The Structural-Constructivist Resolution of Affective Science: An Analysis of Cultural and Linguistic Specificity in the Core Emotion Framework

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ARCHIVE:

- https://huggingface.co/datasets/CoreEmotionFramework/CEF_Main_Archive/tree/main
- https://www.optimizeyourcapabilities.com/Publications/
- https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=ORdecUoAAAAJ
- https://philpeople.org/profiles/jamel-bulgaria
- https://zenodo.org/communities/030303/
- https://osf.io/hz53j/

Preregistration:

- https://osf.io/ac4x2/overview

Pilot study:

- https://osf.io/fydsq/wiki?wiki=j7q8g

*) *We welcome feedback on the preregistration and study design, and invite researchers who are interested in pre-reviewing the system to contact us.*

Abstract

The historical progression of affective science has been defined by an enduring ontological friction, often characterized by scholars as a "hundred-year war" between two seemingly irreconcilable paradigms. On one side of this deep-seated schism stand discrete emotion theories, most prominently the "basic emotion" framework championed by researchers such as Paul Ekman and Carroll Izard. This tradition operates on the premise that specific emotions—anger, fear, joy, and sadness—are biologically hardwired, universal categories possessed of dedicated neural circuitry and invariant facial signatures. Conversely, psychological constructionist models, represented by the work of Lisa Feldman Barrett and James Russell, argue that emotions are not biological entities existing within the brain but are instead emergent, culturally situated conceptual events synthesized from core affect and contextual knowledge. The Core Emotion Framework (CEF), conceptualized and formalized by Jamel Bulgaria, enters this fragmented landscape not merely as a compromise but as a "structural-constructivist" resolution designed to bridge the divide between universalism and cultural relativity.

By reframing emotional life as a set of ten functional operators within a "Human Operating System" (Human OS), the CEF attempts to unify representational, affective-regulatory, and somatic-inferential processes within a single functional ontology. A central pillar of the framework is the claim that while the subjective labels and "output states" categorized as emotions are indeed constructed and culturally variable, the underlying "instruction set"—the Decalogue of Operators—is universal, structurally irreducible, and logically derived from the requirements of any sentient system. This analysis evaluates the cultural and linguistic specificity of these ten operators, specifically investigating the claim that they represent universal primitives independent of language by utilizing Jamel Bulgaria's academic archives and the Amano et al. (2026) Japanese benchmarks as critical empirical constraints.

Keywords: Core Emotion Framework (CEF); structural-constructivism; functional operators; Decalogue of Operators; 3×3+1 architecture; Human Operating System (Human OS); TS-6 schema; emotional lexicon; semantic drift; linguistic bias; cross-cultural affective science; AI-based valence; reproducibility; Japanese population; Amano et al. (2026); trait-like stability; Sensing operator; Accepting operator; Agency–Yielding controversy; operator agility; structural psychopathology; detangling protocol; Emotional Cycling Machine (ECM); activation vector modeling; synthetic affect; institutional operating systems.

The Architectural Foundation: The 3x3+ Hub Model

The Core Emotion Framework moves away from treating emotions as static biological "things" or mere social labels. Instead, it redefines affective experience as a series of internal transformations governed by a $3x3+$ hub architecture. This model aims to unify the diverse strands of affective science within a single functional ontology, shifting the focus from the subjective "feeling" of an emotion to the mechanistic "execution" of a functional operator. This shift is critical for achieving scientific falsifiability; while private subjective states are notoriously difficult to measure objectively, an internal "operator" that processes information and regulates action can be mapped, simulated, and falsified through behavioral and psychometric data.

The "Decalogue" represents the formal term for the ten functional operators that the framework identifies as the irreducible building blocks of emotional experience. These operators are organized into three primary functional centers: the Head (Processor), the Heart (Engine), and the Gut (Foundation), plus an overarching "Accepting" baseline. Each center is segmented by three "movement modes" that describe the orientation of the center's processing: Outgoing (active engagement), Reflecting (internal analysis), and Balancing (homeostatic regulation).

