
Boundaries and the meaning of social space: a study of Japanese house plans

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Abstract. If there was a single best way to design a house to live in, all modern houses would be the same, but they are not: typical modern Japanese houses are not the same as typical modern British ones. As cultural values vary, so do psychological needs; and house form changes accordingly. The basic boundaries in the house are expressions of social classifications which regulate human behaviour, and boundaries are a useful focus when considering the meaning and cultural variation of house design. In the present study, data on spatial boundaries (house plans) are interpreted in the light of the Japanese emphasis on the *inside–outside* classification, which not only forms a physical demarcation in and around the house but also creates and reinforces psychological boundaries in human relationships. The social boundaries which define and maintain this classification are also evident in phenomenological accounts of Japanese people resident in the United Kingdom.

Introduction

Boundaries exist everywhere; there are boundaries throughout our social environment, and houses are no exception. It is widely accepted that house plans and the use of space reflect underlying sociocultural values and associated psychological needs, for the house is not only a physical space in which we shelter but also a space where social interactions take place (for example, Mumford, 1970; Saunders, 1990). As cultural values and norms vary, so do psychological needs (see, for example, Markus and Kitayama, 1991), and the configuration of houses changes accordingly.

‘Culture’ is a relatively organised system of shared meanings (Geertz, 1973), and the meaning of social space is part of that system. It is not a simplistic linear causal relationship, in which culture produces house form. There are many elements of culture, which are interwoven and mutually reinforcing (for example, ecological and environmental context, values, notions of personhood, social structure, ontological beliefs, and construction of gender). House form (that is, the shape, the boundaries, and the organisation of the house) is one of these elements. It reinforces values and is enabled by them. Elements of culture are maintained because they work for people; and they work differently in different cultures (and subcultures).⁽¹⁾

The basic boundaries in the house are, therefore, expressions of culturally recognised norms which regulate human behaviour. Seen this way, boundaries function at three distinct but related levels: physical or spatial, sociocultural and psychological. The boundaries at the physical, spatial level are concrete manifestations of social classifications, and social classifications are internalised by people and experienced phenomenologically.

To clarify, using a simple but commonplace example: a bar (or pub) usually has an entrance. This is placed on a physical, spatial boundary which marks the area classified

⁽¹⁾ Cultures are not homogeneous or monolithic and are subject to constant renegotiation. However, it is still valid to speak of what is typical in a particular culture (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

as a 'bar'. Because people recognise and understand the significance of the threshold, it is also a sociocultural boundary; and the significance of this sociocultural boundary (that is, the meaning of the physical threshold) lies in its association with social classifications. In this case, people below a certain age may not go into a bar and buy alcohol in many countries. There is a boundary of adulthood which is understood by adults and children, and this sociocultural boundary marks the particular social classification: adults may cross the boundary, children may not. Children know the bar is a forbidden place for them, so if they *do* cross the threshold, they are aware of it. There may be associated cognitive and affective experiences: a frisson of excitement, nervousness, etc. The boundary, therefore, also exists at the psychological, phenomenological level: the child is aware of crossing it.

Boundaries, thus, exist at three distinct but related levels, and the special qualities of boundaries have commended them to sociological and anthropological scrutiny (Douglas, 1966; Pellow, 1996; Turner, 1967). In the present context, boundaries are salient to an exploration of the meaning (at the sociocultural level) of house plans and to address questions of cultural variation: why, for example, is the internal layout of Japanese houses different from that of Western ones? Furthermore, why has the internal layout of Japanese houses changed over time in some respects but not in others?

This paper, by using an empirical study of Japanese houses, focuses on boundaries as a way of gaining insight into the meaning of social space. We briefly consider the significance of boundaries within the social construction of space, then we introduce relevant Japanese values, in particular the emphatic distinction between *inside* and *outside* (a classification which creates and reinforces psychological boundaries in human relationships, and forms spatial demarcations in and around the house) and the, much discussed, Japanese concern with dirt avoidance (Hendry, 1992; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984; 1987). In terms of the above description of boundaries at different levels, published accounts of Japanese values are used to infer sociocultural boundaries with reference to spatial use, and a study of Japanese house plans shows physical, spatial boundaries. Furthermore, phenomenological accounts provide confirmation that the inferred sociocultural boundaries are, indeed, also experienced at the psychological level. By looking at the three levels of boundaries separately, we attempt to demonstrate the interrelationship between them. Finally, we argue that the exploration of boundaries is informative regarding the organisation and appropriation of social space.

