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**FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS AND DYNAMICS IN  
JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES: A PRELIMINARY  
REPORT FROM THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT SCALE**

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**ABSTRACT.** *This paper uses the Family Environment Scale (FES) to compare and contrast psychosocial environments of Japanese families with those of American families. The aim is to explore some cultural dynamics of each society from the point of view of family behavior. The FES contains 10 subscales, measuring the following family characteristics: Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, Independence, Achievement Orientation, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, Active-Recreational Orientation, Moral-Religious Emphasis, Organization, and Control. Comparison of each subscale between Japan and the United States revealed that: (a) Cohesion and Control were positively correlated for Japanese parents but negatively correlated for American parents; (b) Achievement Orientation and Intellectual-Cultural Orientation were positively correlated for Japanese parents and uncorrelated for American parents; (c) Cohesion and Control were negatively correlated for American children but uncorrelated for Japanese*

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children; and (d) *Achievement and Conflict* were positively correlated for Japanese children but uncorrelated for American children. Eight of the 10 constructs were useful for understanding family dynamics in Japan. *Independence and Expressiveness*, which are important for American families, did not seem to be easily understood concepts for the Japanese. The results and the implications are discussed in terms of cross-cultural understanding between Japan and the United States.

Japan and the United States are today approaching a critical phase in many areas such as trade, politics and international cooperation. These two societies need each other and perhaps complement each other, yet mutual understanding seems notably difficult. Unlike the exponential advances in technology, the pace of human understanding is discouragingly slow—these two cultures are no exception. Japanese and Americans may experience fewer difficulties when just greeting each other, exchanging small talk, or casually encountering strangers. But once they try to accomplish something or work closely together—in a diplomatic negotiation, a joint business, an international marriage, cross-cultural therapy and so on—they almost always find the situation formidable. And the difficulty, one may observe, appears to come from the deep cultural differences in how people, self, and society are grasped. The challenges of overcoming the differences for a brighter future world face each of us.

In this article, we would like to limit our scope to the family arena and to present similarities and differences we have found in the family's social and psychological environment in Japan and the United States. Human communication involves rich, multifaceted processes that may not be directly accessible to us, and its data would yield only fragmentary reflections of reality. Our approach here is to discuss family behavior (or communication) through the angle of sociopsychological characteristics. Family process is undoubtedly one of the most influential factors for forming one's patterns of behavior. Of course, it varies from family to family, but also from culture to culture. Even though the family structure centering on the nuclear family is becoming more similar among Japanese and Americans, there may be significant gaps as well in its management and operation. To reveal some of the dynamics of the family in these two cultures may help promote further understanding between these peoples whose influences in today's world are increasingly far reaching.

For assessing Japanese and American family characteristics, we employed a well-known family measurement scale called the Family Environment Scale (FES) (Moos & Moos, 1986). The reasons for using the FES are the following: (a) It is composed of 10 subscales that permit tapping many aspects of family behavior—it is helpful to have a balanced picture of the family for the purpose of cross-cultural comparison;

and (b) the FES seeks family members' own perceptions of their family behavior, yielding the participants' perspective. Since our interest has been the members' own view of their family's social climate, the FES seemed the best suited instrument for our study.

## REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

With regard to relevant research, however, it seems that surprisingly few studies deal with the entire family behavior in these two societies. It is more common to find comparative research regarding, for example, child rearing, child education, and parent-child relationships (Tobin et al., 1989; Hendry, 1986).

### *Family Behaviors*

Despite its limited scope, one of the important works that explicitly compares these two cultures is Caudill and Weinstein's (1969) pioneering work on maternal care and infant behavior in Japan and America. According to their report, the American mother tends to have a more lively and stimulating approach to her baby, positioning the infant's body more, and looking at and chatting to the infant more. On the other hand, the Japanese mother is present more with the baby, having a soothing and quieting approach through lulling, carrying in her arms, and rocking. Consequently, the American baby is found to be more physically active and happily vocal and more involved in the exploration of his/her body and environment than the Japanese baby. Such cultural patterns are already learned by the three- to four-month-old infants studied by the authors.

Also, their research has revealed a critical cultural contrast with regard to the relationship between mother's chats and the baby's vocalization. The American mother's "chats" are significantly correlated with the infant's "happy vocals" and not with "unhappy vocals," whereas the Japanese mother's "chats" are significantly correlated with the infant's "unhappy vocals" and not with "happy vocals." In other words, the mother's chatting to the infant seems to have a different communicative purpose in each culture. While the American mother appears to use chatting as a means of stimulating and responding to her infant's happy vocals, the Japanese mother appears to be using chatting to soothe and quiet her infant, and to decrease his/her unhappy vocals. These are extremely valuable findings that illustrate a segment of family communication in the two societies, and, furthermore, they could be related to each culture's basic orientation toward verbal communication in general.

Related to child rearing is the topic of the co-sleeping practice of the family. Although not usually treated as a popular subject in communica-

tion, it could be one of the key aspects deciding the character and dynamics of the family. American ethnographers have described the Japanese co-sleeping practice as a sign of intimacy and mutual dependency among the family members (Dore, 1958; Vogel, 1963). Caudill and Plath (1966) have conducted a thorough investigation of "who sleeps by whom" in urban Japanese families in three cities. They explain that Japanese prefer to sleep in clusters of two or three persons and prefer not to sleep alone. Sleeping arrangements in Japanese families, the authors argue, tend to blur the distinctions between generations and between the sexes, to emphasize general family cohesion and to underplay the sexual intimacy between husband and wife.

Today, 23 years after Caudill and Plath's study, the situation might not have changed a great deal despite the rapid socioeconomic changes that have taken place during this period in Japan. Kashiwagi (1986) presents data to compare American children with Japanese children and reports that the majority of five-year-olds in Japan (78.3%) sleep in the same room with their parents, whereas the majority of American children of the same age sleep alone.

Family therapists, who also interact with family members for problem-solving purposes, are the experts, so to speak, in this field, and we feel their perceptions are important despite the clinical nature of their observation. In this review, we would like to pay attention to some American family therapists who have practiced in Japan and made comments as cultural observers. For example, an American family therapist, Bell (1989), and her family invited Japanese friends to visit their summer cottage in Japan on two different occasions. They discussed among themselves where their guests would sleep, then decided to wait until each family arrived to suggest their own arrangements. In both cases, to their surprise, the Japanese parents slept in separate beds—each with one or more children. Sleeping with an adult can certainly provide children with a sense of security in someone else's household. The parents may also think that they can show consideration for the host through controlling possible misbehavior of the children by sleeping together. And, furthermore, the husband and wife might feel a little embarrassed to display their husband-wife intimacy before the host. Thus, the social scientists' findings seem to be in accord with the therapist's observations.