Functional Center	Outgoing Mode (Engagement)	Reflecting Mode (Internal Processing)	Balancing Mode (Regulation)
Head (Processor)	**Sensing**: Raw informational intake and somatic signal detection.	**Calculating**: Algorithmic analysis, comparison, and internal modeling.	**Deciding**: Actuator of informational logic; collapsing probabilities into commitment.
Heart (Engine)	**Expanding**: Relational openness, widening	**Constricting**: Relational boundary setting; narrowing	**Achieving**: Pursuit of internal standards,

	aperture, and vulnerability.	aperture for protection.	relational excellence, and alignment.
Gut (Foundation)	**Arranging**: Structural organization of action and environment; task decomposition.	**Appreciating**: Value recognition, passive resonance, and the savoring of meaningful data.	**Boosting**: Sudden infusion of activation energy for kinetic movement.
Baseline (0)	N/A	N/A	**Accepting**: System recalibration, fundamental stability, and integration.

The logical derivation of these operators is rooted in the "parsimony hypothesis," which posits that human emotional behavior can be decomposed into exactly ten operators. This number is not an arbitrary empirical observation but is presented as a "minimal working set" required for any sentient system to interact with its environment. The transformations follow a rigorous processing pipeline: converting environmental signals into percepts via Sensing, percepts into evaluations via Calculating and Appreciating, evaluations into commitments via Deciding and Achieving, and finally commitments into adaptive behavior via Boosting and Arranging.

Evaluating the Claim of Universal 'Human OS' Primitives

The assertion that the Decalogue of Operators consists of universal primitives independent of language rests on the CEF’s ability to decouple functional mechanics from semantic labels. This is primarily achieved through a sophisticated technical integration involving the EL- lexicon and the TS-6 schema. The framework treats the

English labels for emotions (e.g., "Compassion," "Hostility") as "output states" rather than fundamental units.

Semantic Resolution and the TS-6 Schema

The TS-6 schema is specifically engineered to prevent "conceptual drift"—the historical tendency for psychological terms to change meaning over time or across different research groups. To achieve this, each of the 500 entries in the Core English Emotional Lexicon (EL- v.0) must adhere to a strict representational discipline known as "machine-readable emotional geometry". This system anchors emotional semantics in functional logic rather than subjective interpretation by requiring six components for every entry: a canonical noun term, a precise non-metaphorical definition, a symbolic representation (ordered sequence of functional powers), a 10-dimensional normalized vector representation, and metadata such as valence and arousal.

Term	Symbolic Representation (Ordered Functional Powers)	Vector Representation (10-Dimensional Activation Vector)	Arousal
Anger	Constricting > Boosting > Arranging > Sensing	[0.3,0.0,0.0,0.1,1.0,0.0,0.6,0.0,0.8,0.0]	0.9
Joy	Expanding > Appreciating > Boosting > Accepting > Sensing	[0.2,0.0,0.0,1.0,0.0,0.2,0.1,0.9,0.6,0.5]	0.8
Fear	Sensing > Constricting > Arranging > Boosting	[0.7,0.0,0.0,0.1,0.8,0.0,0.5,0.0,0.4,0.0]	0.95

Love	Expanding > Appreciating > Accepting	[0.1,0.0,0.0,1.0,0.0,0.0,0.0,0.9,0.0,0.8]	0.6
Calm	Accepting > Sensing	[0.2,0.0,0.0,0.0,0.0,0.1,0.0,0.0,0.1,1.0]	0.1

By grounding the ontology in these vectors, the CEF establishes "drift-resistant mapping". As the lexicon expanded from its original 10-term seed set to the final 500-term edition, all prior entries were preserved exactly, maintaining what the framework calls "cumulative integrity". This approach suggests that the operators are indeed language-independent because they can be used to construct the structural signature of any emotional term in any language, provided the functional dynamics are understood. The English terms in EL- are merely one instance of mapping, but the underlying vector space is hypothesized to be universal.