The socially constructed meaning of space

In this paper we take a broadly social-constructionist perspective, whereby people perceive the world the way in which they do because they interact with the world through participation in socially shared practices, which transmit, reproduce, and transform meaning systems through direct and symbolic social interchanges (Dittmar, 1992). Therefore, people's understanding of the world is different across time and culture, and they accept a particular conception of the world not because it is empirically valid but because it seems to work (Gergen, 1985).

The way in which people classify themselves, others, objects, settings, events, and periods of time is defined by conceptual categories. Although these classifications may feel natural or appear to be arbitrary, the practice of categorisation is usually consistent with cultural norms in a specific society at a specific time. Boundaries are used to define our daily affairs and restrict and regulate the interactions of people and the use of spaces. Spatial meaning is therefore expressed by unwritten social rules and conventions (Lawrence, 1984; 1996), and a focus on boundaries helps us to understand the way in which people use social space.

Rituals (for example, washing hands, or saying a blessing, before a meal) maintain a particular (aspect of) culture or a particular underlying assumption through a visible performance (Douglas, 1966). A particular activity takes place in a particular space; and this gives meaning to social space (Goffman, 1959). A ritualised activity, especially a routine in the home, underpins and organises the social system, reflecting or expressing culture (Bourdieu, 1977). Thus, even when physical possibilities are numerous, the actual chores may be severely limited by social conventions and taboos (Rapoport, 1969). Boundaries (physical, sociocultural, and psychological) are constructed and maintained by ritualised practices. They are basic forms of social structure (Pellow, 1996) and the analysis of the three levels of boundaries will therefore lead us to a better understanding of the socially constructed meaning of social space.

The inside – outside classification in Japan (and associated boundaries)

Boundaries represent and maintain certain values (Douglas, 1966); and the distinction between the inside and the outside is particularly salient to Japanese people as it relates not only to physical spaces, but also to psychosocial values. That is, the inside is associated with purity, cleanliness, safety, and intimacy (inside the group as well as inside a physical space), and the outside is associated with impurity, dirt, danger, and strangeness (Hendry, 1992; 1995; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984). The inside – outside classification and these associated notions are the basis of social (and associated psychological) boundaries which regulate Japanese behaviour and social interactions. Japanese people have a number of rituals which maintain the distinction (and the boundaries) between the inside and the outside. These are discussed briefly below with specific reference to the use of domestic space where they are particularly salient.

Clean versus dirty

Japanese people consider the outside to be dirty (which includes a sense of spiritual impurity or danger). In order to keep the inside of the house clean, various daily hygiene rituals are required. When people come back home, they take their shoes off, wash their hands, and gargle. Dogs are allowed inside only after having their paws wiped. One gets dirty from being outside and dirt should not be brought into the house, as the inside of the house is a clean place (Hendry, 1984; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984).

In the morning, people sweep and water the gate, the vestibule, and the area between the two, because it is a circumscribed space where the inside meets the outside and, as such, it requires special care (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984). It is a transitional zone between spatial boundaries and is often a source of anxiety, as it is an ambiguous and dangerous area, neither outside nor inside, where ritual functions regulate the access of people and matter coming inside (Lawrence, 1984).

Shinto, Japan's indigenous religion, is concerned with purity and pollution (Hendry, 1992). Death, illness, childbirth, killing, and handling corpses are all considered to convey impurity, and, after contact, one must be purified by salt and water, which are believed to remove dirt from the object (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1987). For example, the funeral involves a number of rituals. The corpse was traditionally washed in a tub by near relatives or was wiped with water. After the removal of the corpse, the house had to be purified by sprinkling salt and water throughout, and the corpse was taken in a procession to a temple or a shrine (Inouye, 1910). Still today, people have to be purified by sprinkling salt over themselves before entering the house when they come back from a funeral. This is to get rid of the pollution associated with death and to keep the inside of the house pure (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984).

For the same reason, women were secluded in a separate room during menstruation, and their meals were cooked separately. They were regarded as more polluted than men

as menstruation and childbirth were regarded as sources of impurity (Befu, 1971; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984).

