

VIEWS FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE: INTEGRATING EMIC AND ETIC INSIGHTS ABOUT CULTURE AND JUSTICE JUDGMENT

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We analyze forms of synergy between emic and etic approaches to research on culture and cognition. Drawing on the justice judgment literature, we describe dynamics through which the two approaches stimulate each other's progress. Moreover, we delineate ways in which integrative emic/etic frameworks overcome limitations of narrower frameworks in modeling culture and cognition. Finally, we identify advantages of integrative frameworks in guiding responses to the diverse justice sensitivities in international organizations.

In the study of cognition in organizations, and in social science more broadly, there are two long-standing approaches to understanding the role of culture: (1) the *inside* perspective of ethnographers, who strive to describe a particular culture in its own terms, and (2) the *outside* perspective of comparativist researchers, who attempt to describe differences across cultures in terms of a general, external standard. Pike (1967) designates these approaches the *emic* and *etic* perspectives, respectively, by analogy to two approaches to language: phonemic analysis of the units of meaning, which reveals the unique structure of a particular language, and phonetic analysis of units of sound, which affords comparisons among languages. The emic and etic perspectives are often seen as being at odds—as incommensurable paradigms. In this article we argue that these two approaches to culture are complementary. Drawing on the justice judgment literature, we delineate forms of synergy between the two research perspectives that go beyond those identified previously (e.g., Berry, 1990; Brett, Tinsley, Janssens, Barsness, & Lytle, 1997). We first analyze ways in which emic and etic research programs have stimulated each other's progress. Then we analyze advan-

tages of frameworks integrating emic and etic accounts—both as middle-range theories of culture and cognition and as applied guides to responding to diverse justice concerns in international organizations.

EMIC AND ETIC PERSPECTIVES

The emic and etic perspectives have equally long pedigrees in social science. The emic or inside perspective follows in the tradition of psychological studies of folk beliefs (Wundt, 1888) and in cultural anthropologists' striving to understand culture from "the native's point of view" (Malinowski, 1922). The etic or outside perspective follows in the tradition of behaviorist psychology (Skinner, 1938) and anthropological approaches that link cultural practices to external, antecedent factors, such as economic or ecological conditions, that may not be salient to cultural insiders (Harris, 1979).

The divide between these two approaches persists in contemporary scholarship on culture: in anthropology, between interpretivists (Geertz, 1976, 1983) and comparativists (Munroe & Munroe, 1991), and in psychology, between cultural psychologists (Shweder, 1991) and cross-cultural

psychologists (Smith & Bond, 1998). In the literature on international differences in organizations, the divide is manifest in the contrast between classic studies based on fieldwork in a single culture (Rohlen, 1974), as opposed to surveys across many (Hofstede, 1980). Likewise, in the large body of literature on organizational culture, there is a divide between researchers employing ethnographic methods (Gregory, 1983; Van Maanen, 1988) and those who favor comparative survey research (Schneider, 1990).

The conceptual assumptions with which Pike (1967) defined the emic and etic dichotomy are summarized in Table 1. Emic accounts describe thoughts and actions primarily in terms of the actors' self-understanding—terms that are often culturally and historically bound. For example, emic studies of justice perceptions in North American organizations today might center on such constructs as "age-ism" and nondiscrimination, whereas studies of Japanese workplaces might be couched in qualitatively different constructs, such as *amae* and *gimu* (see Kashima & Callan, 1998). In contrast, etic models describe phenomena in constructs that apply across cultures. For example, a country's level on the cultural dimension of individualism-collectivism might be linked to the prevalence with which managers reason about justice in terms of the equity rule (i.e., rewards received should be proportional to contributions).

Along with differing constructs, emic and etic researchers tend to have differing assumptions about culture. Emic researchers tend to assume that a culture is best understood as an interconnected whole or system, whereas etic researchers are more likely to isolate particular components of culture and state hypotheses about their distinct antecedents and consequences. Although, of course, the emic/etic contrast is, in practice, a continuum, this dichotomy has played a central role in the metatheory debates in many social science disciplines (see Headland, Pike, & Harris, 1990).¹

¹ Some scholars have used the terms *emic* and *etic* in ways that depart from Pike's definitions (see Headland et al., 1990). A narrower usage refers to the contrast between culture-specific versus culture-general constructs. This misses the essence of the distinction, because culture-specific constructs do not necessarily resonate with cultural insiders' self-understandings. A broader usage refers to the underlying interests of understanding versus control (Habermas,

Etic and emic approaches traditionally have been associated with differing research methods. As Table 1 summarizes, methods in emic research are more likely to involve sustained, wide-ranging observation of a single cultural group. In classical fieldwork, for example, an ethnographer immerses him or herself in a setting, developing relationships with informants and taking on social roles (e.g., Geertz, 1983; Kondo, 1990). Yet, emic description also can be pursued in more structured programs of interview and observation (e.g., Goodenough, 1970).

Methods in etic research are more likely to involve brief, structured observations of several cultural groups. A key feature of etic methods is that observations are made in a parallel manner across differing settings. For instance, matched samples of employees in many different countries may be surveyed to uncover dimensions of cross-national variation in values and attitudes (e.g., Hofstede, 1980), or they may be assigned to experimental conditions in order to test the moderating influence of cultural setting on the relation among other variables (e.g., Earley, 1989). In sum, although the two perspectives are defined in terms of theory, rather than method, the perspectives lend themselves to differing sets of methods.²

Given the differences between emic and etic approaches to culture, it is not surprising that researchers taking each perspective have questioned the utility of integrating insights from the other tradition. A common tendency is to dismiss insights from the other perspective based on perceived conceptual or methodological weaknesses (see reviews of this tendency in particular research areas by Harris, 1979, and Martin & Frost, 1998). On one side, emic accounts based on ethnographic observation are often discounted on the basis of inconsistency across

1971). Although there may be a correlation in some research areas between the emic versus etic perspective and orientations toward control (e.g., in studies of "organizational culture"; Martin & Frost, 1996), there is no necessary link and no strong correlation in the literature on national culture—our focus.

