CONTRASTING SOME JAPANESE AND ENGLISH POSITIVE EMOTIONS: THE NATURE OF FEELING

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This paper uses the method of “conceptual encounter” to examine the meanings of three of the most common Japanese terms for positive emotions. It contrasts the emotional experiences suggested by these terms with the experiences that are suggested by the English terms that are used as equivalents. The method appears to be successful in revealing the similarities and differences in how some positive emotional experiences are constructed in the different cultures. The results suggest that the differences in what is felt and labeled as emotion may be understood if we regard emotions as involving personal transformations in the Western and the Japanese self.

Key words: emotions, cross-cultural, joy, positive affect

What may our emotional vocabularies tell us about the nature of emotional experience? There is a spontaneous aspect to emotion. We feel something occurring that involves our bodies and that is not willed. Sometimes this is expressed on our faces. Yet we also speak of feeling hunger, thirst, and fatigue. Philosophers have attempted to distinguish emotions from these other bodily states by suggesting that they involve subconscious judgments or are “intentional” in Brentano’s sense of taking objects, of being about something. However, it has been difficult to construct a consistent definition. Levy (1982) has argued that emotions, unlike other bodily states, involve a relationship between person and external situation, and it has been argued that emotions always involve transformations in the relationship between self and other (de Rivera, 1985). In this paper we want to explore some Japanese emotions and contrast the emotional experiences that the Japanese have named with the experiences named in English. From a Western perspective, a list of typical Japanese emotions raises two questions: Why do the Japanese stress a group of mostly positive emotions? Why do some of the terms appear to refer to kinds of behavior rather than emotions? We hope that the answers to these questions may tell us about the nature of what we experience as an emotion\(^{1}\).

In the English popular language we tend to exemplify emotions with four major emotions: anger, sadness, happiness, and fear. Thus clinicians may ask their clients, “Are you mad, sad, glad, or afraid?” These four are often regarded as prototypical (e.g., Borke, 1971; Denham, Zoller, & Couchoud, 1994). Ekman (1992) has argued that they, along with surprise and possibly disgust and contempt, are basic because they are communicated through universally recognizable and distinguishable facial expressions (e.g., Matsumoto, 

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Others advocate including love, although it has no unequivocal facial expression (see Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O’Connor, 1987). It is notable that the majority of these exemplary emotions have negative valence.

Do these emotion names really exemplify the concept of emotion? Fehr and Russell (1984) asked 200 Canadian students to list as many emotions as came to mind in one minute. The emotion names that were most frequently listed are shown in Table 1. The left column of Table 1 shows the top five words listed by their respondents and the percentage of respondents listing each word. These are the words that spring to the mind of English speakers as exemplars of what emotions are. (It is interesting to note that although over 50% of respondents listed love, neither surprise nor disgust were in the top dozen words that came to mind.)

The emotion names that exemplify emotion for the Japanese are a bit different. In Japan, a word “ki-do-ai-raku,” which comes from a Chinese phrase, refers to the various emotions that one experiences in life. The phrase might be translated as glad, angry, sad, and enjoyable relaxation. Note that this listing includes as many positive as negative emotions. When Hama (1990) repeated the Fehr and Russell study with over 200 Japanese students, she found the results shown in the right hand column of table one. Although we can see that anger and sadness are listed by both Japanese and English speakers, neither love nor fear is mentioned as an exemplar by the Japanese, and three positive emotions are listed (see also Kobayashi, Shallert, & Ogren, 2003). We know from a number of studies on happiness that the Japanese, along with other Asian cultures, report relatively less happiness (e.g., Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000). Why, then, from the perspective of an objective psychology, emotion is often said to consist of physiological, behavioral, and “subjective” components — the latter referring to “feelings” as reflected in how we talk about our emotions. The main foci of this paper are on these “subjective” components and what we may learn about feelings when we examine other cultures. In fact, from a phenomenological perspective, we must begin with our experience of emotion. Our feelings and the words we have to examine them, together with our experience of our behavior and the behavior of others and whatever physiological measures we can obtain, are the starting points for our inquiry. From this perspective it is unfortunate to speak of the antecedents of an emotion as though there was such a thing as an emotion distinct from the situation in which it arises, because our experience of the situation is an aspect of our emotion. In English our term “emotion” derives from the Latin *emovere* and suggests that we experience ourselves as being moved by emotion rather than deliberately enacting an emotion.