This strict sense of cleanliness and dirt is also reflected in severe discrimination against people called *burakumin*, whose occupations (for example, butchers, tanners, and undertakers) brought them into contact with dead bodies. They—together with those without permanent residence, criminals, and beggars, who were also classified as burakumin—were labeled as inferior aliens in the feudal era. Regardless of the emancipation of burakumin after the Second World War, they have still remained victims of social discrimination, and the most common prejudice against them is the attribution of uncleanness (Hane, 1982; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1987).

The lower parts of the body are regarded as dirty, too, even though they are washed frequently; through association with urine and excrement, they are defined as particularly defiled. Therefore, underwear is usually washed separately and a separate pair of slippers is used exclusively in the toilet (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984).

In sum, dirt (in Japan) refers not only to physical and visible dirt but also to (culturally defined) conceptual dirt. A person's house must be kept clean to represent and maintain the cleanliness and purity of the family who live there.

Safe and intimate versus dangerous and strange

A person's house is also a safe and intimate place in Japan. When parents tell their children off, they lock the children out as a punishment, instead of locking them in as Western parents might do. This is because the outside is a dangerous place (Hendry, 1992).

The family has been, and is, the fundamental Japanese social unit. The way it is conceptualised is based on Confucian traditions, which were used to create national ideologies to unite the country in the late 19th century when Japan started its post-feudal modernisation. In Japanese culture the idea of being a member of a group, such as a family, is vital; and one primary characteristic in the Japanese family system is its collectivist values (Hofstede, 1991; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The family was more important than its individual members, who were expected to subordinate their individual aims and desires for the good of the family. Emphasis was (and is) placed on harmony, cooperation, and mutual dependency (Fukutake, 1989). It is still the case that, when a person is born, he or she is added to the family registration documents of his or her family, instead of receiving a separate birth certificate; in other words, the newborn baby is regarded as a new member of the family, not as a new individual (Dore, 1978; Hendry, 1992). These family values are applied in one's secondary groups (for example, school and workplace), and such organisations work just like a big family (Dore, 1987; Hendry, 1992; Kashima and Callan, 1994).

The distinction between the inside of the (family) group and the outside world is clearly made when a child is still very young. Children are told that the inside is associated with security and safety and the outside is dangerous, and therefore to stay inside the group. They learn to subject their individual needs to those of the group, and to cooperate with insiders as the best way to benefit personally; and they come to acquire the identity of the group to which they belong (Hendry, 1992). As a consequence, children become willing to depend on, and be relied upon by, others, fearful of making independent decisions and anxious about being isolated from the group, and indifferent to, or afraid of, strangers (Doi, 1971; Hendry, 1992).

Sleeping close together in the same room was (and is) considered more pleasant, more intimate, and safer for a family in Japan than being isolated in separate rooms (Barnlund, 1975; Dore, 1958). It was common for the husband and wife to sleep in the largest room with young children (Inouye, 1910). When children were older, they would

typically sleep in rooms separate from their parents: one for girls and another for boys. Such physical closeness cultivates interdependence among family members and promotes a sense of safety, in contrast to the separate sleeping arrangements in Western families, which encourage independence. Physical proximity symbolises a spirit of happy intimacy and comforting security within the family (Barnlund, 1975). However, families are reluctant to share a wall of the house with others (Hall, 1966) because a shared wall is a threshold which touches the outside and which, therefore, is a source of anxiety.

The idea of family intimacy is expressed in the traditional Japanese sense of privacy. The English word 'privacy' has an implication of an individual space, which is separate, and therefore sheltered and protected, from others and the outside world, in which one feels relaxed (Insel and Lindgren, 1978). The private sphere is the space into which people are able to withdraw from society (Abercrombie et al, 1986). The violation of personal space may be an invasion of privacy, as the sense of privacy is closely connected with the sense of territories of the self (Bryant, 1978). However, *uchi*, which is the closest Japanese word to the English 'privacy', indicates the inside of the group to which one belongs, not individual privacy. The idea of private spheres that are independent of the group has not traditionally been acceptable in Japan (Doi, 1971). The Japanese sense of privacy was familial (Roland, 1988) rather than individual.

