Liget is a key emotion in the life of the Ilongot—an indigenous hunting-and-gathering tribe that lives in the Northern Philippines. One cannot really understand many of the customs of the Ilongot unless one understands *liget*. But understanding *liget* is somewhat of a challenge for English speakers because the concept does not map neatly onto any English emotion terms. The closest approximation is a combination of the English words "anger," "passion," and "energy." The anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo (1980) provides a detailed account of *liget* among the Ilongot, with whom she lived for a number of years. *Liget* is experienced when one is insulted, disappointed, or irritated, but especially when one is envious of another. It can be aroused by all-night songfests, pride of accomplishments, or the death of a loved one. *Liget* is seen as a wellspring of energy. When an individual's *liget* gets worked up, it can allow the person to work in the fields all day or to climb high in the trees. As one of Rosaldo's informants said, "If it were not for *liget,* we'd have no life, we'd never work." *Liget* is something that derives from interactions among people, particularly when they compete against each other and become envious of others' accomplishments. It is also sometimes cultivated through various magic rituals. *Liget* is believed to exist in concentrated form in semen, and thus it is assumed to be more common among men than among women (although women can, at times, feel much *liget* as well). But primarily, *liget* is possessed by striving youths, energetic hunters, and violent men (**Figure 10.1**).

FIGURE 10.1 Two Ilongot youth engaged in a ritual duel.

The most dramatic demonstration of *liget* occurs in the Ilongot head-hunting rituals. Until the 1970s, the Ilongot frequently engaged in head-hunting raids on neighboring tribes. When asked why they killed others in these raids, the men would answer that they kill because of *liget*. Head hunting was a demonstration of the strong feelings of *liget* that were believed to make men great. On these raids, men would play reed flutes and pound their heads to heighten their *liget* as they headed off on a trek to a distant village. Once their *liget* had reached a crescendo, further fueled by chewing on the narcotic leaves of the betel nut, they would rush in and attack their victim. The attack would end when the victor would toss the severed head of his victim high into the air. After the raid had ended, the victors would sing a celebratory song, put flowery reeds in their hair, and return to their villages empowered, glorified, and full of *liget*.

A question to consider here is, How universal is the emotion *liget*? Do you think you have ever felt *liget*? Not its display in a head-hunting ritual, of course, but the emotion itself—a frothy feeling of anger, passion, and energy that can lead either to extreme concentration and productivity or to chaos. Likewise, do you think the Ilongot might ever feel the same kinds of emotions that you do? For example, think of a situation that has made you embarrassed, and how you felt at that time. Now imagine how you think Ilongots would feel in that same situation. Do you think they would feel the same as you did, or would their emotions be different? If you think their feelings would be different, do you think they could ever have the same kinds of feelings that you experienced in your situation?

I imagine that it's difficult for you to answer these questions. It's hard enough to imagine how someone else from our own culture would feel, let alone someone from a culture as distant as the Ilongot. Yet these are precisely the kinds of questions that emotions researchers have been wrestling with. And I think "wrestling" is an apt metaphor in this case, because the question of whether emotional experiences are similar or different across cultures is one of the most contentious in cultural psychology.

The controversy regarding the role of culture and emotion focuses on a fundamental question that has guided our investigation in the other chapters in this book: To what extent are psychological experiences universal and to what extent are they shaped by cultural experiences? In the case of emotion, as you will see, strong arguments have been made for both cases—that emotions are experienced identically around the world and that cultural experiences determine the kinds of emotions one has. Scholarly debates are very important to a field, as they force researchers to sharpen their arguments and lead them to conduct clever studies that provide evidence to shed light on the disagreements. The study of culture and emotions is a classic example of such a debate, and this chapter considers the evidence regarding whether people's emotional experiences are similar or different across cultures. Let's take a stroll down the frontlines of this controversy.

What Is an Emotion?

Before we can begin a fruitful investigation into a topic, it's necessary to have a good understanding of what we are studying. But herein lies the rub. Emotions turn out to be remarkably difficult to define. For the most part, we feel that we can recognize our emotions easily enough. We feel quite sure that we know when we feel happy or afraid—these are highly salient and important experiences in our lives. In many ways, emotions are a central and focal part of our subjective worlds. Although emotions are perceived as central to the human experience, describing what they are is not at all straightforward. The controversy regarding the similarities and differences of people's emotional experience around the world is surely based on the disagreement about how we can define emotions in the first place. Let's consider two theoretical perspectives regarding the nature of emotions that have guided the debate regarding the universality or relativity of emotional experience: the James-Lange theory and the Two-Factor theory.

The James-Lange Theory of Emotions

As with so many other key ideas in American psychology, the study of emotions begins with William James (1950/1890; see **Figure 10.2**). James proposed a thought experiment in which we imagine that someone out for a hike has stumbled upon a bear. The hiker's heart starts pounding and he runs away, experiencing that highly salient emotion of fear. James's question was, "What is the fear that the hiker experienced in this situation?" Where precisely is the emotion here? His answer was that it was the hiker's pounding heart. That is, James proposed that emotions are the physiological responses or "bodily reverberations" to stimuli in the world. A contemporary of James, Carl Lange, proposed that these physiological responses were products of the autonomic nervous system, such as changes in heart rate, breathing, pupil dilation, tear secretion, blood flow to the skin, and stomach contractions, and their ideas became known as the **James-Lange theory of emotions.**

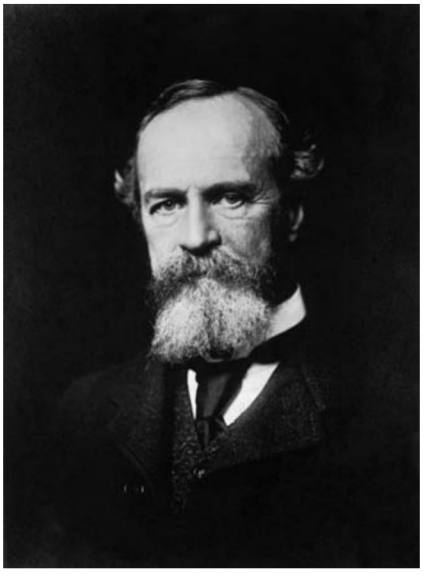

FIGURE 10.2 William James, the key founder of the James-Lange theory of emotions.

The James-Lange theory maintains that our bodies respond to stimuli in the world by preparing us to react in a survival-facilitating way (such as running away from the bear), and our emotions are our bodily changes that signal how we should behave. As James reasoned, what would be left of our feelings of joy, rage, love, or any emotion if we removed the heart palpitations, queasiness in the stomach, or muscle tension? We'd be left with a pure,

cold, intellectual state like that of Mr. Spock on *Star Trek*. According to James, emotions are precisely those physical sensations that make us feel human.

People of course have a wide variety of emotions, which suggests that people must also have an accordingly wide variety of bodily responses. James felt that each emotion word is the description of a different bodily state. Embarrassment is the sensation of blood rushing to the face, love is the feeling of one's stomach turning end over end, and fear is the sensation of a pounding heart. Emotions, according to this view, are all about physiological experiences. And some research has revealed support for the James-Lange theory by identifying distinctive physiological patterns that correspond to certain emotions (e.g., Ekman, Levenson, & Friesen, 1983; Levenson, 1992), although other surveys of the literature call into question the specificity of the physiological patterns associated with emotion (Barret, 2006; Cacioppo, Berntson, Larsen, Poehlmann, & Ito, 2000; Lindquist, Wager, Kober, Bliss-Moreau, & Barrett, 2012; Murphy, Nimmo-Smith, & Lawrence, 2003).

Since he first proposed it, James's theory of emotions has been expanded in many ways, so that emotions are no longer seen to be just the physiological experience but rather also include appraisals, nonverbal expressions, neural patterns, and subjective feelings (e.g., Barrett & Russell, 1999; Ellsworth, 1992; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). However, the theory's focus on the physiological experience has been central to a number of other key theories on emotional experience (Ekman, 1972; LeDoux, 1996; Panksepp, 1998).

The Two-Factor Theory of Emotions

Not everyone saw things the same way as James. Another contemporary of James, Walter Cannon, quickly criticized the James-Lange theory because the autonomic nervous system seemed to be too clumsy and slow to be differentiated into all the emotional states people experience. In some ways, it seemed at the time that the key components of the autonomic nervous system—the sympathetic and parsympathetic nervous systems—were just either turned on or turned off. Cannon thought that such a simple and ponderous system could not provide the complexity to cover the wide array of emotions people feel. Those researchers who conceptualized the autonomic nervous system as too diffuse and ungainly offered a different take on what emotions are (for a review, see Barrett, 2006). Rather than seeing emotions as primarily consisting of physiological responses, this competing school of thought maintained that emotions are primarily the *interpretations* of those bodily responses. This view, the **Two-Factor theory of emotions** (named for the factors of the physiological signals and the interpretation of those signals), redirected the focus of emotions away from the physical body and into the mind.

Stanley Schacter (see **Figure 10.3**) and Jerome Singer (1962) were the most famous proponents of the two-factor theory. They contended that emotion researchers had neglected to study people's interpretations of their physiological sensations because the

FIGURE 10.3 Stanley Schacter, the key founder of the Two-Factor theory of emotions.

earlier studies and thought experiments had never separated people's interpretations from their actual physiological sensations. Their reasoning suggests that the hiker in James's thought experiment experienced fear at sensing his pounding heart because there was no other reasonable way to interpret his bodily sensations in that situation. One could imagine other situations in which the hiker's heart would be pounding—for example, being on a steamy date with an attractive partner—when the hiker would interpret his physiological sensations as indicating that he was in love. Schacter and Singer reasoned that we could identify the separate roles of the interpretation and the physiological sensation only if we disentangled them. Their way of doing so was to conduct an elaborate experiment that controlled for the source of participants' physiological arousal and their interpretation of that arousal.