² The association between perspectives and methods is not absolute. Sometimes, in emic investigations of indigenous constructs, data are collected with survey methods and analyzed with quantitative techniques (Farh, Earley, & Lin, 1997; Yang, 1986). Likewise, ethnographic observation and qualitative data are sometimes used to support arguments from an etic perspective (Nelsen & Barley, 1997; Sutton, 1994).

TABLE 1
Assumptions of Emic and Etic Perspectives and Associated Methods

Features	Emic/Inside View	Etic/Outside View
Defining assumptions and goals	Behavior described as seen from the perspective of cultural insiders, in constructs drawn from their self-understandings Describe the cultural system as a working whole	Behavior described from a vantage external to the culture, in constructs that apply equally well to other cultures Describe the ways in which cultural variables fit into general causal models of a particular behavior
Typical features of methods associated with this view	Observations recorded in a rich qualitative form that avoids imposition of the researchers' constructs Long-standing, wide-ranging observation of one setting or a few settings	Focus on external, measurable features that can be assessed by parallel procedures at different cultural sites Brief, narrow observation of more than one setting, often a large number of settings
Examples of typical study types	Ethnographic fieldwork; participant observation along with interviews Content analysis of texts providing a window into indigenous thinking about justice	Multisetting survey; cross-sectional comparison of responses to instruments measuring justice perceptions and related variables Comparative experiment treating culture as a quasi experimental manipulation to assess whether the impact of particular factors varies across cultures

reports (Kloos, 1988) and for inheriting misconceptions from cultural insiders (Marano, 1982). On the other side, etic accounts based on survey data are often dismissed because researchers remained at a distance from respondents, potentially insensitive to how respondents were affected by their questions (Geertz, 1983).

Yet, not all arguments against integration are staked on critiques of either approach. Separatism has been defended as a means to protect less well-institutionalized traditions from being assimilated by mainstream traditions. Writing about organizational culture, Martin argues that "pressures toward assimilation would undermine a perspective's inherently oppositional stance . . . threatening its conceptual and political integrity" (1992: 187). In sum, both partisan and protective agendas have led scholars to advocate keeping emic and etic insights about a phenomenon somewhat separate.

However, not all previous scholars hold that emic and etic approaches should be kept apart. Some have suggested that researchers should select between approaches, depending on the stage of a research program. For example, it has been argued that an emic approach serves best in exploratory research, whereas an etic ap-

proach serves best in testing hypotheses (e.g., Greenfield, 1996).

In a more explicit selectionist proposal, Berry (1990) endorses a three-stage sequence. In the first stage, initial exploratory research relies on "imposed-etic" constructs—theoretical concepts and measurement methods that are simply exported from the researcher's home culture. In the second stage, emic insights about the other culture are used to interpret initial findings, with an eye to possible limitations of the original constructs, such as details that are unfamiliar or meaningless outside of the home culture. On this basis, then, the constructs in the model are *filtered* to eliminate details that cannot be measured with equivalence across cultural settings. The factors that survive this filter—"derived-etic" constructs—are culture-general dimensions of persons, such as value orientations, or of their environments, such as economic or ecological factors. In the third and final stage, the researcher tests an explanation constructed solely of derived etic constructs.

Brett and colleagues (1997; Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley, & Janssens, 1995) describe another proposal based on a three-stage sequence. These scholars differ from Berry in sharply dis-

tinguishing cultural factors from ecological and economic factors in analyzing cross-national differences. Also, they suggest that etic constructs may not always require measurement equivalence. However, as in Berry's model, the end state is an explanation drawn in terms of etic constructs; emic insights guide the initial steps but are not retained in the final explanation.³

The sequential selection models of Berry (1990) and Brett et al. (1997) have been influential in guiding psychological and organizational researchers in their approaches to culture. Yet these analyses only begin to explore the synergies between perspectives. Although they address the role of emic insights in refining etic explanations, they say little about how etic insights stimulate emic investigation. Although they address the interplay between perspectives within a given research program, they do not analyze long-term interplay across research programs within a general research area. To lay the groundwork for a long-term analysis, we now introduce the research area of justice judgments.

JUSTICE JUDGMENT

Judgments of justice occur whenever authorities in a group allocate resources or rewards among its members. For instance, when a manager gives a larger bonus to an energetic young salesperson than to her more senior and experienced colleague, observers will evaluate this manager positively or negatively, depending on whether they judge the rewards to be in balance with the employees' respective contributions. Managers and others who wish to be perceived positively need to understand how observers arrive at justice judgments. This is not a trivial task, however, because it is not always self-evident what is fair or balanced; justice is not so

much a witnessed reality as a constructed interpretation.