### *Expectations and Images of Family*

A team composed of American and Japanese researchers (Hess et al., 1980; Kashiwagi, 1986) have investigated the differences between Japanese and American mothers in maternal expectations for their children's developmental tasks. The findings reveal a number of cultural contrasts. The American mother expects earlier mastery in verbal assert-

iveness and social skills with peers, such as: "Stands up for own rights with others," "Can explain why he/she thinks so," and "Takes initiative in playing with others." On the other hand, the Japanese mother expects earlier mastery in such areas as emotional maturity, compliance, and social courtesy. For example, the Japanese mother would emphasize: "Does not cry easily," "Comes when called," and "Greets family courteously." While the American mother emphasizes a child's social skills with peers, the Japanese puts a greater emphasis on the child's compliance with the parents. The horizontal peer relationship is highlighted in America, but the vertical parent-child relationship is underscored in Japan. As a result, mothers in these two cultures seem to hold different views of the idea of a "good child." While a child who is courteous, assertive, and socially competent with peers is considered to be a good child in the United States, the "good child" in Japan is obedient, self-controlled, and mild and gentle.

One of the core American family values—according to Hsu (1963, 1972), who compared the United States with China and India—is self-reliance, along with the two subsequent values: romantic love and youth. And the husband-wife relationship plays the most dominant role, taking precedence over other relationships within the family. This emphasis on self-reliance and individualism among Americans has been repeatedly brought up by a number of scholars of American society (Tocqueville, 1835; Stewart, 1972; Spindler, 1974; Barnlund, 1989; Bellah et al., 1985).

A recently published book, *Distant Mirrors: America as a Foreign Culture*, presents essays on American people and society by 14 foreign-born cultural anthropologists (DeVita & Armstrong, 1993). Looking at the American culture from many different cultural perspectives, the authors come back to the theme of individualism and self-reliance again and again, which seem to them the characteristics of American people. Thus, the Korean scholar laments his loss of status as the center of his family universe after immigrating to the United States, while the immigrated Filipino anthropologist with her daughter faces a conflict and is torn between individualism in America and togetherness and harmony in Philippines. And children in America appear to be encouraged to "decide for themselves," "do their own things," "develop their own opinions," or "solve their own problems"—much more extensively than children of other societies.

Another American family therapist (Colman, 1976) notes that in the majority culture Americans revealingly label the adolescent's transition as "leaving home," and describe it as the time children move from dependence to independence. In contrast, she suggests, Japanese therapists prefer to conceptualize this change as moving from immature to mature dependency. The American case implies a gradual change in quality from dependence to independence, whereas the Japanese case may suggest

continuous decrease in the degree of dependency. And, as Colman phrases it, Americans will sacrifice connectedness to achieve separateness, and Japanese the other way around. She gives as an example the time when a well-known Japanese family therapist gave a talk in the United States. He assigned a task to a Japanese family in which the son was the identified patient. The task was that mother and son were to sleep in the same bed as long as the son wished. An American in the audience inquired the age of the son. "Twenty-one," replied the Japanese therapist.

Such basic orientations being different between these two cultures, we are likely to assume that Japanese and Americans hold different images of the family as a whole. An interesting observation has been reported also by the American family therapist L. Bell (1989). She finds that Americans prefer seeing their families more as unified, stable, single entities than do Japanese. Being asked to make a symbolic picture of their family, she observes, Americans will usually make one picture, whereas the Japanese families will make more than one, saying "This is us when father is home," "This is the family at dinner time," "This shows the family's emotional relations," and "This shows the different interests and personalities in the family." The above observations seem to suggest that the idea of family is grasped in a somewhat different manner by Americans and Japanese, which may in turn indicate the reasons for the complex dimensions in cross-cultural marriages.

These studies would suggest that in the areas both of actual behavior and of cognition (i.e., expectations and images) Americans and Japanese present distinct characteristics in family relationships. A study of family interaction in cross-cultural settings can be useful in the field of intercultural communication in many ways, even though it has been a relatively neglected area of research. A great many interpersonal and organizational principles in society may actually come from family behavior and values; that is, for deeper understanding and smoother relationships between Americans and Japanese, it looks imperative for the interculturalists to come to grips—at least to some extent—with the issues of family process and culture.

## METHOD

### *Family Environment Scale (FES)*

The Family Environment Scale (FES) is a self-report, paper-and-pencil questionnaire. The FES comprises 10 subscales that measure the social-environmental characteristics of all types of families (Moos & Moos, 1986). The subscales assess the following three key domains: Relationship, Personal Growth, and System Maintenance. The Relationship di-

mension comprises 3 subscales: Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflict. The Personal Growth dimension includes 5 subscales: Independence, Achievement Orientation, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, Active-Recreational Orientation, and Moral-Religious Emphasis. The final dimension, System Maintenance, is composed of 2 subscales: Organization and Control (Table 1).

The FES questionnaire comprises a total of 90 items, 9 in each subscale. The respondents are asked to rate each item as true or false according to whether or not they agree that each item reflects an accurate picture of their family. The responses are then scored, giving a maximum total of 9 points for each nine-item subscale. The scores thus obtained for each scale enables us to grasp the characteristics of the family environment as seen by the various family members.