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**Table 1. Emotions That First Come to Mind**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canadians</th>
<th>Percentage listing emotion</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>Sadness (<em>Kanashimi</em>)</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Anger (<em>Ikari</em>)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Joy (<em>Yorokobi</em>)</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>Enjoyable (<em>Tanoshii</em>)</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>Glad (<em>Ureshii</em>)</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 From the perspective of an objective psychology, emotion is often said to consist of physiological, behavioral, and “subjective” components — the latter referring to “feelings” as reflected in how we talk about our emotions. The main foci of this paper are on these “subjective” components and what we may learn about feelings when we examine other cultures. In fact, from a phenomenological perspective, we must begin with our experience of emotion. Our feelings and the words we have to examine them, together with our experience of our behavior and the behavior of others and whatever physiological measures we can obtain, are the starting points for our inquiry. From this perspective it is unfortunate to speak of the antecedents of an emotion as though there was such a thing as an emotion distinct from the situation in which it arises, because our experience of the situation is an aspect of our emotion. In English our term “emotion” derives from the Latin *emovere* and suggests that we experience ourselves as being moved by emotion rather than deliberately enacting an emotion.
are three distinct positive emotional experiences stressed as exemplars of emotion, and why is one of these (tanoshii) an exemplar of emotion when it appears to the Westerner to be a description of behavior? What might the experience of these emotions tell us about the nature of feeling?

Although little is known about the subjective experience of the Japanese positive emotions, we already know quite a bit about the positive emotional experiences we have labeled in English. For example, studies by Lindsay-Hartz (1981) and by de Rivera, Possell, Verette, and Weiner (1989) have distinguished what occurs in joy, gladness, and elation. Of course, different people may use emotion labels somewhat differently. One way of dealing with these differences is to find a common prototype. However, prototypes do not furnish descriptions of differences that allow us to understand the subjective experience of an emotion. Hence, rather than describing prototypical experiences, we construct abstract descriptions that help us distinguish one experience from another. To make an analogy with geometry, rather than attempting to describe a prototypically round shape, we may abstractly describe a circle. People may call a variety of shapes circles, but in geometry we imagine an abstract circle whose points are all equidistant from a central focus. Then we can distinguish such a circle from an ellipse (defined as a form with two foci — its form being the line that maintains a given distance from these two foci). Similarly, in the method termed “conceptual encounter” (de Rivera, 1981), we construct abstract conceptualizations that may be used to describe emotional experiences.

The emotion termed elation, for example, is characterized by a person going up — getting high and going a bit out of contact with reality. This transformation appears to occur when a wish comes true. Wishes occur on a level of fantasy that Lewin described as above the level of reality. Thus, when a wish comes true, a person at first cannot believe that it has come true. It is as though the person has to float up to the level of fantasy to

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2 The Japanese vocabulary for emotions is quite different from that of English, German, and Spanish. In the latter societies there is a clear distinction between person and other, and most terms for emotions can be divided into those that are directed at others (such as fear, anger, love, desire) and those that seem directed at self (such as depression, anxiety, serenity, and joy). Dahl and Stengel (1978) found that subjects significantly place 86% of English emotion names in these categories. Yet, this is more difficult to do in Japanese because Japanese terms always deal with relationships. There is less of a self-identity in the Western sense and always some sort of reference to another. Even when we compare emotions that are obviously self-focused, such as American shame and Japanese haji, we find that the Western experience involves a hidden sense of not being the person whom one wants to be, while the Japanese experience involves a failure to enact the required role (one’s tachiba) and an apology for the disturbance to the social order. Further, as Suzuki (1986, p. 167) notes, in most languages there is an a priori basic distinction between self and other, but in Japanese there is “a tendency to assimilate the observing self into the observed object.” Nevertheless, it is possible for Japanese students to place many emotion terms into categories that are directed at other or directed at self. Thus, there is agreement that akogare (yearning) and kowai (frightened) are directed at objects and ureshii, tanoshii, and yorokobu refer to self.