To separate their participants' interpretations from the source of their arousal, Schacter and Singer (1962) needed to do two things. First, they needed to provide the participants with situational cues to guide their interpretation. They did so by having participants assigned to either a situation that was to lead them to interpret their feelings as euphoria or a situation that would lead them to interpret their feelings as anger. Those assigned to the "euphoria" condition were asked to complete a questionnaire in a lab stocked with props and a confederate whose job it was to get the participant in a giddy, playful mood. The confederate did this by playing with the props, such as shooting wads of paper at the participant with a slingshot, making paper airplanes, and playing with a hula hoop that was lying around. The researchers reasoned that participants in this condition should interpret any arousal they were feeling as due to their feeling giddy—or, in the experimenter's terminology, euphoric. In contrast, participants assigned to the "anger" condition completed a questionnaire alongside the same confederate, whose job here was to get the participant to join him in expressing his frustration and outrage at the rudeness of the items in the questionnaire. The questionnaire helped the confederate with this task because it included a list of rather insulting items, such as, "Which member of your immediate family does not bathe or wash regularly?" and "With how many men (other than your father) has your mother had extramarital relationships?" If that last question was not enough, the lowest answer that the participant could select as a response to it was "4 and under"! Participants in this condition should interpret any physiological arousal that they were feeling as due to their anger at being subjected to such an insulting situation.

The second factor that Schacter and Singer manipulated was the amount of physiological arousal the participants would be experiencing. Under the guise that the

experiment was investigating how a new vitamin called Suproxin affected vision, participants were given an injection under one of three conditions. In the placebo condition, participants were given an injection of saline and were truthfully told that the injection would not have any side effects on their state of arousal. In the epinephrine-informed condition, participants were given an injection of epinephrine and were truthfully told that the injection would cause their arousal to increase. Epinephrine is the synthetic equivalent of adrenaline, a neurotransmitter that heightens arousal in the sympathetic nervous system. Last, in the epinephrine-uninformed condition, participants were given an injection of epinephrine but were falsely told that it *would not have any side effects* of increased arousal. This last condition was key; Participants should have felt a great deal of physiological arousal from the injection, but they wouldn't know where the arousal came from. Schacter and Singer reasoned that participants in this condition would look to the situation to interpret their feelings and would conclude that their arousal was due to their experiences in the situation—that is, either due to their giddy feelings from goofing around with the confederate in the euphoria condition or to their annoyance from being insulted in the anger condition. In contrast, the researchers predicted that participants in the placebo condition would experience little arousal and thus would experience little emotion. Likewise, those in the epinephrine-informed condition would experience little emotion because, although they experienced much physiological arousal, they would attribute it to the side effects of the injection they had received.

The results of the study largely supported Schacter and Singer's predictions. The strongest emotions were experienced by those in the epinephrine-uninformed condition. Participants in this condition were feeling a great deal of arousal but they had no good explanation for it. So they came to interpret their arousal by looking to the situation they were in. Those in the euphoria situation explained their arousal as a result of their feeling euphoric, whereas those in the anger situation attributed it to their feeling angry. The emotional experience came from participants interpreting their arousal in light of their beliefs of the situations that they were in. If the same physiological information can be interpreted as either euphoria or anger, two very distinct emotional experiences, this suggests that despite the different physiological patterns that different emotional states might have (e.g., Ekman et al., 1983; Levenson, 1992), people don't have an especially fine-tuned awareness of their bodily sensations. Much subsequent research, using a variety of manipulations of arousal and several measures of emotions (e.g., Dutton & Aron, 1974; Zillman, 1978), have converged to show that people look to cues from their environment to help them label their physical sensations.

The James-Lange theory and the Two-Factor theory suggest two very different origins for emotions, and these theories make different predictions regarding whether emotional experience is universal or culturally variable. If the various extensions of the James-Lange theory are correct—that emotions are largely based on the particular and specific physiological reactions that people have to various events—this

suggests an evolutionary origin to human emotions. That is, if emotions are specific biological signals that alert people to events in their world, it would follow that this biological machinery must have been assembled through evolution. For example, the physiological signals of fear that we experience on encountering a bear in the woods serve us well in aiding to get our body out of harm's way. In the past, individuals who did not experience those physiological signals of fear were more likely to have been caught by the bear and thus wouldn't have had the chance to pass their genes down to the next generation. Over millions of generations these affective signals would have been adaptive for our ancestors, and the signals thus became part of our genetic code. And because we share the same genetic code, and we all shared the same ancestors up until very recently (it was not until about 60,000 years ago that some *Homo sapiens* first left Africa), we have all inherited these adaptive physiological signals. The James-Lange theory thus suggests that people in all cultures should have the same emotional experiences. In support of this, some research has identified distinctive physiological patterns of emotions that are similar among people from diverse cultural backgrounds (e.g., Levenson, Ekman, Heider, & Freisen, 1992; Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, & Freire-Bebeau, 2002; but see Barrett, 2006, for a contrary view). The James-Lange theory, and other theories that focus on the centrality of physiology in emotions, make the case for universality in emotional experience.

On the other hand, if the Two-Factor theory of emotions is correct—that emotions are interpretations of physiological signals—this suggests that in addition to a physiological basis, emotions are grounded in the belief systems that shape people's interpretations (for a thorough discussion of this see Lindquist et al., 2012). Because belief systems are influenced a great deal by culture (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Schwartz, 1994), the Two-Factor theory suggests that people might interpret their physiological signals in different ways across cultures. And research reveals important cultural differences in the experience of emotions (e.g., Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006; Mesquita, 2001; Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006). The Two-Factor theory, and other theories that focus on the centrality of interpretation in emotions, thus make the case for cultural variability in emotional experience.

Does Emotional Experience Vary Across Cultures?

As the preceding section suggests, the question of whether emotions vary across cultures hinges on how you conceive of emotions. Two aspects of emotions have received the most study: an objectively visible aspect, facial expressions; and a subjectively experienced aspect, people's descriptions of their emotional experiences. Let's consider each of these in turn.

Emotions and Facial Expressions

When you're happy, you tend to orchestrate the various muscles in your face to construct a beaming smile. Why is that? Did you learn by interacting with others that this was the appropriate way to express happiness in your culture? Or was the linkage between your happiness and your smiling hard-wired into your brain from birth? On the one hand, facial expressions are a means to communicate with others, and many other ways of communicating are heavily dependent on what people learn in their cultures. As an extreme example, consider what words you use to express happiness. In English, people say *happiness,* in Portuguese people say *felicidade,* and in Japanese people say *shiawase*. Around the world there seems to be a rather arbitrary pairing of phonemes with the experience of happiness. Might there not be a similarly arbitrary pairing of facial muscle movements with the experience of happiness as well? Perhaps in some cultures people frown when they're happy.

On the other hand, unlike languages, facial expressions often appear to be rather reflexive. The same facial expressions that adults make are made by very young infants (Izard, 1994), including those who were born blind and thus have never seen the expressions before (reviewed in Ekman, 1973). This suggests that facial expressions are part of our biological makeup, and because humans share the same biology everywhere, facial expressions should be the same worldwide.

EVIDENCE FOR CULTURAL UNIVERSALS IN FACIAL EXPRESSIONS. Charles Darwin (1872/1965) was one of the first scientists to seriously consider whether emotional facial expressions are common across all people of the world. If they are, this would suggest that the various facial expressions evolved as a product of natural selection—perhaps as means to communicate information before our species had the linguistic capabilities to describe feelings.

The researchers who have contributed the most in following up on Darwin's ideas have been Paul Ekman and his colleagues. Ekman and Friesen (1971) took thousands of photos of people making six different emotional expressions (anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise). They reduced their set of photos to those that were most easily recognized by Americans and then showed this set to individuals in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Japan, and the United States. The participants were asked to select which of a set of six emotion terms best matched the feeling that a person was showing in a photo. If people had no idea which emotions were expressed in the pictures, they would have identified about one out of six (16.7%) by guessing correctly (**Table 10.1**). However, the participants tended to identify the emotion correctly in 80% to 90% of the photos. That is, people in these five different cultures showed a great deal of agreement about what feelings the different facial poses were expressing. They paired smiles with happiness, scowls with anger, frowns with sadness, gapes with surprise, grimaces with disgust, and startles with fear. These findings are supportive of a claim for universals in emotional expression.

TABLE 10.1

Percentage correct in recognition of facial expressions across cultures

	Happiness	Disgust	Surprise	Sadness	Anger	Fear
USA	97	82	91	73	69	88
Brazil	97	86	82	82	82	77
Chile	90	85	88	90	76	78
Argentina	94	79	93	85	72	68
Japan	87	82	87	74	63	71

Source: Ekman & Friesen (1971).

However, demonstrating that a psychological process is universal is not such a straightforward task. It is possible, for example, that Ekman and Friesen obtained such similar responses among these different cultures because the cultures weren't all that different to begin with. The five cultures they had explored were all industrialized, literate cultures, and people from them had all been exposed to a lot of the same media images. For example, around the time that Ekman and Friesen were collecting their cross-cultural data, the Hollywood movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* had been playing in theaters in all five countries. Perhaps participants in those countries outside the United States learned that people smile to expressed happiness by watching Paul Newman's electric grin up on the silver screen. That is, even though Ekman and Friesen collected data from different cultures, it is possible that people from those cultures all *learned* to express emotions with their faces in ways that are similar across cultures. To be more confident that emotional expressions are universal, you would need to question people who hadn't had much experience with other cultures. Only then could you ensure that people had not learned how to interpret other cultures' typical emotional expressions but that the various cultures really did perceive emotional expressions in the same way.