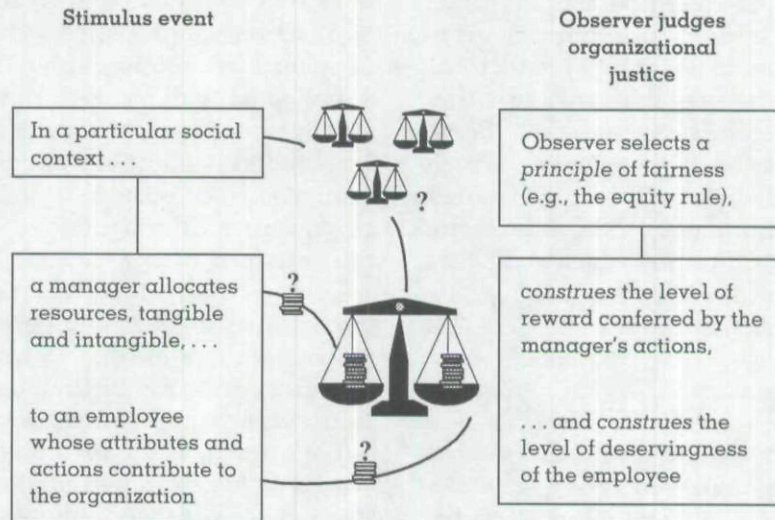
Fortunately, frameworks for understanding how observers interpret fairness have been developed in research on the psychology of justice (Sheppard, Lewicki, & Minton, 1992). The primary tradition in this research concerns *distributive* justice judgments—that is, responses to particular distributions or allocation patterns (Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1985). Although there is increasing evidence that justice perceptions depend greatly as well on the procedures through which authorities bring about these distributions (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler & Bies, 1990), we restrict our attention, for reasons of brevity, to distributive justice.

Judging the fairness of resource allocations in organizations involves two major components: (1) selecting a rule to serve as the principle or "scale" of justice and (2) construing the actions of the persons involved. This distinction can be illustrated in terms of the traditional metaphor that justice is weighed on a scale (see Figure 1). The figure represents elements of the stimulus event that spurs a justice judgment (on the left) and the corresponding elements of an observer's subjective interpretation (on the right). When a resource allocation occurs in a setting, an observer applies a scale that is appropriate to the setting (i.e., a rule is selected from the observer's stock of justice principles). At the same time, the observer does interpretive work in order to decide what to place on each side of the scale. The observer must construe the meaning or relevance of the rewards allocated by the manager, on the one side, and construe the deservingness of the employee, on the other. This observer can then weigh the manager's actions against the employees' actions to check for balance (justice) or imbalance (injustice). Although other cognitive steps enter into justice perceptions, this framework captures the core components.

Before turning to cultural differences, let us review the key points about each component of justice cognition that have emerged from mainstream research—that is, research in the North American and Western European settings, where almost all psychological and organizational research has been situated. Research on how people select a principle of justice began with tests of the notion that fairness perceptions generally follow an *equity* rule that rewards should be proportional to contributions (Adams,

³ Brett et al. (1997) describe a second form of emic-etic interplay in research conducted by a multinational research team. Team members rely on emic understandings of their respective local cultural environments when developing instruments and yet rely on etic frameworks when communicating with their collaborators from other cultures. Although less explicitly than in the first sequence model described by these authors, the authors suggest that the end state is an etic perspective on the phenomenon.

FIGURE 1
Components of Distributive Justice Judgment^a



^a Principle application is like selecting a scale for weighing justice; construing human behavior is like judging what belongs on the scale.

1965). For example, when a piece-rate compensation system seems fair, it is because the observer applies the equity rule and sees the manager's allocation of rewards as balanced with the employees' contributions.

Research then progressed to incorporate other principles. Deutsch (1975) argued that principle selection depends on the primary goal in the context: productivity goals, primary in the workplace, are linked with the equity rule; interpersonal harmony goals, predominant in friendship groups, call for the *equality* rule; and personal welfare goals, as in the family, are linked with the principle of *need-based* distribution. On the whole, Western researchers have assumed that equity is the primary principle in work organizations, and other principles are applied only in contexts where the resource exchange has to do specifically with cultivating employee relationships (e.g., invitations to an office party) or with ensuring welfare (e.g., health insurance plans).

In addition to selection of a principle, justice judgments also require interpretation of the relevant contributions and rewards. In construing what an employee contributes, for example, an observer must determine which attributes and performances of the employee are relevant. A salesperson who generates no sales for her company may not have contributed as much as the company's top performer, yet sales and other

quantitative performance measures may not be the only attributes of employees that are relevant. Interpreting the overall contributions may require a detailed knowledge of the setting. Depending on the local norms and practices, factors such as effort, attitude, or seniority may figure prominently in assessments of contributions.

Moreover, in construing the rewards provided to employees by a manager, an observer must first interpret the ways that the actions of the manager benefit employees. This may involve a great deal of concrete, specific knowledge, such as cultural scripts, roles, and symbols. Additionally, the meaning of some resource allocations may be affected by the context of other allocations. For instance, Martin and Harder (1994) found that, in the United States, a manager's unequal distribution of financial resources, such as salary, is tolerated when accompanied by equal distribution of intangible, socioemotional rewards, such as friendliness. Evaluating the meaning of a manager's action, then, requires more complex interpretative processes than a simple tallying across the tangible resources provided.

In sum, mainstream Western research on the psychology of justice over the past two decades has identified increasingly subtle relationships among contexts, resource allocations, and ob-

servers' reactions; these, in turn, have spawned applied frameworks to help managers anticipate justice sensitivities (Sheppard et al., 1992). Yet, at the same time, researchers in non-Western settings have begun to provide increasingly compelling evidence that culture influences the process of justice judgment. Some findings indicate differences in selecting principles of justice (e.g., Leung & Bond, 1984). Other findings indicate differences in the interpretation of actions by authorities and employees (e.g., Redding & Wong, 1986). We now review how this research has progressed.