The FES is a well-known instrument for assessing family characteristics and is used widely for clinical and sociological research purposes, including studies of family typologies and the relationship between fam-

TABLE 1

FES subscales and dimensions

Relationship dimensions	
1. Cohesion	The degree of commitment, help, and support family members provide for one another
2. Expressiveness	The extent to which family members are encouraged to act openly and to express their feelings directly
3. Conflict	The amount of openly expressed anger, aggression, and conflict among family members
Personal growth dimensions	
4. Independence	The extent to which family members are assertive, are self-sufficient, and make their own decisions
5. Achievement orientation	The extent to which activities (such as school and work) are cast into an achievement-oriented or competitive framework
6. Intellectual-Cultural orientation	The degree of interest in political, social, intellectual, and cultural activities
7. Active-Recreational orientation	The extent of participation in social and recreational activities
8. Moral-Religious emphasis	The degree of emphasis on ethical and religious issues and values
System maintenance dimensions	
9. Organization	The degree of importance of clear organization and structure in planning family activities and responsibilities
10. Control	The extent to which set rules and procedures are used to run family life

ily attributes and child development. By 1986, 216 FES-related studies had been accumulated and the validity of the scale has been examined in the FES manual (Moos & Moos, 1986). Table 2 shows the internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) and test-retest reliabilities for each of the 10 subscales for the United States as well as for the Japanese sample. The internal consistencies for the American sample score 0.6 or more, which Moos and Moos (1986) use as an acceptable range.

## THE UNITED STATES' SAMPLE

For analyzing and interpreting characteristics of American families, we have used the results reported in the *Family Environment Scale Manual*, 2nd edition (Moos & Moos, 1986). Normative data on the FES subscales were collected for 1,125 normal families and 500 distressed families. The results of these two groups are reported separately, and we use the results from the normal families for our cross-cultural comparisons. The sample for normal families includes families from all areas of the country, single-parent and multigenerational families, families drawn from ethnic minority groups, and families of all age groups (e.g., newly-married student families, families with preschool and adolescent children, or families composed of older, retired adults). The sample of normal families also includes 294 families drawn randomly from specified census tracts in the San Francisco area. Subscale means and standard

**TABLE 2**  
Internal Consistencies and Test-Retest Reliabilities

	Internal consistencies ( $\alpha$ )		Test-retest	
	Japan (N = 569)	United States (N = 1067)	Japan (N = 59)	United States (N = 47)
Cohesion	.79	.78	.99	.86
Expressiveness	.52	.69	.95	.73
Conflict	.57 .63 (8) <sup>a</sup>	.75	.99	.85
Independence	.34	.61	.97	.68
Achievement	.56 .60 (7) <sup>a</sup>	.64	.97	.74
Intellectual-cul.	.64	.78	.99	.82
Active-rec.	.59 .61 (8) <sup>a</sup>	.67	.99	.77
Moral-religious	.63	.78	.99	.80
Organization	.64	.76	.95	.76
Control	.63	.67	.98	.77

<sup>a</sup>Alpha scores obtained after deleting confounding items; ( ) indicates number of items used.



deviation for these 294 families are found similar to those for the rest of the sample of normal families.

## THE JAPANESE VERSION OF THE FES

In order to prepare the Japanese version, we (an anthropologist, a sociologist, a psychiatrist, and a psychologist) worked jointly on the first draft of the translation of the original FES questionnaire. This first draft was administered to 188 housewives residing in Tokyo in a pretest, the results of which were used to prepare the second draft. We then had a professional translator translate this second draft back into English, and two native English speakers compared this back-translation with the original, picking out the discrepancies in meaning. Our research team then corrected the Japanese version of the items whose meaning differed from that of the original, and the new version was given to another bilingual Japanese for a final check, which led to the final version used in the present study. Moreover, upon termination of the present study, 11 bilingual people were asked to fill out both Japanese and English versions of the questionnaire at one-month intervals so that we could check the equivalence between the two (Barnlund & Nomura, 1985).

In our first publication on the FES (Noguchi et al., 1991), we discussed translation of the FES and instrument assessment of the Japanese version examining its reliability and validity. We reported the following on the issue of validity. Regarding construct validity, Moos and Moos (1986) did not show the factorial structure of the original FES in their manual, so that it is difficult to examine construct validity on a cross-cultural basis. (However, we have recently performed factor analysis of our Japanese sample, and the results are reported in the following section.) On concurrent validity (criterion-related validity), we are at this moment unable to find a correlating measure in Japan that established validity and reliability. On content validity, we have examined the findings about the Japanese and American cultures by anthropologists and other social scientists. Since our results generally agree with the overall cultural contrasts between Japan and the United States, they may be considered as evidence for supporting the validity of the Japanese FES.

The internal consistency of the scale was assessed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results, shown in Table 2, indicated that 5 out of the 10 subscales—Cohesion, Intellectual, Moral-Religious, Organization, and Control—exceeded the 0.6 standard level of internal consistency. To increase their reliability, the remaining five subscales were manipulated by excluding the items that lowered the internal consistency, thus bringing the level of reliability to 0.6. However, Independence and Expressiveness did not attain this level despite such procedures.

The above results confirm the internal consistency of five subscales in their original form and of three subscales under certain conditions.

The test-retest reliability was also assessed on the basis of the correlation coefficient of each subscale, using a separate sample of 59 housewives who filled out the forms at one-month intervals. As shown in Table 2, the results indicated high correlations in all subscales.

With regard to cross-equivalence (by the 11 bilingual subjects) between the original and the Japanese version, we examined the extent to which the 11 subjects' answers correspond item by item (all the 90 questions) in the two versions and obtained the average agreement of 75.9%, with 85.6% for the highest and 67.8% for the lowest.

### *Factor Structure of the Japanese FES*

We performed a factor analysis to examine the internal structure of the Japanese data set. Results of this factor analysis of the eight subscales are displayed in Table 3. (Expressiveness and Independence, the two subscales whose internal consistencies were very low, are excluded.) A three-factor solution is appropriate for this data matrix. The three varimax-rotated factors shown in Table 3 account for 61.8% of the total variance.

*Factors Seen as Bipolar Dimensions.* Factor 1 can be seen as a bipolar dimension between Intellectual-Cultural Orientation and Active-Recreational Orientation on the one hand and Control on the other. This dimension roughly indicates the extent of freedom concerning personal-family activities, where the members of the family are openly encouraged toward one end and restrained toward the other. Factor 2 can be seen as

TABLE 3

Factor Analysis of the Eight FES Subscales: Matrix of Varimax-Rotated Loadings

Subscale	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	$h^2$
Cohesion	.58	.48	-.28	.65
Conflict	.01	-.10	.84	.71
Achievement	.13	.32	.60	.47
Intellectual-cultural	.82	.11	.09	.69
Active-recreational	.81	.06	.10	.67
Moral-religious	.20	.60	.11	.41
Organization	.28	.70	-.28	.65
Control	-.13	.75	.31	.68
Percentage of variance	31.0	17.1	13.7	

a bipolar dimension that puts Control/Organization on one end and Conflict on the other. To paraphrase this dimension, the more control is exercised, the less familial conflicts would exist. Factor 3, also bipolar, is a Conflict versus Cohesion/Organization dimension. This dimension is relatively clear, placing conflict and disagreement on one end and togetherness and harmony on the other.