The Agency-Yielding Controversy and Structural Integrity

A pivotal event in the logical derivation of the CEF operators was the "Agency-Yielding" controversy, which highlights the framework's commitment to operator-level granularity over simplistic linguistic binaries. Early in its development, the framework utilized a conceptual bridge known as the "Agency-Yielding hook" to align with traditional dimensional models of psychology. However, this hook was critiqued by analyst Xǔ Chénglán as a "bad choice" that threatened the framework's structural integrity by collapsing the 10-operator granularity into a simplistic dualism.

Chénglán argued that mapping the "Reflecting" mode of the Heart (Constricting) and the "Reflecting" mode of the Head (Calculating) onto a single Agency-Yielding axis obscured the detailed structural architecture that makes the CEF unique. The power of the CEF lies in its ability to treat operators like distinct "CPU instructions" rather than mere coordinates on a two-dimensional graph. The resolution to this controversy was found by reframing Agency and Yielding as emergent properties of specific operators within the Gut Center: Boosting (Operator 9) represents the system's "on-mode" or high-

agency state, while Accepting (Operator 10) represents the "off-mode" or yielding state. By situating these functions as specific instructions within the Decalogue, the CEF provides a functional explanation for why humans subjectively perceive a binary of "doing" vs. "being" while maintaining the complex underlying instruction set required for its Human OS ontology. This shift from rhetorical synthesis to functional mechanics signals the framework's transition toward a genuine theoretical resolution that is not bound by the linguistic conventions of Western psychology.

Investigating Linguistic Bias: The Amano et al. (2026) Japanese Benchmarks

To investigate potential linguistic bias and test the universality of its operators, the CEF integrates external reproducibility benchmarks from independent affective science. The findings of Amano et al. (2026), which assessed the short-term test-retest reproducibility of AI-derived facial expression valence in healthy Japanese adults, serve as crucial "boundary conditions" for the framework.

Cross-Cultural Stability and Measurement Boundaries

The CEF interprets the stability metrics reported by Amano et al. as evidence for the existence of its hypothesized functional operators in a non-Western population. The study reported high trait-like stability in an integrated dataset but extremely low stability in neutral conditions, patterns that the CEF maps directly onto its operator architecture.

Valence Condition (Amano et al. 2026)	Reported ICC(3,) Value	Interpretation through the CEF Lens
Integrated Dataset	0.94	Reflects the high trait-like stability of the overall Human OS, likely governed by the **Accepting** baseline.

Positive Condition	0.82	Consistent with the stability of expansive or appreciative signatures associated with **Expanding** and **Appreciating**.
Negative Condition	0.61	Reflects the highly dynamic, state-dependent nature of boundary-setting and **Constricting** shifts.
Neutral Condition	0.05	Evidence for the **Sensing** operator's role as a high-variance, un-labeled perceptual layer sensitive to raw stimuli.

The framework posits that the high stability of the integrated dataset (0.94) supports the existence of a stable baseline recalibration mechanism like the Accepting operator. Conversely, the extremely low stability of the neutral condition (0.05) is viewed as evidence for the Sensing operator's role as an un-labeled, high-variance perceptual layer that responds with high sensitivity to neutral environmental input. By accepting these external data points as boundary conditions, the CEF developers move from "open validation" to "constrained validation," which limits the model's flexibility and forces it to align with independent observations of stability and variability in a real-world Japanese population. If the operators were merely artifacts of the English language, one would not expect them to map so neatly onto the stability patterns observed in a Japanese cohort.

Probing Action-Opinion Divergence: Pilot Study 3

Preliminary behavioral support for the ten operators is provided by Pilot Study 3 ($N = 39$)

), which explored "Action-Opinion Divergence". Participants were presented with everyday scenarios and asked to select their habitual response ("Action") and their idealized best way to act ("Opinion") from options corresponding to the ten operators. The results revealed significant patterns of divergence, suggesting that individuals can distinguish between their reflexive habits and their strategic ideals in terms that align

with the CEF’s operators.