RESEARCH ON CULTURAL INFLUENCE

To illustrate the kinds of cultural differences that arise in organizations and to lay the foundation for our analysis of forms of synergy between etic and emic approaches, we briefly review findings concerning differences in how justice judgments are made in East Asian cultural settings, as opposed to Western settings. Although certainly the cultures within the general area of East Asia vary greatly, there is a common heritage of Confucian values and institutions that makes some general comparisons and contrasts meaningful. We proceed by examining selected results from the two key components of distributive justice perception: selecting principles and construing behavior.

Selecting Principles

The idea that the justice of a given event may be judged by different principles in different cultures is a theme raised in emic studies of justice in East Asian settings. For instance, ethnographers in East Asian cultures have suggested that the principle of harmony is salient in Confucian cultural settings (Hsu, 1953). Whereas Western common sense and theory (Deutsch, 1985) distinguish the goal of harmony from that of productivity, descriptions of Chinese conceptions of groups suggest that harmony is central to social organization and productivity (Hsu, 1971). This idea that harmony is a means to productivity, rather than an opposing goal, is expressed in a proverb by the Confucian scholar Mencius; "Weather is less important than a fertile field, and a fertile field is less important than human harmony." In sum, early emic scholarship—fieldwork and textual study—

uncovered a strong theme of harmony in Chinese cultural discourse concerning groups, relationships, and justice. Nevertheless, the impact on researchers of justice was slight for several reasons. First, ethnographic descriptions of harmony remained somewhat vague. Also, some ethnographic evidence, such as that from historical studies of Chinese negotiations with other countries, showed a seemingly deliberate lack of concern for harmony (Pye, 1982), challenging the generalization.

There is also a long tradition of etic perspective research examining cultural differences in general values related to principles of justice. The first wave of such studies involved comparisons with translated survey instruments that had originally been developed to measure work values in Western settings, such as individual freedom, equality, and the welfare of the group. In several studies scholars found that Chinese respondents give more weight to group-oriented values than do North Americans (e.g., Singh, Huang, & Thompson, 1962).

Although these studies produced sharply defined and replicable differences, a limitation of the approach is that inappropriate Western constructs may have been imposed onto other cultures. A step forward was Hofstede's (1980) study of 40 countries, in which he distilled value dimensions, such as individualism-collectivism, from a factor analysis of country means. Rather than a general orientation toward other people, the individualism-collectivism dimension taps the extent to which individuals conceive of themselves as embedded in particular ingroups and follow a norm of sacrificing personal benefit for ingroup others. Hofstede (1980) placed 40 countries on several major dimensions of value orientation and linked these positions to antecedents in economic and ecological conditions and to consequences in social behavior.

Triandis, Hui, and others developed derived-etic instruments to measure individualism-collectivism at the individual level. In these studies the researchers consistently found that individuals socialized into Chinese and other Confucian-influenced cultures held more collectivist social values and beliefs than individuals in Western settings and placed more emphasis on the ingroup/outgroup distinction (see Triandis, 1995, for a review).

Although both emic and etic studies suggested that Chinese culture may be associated

with different conceptions of justice, there were no striking findings that challenged mainstream research on the psychology of justice. The first findings concerning Chinese culture to have a major impact on mainstream justice scholarship came in studies that brought together the emic insight concerning the centrality of harmony concerns with the etic insight that the ingroup/outgroup distinction matters more. Leung and Bond (1984) tested the hypothesis that, for Chinese individuals, harmony concerns will shape the justice principles applied in interactions with ingroup members. The experiments varied whether participants completed a shared project with ingroup versus outgroup members and varied the contribution level of the members. Results showed that Chinese participants, like U.S. participants, apply the equity rule with outgroup members, but, unlike U.S. participants, apply a more complex rule with ingroup members. With ingroup members, their pattern is one of generosity: allocating by the equality principle when the other has contributed less than oneself but allocating by the equity principle when the other has contributed more than oneself. A virtue of these findings, relative to early survey findings, is that they reveal the dynamics of cultural influence by uncovering how culture interacts with contextual variables (e.g., ingroup versus outgroup). These findings were also bolstered by replications in other East Asian settings (Kim, Park, & Suzuki, 1990; Leung & Iwawaki, 1988), and extensions have uncovered further relevant contextual factors (Chen, 1995).

In recent years the strategy of linking the choice of justice principles to broad cultural value dimensions has come under critique. Anomalous findings within the etic tradition have resonated with long-standing conceptual challenges by emic researchers (for a review see Earley & Gibson, 1998). The controversy has sparked a wave of emic studies in which researchers have taken a closer look at indigenous conceptions: Chiu (1991) conducted a fine-grained content analysis of popular Chinese sayings about injustice, and Ho and Chiu (1994) uncovered relations among the many conceptual components of individualism-collectivism through a similar content analysis.

To a greater extent than in early exploratory studies or in studies with derived-etic constructs, this new wave of focused emic analyses

has revealed subtle distinctions in the kinds of relationships that trigger particular principles of justice in Chinese societies. Of course, these newly noticed emic distinctions are candidates for new derived-etic constructs. For instance, Leung (1997) has drawn on emic insights about harmony motives and has distinguished the concern for maintaining a tie to a peripheral ingroup member, which triggers an equality rule, from the concern for enhancing harmony in a close relationship, which triggers a generosity rule. Although this proposal about harmony goals in different kinds of relationships derives from emic studies of Chinese culture, Leung offers it as a potential etic hypothesis about highly collectivist societies.

Thus, in summary, research on the principle-selection component of justice judgment has involved an active interplay between emic and etic insights. Although most of the research on this component has been from the etic perspective, findings from the emic perspective have spurred insights. Emic research has revealed novel constructs (e.g., generosity as a means to harmony), has challenged etic constructs (the notion that individual's adherence to individualist and collectivist values is captured by a unitary dimension), and has suggested new solutions (e.g., distinguishing types of ingroup relations). Before delineating these forms of emic/etic interplay, let us similarly review cultural research on the other component of justice judgment.