Nonetheless, the Japanese gradually came to have the notion of personal privacy under the effect of the new Civil Code of 1947, which guaranteed individual rights. The English word 'privacy' became a common Japanese word (*puraihashi* in Japanese) after a former foreign secretary used the word publicly to defend his personal life when he objected to the publication, in 1964, of a book detailing his divorce (Murakami, 1996). The notion of personal privacy, even within the family, has now become common. In other words, a new psychological boundary has been created around individual family members. Nowadays, family members are more likely to sleep separately in their own rooms, although Japanese parents still usually sleep with young children, maintaining the traditional family intimacy. [It should be noted, though, that modern children having their own bedrooms reflects smaller family size as well a changing notion of privacy (Prime Minister's Office, 1993).]

At the same time, individualism, which had been seen as 'selfish' in the prewar period, came to be associated with human rights and individual liberty (Dore, 1958); and the new idea of the family as a collection of equal individuals was introduced (Roland, 1988). Accordingly, emotional dependence on, and identification with, the family (and secondary groups) has recently been weakening (Matsumoto et al, 1996), although the loyalty of individuals to their groups still remains strong (Economy and Planning Agency, 1995).

To summarise, Japanese values regarding intimacy and privacy have been changing. Although the distinction between the inside of the group (family) and the outside world still remains, people have become aware of their individual, personal privacy within their 'inside' group, such as the family.

Empirical study: Japanese house plans

In this section we present an empirical study of Japanese house plans. The aim of the study is to utilise the relationship, within this specific context, between physical boundaries, social classifications and psychological boundaries to illustrate the above argument that the exploration of boundaries contributes to deciphering the meaning of social space. Early-20th-century house plans are examined and compared with more recent (late-20th-century) ones, and the frequencies of features in houses built in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s are compared (using chi-squared) for changes over the

thirty-year period. The spatial boundaries (and changes in them), are used to infer social boundaries (and changes in them), which are validated by phenomenological accounts of the psychological reality of these social boundaries.

Data sources

There are three data sources for the present analysis. First, data on spatial boundaries in modern (post-1970) Japanese houses were collected in person by Ozaki as part of her doctoral research during fieldwork in Japan (for more detail, see Ozaki, 1999). Details of 123 house plans (18 houses built in the 1970s, 26 in the 1980s, and 79 in the 1990s)⁽²⁾ were taken from 'house descriptions' obtained at ten estate agents in the sample area (described below). Certain exclusions were required for the study: (a) public housing, because its design gives less attention to popular culture (see Hoshino, 1988); (b) customised housing, as it reflects idiosyncratic needs rather than broader social patterns; (c) flats.

Second, plans of 'mass' houses (not the mansions of the social elite) from the early 20th century available in the existing literature on housing were examined, in order to consider how physical boundaries of Japanese houses have changed (and not changed). This archival research was conducted in The National Cabinet Library, the Tokyo Municipal Hibiya Library, and Hitotsubashi University Library.

Third, in-depth interviews with Japanese people resident in England were conducted. Interviewees were asked how they felt about living in an English house because, if physical boundaries reflect psychosocial boundaries, people from one culture should feel uncomfortable about certain features of a house which does not embody their cultural norms and way of using space. For this reason, it was necessary to interview Japanese people somewhere other than (and culturally distant from) Japan. Ten Japanese people (five males and five females) were chosen on the basis that they had been living in England with their families for more than one year. Each interview took approximately one hour; and the interviews were transcribed and translated into English. In order to validate the information gathered in the interviews, the findings were circulated to the interviewees.

Sample area

In order to obtain plans of contemporary houses, the present study required the sample area to be one with clusters of relatively new housing. Such housing estates are found in currently developing areas where economic expansion creates jobs and brings more people into the region, necessitating more housing stock to accommodate the growing population.

Yokohama Kohoku New Town, situated 25 km southwest of Tokyo, conforms to the above description and was selected as a sample area. Until 1955 the district was largely undeveloped because of the lack of transport facilities. By 1965, however, the outlying districts of Yokohama City had undergone a rapid development in the wake of high economic growth in Japan. In 1965, Yokohama City began the construction of Kohoku New Town, which holds a complex of residential areas, business districts, industrial (mainly R&D) sites, as well as good social welfare and cultural facilities. The project aimed to transform a largely undeveloped area into a pleasant residential area for a planned population of 300 000 people with private housing, without urban sprawl, and in accordance with the prefectural policy on the promotion of high-technology industries. In 1994 Kohoku New Town area became a new administrative ward of Yokohama City, called Tsuzuki Ward. Its current population is approximately

⁽²⁾ The difference in the sample size reflects the fact that the average life expectancy of Japanese houses is 26 years and that the proportion of houses that are over 25 years old accounts for less than 10% of the total housing stock (Groák et al, 1996).