Ekman's solution to addressing this shortcoming was to try to find a culture that had the least possible exposure to Western ways. He chose the Fore of the inner highlands of New Guinea. The Fore had not seen any movies or magazines, they didn't speak English or any other language influenced by a Western tongue, and they had never worked for Westerners. The Fore were from a culture that was one of the least exposed to Western ways on the planet. If the Fore made the same facial expressions that Westerners did, even though they had had virtually no contact with Westerners, the case for universality would be greatly strengthened. Ekman went to investigate whether the Fore would smile or frown when they were happy. What did he find?

It turns out the Fore smiled. And they frowned when they were sad, scowled when they were angry, and so on. Ekman demonstrated this by creating some stories appropriate for each of the six emotions. For example, he asked the Fore participants to imagine how they would feel, and to make a corresponding facial expression, in the following situations: (a) "Your friend has come, and you are happy," (b) "Your child has died," (c) "You are angry and about to fight," and (d) "You see a dead pig that has been lying there for a long time." In **Figure 10.4** you can see the kinds of

FIGURE 10.4 The expressions of Fore men when they were asked to show how their faces would appear if they experienced the following: (a) "Your friend has come and you are happy." (b) "Your child has died and you are sad." (c) "You are angry and about to fight." (d) "You see a dead pig that has been lying there for a long time."

facial expressions the Fore made in response to each of these situations (Ekman, Sorenson, & Friesen, 1969). The odds that by chance people would tend to make facial expressions so similar to the ones that you and I make, even though they have had no contact with our cultures, are extremely remote. This is strong evidence that some facial expressions are universally similar around the world (but see Barrett, Mesquita, & Gendron, 2011; Gendron, Roberson, van der Vyver, & Barrett, 2014; Jack, Garrod, Yu, Caldara, & Schyns, 2012; Russell, 1994 for challenges to this universality conclusion).

Ekman and colleagues proposed that there is a set of basic emotions that are universally recognized around the world. This basic set is argued to include at least six emotions: anger, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise, and disgust (**Figure 10.5**). Given Ekman's findings, you surely already know what each of the basic expressions looks like, but just to make sure, you can see examples of them here.

FIGURE 10.5 The six basic emotional expressions: (a) happiness, (b) surprise, (c) sadness, (d) anger, (e) disgust, and (f) fear.

FIGURE 10.6 The pride expression.

There is also debate over whether other emotions—in particular, contempt, shame, embarrassment, and interest—are universally recognized enough to justify being added to this set (e.g., Keltner, 1995). For example, there is good evidence that the expression of pride is universally recognized (e.g., Tracy & Robins, 2008). However, unlike the six basic emotions, the pride expression involves the whole body; it incorporates an erect posture, with the head tilted back, a slight smile on the face, and arms extending away from the body or held akimbo (**Figure 10.6**). People recognize this expression around the world as pride, and congenitally blind judo wrestlers from around the world spontaneously display elements of this pose after victories, despite never having seen it before themselves (Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008).

EVIDENCE FOR CULTURAL VARIABILITY IN FACIAL EXPRESSIONS. The above evidence, coupled with the findings from dozens of other studies on the topic gathered by Ekman and others, demonstrates that emotional expressions are not just something that people learn growing up. Although there may be a different word to

express "happiness" in almost every language, everywhere around the world people communicate their happiness by orchestrating their facial muscles in a fairly similar way. This is clear evidence for a universal, biological substrate to emotional expressions. Given that movements of the facial muscles can be seen as part of the physiological component of emotions, it follows that in this domain of facial expression, we would see much evidence for universality. However, even here there is also some evidence for cultural variability.

Although Ekman and others' research clearly reveals that in every culture that has been studied people are able to recognize the facial expressions of the basic emotions, there are some intriguing cultural differences. For example, when shown pictures of posed facial expressions from one culture (for example, Americans of European descent), some cultures perform a little better than others. The success rates for identifying American-posed faces was better among English speakers than among speakers of other Indo-European languages (e.g., Swedish, Greek, Spanish), and these samples performed better than those who spoke non-Indo-European languages (e.g., Japanese, Turkish, Malaysian), and all of these groups performed better than those from pre-literate societies (e.g., the Fore and Dani from New Guinea; Russell, 1994). All groups performed significantly better than chance; however, Americans performed best of all at identifying the emotions posed by American actors.

Building on this observation, researchers conducted a meta-analysis of all the past research on cross-cultural recognition of facial expressions and noted that, on average, people were about 9% more accurate in judging the facial expressions of people from their own culture than those of another culture (with, on average, people showing about 58% accuracy overall; Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002). That is, there is a large universal component of recognizing facial expressions and a smaller culturally specific component. The link between certain facial expressions and inferred emotions thus appears to be a functional universal—the facial expressions are interpreted to indicate similar emotions across cultures, but the degree to which each expression is recognized varies across cultures.

The tendency to be better at recognizing the facial expressions of people from one's own culture can be seen in a variety of ways. For example, if you just show people pictures of people's eyes, without the rest of their face showing, and ask them to guess the emotion that the target is feeling, people do better when the target is from their own culture than from another culture (Adams et al., 2010; see **Figure 10.7**). This same task of judging the emotions by just looking at eyes is used in other research as part of a tool to diagnose people with autism. Curiously, then, people appear to be somewhat autistic when they interact with people from other cultures, struggling a bit to interpret what kinds of emotions they are feeling. People also show a stronger fear response as measured by brain imaging (i.e., they show greater activation of their amygdala) when they look at fear faces that are made by people in their own culture than those made by people of other cultures (Chiao et al., 2008). This demonstrates

FIGURE 10.7 Examples from the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (Baron-Cohen, 2003).

that they are especially attentive to signs of fear as expressed in culturally familiar ways. Likewise, although research finds that people can predict the electability of political candidates within their own cultures just by looking at pictures of their faces, they aren't able to make the same kinds of accurate predictions when looking at pictures of candidates from other cultures (Rule et al., 2010).

In general, then, people are better at accurately perceiving the emotional expressions of people they have been exposed to more. Another example of this is that straight men were more accurate in judging the sexual orientations of men just by looking at their faces if they had had much past real-life experiences with gay men (Brambilla, Riva, & Rule, 2013). Hence, there are pronounced enough differences in facial expressions across cultures that people are more skilled at accurately identifying those expressions when they are made by people who are more familiar to them.

The differences in facial expressions of emotions across cultures are distinct enough that people can reliably guess the nationality of targets who are expressing emotions, even when the targets are of fairly similar cultural backgrounds. For example, Americans can guess better than chance whether a target is from the United States or Australia (Marsh, Elfenbein, & Ambady, 2007), or whether the target is Japanese or Japanese-American (Marsh, Elfenbein, & Ambady, 2003), just by looking at a target's face, but only when the target is expressing an emotion. Participants cannot make these same distinctions when the targets are showing neutral faces. Furthermore, people who are of a lower socioeconomic background are more accurate at identifying facial expressions of emotions, indicating that those who have relatively less status must attend more closely to what those of relatively higher status might be thinking and feeling (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Hill, Raste, & Plumb, 2001; Kraus, Cote, & Keltner, 2010). In sum, although overall facial expressions of emotions are universally recognized at better than chance, people are especially adept at recognizing those expressions made by people from their own culture and those who are of higher perceived status than themselves.

Another way that cultures differ in how they interpret facial expression stems from the parts of the face to which they are attending. As we'll explore in the next section, people often don't express all of the feelings they are experiencing, and this tendency to modulate the feelings shown on one's face varies across cultures. In particular, Japanese people are more likely to conceal emotions they feel are potentially disruptive by presenting a more neutral or pleasant face than Americans (e.g., Ekman, 1972). However, it is more difficult to control the muscles around the eyes than it is to control the muscles around the mouth, so it follows that if you want to discern the feelings of someone who may be disguising their emotions, you should focus on their eyes. In contrast, the mouth is a much larger source of information than the eyes, so if you're expecting that people's feelings are being accurately broadcast by their faces, then you would fare best by attending to their relatively large mouths. One study investigated this hypothesis by showing Japanese and Americans photos of people's facial expressions in which the top half of the photos showed a different emotional expression than the bottom half (the researchers mixed and matched the halves from different photos). Participants were asked to decide what emotion the target person was expressing. The results revealed that the judgments of Japanese were more influenced by the top half of the photos (i.e., by looking at the eyes) than the judgments of Americans, and the judgments of Americans were more influenced by the bottom half of the photos (i.e., by looking at the mouths) than the judgments of Japanese (Yuki, Maddux, & Masuda, 2007).

Conceptually similar findings have emerged in studies showing that Europeans judged facial expressions by attending to both the eyes and the mouths, whereas East Asians did so by primarily attending to an area near the eyes (Blais, Jack, Scheepers, Fiset, & Caldara, 2008; Jack, Caldara, & Schyns, 2011). Moreover, there are different

FIGURE 10.8 Can the Japanese tendency to look relatively more at eyes than mouths when judging people's emotions help explain why anime characters have larger eyes than mouths?

patterns of neural activation when East Asians are looking at faces compared with Westerners, that are consistent with the differences in the facial regions that people from different cultures attend to (Goh et al., 2010). Perhaps it's because of this cultural difference in facial perception that Japanese anime characters typically have much bigger eyes than they do mouths (Takemoto, 2010; **Figure 10.8**).

Cultural Display Rules

Ekman and colleagues argue that the capacity to produce and recognize particular facial expressions is identical across cultures. What varies, they argue, are the **display rules** that cultures maintain for emotional expression (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). Display rules are the culturally specific rules that govern which facial expressions are appropriate in a given situation and how intensely they should be exhibited. Some cultures encourage people to display their emotions in clear, if not exaggerated, form. For example, among certain Arab populations it is dishonorable if a man does not respond to an insult with a great demonstration of anger (Abu-Lughod, 1986). Likewise, the Kaluli of New Guinea tend to show their emotions particularly intensely and dramatically (Schieffelin, 1979). Other cultures encourage people to express their emotions in muted form, or to conceal them altogether. For example, among the Utku Eskimos, public expressions of anger are strongly condemned (Briggs, 1970). Similarly, the Balinese have a preference for emotional "smoothness," where the emphasis is on avoiding strong displays of emotional feelings, for both positive and negative emotions (Geertz, 1983). This notion of display rules suggests that even though people in

different cultures vary considerably in how strongly they express certain emotions, it is possible that they are all experiencing the same underlying feelings. Several studies have found evidence that cultures vary in the intensity and transparency with which people express their emotions in their faces (Ekman, 1972; Friesen, 1972; Matsumoto, Yoo, & Fontaine, 2008).