Construing Behavior

Insights concerning cultural influence on the interpretation of behavior relevant to justice comes mostly from emic studies. A recurrent theme in field studies and ethnographies of organizations in East Asian settings (e.g., Redding & Wong, 1986; Rohlen, 1974) is that, compared with Western settings, assessment of employees' contributions is based less strictly on task-relevant performances. In analyses of cultural differences in policies and practices of firms, researchers have noted related tendencies, such as the relatively large weight placed by Japanese and Korean organizations on an employee's seniority when assessing the employee's contribution (Pascale & Athos, 1981) or the concern in Chinese societies for the value of a person's social connections (Redding & Wong, 1986).

Such emic analyses have suggested the possibility that even when there is agreement across cultures on the principle of justice that applies (e.g., the equity rule), there may be disagreement in justice judgments that arise from differences in what observers count as appropriate contributions (e.g., performance versus seniority).

Emic analysis of how culture shapes judgment of deservingness has gone furthest in studies of indigenous Chinese constructs. Although there can be no doubt that an employee's social connections enter into appraisals in many Western settings, the role of an employee's connections in an evaluation of his or her worth generally is left implicit and unarticulated by Western observers. In Chinese culture, in contrast, there is a rich lexicon of lay constructs for articulating how an individual's network confers worth or value (Hsu, 1971). *Guanxi* (which translates literally to "connections" but has more positive connotations) is a construct that guides the ascription of credit to people with extensive networks (King, 1991). Within traditional Chinese commercial settings, an individual's *guanxi* plays a key role in that person's social face or *mianzi* (Hu, 1944). Although *guanxi* has received particular attention, other constructs, such as *renqing*, which concerns how much one person owes in a relationship, have also been analyzed (Gabreyena & Hwang, 1996). Hwang (1987) presented a general model of Chinese social and organizational behavior as a function of these relational constructs.

Although the bulk of emic research on interpreting action involves qualitative data from ethnographic observation and study of texts, some emic analyses have applied quantitative methods while still taking the emic approach. For example, predictions about justice behavior from Hwang's (1987) model have been tested experimentally. Emic predictions about relationships have also been approached with quantitative survey tools; for instance, *guanxi* has been modeled in terms of relational demography (Tsui & Fahr, 1995).

Some scholars have proposed etic hypotheses about construal of employee deservingness. For instance, Hofstede argues that in collectivist societies "promotion decisions take employees' ingroup into account," whereas in individualistic societies they "are supposed to be based on skills and rules only" (Hofstede, 1991: 67). How-

ever, little direct evidence has accumulated for etic hypotheses concerning how interpretation of deservingness hinges on collectivism and ingroups.

Perhaps the closest development is research comparing how an individual's network is evaluated across cultures, exploring parallels to *guanxi* in other collectivist cultures. For example, a form of relation known as *compadres* is an important link in business interactions in some Latin America cultures (Stephens & Greer, 1995). In a step toward an etic analysis, Xin and Pearce (1994) have argued that emphasis on *guanxi* functions to protect against fraud and, hence, that it arises in settings lacking institutional protections (i.e., strong courts). Although these authors have presented supportive evidence for this functional relationship within China, cross-cultural evidence has yet to emerge. Morris, Podolny, and Ariel (1998) have used a survey of employee networks in an international organization to compare how an employee's network made others obligated to that employee. These authors did not observe a general tendency for relationships to be valued in collectivist societies; rather, different kinds of relationships incurred value in different collectivist settings (e.g., dependence relations in Hong Kong, as opposed to friendship relations in Spain). In sum, although etic analyses of the role of relations in perceptions of employees' deservingness have exposed interesting questions about the function, they appear to miss some important details.

Overall, research on how observers interpret actions in terms of justice-relevant rewards and contributions has moved forward through the mutual influence of researchers working in the emic and etic traditions. Interestingly, however, the majority of cultural research relevant to this component has been from the emic perspective—the opposite of what we observed concerning the abstract component of principle selection. This may reflect that in a more concrete, knowledge-based cognition, there are fewer relevant etic constructs—constructs with an equivalent meaning across cultures. It may be that construals of deservingness vary across cultures in so many specific ways that generalities in terms of etic constructs, such as the ingroup, fail to capture the variance.

Having reviewed major cultural findings related to justice perception, we now are in the

position to draw some conclusions about how emic and etic insights complement each other.

FORMS OF SYNERGY

Drawing on our example of the justice judgment literature, we now analyze several general forms of synergy that can occur between emic and etic research programs within a topic area. We start by analyzing how emic and etic contributions stimulate each other's progress. We then suggest that the emic and etic approaches are partly able to counteract one another's theoretical weaknesses in describing culture. Finally, we argue that a full psychological model of judgment may only be possible and meaningful when etic and emic insights are combined.