Scenario	Observed Action-Opinion Divergence	Operator Application (Habit → Ideal)
Too Many Tasks	Habitual narrowing/comparing vs. Idealized organization.	Constricting/Calculating → **Arranging**.
Conflict	Tendency to "push through" vs. "validating/opening."	Deciding/Boosting → Appreciating/Expanding.
Setback	Selecting "Accepting" as the Ideal, even when not the habit.	Arranging/Calculating → **Accepting**.
Loss / Ending	Elicited the most "Accepting" and "Appreciating" ideals.	Constricting/Sensing → **Accepting/Appreciating**.

These findings suggest that "operator agility"—the capacity to flexibly engage and disengage these primitive instructions according to context—is a key marker of psychological health. Participant feedback underscored this introspection, with respondents noting that their initial reflexive action was often distinct from what they believed they "should" do, a distinction that the CEF’s operator-level analysis captures with high resolution. The ability of participants to utilize these operators to describe their internal states suggests they are intuitive functional primitives rather than complex linguistic labels.

Clinical Operationalization as a Human Operating System

The CEF is not merely a theoretical exercise; it is positioned as a "Human Operating System" for clinical use, a practical application that creates a unique epistemological challenge: how can a framework be applied clinically before its underlying ontology is biologically confirmed?. The framework addresses this by distinguishing between "clinical utility" and "empirical validity," suggesting that the model may be useful for "detangling" complex emotional states even before its biological reality is established.

Structural Psychopathology and the 7-Step Detangling Protocol

The framework's functional ontology allows for a paradigm shift in mental health diagnosis, moving from symptom-based clusters to "operator-based" analysis within a methodology called "Structural Psychopathology". In this view, psychological distress is the result of "structural failures" of the Human OS, specifically operator fusion or operator silencing.

The most prominent example of this operationalization is the "GoodPerson Anxiety Pattern (GPAP)," hypothesized as a structural configuration of Avoidant Personality Disorder. In the GPAP, an individual experiences a functional "fusion" between an overactive Expanding operator (Heart Outgoing) and an overactive Calculating operator (Head Reflecting). This fusion creates a state where the individual is perpetually scanning relations and building cognitive models to please others, which in turn silences the Deciding operator. The system becomes stuck in a loop of high-arousal relational prediction without ever reaching a commitment to action or self-boundary.

To address these misalignments, the CEF offers practitioner tools such as the "7-Step Detangling Protocol" and "emotional-cycling workflows" documented in the PM Series.

- **Mechanism of the Protocol**: The protocol treats emotional distress not as a monolithic disease, but as a failure of specific "operator cycles".
- **Operationalizing Transitions**: It provides a step-by-step procedure for resolving "stuck" states by moving the Human OS from a failure mode (like decision paralysis) back into a functional execution of operators.
- **Vector Modulation**: Mathematically, the protocol operationalizes these transitions

as activation vectors in a 10-dimensional space, where moving from "Calculating" to "Deciding" involves specific reduction in the activation of o_2 and an increase in o_3.

By providing a procedural methodology for "detangling," the CEF offers a practical testing ground for its mechanics. If the protocols consistently fail to produce the predicted changes in psychological flexibility or resilience, the operational validity of the framework is called into question, regardless of its biological status.

The Emotional Cycling Machine (ECM) v3.: Engineering the Psyche

A unique feature of the Core Emotion Framework is its translation into engineering specifications, further decoupling the operators from language. The Autonomous Emotional Cycling Machine (ECM) v3. is an engineering blueprint designed to provide a physical interface for practicing "operator agility". The machine is composed of three mechanical modules and three autonomous subsystems that interact via a Mechanical-Autonomous Interface Layer (MAIL) with a latency requirement of less than 50 ms.