117 000 people, with 40 000 households. The residents are mostly white-collar people (professional, managerial, and clerical) working in high-technology and R&D sectors, or associated service sectors such as finance and information. The area, then, is a relatively recent development, containing contemporary housing; and this serves the aim of the present study.

Results: spatial boundaries

The characteristics (boundaries) of Japanese houses which are considered in the following analysis are: (a) the vestibule; (b) the enclosure of the plot (of the house and the garden); (c) the separation of the toilet from the bathroom; and (d) the style of bedrooms. These characteristics are particularly relevant in the present context.

Houses built between 1900 and 1945

The, still familiar, *tatami* straw-matted rooms were one of the most striking features of Japanese houses in the first half of the 20th century. The walls of the rooms were made of paper and were removable; one would keep these paper walls between the rooms open during the day and closed at night when one slept. Each room had a cupboard where a set of *futon* mattresses could be kept during the day; therefore the room was empty with no furniture except for some chests of drawers, and was multipurpose. The larger houses had a few adjoining *tatami* rooms, which meant that one could make a large, spacious room for some special occasions (Inouye, 1910).

In the early 20th century, along with the development of suburbia, the middle class (for example, school teachers and government officials) increasingly started to live in suburban detached houses enclosed by high fences (Aoki, 1983; Fujimori, 1993; Inouye, 1910). Every house, large or small, had a vestibule where one would take one's shoes off and climb up a few steps to the floor level. This space contained a cupboard in which shoes were kept (Morse, 1972; Nakagawa, 1985). The bathroom consisted of a few smaller sections: a room for undressing, and another for washing the body and bathing, two distinct processes (Aoki, 1983; Fujimori, 1993). The toilet was separate from the bathroom, not part of it (Morse, 1972).

Houses built between the 1970s and the 1990s

All houses in the sample of 123 are detached, with the exception of one terraced house.⁽³⁾ Every house has a vestibule where shoes are removed, with a cupboard where they are kept. They all have either walls or a combination of walls and hedges around the plot, and the garden is hidden away from the eyes of passersby. People erect high walls or fencing if builders have not already done so (Government Housing Loan Corporation, 1994). Without exception, the bathroom and the toilet are kept separate. The bathroom always comprises two rooms: one is the actual bathing room which has a bath tub and a space where one washes and rinses oneself (prior to bathing). The other is the washing–dressing room where a wash basin and a washing machine are located and where one takes one's clothes off before entering the bathing section. These (with the addition of the washing machine) are unchanged traditional features.

The change in bedroom styles, however, is notable. Japanese-style bedrooms with *tatami* mats have increasingly been replaced by the Western type of room (that is, rooms with a door and solid walls, where one has a bed, not rooms with *tatami* mats, removable walls, and a *futon*). The majority of 1970s houses have both types of bedrooms and there is one house that has only Japanese-style bedrooms. But the 1980s saw an increase in the number of houses with Western bedrooms only, and the proportion of such houses has exceeded that of those with both types of bedrooms

⁽³⁾ According to the 1993 Housing Survey conducted by Management and Coordination Agency (1996), linked houses account for 7% of all houses in Japan.

in the 1990s. The newly built houses are more likely to have only Western-style bedrooms. There is a statistically significant association between the bedroom type and the age of houses ($\chi^2_2 = 22.80, p < 0.0001$, see table A1). The decrease in the number of Japanese-style bedrooms is striking.⁽⁴⁾ However, it should be noted that the number of bedrooms has not changed, it is simply that more of them are Western style.

Although Western-style bedrooms are increasingly popular, there is typically a Japanese-style tatami room next to the living room on the ground floor. This feature is consistently seen, regardless of the age of houses. This room can be used as a drawing room for formal occasions or as a guest bedroom at night, by virtue of the multifunctional capacity of a tatami room (see figure 1).