In the United States, reports on the factor structure of the original FES are found in the studies by Fowler (1981, 1982) and Boake and Salmon (1983). These investigators reported that a two-factor solution was appropriate for the original English version and that the FES's 10 subscales clustered on Factor 1: a bipolar dimension of Cohesion vs. Conflict; and Factor 2: a unipolar dimension of Control/Organization. American results suggested the presence of these two basic themes for family functioning: Relationship represented by Cohesion and System Maintenance represented by Control (see Table 1).

Comparing these results from the two nations, we notice that the clustering patterns are somewhat different. While two factors emerged in the United States, three factors were identified in Japan. However, in terms of bipolar dimensions, an underlying similarity exists between America's Factor 1, the dimension of Cohesion vs. Conflict and Japan's Factor 3, that of Conflict vs. Cohesion/Organization (with reverse factor loadings).

*Factors Seen As Unipolar Dimensions.* Looking over the Japanese results (Table 3), we notice that the subscales most highly loaded in each factor also happen to be members of each of the three FES key domains. That is, the Intellectual and the Active Orientations in Factor 1, marking the highest loading (.82 and .81), are both members of Personal Growth. The highest in Factor 2, Control and Organization (.75 and .70), both belong to System Maintenance; and the highest in Factor 3, Conflict (.84), belongs to Relationship. When these Factors are seen as unipolar dimensions, the three factors emerging from the Japanese data roughly represent each of the three key domains.

To summarize, one of the bipolar dimensions is found to be parallel between Japan and the United States. But, more important, in the unipolar view, the Japanese results give support to the basic design of the FES, which includes the three key domains of family characteristics. However, it is also suspected that the factor structure of the Japanese data differs somewhat from the original FES subscales—three stable factors emerged for Japan and two for the United States—although it is difficult to make a conclusive statement, because we excluded the two subscales, Independence and Expressiveness, due to their low reliability. Therefore, in this paper, we will look into the results of subscale intercorrelations

and suggest some of the Japanese cultural dynamics behind this difference.

### *The Japanese Sample*

The Japanese FES was administered in November 1989 in Tokyo's Setagaya Ward. The subjects were families of married parents and one or more teenage children (junior-high or high-school students). Five hundred families were chosen in a stratified, two-stage, random sampling design, and both parents and one or more children from 320 of those families filled out the questionnaire, i.e. an effective return rate of 64.0%. The respondents were distributed into 320 mothers, 320 fathers, and 400 children, i.e. a total of 1040.

The questionnaires were left with the respondents and picked up at a later date. Although the manual recommends the self-administration method in the presence of a test administrator, we expected resistance on the part of the Japanese families involved to letting researchers who are total strangers know all about their family relationships.

However, with this method of leaving the questionnaires to be filled out by the respondents alone, the question arises of how seriously the respondents answer and how accurately they understand the various items. In other words, the reliability of the respondents and their ability to act as respondents are both unknown factors. To solve this problem, we picked out questions that are very similar in meaning but with one phrased in a positive expression and the other in a negative one. The consistency of the responses on these questions enabled us to exclude all low-reliability responses from our data. We consider that this method enabled us to check both the attitude of the respondents and their understanding of the questions.

With this method, we found a number of forms with obvious misrepresentations and excluded them. As a result, 560 out of 1040 questionnaires collected (55.1%) were considered valid. A comparison of the basic attributes of these reliable cases with those seen in the total collected cases (Table 4) shows that they are similar on all items, sex, age, education of father, occupation of father, number of family members, number of children, and type of family, so that no new bias seems to have emerged from this procedure.

Concerning the sample equivalence, it should be noted that the American sample includes nonadolescent children, whereas the Japanese sample does not. Very small children have difficulty in answering the survey items, so they are excluded in both nations. Thus, the discrepancy exists only in the area of preadolescents. Because of this gap in the two subsamples, the results in this paper remains preliminary and should be seen

**TABLE 4**  
**Characteristics of the Japanese Sample**

Total	Collected cases 1040	Cases used for analysis 569
<b>Family</b>		
Father	320 (30.8%)	171 (30.1%)
Mother	320 (30.8%)	151 (26.5%)
Child	400 (38.4%)	247 (43.4%)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	512 (49.2%)	285 (50.1%)
Female	528 (50.8%)	284 (49.9%)
<b>Age</b>		
Father	46.9 (± 4.5)	46.9 (± 4.7)
Mother	43.6 (± 4.1)	43.5 (± 4.1)
Child	15.3 (± 1.7)	15.4 (± 1.7)
<b>Father's education</b>		
Junior High School	24 ( 7.5%)	13 ( 7.6%)
High School	85 (28.6%)	49 (28.7%)
Junior College	17 ( 5.3%)	8 ( 4.7%)
College	178 (55.6%)	92 (53.8%)
Graduate School	15 ( 4.7%)	8 ( 4.7%)
<b>Father's occupation</b>		
Professional	53 (16.6%)	26 (15.2%)
Managerial	85 (26.6%)	42 (24.6%)
Clerical-Sales	47 (14.7%)	29 (17.0%)
Private Business	110 (34.4%)	61 (35.7%)
Others	25 ( 7.8%)	13 ( 7.6%)
Number of family members	4.6 (± 1.0)	4.7 (± 1.0)
Number of children	2.3 (± 0.7)	2.3 (± 0.8)
<b>Types of family</b>		
Nuclear	229 (71.6%)	117 (68.4%)
Three-Generation	85 (26.6%)	51 (29.8%)
Other	6 ( 1.9%)	3 ( 1.8%)

only as an initial effort to explore the topics of family process in these two societies.

## RESULTS

### *The Similarities Found Between Japanese and American Families*

The similarities between these two societies are perhaps equally as important as the differences, since common cultural grounds are often the basis for gaining mutual empathy and promoting friendship. Both Japanese and Americans have developed industrialized and highly tech-

nological communities in which both have to compete and co-exist. It is often an active pursuit of such commonalities that helps and facilitates international teamwork. Whether these similarities are due to the universality of family dynamics or simply a parallel between the two nations, we are not in the right position to claim.