Evidence of cultural variability in display rules of emotion can also be found in hospitals. I am told that in a number of emergency rooms in North America it is not uncommon for some of the medical staff to privately joke among themselves by referring to some patients as having symptoms of AMS: acute Mediterranean syndrome. This syndrome refers to the observations by some ER personnel that people from many Mediterranean cultures communicate their discomfort and pain at several decibels louder than those from many other cultures. The medical staff identify some patients as having AMS to warn each other that they are likely to get an earful. The staff in these emergency rooms do not appear to have identified an illusory correlation. Much research corroborates their observations and finds that there are clear cultural differences in the ways pain is expressed. For example, one comparison of Italian and Irish clinical admissions to a hospital found that 57% of the Italians reported being in pain in contrast to only 33% of the Irish (Zola, 1966). Another study found that patients of Italian and Jewish backgrounds communicated their pain much more openly than those of Irish and Anglo backgrounds (Zborowski, 1969; also see Bates, Edwards, & Anderson, 1993), although some kinds of self-report measures of pain do not reveal consistent cultural differences (Zatzick & Dimsdale, 1990). Cultural differences in pain expression appear to be more pronounced among older patients than among younger ones (e.g., Koopman, Eisenthal, & Stoeckle, 1984), highlighting how emotional expression is shaped by cultural experiences over time. Whether the greater cries of pain of more emotionally expressive people lead to greater *experience* of pain is an interesting but difficult question to address.

In addition to governing the intensity with which emotions are expressed, display rules also shape the kinds of facial expressions that people might display. For example, when Americans are embarrassed they tend to make a facial expression along the lines of that shown on the left in **Figure 10.9**. They turn their head away, look down and to the side, smile with pressed lips, and touch their face. However, Indians often express their embarrassment by biting their tongues, as shown on the right in Figure 10.9. The expression shown on the left is recognized as embarrassment quite accurately by both Americans and Indians; however, the tongue bite is recognized as embarrassment by Indians but not Americans. This suggests that the tongue bite represents an expression that is voluntarily produced rather than reflexively generated (Haidt & Keltner, 1999). Voluntarily produced emotional expressions such as the tongue bite suggest the existence of cultural display rules that lead people to express idiosyncratic facial expressions, known as **ritualized displays,** that differ from the ostensibly universal facial expressions identified by Ekman and colleagues. Of course

FIGURE 10.9 Americans and Indians both recognize the photo on the left as a prototypical embarrassment display. However, only people in India recognize the photo on the right as a ritualized display of embarrassment.

this adds a layer of complexity to the challenging task of interpreting emotional expressions across cultures. When we see someone's facial expression, it is not always clear whether we are looking at a universal facial expression or one governed by cultural display rules.

Facial Feedback Hypothesis

An important point about display rules is that they presuppose that emotional *experiences* are unaffected by facial expressions. The theory maintains that the experience of the basic emotions is more or less constant across cultures, although cultures vary in how they choose to display those facial emotions. However, are emotional experiences and expressions completely unrelated? One view, known as the **facial feedback hypothesis,** suggests that they are not. The facial feedback hypothesis proposes that one source of information we utilize when inferring our feelings is our facial expressions. So if we are trying to figure out if we feel happy, one clue that we might consider is whether we are smiling. After all, our faces are more likely to be smiling when we have happy feelings than when we have feelings of sadness or disgust. This correlation between our facial expressions and feelings might thus be relied on in interpreting our feelings.

One study investigated whether people's emotions were influenced by the expressions their faces were making (Strack, Martin, & Stepper, 1988). The researchers

reasoned that you couldn't just ask people to make certain facial expressions before inquiring about their emotional experiences, because they might come to suspect the purpose of the study (e.g., why did the experimenter ask me to smile before he asked me to rate my happiness?), and this would affect the findings. As a result, the experimenters sought to manipulate people's facial muscles into a smile or frown without the participants being aware that they were actually smiling or frowning. Their unique solution was to ask participants to hold a pen in their mouth. One group was instructed to hold a pen between their teeth without having it touch their lips. A second group was instructed to hold a pen between their lips without having it touch their teeth. As **Figure 10.10** shows, when you do this the muscles around your mouth are in similar positions as when you are smiling and frowning, respectively. Then participants were asked to rate how amused they were with a number of cartoons. Quite remarkably, the pen-in-teeth group found the cartoons to be more amusing than the pen-in-lips group! Apparently, participants were inferring how amused they were by the cartoons by considering what their facial muscles were doing, although none of them appeared to be aware that they were doing so. There thus appears to be some wisdom to the advice to put on a happy face!

The facial feedback hypothesis suggests that culturally divergent display rules might affect more than just people's expressions of their emotions. If your culture encourages you to express your emotions clearly on your face, you may infer that you're feeling strong emotions, whereas if your culture encourages you to deamplify or mask

FIGURE 10.10 Facial muscle movements can affect the experience of emotion. People holding a pen between their teeth tend to find cartoons more amusing than people holding a pen between their lips.

your emotions, you might conclude that you're not feeling much emotion. American culture is one in which people are encouraged to express their emotions, whereas Japanese culture is one in which people are encouraged to exert considerable control over their emotional expressions. How do the cultures compare in their emotional experiences?

Cultural Variation in Intensity of Emotional Experience

A number of studies have compared the emotional experience of Japanese and Americans using a variety of techniques. For example, Japanese and American participants were asked to report on occasions when they had experienced certain emotions (Matsumoto, Kudoh, Scherer, & Wallbott, 1988). The Americans reported feeling those emotions longer and more intensely than the Japanese did. Similarly, in another study Japanese and American students completed a questionnaire a number of times per day over a week to indicate the emotions they had been experiencing (Mesquita & Karasawa, 2002). The Japanese were about three times as likely as Americans to report that they had *not* been feeling any emotions (see Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000 and Wang, 2004 for similar findings). Other research has found that East Asians are less attentive to their visceral states when compared with Westerners (Ma-Kellams, Blascovich, & McCall, 2012; Ryder et al., 2008); Ghanaians have also been found to attend less to their emotions than Americans (Dzokoto, 2010). These studies suggest that the cultural display rules governing the deamplifying and masking of emotions in East Asia might be leading East Asians to experience fewer and less intense emotions than Americans.

In some cultural contexts the expression of intense emotions may make it problematic to fit in well with others, particularly for the expression of such interpersonally disruptive emotions as anger. It can be difficult for an interdependent group to function well if members are angry with each other, particularly if someone lower in the hierarchy feels anger toward someone of higher status. The individual would appear to fare better by not expressing that anger. However, much research with Westerners has revealed that people with hostile tendencies are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease (e.g., Diamond, 1982; Mann, 1977). Furthermore, some have maintained that the reason hostility leads to cardiovascular disease is that hostile people have more occasions when they need to inhibit their anger. That is, some researchers maintain that it is the *suppression* of an anger response that causes difficulties in regulating one's heart rate, and thus a slower recovery of the heart rate following an initial angering event (e.g., Brosschot & Thayer, 1998). If the inhibition of anger leads to cardiovascular stress for people from all cultures, it would seem that people from cultures in which inhibition of anger is more common would suffer from more heart disease, because they would more often be trying to bottle up their angry feelings.

Alternatively, perhaps in cultures where the expression of anger is problematic, people tend to *experience* anger less intensely. This hypothesis was investigated in a couple of studies that compared Chinese-Canadians and European-Canadians in their anger responses (Anderson & Linden, 2006). In a first study, people were provided with some scenarios that typically provoke feelings of anger. For example, one scenario read, "You go with your family to a restaurant where the food is superb and prices are low, but the service is terrible. There are many people in the restaurant; you wait a quarter of an hour and the waiter has not yet come to your table to take your order." Participants were asked how angry they would be, and which of four strategies they would take. One strategy is to express the anger (e.g., to complain to the manager); a second strategy is to suppress outward signs of anger (e.g., to wait quietly, while getting angrier inside); a third strategy is to distract oneself from the anger source (e.g., change the topic of conversation); and a last strategy is to generate a less-angry appraisal of the event (e.g., convince yourself that the staff are very busy).

The results indicated two things: first, Chinese-Canadians, on average, found the scenarios to be less anger-provoking than the European-Canadians did. They imagined feeling less anger if they had been in those situations. Second, the most common response to the anger-provoking event for European-Canadians was to openly express their anger. In contrast, for the Chinese-Canadians, their most common response was to reappraise the situation in a less angry way or to make efforts to distract themselves from the anger-provoking event. That is, whereas the European-Canadians felt much anger and tended to express it openly, the Chinese-Canadians adopted strategies to minimize their anger response, and accordingly, felt less angry.