To sum up, a number of comments can be made about consistency and change in the boundaries of Japanese houses through the 20th century. First, there was a vestibule in the house throughout the century. Second, the property has always been enclosed. Third, the bathroom area contains additional boundaries: the separations between the bathroom and the toilet, and between the washing–dressing room and the actual bathroom. Fourth, there has been a dramatic change in the style of bedrooms, with more clearly demarcated personal (that is, individual) space within the house. These boundaries are products of the classification of the inside and the

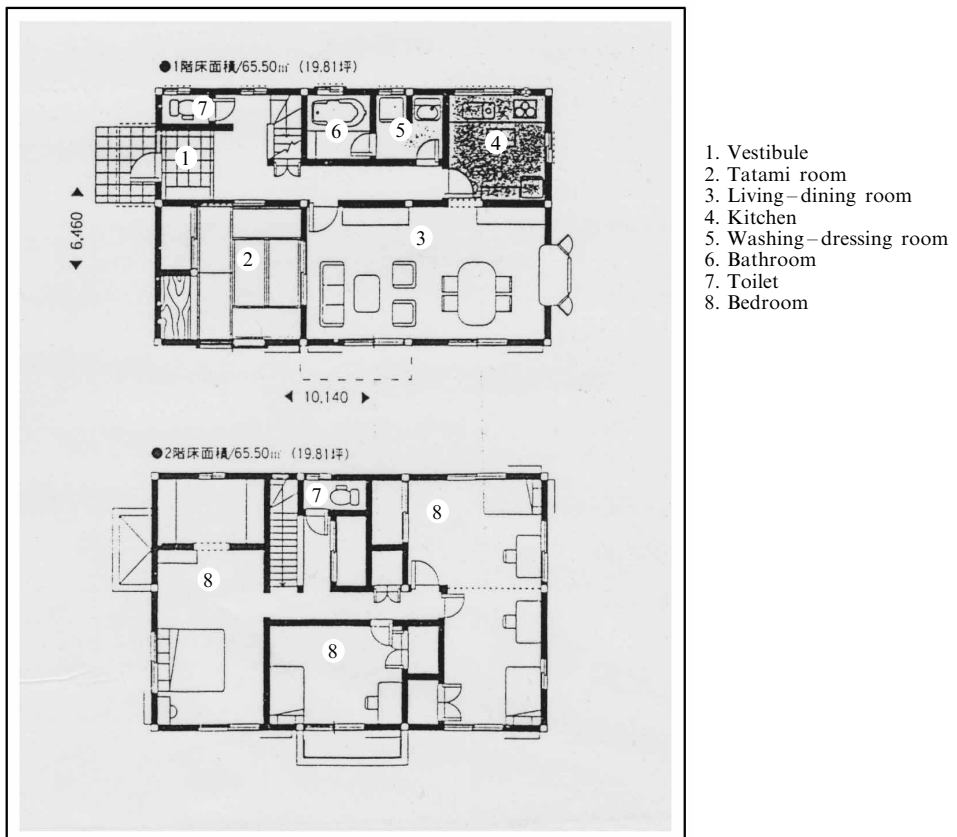


Figure 1. A contemporary house plan.

⁽⁴⁾ The bed was introduced into Japan after the Second World War and the percentage of the population owning beds has been increasing since then (Management and Coordination Agency, 1996).

outside and of associated social and psychological boundaries in Japanese culture, and increasingly emphasised boundaries such as those in the Japanese bedrooms represent shifting values—in this case, the increasing acceptance of the notion of individual privacy.

Phenomenological boundaries

In the interviews with Japanese people who lived in England a number of remarks regarding ‘cleanliness’ were made (indeed, all respondents spoke of this), which exemplify the Japanese sense of dirt.

“We need a proper space for taking shoes off. We take shoes off in the small entrance area; but as there is no step or barrier there [interviewee points to the floor], it is very difficult to make a proper boundary—like you take your shoes off there, and from this line you cannot enter with your shoes on. I want this kind of demarcation and do not like to see people break this demarcation and come into the house with their shoes on.”

“British people do not seem to think that the floor inside the house is dirty, even though they are walking on the floor with their shoes on. Their sense of cleanliness is very different from ours.”

“There is no proper entrance in an English house, which is inconvenient. We have made a place where we can put our shoes in. This is probably a mental thing, but we are living here in England as if we were in Japan.”

“Our first priority of choosing a house was that the house had an entrance hall where we could take off our shoes and keep them. We want the inside the house to be clean. I think it is much cleaner if we take shoes off when entering the house; we actually tend to sit on the floor although we do have settees in the living room. Just a habit, though.”