Table 5 compares the scores for each subscale and the standard deviations in Japan and the United States. Table 6 indicates the results of the comparison between the Japanese and the American intersubscale correlation coefficients in the parents' generation above the diagonal line and the children's generation below.

As noted before, population selections differ slightly between the American and the Japanese sample. The American sample includes families with preschool as well as adolescent children, while the Japanese sample includes only families with adolescent children. Therefore, we shall limit our discussion to the cross-cultural comparison of the intersubscale correlations based on Table 6. We feel the samples are large enough so that it is meaningful to draw rough cultural sketches, even though they are preliminary. The following patterns are seen for both the parents and the children of the two countries.

*Intellectual-Cultural + Active-Recreational.* First of all, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation is seen as highly correlated with Active-Recreational Orientation for both parents (.46 for Japan; .45 for the U.S.) and children (.53 for Japan; .40 for the U.S.) of these two societies. That is, the family's intellectual-cultural tendency goes along with their effort to go out and engage in various outside activities. If family members enjoy music, art, and literature or often discuss political and

**TABLE 5**  
Subscale means and standard deviations (Japan and the United States)

	Japan		United States	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Cohesion	6.23	2.42	6.61	1.36
Conflict	3.11 (3.50)	1.83 (2.06)	3.31	1.85
Achievement	2.27 (2.92)	1.65 (2.12)	5.47	1.61
Intellectual-cul.	5.05	2.09	5.63	1.72
Active-rec.	4.32 (4.86)	1.92 (2.21)	5.35	1.87
Moral-religious	3.95	2.04	4.72	1.98
Organization	5.60	2.13	5.41	1.83
Control	3.86	2.15	4.34	1.81

Note: ( ) indicates scores obtained by using a maximum score point of 9.

TABLE 6

## Subscale Intercorrelations

	Cohesion	Conflict	Achieve.	Intelle.	Act-Rec.	Moral-R.	Organiz.	Control
Cohesion								
Conflict	-.24							
Achieve.	-.04	.31						
Intelle.	.11	.07						
Act-Rec.	.46	.03	.06					
Moral-R.	.32	.07	.12	.21				
Organiz.	.50	-.32	-.01	.34	.29	.21		
Control	.38	-.33	.31	.14	.12	.27	.22	
	.20	.22	.40	.11	.11	.28	.22	
				-.03	-.05	.35	.27	

Parents above the diagonal and children below the diagonal/Japan, first line; U.S., shaded line

social problems, they are likely to attend social activities outside work or school.

*Cohesion + Organization:* Another strong correlation is found between Cohesion and Organization. In both Japan and America, committed and supportive families have clear organization and structure in family activities, according to the parents and the children of both countries (.52 and .50 for Japan; .41 and .38 for the U.S.). That is, group spirit and togetherness of a family tend to induce careful planning and orderliness in family relations, and perhaps vice versa.

*Cohesion + Intellectual-Cultural Orientation:* When a family is Cohesive, it also tends to have high Intellectual-Cultural Orientation in both societies (.46 and .47 for Japan; .38 and .38 for the U.S.). If members of the family back one another and get along well, they tend to participate more in intellectual and social activities such as lectures, plays, concerts, and so on. And these activities and practices may, in turn, bring more personal attention and time for family members.

*Achievement + Control:* Interestingly, the parents and the children of both countries agree that Achievement Orientation and Control are positively correlated (.31 and .43 for Japan; .32 and .40 for the U.S.). That is, a family's inclination toward individual competition and achievement is likely to produce more set rules and procedures to run family life. Doing well at work or school, therefore, appears to coincide with having more rules to follow and set ways of doing things at home regardless of the sociocultural differences.

*Conflict – Cohesion or Conflict – Organization.* Conflict, as a subscale, is negatively correlated not only with Cohesion (–.21 and –.24 for Japan; –.44 and –.53 for the United States) but also Organization (–.29 and –.32 for Japan; –.33 and –.33 for the United States) among both the Japanese and the Americans. In other words, the greater amount of expressed anger and conflict tends to lower not only the degree of commitment and help (i.e., cohesiveness), but also that of organization and structure within the family. Or, conversely, it suggests that a family's greater group spirit and higher degree of organization would both contribute to diminish the amount of anger, aggression, and conflict among the members.

The results of factor analysis both in Japan and the United States support this finding—the bipolar dimension of Factor 3 in Japan and that of Factor 1 in the United States both indicate the negative correlation between Conflict and Cohesion.

Now you may remember from the above that Cohesion and Organiza-



tion have shown a strong correlation and that they belong to Relationship dimensions and System Maintenance dimensions, respectively. This suggests that Conflict impairs both relationship and system maintenance aspects of the family but does not suggest that it impairs one's personal growth, which is another dimension. Cohesion, for example, is shown to contribute to the family's intellectual-cultural activities, in that Relationship affects Personal Growth. Conflict, on the other hand, seems to affect the relationship and system maintenance levels but does not always cause damage to one's individual achievement or intellectual or religious actions. We feel this is one of the critical aspects of the nature of family conflict—for both the Japanese and the American parents and children—that conflict can have a fifty-fifty chance for motivating or inhibiting one's individual growth and humanity.

### *The Differences Found Between Japanese and American Families*

Cultural differences between Japan and the United States have been the focus of many social scientists since World War II. Today, the two nations have begun to seek a new relationship after witnessing the breakup of the Soviet Union, in which ethnic and cultural differences played a significant role. Japanese and Americans tomorrow will have to contend even more with each other's differences in ideas and values, and through those differences, they can achieve a better grasp of each other and of themselves.

A number of key concepts have been utilized to fathom the basic character of the Japanese culture: shame (*haji*; Benedict, 1946), dependency wish (*amae*; Doi, 1973), limited social nexus (Nakamura, 1964), vertical society (Nakane, 1970), public and private self (Barnlund, 1975), and others. Here are some of the cultural differences we found regarding the family social environment.

#### *1. Comparison of Japanese and American Scores*

Here, due to the subsample discrepancy, we shall only discuss the subscale scores that were most different in the two societies.