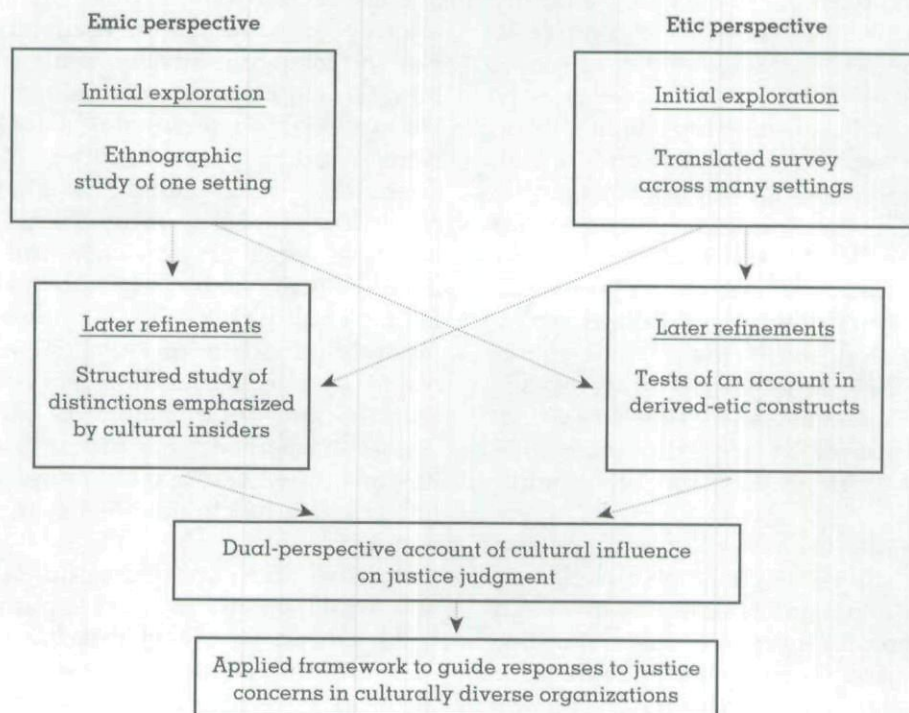
Mutual Stimulation

The primary form of synergy is the stimulation that emic and etic insights can provide to each other. Differences between the perspectives mean that there are lessons from exploratory studies in one tradition that are not redundant

with those from the other tradition. When preliminary exploratory studies from either perspective suggest the possibility of cultural influence on a judgment, this often spurs a second generation of studies, which often come at the problem from the opposite perspective in order to critique or challenge the initial claims. In providing apt challenges to the limitations of initial claims, second-generation studies in one tradition often evoke new formulations that synthesize the original claim with the critique. This ongoing, mutually enriching relationship between the two kinds of research is illustrated in Figure 2. A general theme is that different strengths of the two approaches create complementarities. Let us now describe these specific paths of influence between perspectives in more detail.

First, we examine the different merits of exploratory studies in the emic and etic traditions. Emic exploration proceeds through open-ended and long-standing observations of ethnographers who immerse themselves in a particular culture. The strength of this method is in the wealth of detail conveyed in "thick description"

FIGURE 2
Interplay Between Emic and Etic Research^a



^a Paths of mutual influence between the two research perspectives, leading to an integrative explanatory framework.

(Geertz, 1983). The ethnographer aims to understand the culture on its own terms, rather than through imposition of prior theories. This enables the discovery of novel features. Yet, a weakness is that subjectivity in what the researcher notices and how much he or she chooses to generalize can easily distort the portrait. However, flawed and conflicting ethnographies can serve a valuable function in provoking further research. For instance, Hsu's (1953) descriptions of all-pervading harmony concerns and the conflicting descriptions of others (Pye, 1982) sparked Leung and Bond's (1984) etic investigation of the social contexts that moderate cultural differences in the justice principles.

Exploratory studies from the etic perspective often take the form of imposed-etic surveys. The dubious equivalence of measuring instruments and the lack of sustained first-person observation mean that nuances of meaning can be lost in translation. Nevertheless, there is often a reliable signal through the noise, and the broad outlines of cultural differences and their associations to other variables (such as ecological and economic factors) are identified. The images of culture produced by exploratory etic studies are like the crude maps of world geography sketched centuries ago, based on the reports of returning sea navigators. Such maps simplify the terrain, but in doing so provide a guide to which places might be interesting for a closer look.

An example of how etic maps spur closer, emic study can be seen in the aftermath of Hofstede's (1980) findings that even the most highly industrialized East Asian societies differ sharply from the West. Until this study, many social scientists believed that, regardless of traditional cultures, wealthy industrialized societies were fast converging in their social values (Inkeles, 1960). Emic studies generally focused on less industrialized societies. Hofstede's findings provoked a renewed interest in emic studies of Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and other industrialized East Asian societies.

We now examine the interplay between second-generation studies in each tradition. In second-generation emic studies, as we have seen, researchers retain an interest in understanding a culture through the constructs of cultural insiders, yet they focus more narrowly on one part of a culture than do researchers conducting exploratory studies. Often, these studies are influ-

enced by second-generation etic research, because they are directed toward the goal of uncovering the contextual variables omitted in these etic studies. For example, studies representing individualistic and collectivistic values on a single dimension gave rise to focused emic studies of the structure of these values in Chinese culture (Chiu, 1991; Ho & Chiu, 1994). These studies, in turn, provided a strong challenge to etic researchers, in that they were based on systematic data collection and were operationalized quantitatively. Indeed, these studies have been incorporated into new etic proposals (e.g., Leung, 1997). In sum, the emic critiques of etic work drew attention to important concerns underemphasized in the original etic scholarship and suggested tools for a subsequent wave of etic accounts.

Richness in Models of Culture

Whereas our first point concerned how findings from the two perspectives challenge each other and stimulate each other's new questions, our second point concerns how the two kinds of explanation complement each other in contributing to rich accounts of culture. A fault line runs through the disciplines concerning culture. On one side are disciplines like history or cultural anthropology, rooted in a historicist logic of seeking local regularities within a bounded milieu. On the other are disciplines like economics, driven by a functionalist logic of seeking transhistorical generalizations. Organizational behavior involves both of these logics (e.g., Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Yet, the emic and etic perspectives each provide only half of the story. Because emic studies tap into the explanations held by cultural insiders, the emic perspective inherently leads to an emphasis on the causes of phenomena that are internal and local to the cultures and organizations being studied. Because etic perspectives attune one to relationships between external structural variables and behaviors, a functionalist story is more likely to result.