“Children tend to eat things which they have dropped on the floor. If you did not take off your shoes, it would be very dirty. My wife particularly does not like things of this kind.”

Similarly, respondents made comments on dirt in the bathroom: as a place for a purification ritual the bathroom must be a clean place, necessarily separated from the toilet.

“The bathroom is less hygienic because of the shoes and the presence of the toilet.”

“We looked for a house with a separate toilet. The toilet should be separate from the bathroom; it is cleaner this way, as the toilet is supposed to be a dirty place.”

“I do not like the carpet in the bathroom. It seems less clean to me, although it is probably not too dirty. We might imagine that it is less hygienic because of the shoes and the presence of the toilet.”

Other comments were related to a preference for a single living–dining–family space and the perceived superfluousness of a separate dining room. Separate downstairs rooms found in English houses are rather ‘cold’.

“We do not use our dining room. We have actually put the computer there, and it is more like a study. We eat breakfast in the kitchen and have supper in the front room. But my [British] husband’s parents prefer to eat in the so-called dining room. So, when we have them, we have to have that room ready, which is a drag.”

“There is a separate dining room in our house. But we do not eat there. We eat in the living room, which I think is more intimate.”

Discussion

The distinction between the inside and the outside is a salient classification in Japan. It has spatial, social, and psychological implications, creating boundaries which influence behaviour and the use of space.

Japanese houses have consistently had specific spatial demarcations which maintain the social and phenomenological boundaries, and consequently the classification between the inside and the outside. A vestibule is designed not only to keep the inside of the house clean, but also to make a clear distinction between the inside and the outside and also between insiders (for example, household members, relatives, and friends) and outsiders or objects which belong outside (shoes, which have been in direct contact with outside dirt, remain there). The inside of the house is the space for insiders, and outsiders are not invited into such an intimate space; this exemplifies Lawrence's (1996) point that spatial demarcation expresses social differentiation, reflecting distinctions between individuals and groups. The absence of a vestibule is, indeed, a problem for the Japanese interviewees, because the lack of spatial boundaries implies an absence of psychosocial boundaries and makes them feel ill at ease.

The boundary found in the bathroom area is another feature for maintaining the demarcation between pure and impure spaces: the most defiled place (the toilet) cannot be situated in the place allocated for purification (the bathroom). The Japanese traditionally see bathing as having the function of symbolic purification: for them, dirt relates to illness and to death—which has to be systematically dealt with through appropriate ritual (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984). For the same reason, houses with a washing machine in the kitchen (which are commonly found in the United Kingdom) do not sell well in Japan, because people do not like to mix 'clean' food and 'dirty' clothes in the kitchen. It is out of the question to wash one's clothes in the kitchen, which should be the cleanest place in the house (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984).

The interviewees' comments on a separate toilet, together with the ones on the lack of a vestibule, indicate that, to Japanese people, shoes inside the house and a toilet in the bathroom illustrate precisely what Douglas (1966) called 'matter out of place', in the context of the Japanese inside–outside classification. These are examples of dirty, outside matter in supposedly clean, inside places. What we see as dirt is indeed an indicator of our social classification systems. Otherwise, the British, too, would insist on a vestibule, a separate toilet, and a washing machine away from the kitchen. It is not that the Japanese have more space to separate living functions; in fact, the reverse is the case, they generally have less. The rituals described earlier show the importance, in Japanese culture, of the dichotomy between the clean inside and the dirty outside. This strong demarcation is part of a system of classification, constructing and maintaining psychological boundaries, and creating spatial boundaries.

The classification of the inside and the outside also relates to intimacy and safety. There have long been fences around houses to protect familial privacy. This is why the detached house is the main form of housing; physical proximity to the neighbours would threaten the safety and intimacy of the inside of the house (Hall, 1966). This perceived intimacy of the inside was expressed in the Japanese respondents' remarks about preferring to eat in the living room because it is more intimate. To gather in the family room has been the tradition in Japan. In this space they eat, communicate, and watch television together; the housewife does housework such as ironing and children do homework. This multifunctional room has been, and remains, the centre of the house and is a symbol of family intimacy (Miyawaki, 1991). However, the idea of family as the basic social unit does not fit in well with the boundaries in the living space of a British house.