*Achievement.* The mean scores first revealed a striking difference in Achievement Orientation, which is much greater in the United States (5.47) than in Japan (2.27) (see Table 5). Achievement is, indeed, regarded as one of the most deeply rooted values of American society (Merton, 1957), and many Americans would share their belief in good competition and personal success, striving to do things just a little better the next time. However, the result might sound a little odd to some readers who also think of the rapid economic growth Japan has achieved

in the last 30 years. In fact, extremely high achievement drives are reported in the personalities of Japanese immigrants in America (Caudill & DeVos, 1956). We interpret that the large difference we found between the two countries is mainly due to the FES emphasis on individual competitiveness. As the FES defines Achievement Orientation as the extent to which activities are cast into a competitive framework, achievement here is primarily defined as an individual quality.

In Japan, although this is slowly changing, the group (including the family) has always been a unit of achievement and competition. In the Japanese organization, work is usually assigned to a group or to a section of an organization and performed in the name of the group, not by any particular individual. The existence of a strong in-group feeling with a high emotional content has worked to discourage the application of the American-style merit system and to discourage competition within a face-to-face group (Nakane, 1970; Vogel, 1963; Barnlund, 1989).

The Japanese idea of achievement thus seems to be located in a different imagery context than individual competition. Using samples of TAT materials, DeVos (1973) reports a pervasive preoccupation with achievement among the Japanese expressed together with a great need for affiliation and concern for nurturance, which conflicts with his American data that suggest a negative correspondence between the appearance of the achievement need and the affiliation need. DeVos's study (1973) and ours both suggest that Japanese and Americans are both achievement-oriented but the contexts and dynamics are perhaps dissimilar.

*Cohesion.* The standard deviation for Cohesion is found to be much greater in Japan than in the United States. Generally, a large standard deviation on a scale is due to (a) a de facto large scattering; (b) the high sensitivity of the scale; (c) both (a) and (b). In this case, at least, the high sensitivity seems to be involved. Like the idea of affiliation need, Cohesion appears to be a culturally salient concept for most Japanese. It can be one of the most crucial aspects of the Japanese group orientation (Hamaguchi, 1982). Whether it is equally crucial or not in the sphere of the family, we cannot say from the comparative scores at hand. However, it is perhaps true that the items in Cohesion are relatively easy for the Japanese to rate because of their cultural emphasis; hence, a very slightly different response might have resulted in a greater standard deviation.

## 2. Cross-cultural Comparison of Intersubscale Correlations

Table 6 indicates the Japanese and the American intersubscale correlations. Here, the difference is examined according to the following two criteria: (a) the positive correlation is significant in one country and the

negative correlation in the other, and (b) either the positive or negative correlation is significant in one country and not in the other. (We administered the test of significance for the Japanese sample, but it has not been reported for the American sample in the Moos's manual, 1986. Our sample [569] has shown significance,  $p = 0.05$ , with the correlation coefficient of 0.15. Thus, it is perhaps safe to assume the level of significance for the American sample, which is much larger than ours [1,125], with the coefficient of 0.15.)

*Cohesion vs. Control.* Let us first look at the parents' generation. Interestingly, the correlation between Cohesion and Control shows a positive correlation in Japan (.28 for parents, .09 for children) but a negative one in the United States ( $-.17$  and  $-.20$ , respectively). In other words, whereas cohesion increases with greater control in Japan, the greater the control, the weaker the cohesion is in the United States. Or, while greater cohesion is made possible by greater control among the Japanese, weaker control makes for greater cohesion among the Americans. In the American cultural norm, the contents of Cohesion, which include help and support within the family, are decided on at the discretion of each adult member and are not the result of rules and restrictions (i.e., Control) beyond the individual. However, in Japan, such things as help, support, and commitment (i.e., Cohesion) seem to come from the parents emphasizing traditional rules and procedures existing beyond the individual. Perhaps only this higher level can persuade most Japanese adults to follow set rules and increase their commitment to and support of their family. Either way, it is an interesting finding in view of the differing organizational principles ruling in Japan and the United States.

The existence of Factor 2 in Japan seems related to this cultural contrast (Table 3). The bipolar dimension of Control vs. Conflict did not appear in the U.S. results. In Japan, the more rules and control exist in the family, the less conflict may be observed among the members (indicated by the Japanese result of factor analysis). And the less conflict is observed, the more likely for the family to enjoy cohesiveness; and, in the case of Japan, more control, also. These dynamics—which are absent in the United States—might be related to the factor structure of the Japanese FES, which emerged differently from that of the United States.

*Achievement vs. Intellectual-Cultural.* While Achievement Orientation and Intellectual-Cultural Orientation are positively correlated among Japanese parents (.18), they are uncorrelated among American parents (.01). We see the Japanese results as an expression of the belief in good education, which consequently requires competition and achievement through its arduous school entrance exams. Achievement in Japan is more likely to be expressed in terms of entering famous schools

than in the United States. On the other hand, as Achievement is one of the fundamental principles of American society that cuts across the social strata (Merton, 1957), there may be little probability of a difference due to social class or intellectual level.

*Intellectual-Cultural vs. Organization.* Similarly, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation and Organization are positively correlated among the Japanese parents (.30) but uncorrelated among the American parents (.09). Organization is a measure of how clearly role and responsibility are defined within the family. The results reveal that in Japan the more intellectual the stratum is, the more importance is attached to a clear intrafamilial structure and organization. It is thus likely that educated and intellectual Japanese parents can be both clear and rigid as regards family operation.

*Cohesion vs. Control.* Let us now have a look at the children's generation. Cohesion and Control are uncorrelated in Japan (.09) but negatively correlated in the United States (-.20). In the United States, the same negative correlation is observed in both the parents' and the children's generation; however, in Japan, the positive correlation between Cohesion and Control observed in the parents' generation is not found in the children's generation. Either these two elements, which are of primary importance to the Japanese principle of group mentality, have yet to be assimilated by the children's generation, or this finding may be an expression of typical adolescent rebellion. Or, this might even be a sign that Japanese cultural modes are in transition and that the parents' frameworks are not well transmitted to their children.

*Achievement vs. Conflict.* Achievement Orientation and Conflict are found positively correlated among Japanese children (.31) but uncorrelated among American children (.07), who might experience less familial conflict. On the other hand, intrafamilial relationships could be a source of conflict for achievement-conscious Japanese children who try to be competitive with others. These results may indicate that in Japan, the more education-oriented the family is, the more likely the children are to have conflicts.