In a second study, participants were examined to see how they physiologically responded to an anger-provoking incident (Anderson & Linden, 2006). Chinese-Canadians and European-Canadians were brought into a lab where they were exposed to a rather rude and unprofessional experimenter. Throughout the course of the experiment, their blood pressure was measured. People from both cultural groups initially responded with similar degrees of anger to the obnoxious experimenter, as measured both by a self-report questionnaire and by their blood pressure. Both groups of participants showed an initial jump in their systolic blood pressure, which indicates an anger response. After that angry response, participants' blood pressure slowly dropped back down to baseline levels. Of interest here is that the blood pressure of the Chinese-Canadians recovered to baseline levels significantly more quickly than the blood pressure of European-Canadians (**Figure 10.11**). None of the participants openly expressed their anger to the experimenter (although some were given the opportunity to complete a written evaluation of the experimenter, which did not significantly influence the results), and thus participants were in a situation where they needed to inhibit the expression of their anger. Apparently,

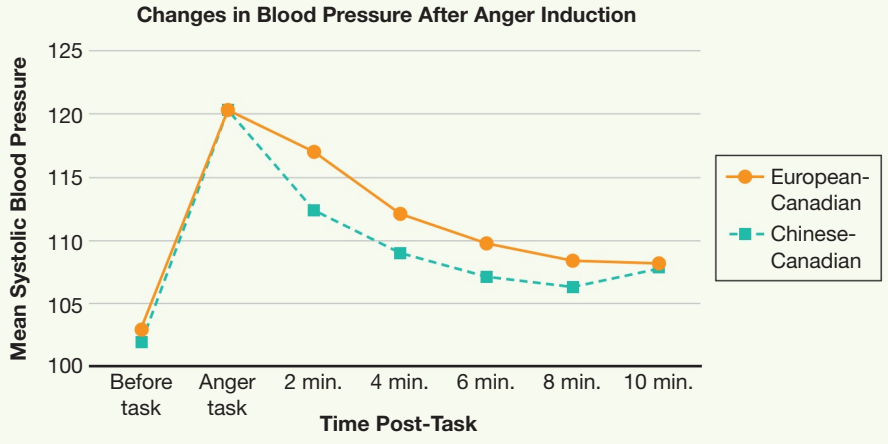

FIGURE 10.11 After being angered, Chinese-Canadians' blood pressure returns to its baseline level more quickly than European-Canadians' blood pressure does. This suggests that the Chinese-Canadians are not needing to devote as much effort toward suppressing their anger.

inhibiting anger led to a slower recovery of blood pressure for European-Canadians than it did for Chinese-Canadians. This suggests that the Chinese-Canadians experienced their anger less intensely than European-Canadians and were more comfortable with strategies that served to reduce their experience of anger, whereas the European-Canadians suffered from physiological consequences if they did not openly express their anger.

Similar findings have emerged in a number of other studies (Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2009; Mauss & Butler, 2010; Mauss, Butler, Roberts, & Chu, 2010). Moreover, other research has found that, compared with Americans, negative emotions in East Asians are associated with fewer negative health outcomes (Curhan et al., 2014; Miyamoto et al., 2013) and less of a neural response when suppressing their emotions, indicating that it is not as effortful for them to suppress negative emotions (Murata, Moser, & Kitayama, 2013).

Cultural display rules thus alter the ways that people express their emotions, which, in turn, can potentially alter their emotional experiences. To the extent that expressions of emotions are inextricably linked to the experience of emotions, this adds a further layer of complexity in evaluating the evidence for the universality or cultural variability of emotional experience.

Emotion and Language

As described earlier, much research supports the existence of a set of basic emotions that are experienced comparably around the world. The psycholinguist Anna Wierzbicka (1986), however, calls our attention to the fact that all the basic emotions have a clear English label. The problem, she argues, is that many other languages do not have labels that correspond to some of these so-called basic emotions. If a universal theory of emotions had instead been proposed by someone who spoke a language that lacked terms for some of the basic emotions it would seem unlikely that they would have come up with the same set of basic emotions that American researchers came up with.

Consider the Natyashastra, which is an Indian treatise of emotion that was written in the second century A.D. (see Shweder & Haidt, 2000). The Natyashastra identifies a list of eight basic emotions. That list overlaps somewhat with the list derived from Ekman and colleagues' research (there are emotions that correspond to the English terms of anger, fear, sadness, and disgust); however, it did not include words that corresponded to the basic emotions of happiness or surprise. Nor did it overlap with other contenders for the status of "basic emotions," such as pride, embarrassment, shame, interest, or contempt. Furthermore, the Natyashastra included four emotions that are not typically seen as "basic" emotions (love, amusement, enthusiasm, and wonder; Masson & Patwardhan, 1970). There thus appears to be some disagreement across cultures as to what the candidates for the "basic" emotions are.

Indeed, when it comes to exploring how different cultures describe their emotional experiences, we see tremendous cultural variation (Russell, 1991). On one extreme is the English language, which has more than 2,000 different emotion words. English speakers are particularly well equipped to describe the most subtle of variations in their emotional experience. On the other extreme is the Chewong of Malaysia, who have only eight emotion words (only three of which—anger, fear, and shame—map on to Ekman's basic emotions). Given this difference in the lexicons, it certainly is not surprising that so much interest in research on the emotions has emerged from English speakers and not from the Chewong.

The degree of cultural variation in emotional description is not just in terms of the number of emotion words that different groups have. People categorize their emotions in very different ways as well (Russell, 1991). For example, Luganda speakers in Uganda do not make a distinction between sorrow and anger. The Gidjingali aborigines of Australia use one word (*gurakadj*) to express both shame and fear. Samoans use one word, *alofa,* to express both love and pity. The Utku Eskimos do not distinguish between feelings of kindness and gratitude. The Ifaluk in Micronesia do not even have a word for "emotion" but instead lump all internal states together (Lutz, 1988). The emotional lexicon is carved up in remarkably different ways across cultures.

"Schadenfreude Monthly"

Furthermore, despite the enormous number of emotion words in the English language, there are many emotion words in other languages that have no equivalent in English. Some of these reflect feelings that English speakers are probably familiar with, even though the language doesn't contain a single term to express them. The best-known example is *schadenfreude,* the German term describing the feelings of pleasure that one gets when witnessing the hard times that befall another. Some other cases of novel emotion terms seem to express feelings that are not especially familiar to most English speakers, such as *liget*. Other less-familiar emotion words include the Javanese term *iklas,* which refers to somewhat pleasant feelings of frustration (Geertz, 1959) and the Japanese word *amae*. *Amae* captures the relatively pleasant feelings that one experiences when allowed to emphasize his or her dependence on another. It often involves tendencies to behave inappropriately toward a close other, as a gesture to demonstrate how secure the relationship is (Niiya, Ellsworth, & Yamaguchi, 2006).

Personally, I have had a great deal of experience in Japan, and my occupation as a cultural psychologist demands a certain openness to culturally divergent ways of thinking. Nevertheless, my own experiences with *amae* situations are often frustrating and completely bewildering to me. I am quite certain that although I have a decent intellectual understanding of *amae,* I do not experience the emotion in the same way that most Japanese do. I think this is so because the kinds of inappropriate behaviors that demonstrate one's dependence on another carry different meanings for me, given my own Canadian cultural upbringing. I would argue that the cultural diversity in emotion terms arises from the different clusters of meanings that are frequently encountered in different cultures. For example, if inappropriate behaviors toward a loved one are consistently met with responses that indicate that your relationship is strong, this will lead to the pleasant cluster of feelings that constitutes *amae*. If the same behaviors are met with frustration or distancing from your loved one, you would appraise the situation differently and feel a different emotion.

Much cross-cultural research thus reveals that there are many exotic specimens in the emotion zoo. However, one important question to consider when looking at

the dizzying array of emotion words around the world is: How much do the emotion words matter? Could it be that the labels are irrelevant to the experiences of emotion? Some researchers argue that the diversity in emotion terms is relatively meaningless because our language use does not affect our underlying psychological experience (e.g., Pinker, 1994). Other researchers view the diversity in emotion terms to be highly telling of cultural diversity in emotional experience (e.g., Russell, 1991). This disagreement gets to the heart of the controversial debate on linguistic relativity—that is, the extent to which the ways people think are influenced by the words they use, as discussed in Chapter 9. It is difficult to assess with any confidence the degree to which emotion labels affect emotional experience, because there aren't good physiological indicators of the nonbasic emotions. So we are hard pressed to evaluate whether English speakers experience *schadenfreude* as intensely, or with all the associated feelings and meanings, as German speakers do. At present, we can say that there is tremendous diversity in emotional experience across cultures in terms of how it is described in words, but whether this diversity is captured in people's own thoughts and internal states remains debatable.

Cultural Variation in Kinds of Emotional Experiences

In addition to research that has contrasted facial expressions and emotion terms across cultures, other research has attempted to investigate people's emotional experiences. How similar or different are people's daily emotional lives across cultures?

The differences between interdependent and independent selves provide a nice theoretical framework from which to draw hypotheses about how we might expect emotional experience to vary across cultures. People with interdependent selves are more concerned with maintaining a sense of interpersonal harmony and thus should be more aware of how events in the world affect others close to them as well as themselves. Those with independent selves, in contrast, should focus more intently on how events affect themselves, or how events might serve to distinguish themselves from others. This suggests that people with independent selves and interdependent selves will interpret situations differently—looking at situations as providing opportunities to distinguish themselves from others or to affect their relations with others.

This hypothesis was tested by comparing those from a more collectivistic culture (Surinamese and Turkish immigrants to Holland) with those from a more individualistic culture (mainstream Dutch citizens of Holland; Mesquita, 2001). In accordance with these very predictions, the Surinamese and Turks expressed more relational concerns and attended more closely to how situations affected others, compared with the Dutch. Moreover, the Surinamese and Turks were more likely than the Dutch to

ensure that others attended to the same events, thereby sharing the experience with the participants. This suggests that the emotional experiences of those who are more interdependent are more interpersonally engaged than the emotional experiences among more independent individuals. Similar findings have emerged contrasting Mexicans and Americans—Mexicans are more likely to experience interpersonally engaging emotions and less likely to experience interpersonal disengaging emotions when compared with Americans (Savani, Alvarez, Mesquita, & Markus, 2013).