A further complication is that the Japanese are less apt to directly speak about their personal feelings than to describe behavior or characterize the qualities of objects or self that are related to feelings. Thus, rather than speak of a feeling of love (ai) or affection (aijou), a Japanese may refer to the other as kawaii (cute, darling, dear) or speak of kawaigaru (to pet, caress, make a pet of). Similarly, a feeling of gratitude is most likely to be referred to as thanks (arigato).
realize the new situation in which they find themselves. On the other hand, gladness may be characterized as a brightening and opening that occurs when a hope is fulfilled. Hopes are grounded in reality but involve a sense that one’s situation is not quite the way one would like it to be. It is as though there is a cloud that shades our perception of goodness and that when a hope is realized, the cloud lifts and the world becomes brighter.

Joy is different still. Unlike elation and gladness, joy requires celebration and appears to occur when there is a meeting with another person or aspect of nature that is perceived as unique rather than objectified in any way. In Strasser’s (1977) analysis, enjoyment occurs when we have possession, joy involves a taking into possession, and happiness involves a series of paradoxes that include the paradox that one both possesses and is involved in possessing.

How might these descriptions of positive emotions in the English language compare with the description of positive emotions in Japanese? In comparing the conceptualizations of positive emotion terms in English to those in Japanese, it may be important to remember differences in how the self is construed. Thanks to the writings of Doi (1985), Lebra (1976), Markus and Kitayama (1991), and Roland (1988), we now know a good deal about how the Japanese self and culture may be characterized and contrasted with the Western self. We know, for example, that in intimate relations, the Japanese are much more comfortable with feeling dependent, and that they cultivate empathy rather than autonomy. And in less close relationships we know that the Japanese do not attempt to construct a sense of identity that is maintained across situations, but rather attempt to enact a temporary role obligation (a tachiba) that is determined by one’s relative status in specific situations and that maintains group harmony (de Rivera, 1989). The Japanese social self always belongs to a group and is much more interdependent or sociocentric than the Western self. Further, in public situations the Japanese person is continually adjusting honne (or private subjectivity) and tatemae (or publicly taken normative position), and achieving the personal wishes of honne is much less important than conforming to the group norm established by tatemae (Matsumoto, 1996). In this paper we are interested in taking what we know about Japanese culture and self and applying that knowledge to what we can discover about the structure of Japanese positive exemplar emotions in order to examine the nature of feeling and what we experience as emotion.

The analysis of dependency stems from Doi’s analysis of amae — presuming on the benevolence of the other, as when a child assumes that its mother will care for him or her. Doi’s analysis stresses the dependency that is involved, a trusting and a longing to depend on the other, to be loved. Kumagi (1981) stresses the affectionate mutuality of the relationship — the child indulging itself (asserting its own will) and the mother being indulgent (withdrawing her own will), and suggests that this pattern characterizes intimate relations in Japan and that it is even transposed to non-intimate relations via indulgence and deference. Taketomo (1986) suggests that the language of amae is a metalanguage for behavior that is deviant from the norm but accepted by both parties (social pressures temporarily relaxed). In any case, the mutual dependence is stressed and may be contrasted with the relationship of autonomous selves who may or may not love one another. The best way to relate this to tachiba is unclear. Perhaps it is simply that the Japanese self is mostly experienced in relation to other rather than separately defined. For example, one’s body may be seen as belonging to one’s mother as much as belonging to one’s self.
Method

Participants:
Six Japanese native speakers (four females and two males) who had stayed in the U.S. from 1 to 5 years were interviewed in Japanese. They studied at Clark University in Worcester, MA, and ranged in age from 20 to 38. All of them planned to go back to Japan in the future.

