

# **SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN INTEROCEPTIVE BODILY AWARENESS BETWEEN US-AMERICAN AND JAPANESE CULTURES**

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**Background:** Interoceptive awareness is the conscious perception of sensations that create a sense of the physiological condition of the body. A validation study for the Japanese translation of the Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness (MAIA) surprised with a factor structure different from the original English language version by eliminating two of eight scales. This prompted an exploration of the similarities and differences in interoceptive bodily awareness between Japanese and European Americans.

**Aim:** We recruited focus groups participants who identified as Japanese individuals, are bilingual in Japanese and English, and have had enough experience in both Japan and the US to comment from both cultural perspectives. Our aim was to learn more about potential cultural differences in the concept of body awareness through their lived experiences.

**Methods:** 16 participants who identified as Bicultural Japanese Americans discussed concepts and experiences in the two cultures in focus groups. We conducted qualitative thematic analyses of transcribed recordings, which is complemented by exploratory quantitative data collection of their socio-cultural orientations and responses to MAIA in both languages.

**Results:** Our qualitative data illustrated cross-cultural differences in interoceptive bodily awareness: switching between languages changes embodied experience; external versus internal attention focus; social expectations and body sensations; emphasis on form versus self-awareness; personal space; and mind-body relationship; context dependency of bodily awareness and self-construal.

**Discussion:** The participants explained key concepts that present challenges for a Japanese cultural adaptation of the MAIA, specifically the concept of self-regulation lost in the factor analysis. In Japanese culture, self-regulation serves the purpose of conforming to social expectations, rather than achieving an individual self-comforting sense of homeostasis. Our findings will inform the next phase of improving the MAIA's cross-cultural adaptation.

## **Full List of Authors**

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## **Learning Objectives**

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Interpret that embodied identities and mind-body relationships between cultures can be studied through measurement of interoceptive awareness through validated instruments like the MAIA.
2. Recognize the importance of culturally informed framework of both qualitative and quantitative research as the use of mind-body clinical interventions become more globalized.