Moreover, we should expect that common cultural concerns should be associated with the kinds of emotions relevant to those concerns. For example, defending one's honor is a significant concern among Turks, whereas maintaining face is a particular concern among Japanese. The kinds of emotions that arise when people are concerned with defending their honor are feelings of anger and shame, and these are experienced more frequently in Turkey. In contrast, a concern with maintaining face is associated with feelings of shame but not anger, and in Japan people are far more likely to experience shame compared with anger (Boiger, Gungor, Karasawa, & Mesquita, 2014). In contrast, Americans are more likely to experience situations that lead to anger, but not those that lead to shame (Boiger, Mesquita, Uchida, & Barrett, 2013).

Similarly, research comparing the emotional experiences of American and Japanese Olympic athletes when describing their reactions to winning finds that Japanese athletes are more likely than their American counterparts to discuss their relationships when describing their emotions. Furthermore, when participants who read athletes' self-descriptions were asked to infer the emotions an athlete was feeling, Japanese participants inferred more emotions when the athlete mentioned relationships, whereas American participants inferred more emotions when the athlete focused only on herself (Uchida, Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009). In other words, for Japanese, emotions are experienced more as interpersonal states that connect people to each other, whereas for Americans, emotions are experienced more as personal states that lie within individuals.

Along a similar line, descriptions of daily emotional experiences were compared among Japanese and Americans (Kitayama et al., 2000). People were provided with a number of emotions that varied on two dimensions and asked how often they experienced them. One dimension was whether the emotion was positive or negative (e.g., happy versus guilty). A second dimension was whether the emotion was interpersonally engaged or disengaged—that is, whether the experience involved connecting with others or distinguishing oneself from others. These two dimensions were combined to form four separate categories of emotions. Some examples of these categories are shown in **Table 10.2**.

The researchers were interested in assessing how good these various emotions felt. Toward this end, they correlated how often participants reported experiencing the positive interpersonally engaged and disengaged emotions with how often they reported feeling some general positive emotions, such as feeling happy, calm, or elated. The

TABLE 10.2

Emotion categories used in Kitayama et al.'s study of emotions associated with happiness

Positive Interpersonally Engaged Emotions	Negative Interpersonally Engaged Emotions
Respect	Ashamed
Shitashimi (friendly feelings)	*Oime* (indebted)
Positive Interpersonally Disengaged Emotions	**Negative Interpersonally Disengaged Emotions**
Proud	Anger
Yuetsukan (superior)	*Futekusare* (sulky feelings)

pattern of correlations was quite striking, as shown in **Table 10.3**. Those Japanese who reported feeling a great deal of positive interpersonally engaged emotions reported a lot more positive feelings in general. In contrast, Americans who reported feeling a great deal of positive interpersonally disengaged emotions reported much more positive feelings in general. In contrast, the positive interpersonally disengaged emotions for Japanese and the positive interpersonally engaged emotions for Americans were not closely tied to general positive feelings. This suggests that Japanese feel especially good when they're focusing on how their emotional experiences lead them to connect with others, whereas Americans feel especially good when they're dwelling on those emotional experiences that distinguish them from others. What makes people feel good appears to vary in important ways across cultures (also see Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006; Uchida & Kitayama, 2009, for similar findings).

TABLE 10.3

Correlations between different types of positive emotions

	Positive Interpersonally Engaged Emotions and General Positive Emotions	***Positive Interpersonally Disengaged Emotions and General Positive Emotions***
Japanese	.58	.20
Americans	.30	.54

Cultural Variation in Subjective Well-Being and Happiness

Is happiness necessary for a good life? This is a rather heavy existential question, and it becomes much more challenging when you consider it from a cross-cultural perspective. Happiness is indeed a universal emotion, and people everywhere often pursue activities that make them happy. Happiness feels very good, and it signals to the individual that all is well. Furthermore, much research demonstrates that there are tangible benefits to being happy. For example, happiness is associated with increased longevity and career success, at least in North America where this research has been largely conducted (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Given that happiness is so pleasurable and apparently has such beneficial consequences, shouldn't people in all cultures strive to maximize their degree of happiness?

Coming up with an answer to this question depends on how one views happiness. Happiness does seem to be a central value among many people from Western cultures. Indeed, the pursuit of happiness has been central enough to American culture that it was described as an "unalienable right" in the Declaration of Independence. This pursuit is alive and well in North America, and much of the West, as evidenced by the findings from many surveys that many Western countries report average levels of happiness that are far above neutral (Veenhoven, 2014).

However, happiness has not always had such a central role in Westerners' lives. In 1843, the British historian Thomas Carlyle noted that, "'happiness our being's end and aim' [a famous quote on happiness from the English poet, Alexander Pope] is at bottom, if we will count well, not yet two centuries old in the world." Carlyle was referring to changes during the Enlightenment when the world began to be seen as a more rational and predictable place and happiness was believed to be achievable through efforts to pursue a good life. Prior to this shift, happiness was seen as largely the result of good luck. Indeed, the idea that happiness is a matter of good luck is still evident in most cultures in the world. When Oishi, Graham, Kesebir, and Galinha (2013) examined dictionary definitions of the word "happiness" in 30 countries, they found that definitions of happiness that included luck were in the dictionaries in all the countries except the United States, Spain, Argentina, Ecuador, India and Kenya. Perhaps not surprising, people who live in countries where happiness is defined as good luck report feeling less happy than those where luck is not seen as an important part of the definition.

Moreover, looking at definitions across time in American dictionaries reveals that the definition of happiness included the concept of good luck until 1961. Also, the same authors looked at how frequently the expressions "happy nation" and "happy person" were used in a Google NGram database of American books and found that uses of the term "happy nation" have steadily dropped over time, whereas the term

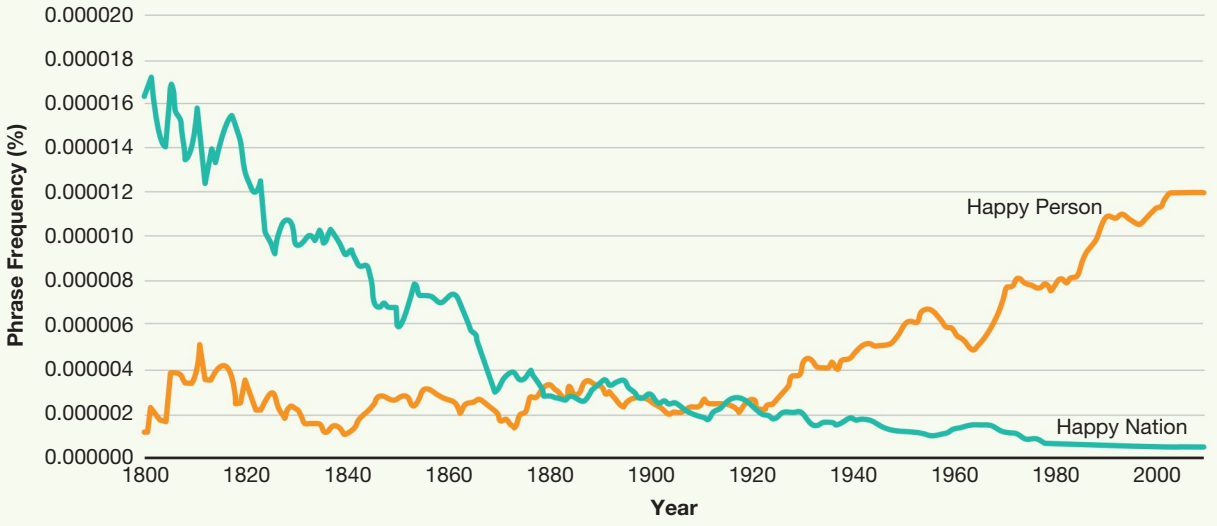

FIGURE 10.12 According to the Google NGram database of books published in the U.S., the use of the term "happy nation" has slowly dropped over time, whereas the use of the term "happy person" has steadily increased since the 1920s.

"happy person" has steadily risen (**Figure 10.12**). This suggests that happiness has been transformed over time in American English to reflect more of an individual's state, as opposed to that of a collective.

What does the cross-cultural literature have to say about happiness around the world? A great deal of research has explored how positive emotional experiences are distributed around the world. Much of this research has investigated cultural differences in **subjective well-being.** Subjective well-being is the feeling of how satisfied one is with one's life. Research consistently reveals that there are pronounced cultural differences in subjective well-being. In general, the nations that score highest on this measure are Scandinavian and Nordic countries, much of Latin America, various English-speaking countries, and Western Europe. On the low end are the former Soviet republics and some impoverished countries in Africa and South Asia (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995; Inglehart & Klingemann, 2000; Veenhoven, 2014). Around the world, people are not equally satisfied with their lives.

Well-being varies not only across cultures but across regions within cultures. In one investigation, various measures of subjective well-being were contrasted across five regions of the United States: New England, the Mountain region, West South

Central, West North Central, and East South Central (the researchers were unable to collect data from other regions; Plaut, Markus, & Lachman, 2002). Participants from each region evaluated their well-being in terms of their health, their sense of autonomy, their satisfaction with their identities, their emotions, their relations with others, and their sense of social responsibility. The researchers standardized their results so that people in each region could be compared with people from other regions on their well-being on these dimensions (i.e., positive *z* scores indicate that a region had scores that were on average higher than the national average). As can be seen in **Figure 10.13**, there was much variation in the well-being profiles across the country. People in New England and the Mountain states, on average, were faring better on most domains of well-being than other regions in the country were. Well-being thus varies both across countries and across regions within countries. Why would rates of well-being differ across cultures?