However, a richer account of culture can result when an integrative explanatory framework arises. One way this happens is when emic findings from several cultures reveal parallel patterns. Etic researchers often respond by attempting to capture the pattern in terms of more general factors that can be as-

sessed through parallel constructs and measures. For example, emic studies of employee relationships in Chinese societies and other societies have led to more general functionalist accounts of when relationships are valued (e.g., Xin & Pearce, 1994). These attempts rarely succeed in full, but they raise the valuable question of why a given historically rooted practice persists in its contemporary form. These accounts, in turn, spur emic studies highlighting unique details not captured by functionalist generalizations. In this example we see that looking at the same phenomenon from two perspectives adds depth and richness to the explanatory framework. The emic account of *guanxi* highlights the embeddedness of Chinese conceptions of distributive justice in other aspects of Chinese culture. The etic account illustrates that these constructs and this culture exemplify a diffuse but recognizable syndrome of collectivism that has particular ecological and economic antecedents.

An account of culture that acknowledges both historicist and functionalist logics is important in organizational behavior, in that many researchers have agendas that are both intellectual and practical. For instance, many organizational researchers are aligned with the critical interest of exposing power relations, which requires understanding informants on their own terms but also going beyond their reports to describe economic and other conditions that "envelop" the informants' world (Jermier, 1998). Accounts of culture serving a critical agenda or other change agendas require the richness of integrating emic and etic insights.

Comprehensiveness in Models of Judgment

Another way in which an integrative, emic-etic framework serves better than a single-perspective explanation is in capturing the kinds of cognition involved in justice and other judgments. A pattern revealed in our review of research on culture and justice was that most etic research activity has focused on the more abstract component of applying a justice principle. Conversely, most emic research activity has focused on the more concrete component of construing the deservingness of the people involved. Quite likely, these biases of etic and emic perspectives are inherent ones.

The tendency of etic perspective research to omit all but the most abstract components of a cognitive process is, in fact, rooted in the very procedure for identifying derived-etic constructs. Derived-etic constructs (Berry, 1990) are supposed to be the common denominators of the variables involved in a psychological process across cultures. Identifying behavioral events with equivalent meanings across cultures is easier to do if the behavior and meaning are conceptualized abstractly. As a result, all of the concrete details that are not equivalent across cultures drop out of the description. In other words, the search for constructs with measurement equivalence across cultures creates an upward pressure toward abstract descriptions. Concrete details differ qualitatively in ways that prevent comparison with parallel methodological procedures.

Let us consider why an etic approach is able to illuminate the abstract component of applying justice principles but not the concrete component of interpreting actions. There seems to be a finite list of basic justice principles across cultures; a workable derived-etic model is possible. Event construal, however, involves a large number of overlapping constructs concerning social roles, relationships, symbols, and so forth. Endless variation seems possible—not merely in the frequency with which constructs are evoked but in the qualitative content of the constructs. As we have seen, etic hypotheses about construal of deservingness have not found empirical support. In sum, an etic approach leaves us with a highly abstract and incomplete view of culture and cognition that fails to offer predictions about any particular case.

Turning to the other side of the problem, we can see that a purely emic approach is no better. With purely emic studies, like early ethnographies of Chinese harmony, researchers have a difficult time distilling the key principles. It may be that seeing the behavior in two different cultures makes it easier to spot the abstraction that unites them. In sum, although the two perspectives often bring researchers' attention to the same phenomenon, it is also true that they are complementary, in that they draw researchers' attention to different components of justice judgments, making it more likely that all of the important aspects of cognition will be recognized.

ADVANTAGES OF INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORKS IN APPLICATION

In addition to the benefits of an integrative framework in basic theory, there are also benefits in applied problems. The practical need for a framework to guide managers in coping with cultural differences in justice judgments has never been greater. Organizations increasingly span many cultures, both because of the diversification of the workforce in many nations and because of the globalization of organizations themselves.

There are advantages of an integrative emic framework at several points in managing across cultures: (1) anticipating the justice sensitivities of employees in other cultures, (2) identifying and choosing policy options, and (3) successfully implementing a policy option.

Anticipating Cultural Differences in Justice Sensitivities

Etic research has had a high stature in organizational research in part because it seems practical and efficient. The hope has been that the myriad cultural traditions in an international organization might be reducible to a few simple cultural dimensions. Interestingly, however, the popular literature of cultural training guides for managers has not been influenced much by the etic research found in management journals. Managers still tend to learn about cultural sensitivities in a country-by-country fashion (e.g., Cushner & Brislin, 1996).

Training guides convey potentially relevant points by referring to recurrent roles and situational scripts. These guides include little in the way of etic generalizations, such as that collectivist cultures promote a harmony-preserving distribution rule in ingroup interactions. Although an etic generalization may allow a manager to make general predictions about many cultural groups, it does not allow a manager to make precise predictions about any of them. That is, to apply etic predictions in such terms as *ingroup*, these terms must be fleshed out or instantiated into the concrete details of a local cultural setting. Without the cultural specifics identified through emic analysis, the abstract principles identified by etic methods are unlikely to be sufficient for developing organizational policies.

