

# Assignment 6



14 October Emotion and Culture Everyone deals with emotions differently. Emotions bring color and richness to people's lives and helps give meaning to the different events in our lives whether they are good and bad. Charles Darwin, best known for his work *Evolution of the Species*, suggested in his subsequent volume, *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals*, that everyone is born with biologically innate facial expressions. (Matsumoto and Juang, pg 227)

This paper will show the universality of those facial expressions of emotion and how the culture in which we live can shape those emotional responses. Thus, this will basically explain how we each deal with emotions.

#### Factors of Universality

There are many factors that explain the universality of emotional expression in various cultures. These factors are expression, perception, experience, antecedents, appraisal, and concept. These factors basically shape who we are.

Charles Darwin gave us the basis on which to discover the universality of human emotion. He suggested that facial expressions, like other behaviors, are biologically innate and evolutionary adaptive. And humans express emotions in their faces in exactly the same ways around the world regardless of culture or race. In this he was right.

Thus, the universality of our emotions provide cultures a base form that the cultural influences can mold and shape us into who we are.

#### Cultural Influences

Culture plays a major role in how we react to different situations daily. Whether these situations are social, business, with family, with friends, or with strangers; we react differently. We use cultural display rules to help

guide our reactions to each and every situation that we are in. These rules are learned early in life and by adulthood our reactions to these rules are pretty much automatic.

Different cultures display emotions for the same situations differently. An example came from pg 231:

“ Ekman (1972) and Friesen (1972) designed a study to document the existence

of these cultural display rules and their role in producing cultural differences in emotional expressions. In the study described earlier, American and Japanese subjects were asked to view highly stressful films while their facial reactions were videotaped. That experiment actually had two conditions. In the

first condition, subjects viewed the stimuli by themselves. In a second condition,

an older, higher-status experimenter came into the room and asked the subjects to watch the films again, with the experimenter observing them.

Their

facial reactions were again videotaped. Analyses showed that the Americans in

general continued to show negative feelings of disgust, fear, sadness, and anger.

The Japanese, however, invariably smiled in these instances. These findings show how universal, biologically innate emotional expressions can interact with culturally defined rules of display to produce appropriate emotional expressions.

In the first condition, when display rules did not operate, the Americans

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and the Japanese exhibited the same expressions. In the second condition, display rules were operative, forcing the Japanese to smile in order not to offend

the experimenter, despite their obvious negative feelings. These findings are especially impressive because the subjects in the second condition that produced

differences were the same individuals as in the first condition that produced similarities.”

Thus, facial expressions of emotion are under the dual influences of universal, biologically innate factors along with culturally specific learned display rules. Furthermore, when the displays rules do not apply to the situations, the innate universal facial expressions tend to come forth. That explains why people can differ in their emotional expression despite the fact that our expressional base is all the same.

#### My Expression

Culture has shown me that our expressions can vary. However, the value of morality that I choose to uphold allows for my general reactions to various situations to be somewhat different than other people. I choose to go with a more Christian value base and a more professional base when I am at work. I try to be friendly to everyone that I meet. Thus, I am generally regarded as a dependable person and a well liked person.

I feel that culture is now more degrading a person than ever before in my life. Thus, there are times that watching anything on TV is hard to do. But, still I manage to find things that I can watch. However, TV is a major part of our media as is the rapid use of the internet nowadays.

As you can see, our emotions and who we are as a person are directly

affected not only by our basic innate universal emotional base, but the cultural influences which are around us each and every day.

#### Works Cited

Matsumoto, D., and L. Juang. Culture and Psychology. 4th ed. Thomas Wadsworth, 2008. 225-260. Print.