Procedure: Conceptual Encounter
How may we examine the subjective experience of emotion? Rather than simply asking respondents to talk about their subjective experience, de Rivera (1981) has suggested that the investigator should also construct an abstract conceptualization of the experience and test that conceptualization by having it encounter the account of the respondent’s concrete experience. The participants were interviewed using the first part of the method of conceptual encounter (for details, see de Rivera, 1981; de Rivera, in press). In this method, the participants tell of a time when they experienced the emotion in question. From their account, the investigator attempts to create a conceptualization that characterizes the situation in which the emotion occurs as well as the wishes and bodily transformations that accompany the emotion. Preliminary conceptualization is then offered to participants for their criticism. The encounter between the investigator’s abstract ideas about the emotion and the respondent’s concrete experience enables the investigator to construct a more precise conceptual description.

For the current investigation, the three most frequently listed positive emotion words (yorokobu, ureshii, tanoshii) were used. A previous study (Ono & de Rivera, 2004) showed that the grammatical form of emotion words contribute to a Japanese speaker’s judgment of the extent to which the words refer to emotions. A verb yorokobu, as opposed to a noun yorokobi, and an adjective tanoshii, as opposed to a verb tanoshimu or a noun tanoshimi, were more appropriate referents to emotions. Therefore, the interviewer chose to use a verb and two adjectives, yorokobu, tanoshii, and ureshii, in inquiring about the participants’ emotional experiences. The interviews were conducted in 2 sessions that lasted approximately 1 hour each and were audio taped and transcribed afterwards.

Below, we report what we found for each of the three Japanese positive emotions and contrast it with what we found with the Western experience of emotions ordinarily regarded as equivalents.

Results

Some participants initially used the three words interchangeably; however, upon further inquiry, they came to see that not all positive experience can be described with all three words at the same time. We have delineated yorokobu, tanoshii, and ureshii for the sake of comparison and clarity, but it is important to note that all three words are generic terms and often used casually in speech without much reflection.

Yorokobu. This term is used to refer to a clearly emotional behavior that is usually translated as “to be delighted/glad; rejoice” (Obunsha, 1968). Yorokobu is an intense, spike emotion: It is the “yat tah (yes)!” that affirms that a good thing has happened, such as when a girl’s boyfriend brings her some Godiva chocolates, class is canceled, or a student gets an award. When one cries out “yat tah!,” the hands go up in the goal sign, one may clap, laugh out loud, and/or scream — and these celebratory actions often accompany yorokobu. The Westerner might suppose that an inner joy is central to experiencing yorokobu and that these behaviors express this feeling of inner joy. In fact, however, yorokobu cannot be fully felt unless one can express the emotion in action. One participant told how she could not fully yorokobu when she won a scholarship. There were other people in the room who wanted the same scholarship but did not get it. She
reported that her experience of yorokobu was incomplete because she felt badly for these others and could not express her feeling. On reflection she commented that in order for one to yorokobu, one must be able to share it with others. In fact, Yorokobu is more done than reflected upon. So when the person reflects on their positive experiences, they are apt to use a different term to report a feeling such as ureshii, tanoshii, or shiawase (a sense of happiness, full satisfaction, or contentment). To some extent this appears to occur because yorokobu includes these other feelings, but to a large extent it feels inappropriate to verbalize one’s yorokobu experience.

