretical orientations cannot be assumed. It becomes necessary to verify that the hypothesized processes are in fact responsible for the results obtained in each culture.

Focus on similarities AND differences; remember gender and historical cohort

When comparing groups, there seems to be a tendency to polarize, to exaggerate cultural differences, and to ignore differences within a culture according to gender, or historical cohort, for instance. Cherished hypotheses concerning differences (for example, that Americans are more independent, Japanese more interdependent) tend to hang on despite evidence to the contrary (Matsumoto, 1999). Patterns change through time; generations are different (Matsumoto, Kudoh, and Takeuchi, 1996). Sometimes an observed "cultural difference" is really a difference between men only; the women in the two cultures are similar. Bell, Bell, Nakata, and Bell (1996) found greater differences between Japanese and American men, than between Japanese and American women, in the valuing of connection relative to individuality in families. Hermans and Kempen (1998) note the importance of our increasingly interconnected world society to cultural evolution. Both similarity and difference, through historical time and between cultures, should be noted.

CLOSING COMMENTS

The examples we have offered show the extreme difficulty, if not sheer technical impossibility of establishing unequivocal conceptual and measurement equivalence across cultures. The cultural differences between Japan and the U.S. are vast and salient. But we do not believe that the study of cross-cultural differences between more closely related cultures are necessarily any more easily accomplished. Apparent similarities among these cultures, we feel, are likely to mask the underlying differences in assumptions. Whether comparing U.S. families with English families, middle class WASPs with working-class WASPs, comparing Italian Americans with those of Hispanic descent, or comparing men with women, the assumption of similarity is dangerous.

It is our view that theory testing using a strict mechanical view based on the Popperian model is impossible. But we do feel that cross-cultural research is not only possible, but exciting and fruitful. We hope we have conveyed our experience and conviction that successful cross-cultural research is based as much on flexibility, sensitivity, and openness as it is on methodological rigor. We feel that intuition may be more important than rigorous deduction

or methodological rules. On the other hand, to throw out methodology and provide unstructured musings on culture is also unproductive. Measurement and comparison are not to be avoided, but they must be used with a great deal of imagination and, we might add, forgiveness. Everything we measure and compare might mean something else, hidden in the historical context, or in parts of one or another culture (including our own) that we do not understand. We counsel caution and especially humility. But we must not give up enthusiasm and enjoyment in our pursuit of understanding.

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APPENDIX: JAPANESE PAPER SCULPTURE INSTRUCTIONS

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