*Achievement vs. Organization.* Also, Achievement Orientation and Organization are found uncorrelated among Japanese children (-.01), but positively correlated among American children (.31). Indeed, organization with clear-cut roles and the accompanying responsibility that this involves is seen as a means to success and therefore taught American children at an early age. This may be reflected in the clear roles and task definitions given personnel in American work settings, which contrast

with the rather ambiguous role distribution seen in Japanese companies. The result might indicate the differing frameworks of these two societies already being observed in the children's behaviors.

*Moral-Religious vs. Active-Recreational.* Moral-Religious Emphasis and Active-Recreational Orientation are found positively correlated in Japan (.29) but uncorrelated in the United States (.04). In Japanese elementary schools, "everyone in harmony" (*minna nakayoku*) is one of the major themes repeatedly emphasized—including in their weekly class of moral education (Christine Ogawa, personal communication; Nomura, 1987). Recreational activities fit this purpose through developing social skills for harmony and cooperation, which is the moral goal for most Japanese. For American children, however, moral-religious training is rather geared toward one's individual growth as an integrated but unique human being, so that the link between these two orientations might not be always necessary. These cross-cultural observations should be investigated further in a more rigorous way.

### *3. Independence and Expressiveness: Culturally Problematic Constructs*

As shown in Table 2, the internal consistency of Independence is extremely low in Japan; it has the correlation coefficient of only 0.34. We have therefore examined the correlations of each item in Independence with the scores of all the other subscales. Three out of nine items in Independence have shown the correlation of 0.2 or more with the following subscales: Cohesion, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, and Control.

This means that the items in Independence are confused by the Japanese respondents with the ideas of Cohesion, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, or Control. A number of items in Independence have perhaps contributed to a confusing, multifaceted image that is not focused on a single concept of Independence. An item from the Independence scale, "There is very little privacy in our family," for example, may be classified by Japanese in the category of Cohesion or even of Control. "Family members strongly encourage each other to stand up for their rights" can be classified in Intellectual-Cultural Orientation. Thus, items that Americans understand as expressions of Independence appear to be diffuse concepts for the Japanese and difficult to understand. Any understanding, if there is any at all, probably stops at the conceptual level and may not be connected with experience.

The same holds true of Expressiveness, which scores the low correlation of 0.52. Following the same procedure, we have computed the correlations between the various items on the Expressiveness subscale and the

**TABLE 7**  
**The Similarities in Intersubscale Correlation Between Japan and the United States**

Japan and the United States		
1. Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	+	Active-Recreational Orientation
2. Cohesion	+	Organization
3. Cohesion	+	Intellectual-Cultural Orientation
4. Achievement Orientation	+	Control
5. Conflict	-	Organization
6. Conflict	-	Cohesion

+ Positive correlation.  
 - Negative correlation.

other subscales. It is found that 6 items correlate highly with Cohesion, 3 with Organization, 2 with Conflict and 1, respectively, with Intellectual-Cultural, Active-Recreational, and Moral-Religious Emphasis. An item from the Expressiveness scale, "We say anything we want to around home" can perhaps be classified by Japanese in Cohesion. "There are a lot of spontaneous discussions in our family" could be categorized in Organization or even Intellectual-Cultural Orientation. Behavior seen as free expression of emotions in the United States is interpreted in Japan as sign of strong mutual support or togetherness of a family. And an open expression of one's opinion in the American sense might be interpreted as an intellectual-cultural activity in Japan.

The above findings seem to have an important cross-cultural implication. Unlike the other eight constructs, which managed to cross the cultural boundaries, Independence and Expressiveness may be the ones from which the two societies critically diverge. Since they are the important constructs that roughly correspond to the concepts of "self" and "communication," it might suggest that a profound difference between Japan and the United States lies in these crucial areas of our humanity: how to see one's personhood and how to communicate with others. Further, Independence as a construct may be less universal and more culture-specific than we generally assume. It may be more germane to the Western framework of self and individual, but difficult to convey in Japanese culture. The degree of expressiveness, too, might not be measured in Japan only by the extent of one's open and direct utterance of feelings and opinions (cf. Nomura & Barnlund, 1983).

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The *Family Environment Scale* measures personal and relational characteristics of a family in a number of areas. This survey is preliminary, but we think it worthwhile to draw tentative sketches of Japanese and American family patterns to call attentions to this issue in cross-cultural research. Tables 7 and 8 summarize our present findings.

The Japanese and the American respondents, both the parents and the children, seem to agree that intellectual-cultural involvement is parallel to the extent of participation in social activities; that togetherness of family is enhanced not only by social-intellectual curiosity but also by orderliness and good planning within the family; and that getting ahead in life is associated with placing emphasis on family rules and set ways of doing things. And the people of both countries assert that anger and conflict among family members has a negative correspondence to the degree of commitment and support, as well as to that of neatness and carefulness of family functioning.

In terms of the three major dimensions in the FES, Relationship, Personal Growth and System Maintenance, we may add the following observation. That is, system-oriented descriptions might create a greater

TABLE 8

## The Differences in Intersubscale Correlation Between Japan and the United States

Japan		The United States	
Parents			
1. Cohesion	+	Control	Cohesion - Control
2. Achievement Orientation	+	Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	Achievement Orientation 0 Intellectual-Cultural Orientation
3. Organization	+	Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	Organization 0 Intellectual-Cultural Orientation
Children			
1. Cohesion	0	Control	Cohesion - Control
2. Achievement Orientation	+	Conflict	Achievement Orientation 0 Conflict
3. Achievement Orientation	0	Organization	Achievement Orientation + Organization
4. Moral-Religious Emphasis	+	Active-Recreational Orientation	Moral-Religious Emphasis 0 Active-Recreational Orientation

+ Positive correlation.

- Negative correlation.

0 No correlation.

basis for commonality between these two cultures than the other two dimensions. According to Table 2, the Japanese respondents have partial or total difficulty understanding two out of three concepts in Relationship (Expressiveness and Conflict) and have similar problems with three out of five in Personal Growth (Independence, Achievement, and Active-Recreational). But, in the System Maintenance Dimension, neither Organization nor Control presents any such difficulty. In other words, structural and rule-based descriptions, and perhaps systemic approaches to family in general, can possibly create a slightly more accessible language across these cultures.