Like the term “happiness” and “joy,” yorokobu may be used both generically and with the above mentioned specific meanings. Joy implies an inner state that, as a Western experience, involves the transformation of the bounded, individualized self that is now taking possession of something it previously lacked. Is joy a good translation of yorokobu? If we simply think of emotions as the result of common antecedents causing a transformation, then yorokobu may be taken as the same as delight or joy. In both cases the antecedent, at least the superficial antecedent, is good fortune and the attainment of possession after prior uncertainty. However, the nature of transformation is rather different. The Western self spontaneously expands and is not conscious of enacting joy unless some pretence is involved. Although a gift has been received, and there is gratitude and celebration, it is an inner autonomous heart that has sought after such good fortune, and the celebration may be private. By contrast, the Japanese yorokobu because they have received something that is impossible to attain by themselves. Always being aware of his or her relation to others, embedded in a social group, the Japanese self is not separate from others. Unexpected receipt of the good fortune calls for celebratory behavior that must be spontaneously displayed and shared by others in order for one to fully yorokobu.

Our participants dealt with the affect that we presume is present when one wins a victory or gets a prize by sharing the enjoyment of the good fortune and their gratitude. They did not emphasize a personal accomplishment so much as they shared a good fortune. Of course, one presumes that a feeling is present and could be described — that the heart expands, or one floats — but yorokobu requires the public behavior in addition to the intense private feeling of an enhanced ego.

In fact, although a Japanese person may report experiences of yorokobu, the term is more often used to refer to someone else’s emotion. For example, one participant described her yorokobu experience when she won a basketball game. However, she reported that during the celebration, she would not have used the term “yorokobu” to describe her own feelings, but would have done so in describing others, such as “they were all happy (minna yoroko-n-de-ru).” It would be too obvious and awkward to refer to one’s own emotional behavior in the moment of celebration, although when taking a distance from one’s own subjective experiences, such as in formal writing or speech, one might say, “I feel joy (yorokobi wo kanjiru)” or “I am congratulating (yoroko-n-de-iru).” Rather than the sort of celebration of victory, which would call attention to the self and imply an egoism that is frowned upon in Japan, the victory is experienced as a winning-that-is-given-by-others, so that gratitude is more called for than pride. In a sense, it is not that the self is responsible and the ego has accomplished something but that one is grateful
for receipt of a good fortune. In one sense “happy” would be a better word, for it implies that something happens. However, happiness implies a state of much greater duration, and even the term “happy” implies something that lasts a while.

It would seem that the expansion implied by the emotion is not only experienced as a release of energy, an explosion, but also an expansive sensation characterized by blending of the self with others. Through yorokobu, the celebrated blends with the celebrator. The beauty of the Japanese inter-relational self is revealed in the implication of an expression such as yorokonde mora-e-ru — an expression that may be translated as “somebody kindly appreciated my gift.”

Tanoshii. Obunsha’s dictionary (1968) translates tanoshii as pleasant, happy, delightful, merry, cheerful, or joyful. It is used when one is having fun and feeling good and not experiencing any uneasiness. Things are agreeable and nice. It might be most accurately translated as “relaxed having fun.” Once the senior author learned the word tanoshii, he was able to use it to code experiences and found it useful to label incidents where people are having fun. He observed people laughing at slapstick or prancing about quite unconcerned with the reactions of others. The affect is clearly positive and active. However, most English speakers would not consider “relaxed having fun” as an emotion. Rather, it would seem to be a description of behavior.

If we try to express tanoshii as an emotional state, we might translate it as enjoyable or feeling enjoyment. However in English, enjoyment implies a reflectivity. When one enjoys an activity, one may savor the experience as it is occurring, and one may do so in private. By contrast, our results seem to indicate what is central to a tanoshii experience is that one must be spontaneous and be free of self-awareness in the moment. It occurs when one is relaxed and free of social concerns. One is at ease, content. One is not trying to accomplish something and is not concerned with one’s status, what others are thinking, or how one ought to be behaving. Rather, one is simply enjoying fun activities, such as going shopping with a friend, or playing a friendly game of tennis. It is the feeling one has when one is lost in joyful activities. The body feels lighter and comes to move naturally.