Many factors contribute to the overall satisfaction that people have with their lives. A not surprising one is wealth. On average, people who live in countries in which they have access to enough wealth to easily meet the basic needs of life tend to be considerably more satisfied than those who do not. Indeed, some of the

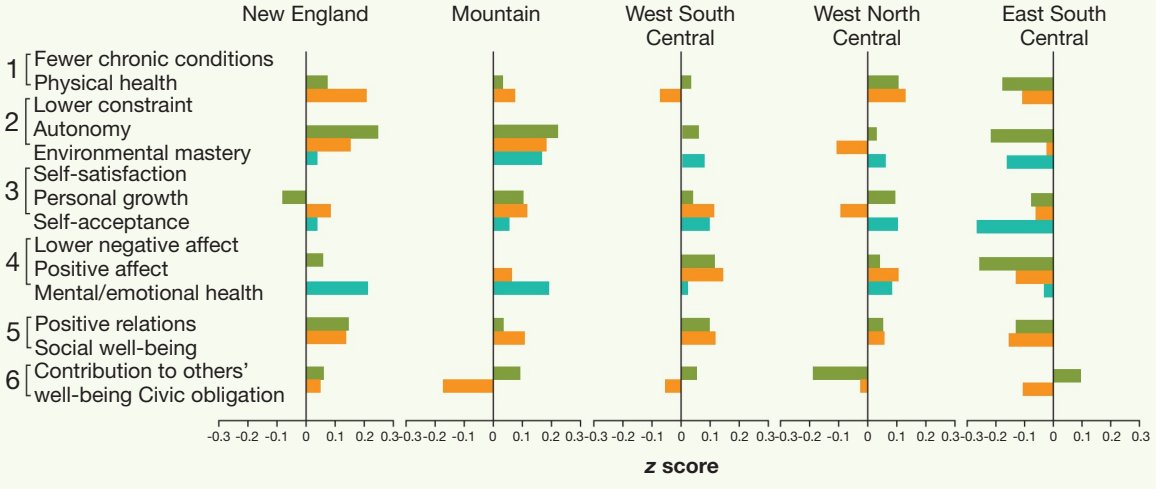

FIGURE 10.13 These are the well-being profiles for various regions of the United States. Bars pointing to the left indicate low scores and less well-being, whereas bars that point to the right indicate high scores and greater well-being.

least satisfied people in the international comparisons come from countries such as Bangladesh and Cameroon where many people don't have adequate food and clean water to survive easily. However, the relation between money and happiness is not universally strong. Money and happiness seem to be most closely connected at very low levels of wealth, where a few extra dollars can make the difference between surviving or not. For example, a strong correlation of .45 was found between income and life satisfaction among respondents in the slums of Calcutta (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2002). The relation between income and subjective well-being is much smaller in developed nations, although it is still positive (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). On average, once a country has an average GDP of at least 40% of that of the United States, there is no longer any pronounced relation between money and subjective well-being (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995). In sum, money can buy a lot of happiness if you're struggling to survive; however, it has much less impact if your basic needs have been met.

Another factor that predicts the subjective well-being of nations is human rights. On average, those countries that promote human rights the most tend to have the happiest citizens. Conversely, those countries in which people live under the constant threat of being thrown in jail for suspicions of plotting against the government are, on average, not as happy. The overall equality among people in a country is also associated with greater subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1995). The Scandinavian and Nordic nations, which have various social policies to minimize differences in opportunities among its citizens, tend to have some of the happiest people around. It seems that people feel good when their rights are not threatened and they have opportunities that are comparable to those of their neighbors.

"Right. Money isn't everything—what's the other thing again?"

These are the factors that have emerged consistently across studies. However, they do not seem to be the only factors that matter, because many nations have average subjective well-being scores that depart considerably from what would be predicted from these factors alone. In particular, many countries in Latin America show

average subjective well-being scores that are much higher than would be predicted by the variables of wealth, human rights, and equality (Diener, 2001), whereas countries in East Asia show much lower subjective well-being scores than would be predicted by these factors (Diener, Suh, Smith, & Shao, 1995). There must be other factors that influence well-being that have yet to be reliably identified.

The above research shows that a variety of factors predict subjective well-being in *similar* ways across nations. However, there also appear to be some factors that predict life satisfaction *differently* across cultures. Consider the question of whether the "good life" can be attained mostly by doing what a person would *like* to do or by doing what a person thinks he or she *should* do. In what kinds of cultural contexts might we expect people to base their life satisfaction on whether they are doing the kinds of things they would like to do? It would seem that if people have a more independent view of self, satisfaction with their lives should be based on whether they feel they are acting in ways consistent with their inner desires. If you recall, people with independent selves tend to view their identity as being grounded in inner attributes, such as their personality traits, attitudes, and opinions. If someone acts in ways consistent with those inner attributes, it should feel good, because this would represent a culturally appropriate way of being—that is, a good life, independent style. This question was investigated by exploring whether feelings of life satisfaction are more highly correlated with overall positive affect in individualistic cultures than in collectivist cultures (Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998). Indeed, there was clear evidence to support this: People in individualistic societies were far more likely than those in collectivist societies to base their life satisfaction on how many positive emotions they were experiencing. Positive emotions appear to be seen as the basis of a good life in individualistic cultures.

So what is life satisfaction based on for people with more interdependent selves? Suh and colleagues reasoned that people with interdependent selves would feel good about their lives if they were living up to others' standards for being a good person. That is, if they felt they were highly respected by others, they might feel very good about their lives. Indeed, people in collectivistic cultures showed a higher correlation between their life-satisfaction scores and being respected by others for living up to cultural norms when compared with people from individualistic cultures. Living up to cultural norms seems to be viewed as the basis of a good life in collectivistic cultures.

Another key factor that influences people's judgments of life satisfaction is which theory they embrace regarding how happy they think they should feel. Some people think life should be full of happy experiences, whereas others believe life should consist of both the happy and sad times. The theory that you endorse will influence how you make sense of your satisfaction, regardless of your actual daily experiences. Consider the following study (Oishi, 2002). American participants

were asked to complete a brief questionnaire at the end of every day to indicate how satisfied they had been that day. After doing this for 7 days, participants were also asked to think back over the past week in which they had been completing the questionnaire and to indicate how satisfied they had been with that week. The participants were divided into two samples: those of European descent and those of Asian descent. Participants from other cultural backgrounds were not included in the study.

The findings were quite revealing, as can be seen in **Figure 10.14**. When people looked back at their weeks, the European-Americans remembered having a much better week than the Asian-Americans did. At first glance, this difference would seem to suggest that the European-Americans encountered more satisfying events in their week than the Asian-Americans. However, if you look at the right side of the graph, you see how positively the participants rated their satisfaction each day of the week. There was no cultural difference here. That is, it seems that European-Americans and Asian-Americans were having comparable weeks in terms of the satisfying events that they experience, but the European-Americans were remembering their weeks as having been better than they really were, whereas the Asian-Americans seemed to be

FIGURE 10.14 European-Americans and Asian-Americans gave similar overall satisfaction ratings about their daily experiences. However, when both groups looked back on their experiences, European-Americans recalled them as being more satisfying than Asian-Americans did. This finding suggests that the recollections of European-Americans are being shaped by a theory that life should be more happy than the theory held by Asian-Americans.

remembering their weeks as having been about as good as they had experienced them. What can we make of this finding?

It seems that when people reflect on their day, they recall the events that happened and rate their satisfaction accordingly. However, when they consider a longer period, their estimates are more likely to reflect the theories they hold about what life should be like (e.g., Robinson & Clore, 2002). European-Americans appear to be operating under an implicit theory that they should be happy, whereas Asian-Americans seem to operate under the theory that emotional experience, like other aspects of life, should be balanced and consist of both positive and negative experiences (Rodgers, Peng, Wang, & Hou, 2004). This dialectical view on emotions means that East Asians can simultaneously experience both positive and negative emotions (Miyamoto, Uchida, & Ellsworth, 2010). These findings indicate that when people think back over their lives, they are likely to interpret their feelings with respect to these culturally divergent theories, but when they consider their feelings at a given time, those theories do not come much into play. It is quite possible that many of the observed cultural differences in subjective well-being are based on the different theories that people from different cultures have about how they should be feeling about their lives.

Interpreting cultural differences in happiness is made more difficult by the findings that positive emotions appear to have different meanings and consequences across cultures. A guiding assumption underlying research on happiness is the expectation that people necessarily want to be happy and that it would always be better if one were only a little bit happier. But this notion that happiness as "our being's end and aim" is found equally across cultures appears to be questionable. Consider for a moment why it is that you chose your college major. Was it because it seemed like the prudent thing to do, or did you think that having this particular major would ultimately make your life happier than if you didn't have it? Do we make decisions in our lives to make ourselves feel happier?

One study investigated the role of predicting happy feelings when making decisions. Canadian students were asked to make a number of forced-choice decisions. For example, they were provided a description of two different computer games and were asked to choose one of them to play. One of the games was described as being quite fun and enjoyable, whereas the other was described as one that could improve one's thinking skills and boost one's grades. The results indicated that European-Canadians were more likely to choose the fun game, whereas Asian-Canadians were more likely to choose the useful game (Falk, Dunn, & Norenzayan, 2010). Similar findings emerged when students were asked to select university courses from a fictitious set of course descriptions; European-Canadians were more likely to choose the courses that sounded fun and interesting compared with Asian-Canadians, who focused more on the perceived utility of the courses. Asian-Canadians seem less interested in

the idea of doing things for the sake of anticipated positive feelings compared with European-Canadians. Life appears to be less about a pursuit of happiness for people with Asian cultural experiences than it does for Westerners.

One reason that Asians might be less interested in positive feelings compared with Westerners is that there may be fewer benefits for them of having especially positive feelings. There is some evidence for this: Whereas European-Americans who report experiencing many positive emotions also report experiencing less depression, East Asians who report having many positive emotions are no less at risk for depression than those East Asians who report having very few positive emotions (Leu, Wang, & Koo, 2011). That is, positive feelings do not seem to carry the same protection against depression in East Asia. Perhaps it's because positive feelings do not have the same beneficial consequences in East Asia that research finds that happiness-boosting activities do not seem to be as effective among East Asians as they are among Westerners (Layous, Lee, Choi, & Lyubomirsky, 2013).