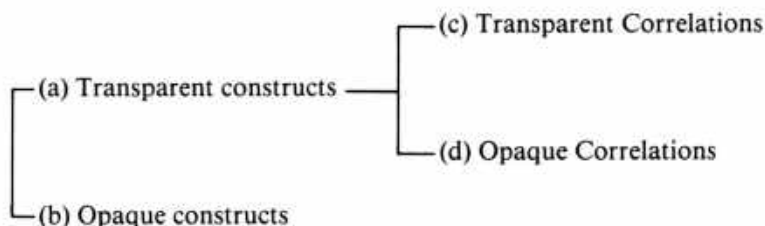
As to the cultural differences, for the Japanese parents cohesiveness of family is found to be correlated with conforming to house rules or decisions by the key family member, whereas, for the American parents such cohesion and intimacy would diminish if inflexible rules and procedures were imposed to run family life. American children agree with their parents in this view, while Japanese children do not significantly. Nevertheless, the contrast may be seen as a reflection of differing cultural assumptions of Japan and the United States concerning the relationship between family cohesion and family control.

Achievement, belief in competition, and aspiration for promotions seem linked with intellectual-cultural tendencies among the Japanese parents, but no strong linkage is found among the American parents. For the Japanese children competition around academic achievement is intertwined with familial conflict and disagreement, while for the American children it appears to be less so. For the American children successful achievement may be associated with the emphasis on clear organization and orderliness, while for the Japanese children that does not seem to be the case.

Furthermore, for the Japanese parents, the degree of family organization and clear roles seems parallel to a family's intellectual-cultural bent, which is not found for the American parents. And moral-religious emphasis appears related to active participation in social-recreational activities among the Japanese children, while they seem unrelated for the American children.

Now, let us change perspectives. If we discuss our results from the point of view of transmission, what can we add to the static map of comparison we presented? To do so, let us call translating the original FES constructs such as Cohesion or Independence into a different cultural context, a "transmission." Let us also call sharing the same correlation in two different cultural contexts another level of transmission. If we name the transmittable content transparent and the untransmittable one opaque, borrowing Spencer-Brown's terminology (1972), the following diagram may be drawn:





Transparent constructs (a), include the eight subscales we managed to use in the FES Japanese version. Opaque constructs (b), are Independence and Expressiveness, which did not function as integral constructs in the Japanese culture, regardless of our item manipulations. Transparent correlations (c), are the similar intersubscale correlations found both in Japan and the United States, such as a positive correspondence between Intellectual-Cultural and Active-Recreational Orientation, or a negative one between Conflict and Organization. Opaque correlations (d), are the differences in intersubscale correlation between the two countries, for instance, a positive correspondence between Cohesion and Control for the Japanese parents and a negative one for the American parents, and so on.

Utilizing a perspective of transmission, the following implications for cross-cultural research may be possible. First, there are various levels of transmission—in this case from the original English to the Japanese: zero transmission, partial transmission, adequate transmission, and overtransmission, to give tentative names. Some constructs such as Independence failed (zero) to be transmitted; some such as Achievement Orientation managed to transmit (partial) after manipulations (i.e., item deletion); some such as Intellectual-Cultural Orientation are adequately transmitted with no apparent difficulty; and some such as Cohesion might be overtransmitted, that is, the meaning has been acutely understood by the Japanese due to their cultural emphasis. Cohesion, one of the key components in the Japanese group mind, has turned out a highly sensitive scale, yielding a greater standard deviation (see Table 5). The concept and phenomenon of “overtransmission” is perhaps one of the neglected areas in cross-cultural research, since our tendency is to focus more upon difficult areas of transmission.

The three major dimensions can also be discussed in the same way. The System Maintenance dimension has been adequately transmitted, while Relationship and Personal Growth have been a partial success. For example, Expressiveness has to be deleted from the Relationship dimension for that dimension to be transmittable, and Independence from the Personal Growth dimension for the same reason.

Second, the idea of transmission seems useful for searching the way in

which we make cross-cultural research instruments more adaptive. To make an opaque construct transparent ( $b \rightarrow a$ )—as in the case of Achievement, Conflict, or Active-Recreational Orientation—we have deleted items that lowered the internal consistency. That is, an opaque construct can become transparent by excluding confounding elements. Exclusion is indeed one of the major strategies in making the transmission possible; however, it should be noted that too much exclusion will destroy the construct itself. The Independence Scale, for example, did not attain an acceptable level of reliability after the deletion. But, even though we attained the reliability by excluding many items, it would end up losing coherence as a scale, since there would be too few questions (items) left.

Third, the idea of transmission and the similarity between the cultures can be taken as synonymous, since what is similar and what is transmittable coincide with each other. By excluding the confounding items, one can make opaque content transparent so that it becomes visible from the other culture, hence, transmittable.

Outside cross-cultural research methods, there is a larger question of mutual understanding between these two societies: How can we make an opaque correlation transparent for the other culture? In other words, is there a way of making untransmittable correlations transmittable ( $d \rightarrow c$ )? The constructs such as Cohesion and Control have been well transmitted to the Japanese culture, but their correlations—a positive one for the Japanese parents and a negative one for the American parents—have not. The adequate transmission of constructs is a necessity to obtain the similar correlations, but transmission of “relationship” (i.e., correlations) is a more complicated problem to which we cannot give an immediate answer.

In the spirit of the above argument, however, one way might be to delete the patterns, namely the correlations. If the two societies begin to lose their strong cultural and habitual forms, the two societies would come close in terms of having no correlations. But, the following two questions arise: (1) whether “no pattern” can be considered a similarity or a basis for transmission; and more important, (2) whether this type of cultural change is desirable for the people of each society. This question becomes pertinent, however, when the two cultures are in situations in which clashes can occur. Rather than stressing the differences between Japanese and American cultures, our research has discovered a number of important similarities in Japanese and American family dynamics. An appreciation of the similarities rooted in both cultures, combined with a respect for certain differences, will enhance cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

The world keeps shrinking as we increase the level of human activity across cultural boundaries. The partner nations are like one family

whose members need their own cohesiveness, independence, and organization in their "family" relations. A cross-cultural researcher must be a "family therapist" who provides accurate pictures of each member society and offers new insights on their relationships. The world is indeed shrinking, but we are the "shrinks." May this article be therapeutic for those who work for improvement of human relationships across cultural boundaries.

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