Because one does not usually reflect upon the emotion, it is easier to observe tanoshii in others than in oneself. And typically one feels tanoshii with others. One respondent reported feeling ureshii when he was recognized by an award from his classmates. He had always tried to make everyone laugh and have a good time. That is, he was happy that he could make his friends laugh (tanoshi-mase-ru). Note, that he did not personally experience tanoshii because he was trying to make others feel tanoshii. Thus, tanoshii describes a nonself-conscious behavior of enjoyment that is describable mostly in retrospect.

Ureshii. This is the term that most clearly refers to a feeling in the Western sense. It is usually translated as happy or glad and may be used generically. However, the interviews suggest that it is often used to refer to specific feelings that Westerners do not really code. Ureshii is a feeling that is felt more than expressed and may be experienced

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4 Two of our participants spoke about gift-giving situation in an almost identical manner, using expressions such as yorokonde-mora-e-ru, yorokonde-kureru; one participant stated, “presento wo agete yorokonde mora-e-ru to ureshii” — I will be happy when I give a gift which makes the other person yorokobu.
as surging up from the heart or stomach and spreading out throughout the body. One is clearly moved, and the eyes may begin to tear. Unlike yorokobu, which must be displayed and shared with others if it is to be realized, ureshii may be personal and private. One of the participants, who experienced ureshii when her mother came to meet her after she spent a year in the U.S., reported that she was embarrassed to show that she felt so ureshii she wanted to cry.

The feeling of ureshii appears to occur when something reassures a person that he or she is personally recognized, is important to another, wanted, or appreciated. It may occur when a student who is living away from home has headaches and her mother calls with an obvious concern for her health, or a friend calls to share a problem and ask for advice, or one’s classmates show an appreciation for one’s efforts to be kindly. Thus, the emotion involves personal relations, a sense of acceptance from others — as when people appreciate who one is and accept what one is feeling. Underlying the emotion, there appears to be a period of uncertainty about whether one’s feelings really are accepted or one really has been successful in empathizing with the other. In any case, it involves a feeling of entitlement that one is good enough for a personal connection that goes beyond role obligations. Thus, it may be related to amae and underlying dependency relations. The period of uncertainty before the emotion suggests that there is an underlying hope that one deserves to be accepted and appreciated on a personal basis, that one may amaeru.

Is gladness a good translation of ureshii? If there is an underlying hope, the emotion may clearly be related to gladness. Recall that in English, gladness is preceded by a hope, and that although there is doubt rather than certainty, there seems a real possibility that the hoped for event might occur. However, rather than a general feeling of gladness that might follow the fulfillment of any underlying hope, ureshii often seems based on the specific hope that one will be personally valuable and cared for. Nevertheless, it is a high frequency, exemplar word. It seems possible that it reflects what we might label a feeling of being loved and is related to amae, as well as to the underlying longing to depend on the empathic caring of an other and perhaps to be dependable. We may postulate that it is when this hope for empathic caring is fulfilled that one experiences ureshii. We postulate that the Japanese code the fulfillment of this particular hope because it can be distinguished from the expectancies to which one is entitled because of the many mutual obligations in which the self is embedded.

The longing to be valued seems so fundamental that it is not clear why the fulfillment is not also coded in English. Perhaps just as Westerners avoid an acknowledgement of passive dependency love, they do not specifically code the feeling of being loved. As our colleague Ito (personal communication) has observed, the Japanese are more willing to admit that other people support their well-being. This seems to call for some interesting research on the experience of Westerners.

**DISCUSSION**

We began this investigation by asking why the Japanese use three different positive
emotion terms as exemplars of emotion when Westerners tend to use only one positive term, “happiness.” We also wondered why the Japanese consider *tanoshii* an emotion whereas Westerners would consider “having fun” to be a description of behavior. We will discuss each of these questions in turn and then consider how a description of the subjective experience of emotions may tell us something about the nature of feeling.