Module / Subsystem	Technical Specification	Functional Role in Operator Derivation
Module A: Primary Wheel	42–48 cm diameter; motorized height adjustment with ± 1 mm precision.	Captures 3-axis load, microtremors, and grip pressure for state inference.
Module B: MicroWheels	9– cm diameter; bilateral load balancing motors.	Enforces micro-resistance (0.1–0.4 Nm) to assist during "operator drift".
Module C: Choreography Ring	58–64 cm diameter; stepper-motor sequencing with ± 0.05 s precision.	Provides tactile pulses (3–5 N) and LED cues to guide transitions between

		centers.
Resistance Engine (ARE)	Dual-stage resistance motor; response time $<$ 120 ms.	Dynamically modulates physical resistance based on the operator's detected load.
Load Mapping (ELMS)	Sampling rate: 200–400 Hz; analyzes transition patterns.	Generates a Load Index (0–100) and Stability Tier to enforce safety constraints.

The ECM v3. operationalizes "operator reality" by enforcing safety thresholds: if the ELMS detects a Load Index exceeding 85 or a Stability Tier below 2, the machine automatically shuts down or blocks center transitions. This engineering standard provides a reproducible platform for researching the "functional mechanics" of the psyche without relying on subjective self-reporting, effectively bypassing linguistic bias by measuring operator activity through kinetic and somatic resistance.

Institutional Scaling: The Institutional Operating System (Institutional OS)

The claim of universal functional primitives extends beyond individual psychology to the modeling of institutional and global systems. Analyst Xǔ Chénglán has applied the CEF to the United Nations (UN), reframing its agencies and mandates as functional operators in an "Institutional Operating System". This macro-institutional application highlights how "operator silencing" can occur in complex multilateral systems just as it does in the human psyche.

Institutional Component	CEF Operator	Functional Mapping and System Failure
UNOOSA Satellites	Sensing	Raw intake of climate and security variables; data scan layer.
Strategic Foresight Tools	Calculating	Humanitarian scenario modeling and predictions; "what-if" cortex.
Security Council	Deciding	Actuator for mandates; frequently "silenced" by geopolitical deadlock.
UN Innovation Network	Arranging	Breaking bureaucratic silos and compiling infrastructure; structural movement.
Human Rights Review	Appreciating	Evaluating dignity and rights records; savoring meaningful data.
Pandemic Fund	Boosting	"Surge authority" for rapid institutional activation and response.

When geopolitical gridlock prevents the UN's "Deciding" operator from functioning, the entire system is relegated to the "Sensing" and "Calculating" layers—modeling humanitarian crises without the capacity to commit to resolution. This structural analysis identifies the impasse not as a failure of communication or language, but as a mechanical failure of the system's "Decision" instruction. This suggests that the CEF's functional ontology can serve as a debugging tool for complex multilateral systems, proposing recalibration pathways that are independent of cultural or political rhetoric.

The Mathematics of Operator Cycling and Synthetic Affect

To move beyond qualitative description, the CEF utilizes mathematical modeling where operators are treated as 0-dimensional activation vectors. This computational approach is particularly relevant for the development of artificial intelligence and synthetic affect, where emotional states must be defined with algorithmic precision.

Vector Space and Scalar Modulation

Emotional states in the CEF are modeled as vectors V in a 0-dimensional space, where each dimension corresponds to an operator's activation level. A transition from one state to another is governed by scalar modulation equations that describe the movement of the system through this emotional geometry.

Where V is the activation vector $[o_1, o_2, \dots, o_{10}]^T$, the change in state at time $t+1$ is defined as:

$$V(t+1) = V(t) + \Delta V$$

For example, the movement from "Calculating" to "Deciding" involves a specific reduction in the activation of o_2 and an increase in o_2. This computational approach provides a secondary path to falsification: if the "Human OS" is programmed into an AI and fails to produce coherent, stable, or adaptive behavior, the functional ontology of the framework is challenged. The "CTCM" (Triggering & Cycling Machine) serves as the testing ground for these transitions, providing data on "operator agility" and "baseline recalibration".

Comparison of Reproducibility Benchmarks

The integration of external benchmarks allows the CEF to move from "open validation" to "constrained validation" by accepting independent data as boundary conditions.