Similarly, experiencing negative emotions does not appear to have the same consequences across cultures. Consider this quote from the Russian heroine of Woody Allen's 1975 satire of Russian novels, *Love and Death:* "To love is to suffer. To avoid suffering one must not love. But then one suffers from not loving. Therefore to love is to suffer; not to love is to suffer; to suffer is to suffer. To be happy is to love. To be happy, then, is to suffer, but suffering makes one unhappy. Therefore, to be unhappy, one must love or love to suffer or suffer from too much happiness. I hope you're getting this down." Woody Allen here is having fun with the stereotype that Russians live to suffer—that they dwell on all that is miserable in their lives and wallow in their despair. This is an observation that is commonly made about the Russian character. "That dark Russian spirit, brooding and complicated—Religion, society and morality are all tied up in the distrust of any amount of happiness. Even the children are worried all the time" (Wagman, 2008). It would follow that if the Russian stereotype is accurate, then all this dark brooding would be associated with increased levels of depression. But is this true?

To investigate this question, Russians and Americans were asked to read some vignettes in which a target has done something that has made her feel upset (Grossmann & Kross, 2010). For some of the vignettes, the target analyzes her feelings about why she's upset, whereas in the others she does not analyze her feelings. Participants were asked to indicate which of the vignettes more closely resembled their own coping tendencies. In addition, participants completed a measure of depression. The findings? Russians were more likely to identify with the target that reflected on her feelings than Americans did, reflecting the stereotype of the Russian brooder. Moreover, whereas those Americans who identified with the self-reflective target were more depressed than those who did not identify with that target, for Russians there was a trend in the opposite direction. Self-reflective Americans were considerably more depressed than self-reflective Russians. Similar findings emerged

with other measures. This suggests that brooding over one's negative emotions, although common in Russia, does not lead Russians to feel more depressed, as it does for Americans. Wallowing in one's negative self-feelings does not have the same consequences across cultures.

The question of cultural variation in happiness is further complicated in that the *kinds* of positive emotions people desire also seem to vary considerably across cultures. Not all positive emotions are created equal. Some positive emotions, such as excitement and elation, involve a great deal of arousal. Other positive emotions, such as feeling calm or at peace, involve a low degree of arousal. Research by Jeanne Tsai and colleagues (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006) reveals that these two kinds of positive emotions are sought after differently by Americans and East Asians. Tsai and colleagues propose the notion of **ideal affect**—the kinds of feelings that people desire. They are the emotions that people are trying to achieve, so they structure their lives in order to increase the likelihood that they will experience these emotions. For most Americans, ideal affect contains positive emotions that are high in arousal, whereas for most East Asians ideal affect contains positive emotions that are low in arousal.

There is much evidence for this cultural difference across a wide array of life activities between the two cultural groups. For example, a comparison of facial expressions that were shown in characters in American and Taiwanese children's storybooks revealed that the American faces more often showed feelings of excitement and had significantly bigger smiles than the Taiwanese faces. The authors of these books seem to be aware of what their audiences want, as subsequent analyses revealed that European-American preschool children preferred the pictures of excited faces more than the Taiwanese preschoolers did, and they also felt more similar to the characters who were engaged in high-arousal activities; the Taiwanese children felt more similar to the characters engaged in low-arousal activities (Tsai, Louie, Chen, & Uchida, 2006).

Further evidence for this cultural difference can be seen in Christian and Buddhist teachings and practices. A content analysis of classic Christian and Buddhist texts (e.g., the Gospels of the Bible and the Lotus Sutra) as well as contemporary Christian and Buddhist self-help books revealed that high-arousal states were encouraged more in the Christian texts whereas low-arousal states were encouraged more in the Buddhist texts. Furthermore, some Christian sects include enthusiastic religious practices such as jumping, shouting, and applause; Buddhist religious practices emphasize meditation and the calming of one's mind (Tsai, Miao, & Seppala, 2007).

In addition, various activities encourage high- or low-arousal states, and cultures differ in the frequency with which they practice those activities. For example, European-Americans are more likely to engage in active individual activities such as jogging or rollerblading, whereas Asian-Americans are more likely to engage in passive activities such as sightseeing and picnicking (Gobster & Delgado, 1992;

FIGURE 10.15 East Asians are more likely than Americans to prefer low-arousal activities, and are less likely than Americans to prefer high-arousal activities.

see **Figure 10.15**). European-Americans are more likely to prefer fast-tempo and exciting music, whereas Chinese are more likely to prefer calm music (Tsai, Miao, & Seppala, 2007). In sum, European-Americans are more likely to engage in activities that lead to high-arousal positive states, whereas those from East Asian backgrounds aspire for more low-arousal positive states. Recent research reveals that Latin Americans prefer high-arousal positive emotions at least as much as (if not more than) Canadians or Americans (Ruby, Falk, Silberstein, Villa, & Heine, 2012). The pursuit of happiness across cultures, then, also appears to depend on the kinds of positive emotions people desire.

What can we conclude about cultural variation in the pursuit of happiness? First, it appears that cultures do differ in the average degree of well-being they experience and that these differences hinge, in part, on some universal relations between well-being and such variables as wealth (at low ends of the wealth spectrum), human rights, and equality. However, the question is also complicated because people in different cultures view happiness and positive emotions in quite different terms. Among Westerners, interpersonally disengaging acts feel especially good, subjective well-being is associated with positive feelings, people operate under the implicit theory that more positive feelings are better, positive emotions serve as a bulwark against depression, and high-arousal positive emotions are preferred. Among East Asians, in contrast, interpersonally engaging acts feel especially good, subjective well-being is associated with appropriate role behaviors, people operate under the implicit theory that it is good to experience both positive and negative feelings, positive emotions are not associated with less depression, and low-arousal positive emotions are more sought after. Cultures vary in their happiness, in part, because they have quite different ideas about what happiness is and what it is derived from.

Conclusions Regarding Cultural Variation in Emotions

The field of culture and emotions has experienced considerable debate regarding the role of culture in shaping the emotions. Much of this debate grows out of researchers' different conceptions of emotions and of the aspects of emotions they study. What can we conclude about cultural variation in emotional experience?

If we focus on facial expressions, there is good evidence for universality in emotions around the world. For the most part, people are universally adept at producing and recognizing facial expressions associated with the basic emotions. There is no evidence for accessibility universals here, however, because people perform worse when evaluating the facial expressions of those from other cultures than from their own.

Looking at emotional experience, there is more evidence for cultural diversity. People from different cultures vary in the intensity with which they experience emotions, the kinds of things that they feel best about, and the degree to which they experience positive versus negative feelings. Emotional experience varies more across cultures than people's facial expressions for the basic emotions.

Last, considering the emotional lexicon, there is tremendous variability in the kinds of words that people use to describe their experiences. Cultures vary not only in the number of emotion words that they have but also in the ways they carve up the emotional space, with many English emotion words not existing in other languages, and many non-English emotion words not existing in English.

SUMMARY

There is considerable debate about the best way to conceive of emotions. Some theories have focused more on the physiological markers of emotions; others focus more on the interpretive aspects of emotions. In general, theories that focus on the physiological aspects of emotions predict less cultural variability, while theories that focus on interpretive aspects of emotions expect much cultural variability.

Research on facial expressions reveals much consistency around the world in the ways that people recognize the basic emotions of fear, anger, happiness, sadness, surprise, and disgust. These expressions are not the product of cultural learning but reflect universal physiological reactions. However, some aspects of the ways people express their emotions are shaped by cultural learning, and people are less accurate at recognizing facial expressions of people from different cultures than of people from their own culture.

Cultures vary in the display rules that shape how emotions are expressed. Display rules guide both the intensity with which emotions are expressed and the ways they are expressed. Some cultures communicate their emotions more directly, whereas others express them in more moderated form.

Cultures vary tremendously in their vocabulary for emotions. Some cultures have many more emotion words than others, and there is often little overlap between these emotion words. For example, terms for the basic emotions are not represented in all languages, and many emotion words from other languages do not exist in English.

People with interdependent selves are more likely to interpret situations with regard to relational concerns than are people with independent selves. Also, people with interdependent selves are more likely to feel happy when they have interpersonally engaged positive emotions, whereas people with independent selves are more likely to feel happy when they experience interpersonally disengaged positive emotions.

Cultures around the world vary considerably in their degrees of subjective well-being. Subjective well-being is affected by such variables as wealth, protection of human rights, and income equality. People's reporting of their subjective well-being is also affected by whether they believe that life should be consistently good or that life is inherently composed of both good and bad events. Furthermore, some kinds of positive feelings, such as high-arousal states, are more desired in Western cultures, whereas low-arousal positive feelings are more desired among East Asian populations.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Do you think you can experience the emotion *liget* in the same was as an Ilongot does? On what basis did you come up with an answer to this?
2. What is the primary difference between the James-Lange and the Two-Factor theories of emotion?
3. If you expressed your emotions with your face, would people from all over the world be equally accurate at identifying how you're feeling? Who do you think would be worst at accurately identifying your feelings?
4. Why do cultures vary in terms of what part of the face they attend to when judging other people's facial expressions?
5. How do cultural display rules influence the emotions that people actually experience?
6. Do you think you experience the emotion *schadenfreude* in the same way and to the same degree as the average German speaker?

7. Do you think the pursuit of happiness should be equally valued across cultures?
8. Why do you think that North Americans and Latin Americans tend to value high-arousal positive emotions more than East Asians do?

KEY TERMS

James-Lange Theory of Emotions, 404
Two-Factor Theory of Emotions, 405
Display Rules, 417
Ritualized Display, 418
Facial Feedback Hypothesis, 419
Subjective Well-Being, 430
Ideal Affect, 437