**Three Positive Terms**

The work of Markus and Kitayama (1991; 2003) illuminates how differences in cultural expectations and values result in different construals of the self which, in turn, affect the way we express and experience emotions. Western culture values an individual who maintains independence and realizes unique attributes, while Asian culture values harmonious relationship among individuals. Hence, it seems possible that individualistic cultures stress the meaning of emotion in enhancing the chance of individual survival while collectivist cultures emphasize the value of emotion as “social glue” (Mastumoto, 1996, p. 74). It may be that negative emotions are more stressed in individualistic cultures because they help delineate dangerous or aversive situations and contribute to an increased chance of individual survival. In contrast, collectivist cultures may place more importance on positive emotions, which must be distinguished and acknowledged in appropriate manners in order to maintain harmony.

Certainly, our results seem to suggest that the three different positive emotions stressed in Japanese involve different display rules that help maintain harmonious relationships. To selfishly celebrate good fortune or to simply engross oneself in enjoyable activity is inappropriate in Japan. However, if there is a mutual understanding that one can share these positive feelings with others, it will serve to affirm the social connections. Markus and Kitayama (1991, p. 236) observe that, “... positive emotional expressions are most frequently used as public actions in the service of maintaining interpersonal harmony and, thus, are not regarded as particularly diagnostic of the actor’s inner feelings or happiness.” However, this does not mean that the Japanese never experience positive emotions (see also Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000). Our results suggest that the Japanese perceive their feelings as genuine when they can express themselves spontaneously without being concerned about the others. It may be the case that a Japanese person’s public display of positive emotion is in compliance with the cultural display rules and thus taken as insincere. However, when there is a mutual sense of connection between the self and other, there is no need to control one’s emotional expression, and the Japanese may perceive unadulterated positive emotions.

We also speculate that the Japanese use three terms in order to differentiate underlying desires whose fulfillment initiates different positive emotional experiences. Although it was often very difficult for our participants to talk about their longings and hopes, it seems quite possible that the desires that underlie the three emotions differ from each other. Wishes to attain good fortune underlie *yorokobu*; desires for fun times precede *tanoshii*; and the hope to be appreciated underlies *ureshii*.

We believe that our participants’ difficulties in speaking about their desires are common among the Japanese. In Japan, social norms require individuals to focus on the
well-being of others, and self-serving motives are often replaced with what appear as other-serving motives (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, one takes a risk of being judged when making a desire public. Even to privately desire, one must open oneself to disappointment when allowing desires and longings in awareness as real possibilities. We may also speculate that particularly in the case of *ureshii*, the very act of verbalizing one’s desires spoils the fulfillment of *amae*, because one’s ultimate wishes are to have others attune to one’s own needs without having to ask for it (see Doi, 1989).

Lack of explicit mentioning or emotional expression does not necessarily mean that the Japanese experience less emotion and desire. On the contrary, as the existence of many positive emotion terms suggest, the Japanese have a way to indirectly communicate underlying desires. Although it is difficult to verify, the Japanese may have the need to discriminate positive experiences in finer detail because of this very impossibility to acknowledge one’s desire\(^5\).

**The Relation Between Emotion and Behavior**

When English speakers describe their emotions they often refer to perceptual transformations such as feeling “up” (as in elation) or seeing that the day looks brighter (as in gladness). By contrast, our Japanese speakers imply social transformations and include social behavior as an essential aspect of emotional experience. Perhaps behavior is included in the concept of emotion because of a keen awareness of the demands of cultural rules regarding emotion display. It is probable that the cultural values affect the way people talk about their emotional experiences and the way in which they conceptualize emotions, and it is interesting that some of the most common emotion terms among the Japanese have verb forms, such as getting angry (*okoru*) and being joyful, (*yorokobu*).