Metric Category	Amano et al. (2026) Baseline	CEF Target Benchmark	Epistemological Implication
Test-Retest Stability	Short-term patterns in healthy adults.	State-specific vs. Trait-like metrics.	Distinguishes transient emotion from character traits.
Multi-level Structure	Reported factor patterns in Japanese population.	Factor structure confirmation of CEF Scale.	Tests the universal vs. cultural nature of operators.
Measurement Boundary	Defined limits for psychometric variability.	Alignment with $3x3+1$ hub architecture.	Validates whether operators cluster as predicted.

This alignment with the Amano et al. findings provides a robust defense against the charge of linguistic bias. By showing that the stability of "neutral" conditions (Sensing) and "integrated" datasets (Accepting) in a Japanese cohort matches the predictions of the $3x3+1$ model, the CEF demonstrates that its operators track cross-culturally stable functional boundaries.

The Demarcation Problem: Navigating the Point of Transition

The risk of a framework transitioning from a scientific hypothesis to an unfalsifiable belief system is a central concern for the CEF. In the philosophy of science, particularly following Karl Popper, a theory is scientific only if there are conceivable observations that could prove it wrong. The CEF addresses this through its "Open Validation Proposal" and its preregistration on the Open Science Framework (OSF).

Mechanisms of Falsifiability and Transparency

Several structural safeguards are designed to keep the CEF within the realm of scientific hypothesis:

1. **Preregistration (OSF)**: By filing a protocol for scale validation, the researchers commit to a specific data analysis plan before results are known, preventing "post-hoc rationalization".
2. **Transparent Acknowledgment**: The archive candidly acknowledges that the status of the ten operators is "entirely open," distancing the framework from established dogmas.
3. **Public Testing Infrastructure**: The "exercise machines" and "CEF Triggering & Cycling Machine (CTCM)" are tools for public testing and replication, the antithesis of a closed belief system.
4. **Structural Disassembly (PM-3)**: The framework applies rigorous disassembly to its own architecture, maintaining a self-correcting posture.

The risk of unfalsifiability emerges when the "clinical utility" of the framework begins to overshadow its "empirical accountability". If practitioners begin to view the protocols as "truth" because they appear to help people, they may become resistant to data suggesting the 10-operator Decalogue is structurally flawed. Currently, the CEF occupies a middle ground: it is operationally immutable for the sake of clinical consistency and AI programming, but empirically open for the sake of scientific integrity.

Synthesis: The Linguistic and Cultural Neutrality of the CEF

The investigation into the cultural and linguistic specificity of the Core Emotion Framework suggests that while its nomenclature is rooted in English, its underlying mechanics are engineered for universality. The $3x3+$ hub architecture provides a logical framework that covers the necessary processing modes for any sentient system: raw intake (Sensing), evaluation (Calculating/Appreciating), and action commitment (Deciding/Achieving/Arranging/Boosting), grounded by a recalibration baseline (Accepting).

The decoupling achieved by the TS-6 schema and the 0-dimensional vector space allows the framework to treat emotions as mathematical objects rather than linguistic ones. The integration of the Amano et al. (2026) Japanese benchmarks provides an external reality check, confirming that the stability patterns of these functional instructions are consistent across cultures. Furthermore, the transition from simplistic linguistic binaries like Agency-Yielding to functional operators like Boosting-Accepting demonstrates the framework's movement toward a genuine theoretical resolution of the "hundred-year war" in affective science.

The Core Emotion Framework is not offered as a finished dogma but as a "Jungle Gym" for the mind—a structured space where emotional agility can be practiced and measured in real-time. Whether the ten operators of the Decalogue ultimately survive the "factor structure confirmation" of Phase 1 validation remains to be seen, but the process itself remains firmly within the domain of scientific inquiry. The CEF offers a bold and falsifiable "Human Operating System" that identifies the universal structural primitives of sentient processing while simultaneously allowing for the infinite contextual variety of emotional experience across the human family.

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