The only major change observed in the spatial boundaries of the Japanese houses is in the style of bedrooms. Traditionally, the house did not have personal spaces: there was

no need, as there was no sense of personal privacy. This is illustrated by the fact that the walls separating the parents' and young children's bedroom from others were paper and removable. However, it is common in contemporary Japanese houses to find Western-type bedrooms with a door and solid walls, which allow a person to have the personal privacy which individualism requires. This physical change suggests a response to the recent psychosocial change: in other words, an increasing emphasis on the individual is reflected in the solidification of physical barriers between people. No interviewees referred to Western-style bedrooms in their British houses as problematic.

Conclusion

Spatial boundaries are not merely functional. They embody social classifications which produce and are maintained by social and psychological boundaries. Boundaries, then, are constructed by and reflect a particular (in this case Japanese) way of looking at the world. The process of boundary making is a cultural act. It represents a decision of what or who is to be included or excluded, based on particular criteria. Boundaries and boundary-maintaining systems are socially structured, and, therefore, are expressions of cultural codes and are the most basic forms of social structure (Pellow, 1996).

In the present case, it has been seen that the social classifications that distinguish inside from outside, clean from dirty, intimate and safe from alien and dangerous, produce certain spatial boundaries (for example, a vestibule and the separation between the bathroom and the toilet), but not others (for example, the Japanese interviewees found the division between dining and living rooms in English houses redundant). These boundaries have remained consistent over the last century, whereas changed boundaries, associated with the growth of the notion of individual privacy, are evident only in more recent houses. It should be emphasised that these boundaries are not new and different, but are now more marked (by walls and doors rather than by paper partitions). It is also the case that these boundaries leave their trace at the phenomenological level and, in the present study, their absence made respondents uneasy.

Thus, an understanding of psychosocial boundaries and the underlying classification system helps us to investigate the meaning attached to physical space and its organisation. A particular spatial organisation, whether it has long been present or has made its appearance only recently, has reasons for its existence, for people need certain spatial arrangements to accommodate their rituals, which allow them to maintain certain boundaries, and, accordingly, social classifications. Cultures cut the world into meaningful chunks; boundaries encompass and define these chunks.

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Appendix

Table A1. A summary of changes in contemporary house forms: results of chi-square tests.

		Percentage of houses with feature				Association with house age
		1970s–90s	1970s	1980s	1990s	
House types	detached	99				ns
	terraced	1				
Storeys	single	2				ns
	2-storeys	98				
Entrance hall		100				ns
Living room	front (south)	94				ns
	separate living room	20	(86	39)	1	$p < 0.00001$
	living room–dining room	1	(7	22)	9	
	kitchen–living room–dining room	69	(7	39)	90	
Dining room	separate dining room	5	22	(8	0)	$p < 0.00001$
	integral dining room	95	78	(92	100)	
Kitchen	rear (north)	93				ns
	separate kitchen	15	(28	27)	9	$p < 0.00001$
	kitchen–dining room	20	(67	39)	4	
	kitchen–dining room–living room	64	(6	35)	87	
	face-to-face style	21	0	(35	22)	$p < 0.05$
	backdoor	32	56	42	23	$p < 0.05$
Bathroom	rear	100				ns
Toilet	separate	100				ns
	1 (ground floor)	27	56	42	15	$p < 0.0005$
	2 (both ground and first floors)	73	44	58	85	
Utility room		7				ns
Formal-use (multipurpose) room		86				ns
Bedroom number	Japanese style	90	89	86	91	ns
	2	8				ns
	3	78				
	4	12				
	5	2				
Bedroom style	all Western	52	17	35	66	$p < 0.0001$
	both Western and Japanese	47	78	65	34	
	all Japanese	1	6	0	0	
Gardens	enclosed	100				ns
Bay window		75	22	65	90	$p < 0.00001$
Garage	basement	19	28	46	8	$p < 0.0001$
	garage	19	17	27	17	
	parking space	59	50	23	72	
	none	3	5	4	3	

Note: The result of correlation coefficients test ($r = -0.049$, $p = 0.593$) shows no correlation between the price of the house and age of the house. This means that the adoption of a new feature for the house does *not* relate to the price of the house. Figures in brackets denote that the association is statistically significant when the data of two decades or of two styles of a feature are combined.

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