Identifying and Choosing Policy Options

One of the implications of the preceding discussion is that managers who have anticipated cultural differences in justice sensitivities may need to adjust their policies from country to country in order to respond to diverse justice sensitivities. Yet, this localization of policies works against another goal of many organizations, which is to standardize policies across the globe. Increasing numbers of organizations follow the model of Citicorp, Philips, Sony, and other global firms by maintaining coordination through the rotation of managers from one country to another. Standardizing or globalizing policies greatly facilitates the process of employees moving from one unit to another. Hence, firms face a tradeoff.

When considering this tradeoff in policies relevant to justice, one needs a framework that incorporates cultural influences on each component of justice judgment. That is, firms have to contend with differences not only in the principles or rationales that employees endorse but in the concrete beliefs that guide how employees construe behavior of management and of their peers. The four possible combinations are represented in Figure 3. Although research regarding when and how to develop global organizational standardization is advancing, understanding of this issue (particularly how to implement standardization) remains limited (Shenkar & Zeira, 1987; Sullivan, 1992; Taylor, Beechler, & Napier, 1996). Let us see how an encompassing framework for conceptualizing cultural influence helps clarify the options.

Using our framework, we can think of differences in justice perception (and many other organizational domains) as being one of three types: (1) a difference mainly in concrete beliefs related to event construal, (2) a difference mainly in applying abstract principles, or (3) a difference in both. Firms deciding to apply a policy across cultural boundaries will face different issues, depending on which kind of differences exist. When no differences exist, of course, the firm can "go global" in its policies.

A difference only in construal-related beliefs may be the least difficult to manage toward a global policy since employees already share a common framework of principles. For example, employees in both cultures might use equity principles for distribution but in one culture re-

FIGURE 3
Framework for Decision Making About Cross-Cultural Standardization^a

		Construal of Deservingness	
		Same across cultures	Different across cultures
Principle Selection	Same across cultures	- Easy to standardize policies	e.g., <i>weight placed on tenure versus short-term performance</i> - Difficult to standardize - Stress principle similarity and construal definitions
	Different across cultures	e.g., <i>equity versus equality rule</i> - Very difficult to standardize - Stress that some resources are distributed by the culturally favored principle	- Most difficult to standardize - To standardize may require explicit programs; worthwhile only if policy is core to firm

^a Distinguishing types of cultural influence on justice judgment clarifies a firm's options in the tradeoff between globally standard versus locally sensitive policies.

gard seniority as the key contribution, whereas in the other culture count performance as the contribution. Firms would be advised to stress the similarity in the shared principles as the basis of fairness and develop clear definitions of what counts as a contribution or input. In sum, the firm can "think globally" about the principles of fairness in its organization, yet "act locally" in explaining how these principles are instantiated into concrete practices.

A difference mainly in principles makes it more difficult to employ a globally standardized policy and achieve uniform perceptions of fairness. An example would be a case in which one culture favors an equity principle for salary and the other favors an equality principle. One possible strategy here would be to stress other resources that fit the culture's preferred principle. If global salary policy were moved toward being equity based, other resources still distributed based on equality, such as respect and benefits, could be stressed in the equality-oriented culture.

If strong differences exist in both construal and principle selection, substantial investments are likely to be required for successful standardization. For example, Japanese auto manufacturers have implemented many Japanese organizational policies in their North American factories, including an extremely small number of job classifications and intensive functional

cross-training (rather than individual specialization), continually increasing (rather than fixed by contract) performance standards, and security of employment (Florida & Kenney, 1991; Fucini & Fucini, 1990; Wilms, Hardcastle, & Zell, 1994; Young, 1992). However, North American and Japanese workers favor quite different principles and possess different beliefs about how to construe workplace events, which made transferring these policies difficult. As shown by the experience of Japanese auto companies, standardization in such instances entails extensive cultural training and efforts to make clear the reasons for organizational policies (Florida & Kenney, 1991; Wilms et al., 1994), to avoid creating feelings of injustice (Fucini & Fucini, 1990). When developing such training programs, it is necessary for organizations to review emic analyses of local cultural beliefs in order to develop training programs that properly translate concepts into terms that local workers find acceptable.

Successfully Implementing a Chosen Policy

Having chosen to either globalize or localize compensation policies, a firm still has to implement the policy. A key idea in the implementation of a policy is assuring the "buy in" of the employees affected and of the managers overseeing the policy. A plan that reflects assump-

tions held in mutual agreement by all relevant parties has the greatest chance of success. When a policy based on an outsider understanding is imposed from on high, insiders affected by the policy often put up resistance (Drazin & Sandelands, 1992; Dunbar & Ahlstrom, 1995). Managers working with a solely etic perspective, hence, are likely to meet resistance from below in the cultural group. Yet, local managers working with a solely emic (local) perspective are likely to meet resistance from above. That is, the cultural group whose plight is explained solely in their own emic terms may be dismissed and marginalized by outsiders who do not understand the emic description of their justice sensitivity. Hence, only a plan that is expressed in the dual language of emic and etic is likely to resonate with all of the stakeholders involved in a policy that responds to cultural differences in justice sensitivities.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have extended previous arguments about the complementarity of emic and etic insights about culture. In contrast to previous work by Berry (1990) and Brett et al. (1997), we have focused on synergy over the long term within a general research area. We have described several forms of stimulation in which developments within each research tradition are provoked and challenged by findings in the other tradition. Moreover, we have argued that an integrative explanatory framework incorporating insights from both traditions avoids limitations of purely etic and purely emic findings in conceptualizing culture and in capturing its various influences on cognition. Finally, we have argued that such integrative frameworks have several advantages as guides to solving the applied problem of managing justice perceptions in international organizations. That is, an integrative framework enables better anticipation of employees' justice sensitivities, better decision making about a firm's policy options, and, once a policy is chosen, better implementation.

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