The emphasis on overt action in the Japanese conception of emotion may be due to, or reflected in, the difference in the grammatical property of words. Thus, *yorokobu* is in a verb form and may therefore require physical manifestation involving overt actions. By contrast the *ureshii* experience does not call for an observable behavior and there is no verb form for *ureshi-i* (the ending — *i* marks an adjective). In prompting *tanoshi-i* experience, the interviewer used the adjective form, but some of the participants spontaneously used verb forms, such as *tanoshi-n-de-iru* and *tanoshi-mase-ru*. It is quite possible that the grammatical properties of the word influence the conceptualization of the emotions in question, and the existence of verb forms might have contributed to the inclusion of observable behavior in the conceptualization of *tanoshii* and *yorokobi*\(^6\). It would be interesting to test this hypothesis with emotion words that can be used as both

\(^5\) Of course, underlying desires may be expressed in fantasy, and the Japanese have a clear fantasy life and may romanticize. In fact, it would seem that Japanese fantasy life is far less conflicted than that of most Westerners. However, this freedom may occur because personal wishes are so subordinate that fantasies are quite removed from the possibility of real occurrence. One may write a wish on an *ema* (a prayer card at shrines) but this lacks an introspective quality; it is more like a request than an action based on the possibility of realization. One may conjecture that it is only safe to wishfully fantasize when the impossibility is evident. For instance, Japanese women may enjoy reading accounts of gay men in love — not because they are imagining themselves as homosexual, but because the fantasy is so distanced, one can imagine the possibility of love without having to run the risk of disappointment.
noun and verb, such as love and fear, among English speakers.

The concept of tanoshii posits a particularly challenging question. In the sense of Ortony, Clore, and Foss (1987), tanoshii is clearly an emotion in that there are internal, mental, affect (and behavior) focal conditions; yet most English speakers would not characterize “having fun” as an emotion. We believe that English speakers experience “having fun” as behavior rather than emotion because the autonomous self of those from English speaking cultures does not have to undergo a transformation in order to have fun. By contrast, the Japanese self has been described as interdependent with the surroundings (Markus & Kitayama 1991), and the Japanese relational self is typically highly aware of the impact of the person’s behavior on others. For a Japanese person to disregard cultural display rules (e.g., concerns about how one is affecting the other or appears to the other) in order to be relaxed and have fun must involve a transformation of the relation between self and others — a contrasting respite from the usual high degree of social consciousness.

The attention to transformations between self and others is probably in the service of promoting harmonious feelings. Certainly the sharing required by yorokobu reaffirms personal connections, and in ureshii, one’s positive emotion is not experienced as an inflation of ego, but as being filled with the appreciation of the other. Thus, we may postulate that the feeling of emotion always involves a transformation of self, but that for Westerners an individual self is transformed while among the Japanese the self that is transformed is a relational self.

Our results suggest the following: First, the method of conceptual encounter has been useful to create abstract structures that distinguish among emotional experiences labeled by different terms in Japanese, and we may use this method to compare subjective emotional experiences across cultures. Second, when we make these comparisons it seems apparent that even the most basic emotions must be understood to involve cultural constructions. Different construals of self and cultural values affect the way we code emotional experiences. Language plays a significant role in the conceptualization of emotion, through not only the meaning of the words, but also the way these words are used in speech. To accurately translate emotion terms, one must place the terms in a cultural and linguistic context so that the full emotional experience may be understood. Third, the emotions that are considered exemplars reflect important discriminations that advance cultural values. Fourth, what is felt as an emotion is a function of self transformation. The emotions of contemporary Westerners involve transformations of an individualistic autonomous self, while the emotions of the Japanese center on transformations of a relational self.

Of course, all of these conclusions must be tested with more participants, and possibly with Japanese who live in Japan. We also need to investigate concepts of negative emotions in order to reveal the nature of what we feel.

\(^{6}\) Developmental functionalists have focused on how language plays a part in construing the self and the world around it (e.g., Budwig, Stein, & O’Brien, 2001). The meaning is construed through the way language is used in communication, so that it is crucial to take not only semantic, but also syntactic and pragmatic properties of the language into account.
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(Manuscript received March 24, 2005; Revision accepted October 25, 2005)