6   Emotion

What is a joy to the one is a nightmare to the other. That's how it is today, that's how it will be forever.

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956)—German playwright

Usually when people are sad, they don't do anything. They just cry over their condition. But when they get angry, they bring about a change.

Malcolm X (1925–1965)—U.S. civil rights activist

DID YOU KNOW that public kissing is frowned upon in Japan? We are not talking about the Land of the Rising Sun centuries ago but rather modern Japan. While in many countries laws prohibit "indecent behavior" in public and religious standards prescribe modesty between men and women, in Japan neither apply. Japan has no law or religious edict against kissing one's spouse or loved ones in public. People simply follow a tradition, an old and informal rule of conduct, of keeping these matters private. While kissing is rare in Japan, on a visit to New York or Moscow, you will inevitably see people hugging or kissing good-bye at a train station or airport. So what is so unacceptable about public kissing to the Japanese? People from Japan will tell you, from the beginning of their lives, they learn to restrain their emotions in public. It is considered a sign of personal weakness for an individual to display anxiety, love, joy, sadness, and other emotions in the presence of others. The question arises, in countries such as Japan where the expression of feelings is so restricted by cultural rules, do the Japanese—and other peoples from cultures like theirs—experience emotions in the same way that people from more permissive cultures do?

Right now, at this very moment, someone in Montreal is jumping for joy because he got a job promotion. At the other end of the planet, in Jerusalem, a girl is anxiously anticipating her first Bat Mitzvah. Stuck in traffic, an Uber driver in Moscow is frustrated with gridlock during rush hour. An army conscript in South Korea feels unusually calm before his first parachute jump. **Emotion**, or affect, is an evaluative response that typically includes some combination of physiological arousal, subjective experience (positive, negative, or ambivalent), and behavioral expression. Joy and disappointment, sadness and surprise, envy and pride, and dozens of other emotions accompany our daily lives, regardless of where we live or what language we speak. We display emotions through our voice or gestures from the day we are born. We learn how to feel and how to express what we feel from the people around us, the books we read, and the videos we watch. Masterfully captured in words, images, and sounds, human

emotions always draw significant interest from artists. For centuries, artists have illustrated, reflected, painted, and portrayed love, grief, guilt, and the excitement of human existence in their creations.

A brief survey of scholarly books reveals that the task of understanding human emotions has always occupied philosophical minds. Sophisticated and fascinating observations about fear and joy, anger and sadness, and other emotions can be found in the works of the Chinese educator and philosopher Confucius (fifth century B.C.E.), of the Epicureans and Sophists in Greece (third to fifth centuries B.C.E.), of the Arab physician and thinker Avicenna (eleventh century), of the Europeans Descartes and Spinoza (seventeenth century), and of many others. However, the scientific study of emotion began only recently—just over a century ago.

One of the pioneers in this field, American psychologist William James (1884), believed that emotion is embedded in bodily experience. The physical experience leads the person to feel aroused, and the arousal stimulates the subjective experience of anxiety, joy, and so forth. According to James, people do not jump and clap their hands because they are happy; rather they become happy because they jump and clap their hands. James even gave advice about how to feel particular emotions: "The voluntary path to cheerfulness, if our spontaneous cheerfulness be lost, is to sit up cheerfully, and act and speak as if cheerfulness were already there. To feel brave, act as if we were brave, use all our will to that end, and courage will very likely replace fear" (cf. Wallis, 1965, p. 156). At around the same time that James was discussing his ideas in the United States, a Danish physiologist, Carl Lange (1885), proposed similar views on emotions. This view is now called the James–Lange theory.

Forty years later, Cannon and Bard published an alternative outlook, known today as the Cannon–Bard theory of emotion. According to their approach, various life situations—such as a hairy spider crawling on your shoulder—can simultaneously elicit both an emotional experience, such as disgust or fear, and bodily responses, such as increased blood pressure or sweaty palms (Cannon, 1927). In the 1960s, another theory of emotion gained credence among psychologists. According to the theory's authors (Schachter & Singer, 1962), there are two crucial elements of emotional experience: physiological arousal and the cognitive interpretation of this arousal. In every emotion, we first experience a state of physiological arousal. Then we try to explain to ourselves what the arousal means. If the situation suggests that we should experience pleasure, we call it joy. If somebody threatens us, we call this experience fear.

These theories were initially tested on students studying in North America and Europe. However, how well do these theories apply cross-culturally? From one vantage point, all human emotions are universal. They have a similar underlying physiological mechanism, and the specific cultural environment applies only superficial "makeup" to fundamentally universal human affect. For example, in the United States, a group of happy friends will "high-five" each other when their favorite team scores a goal in soccer or earns a home run in baseball, whereas in Eastern Europe friends are more likely to shake hands in a similar circumstance. However, the joy will be felt by both groups of

friends almost identically regardless of the differences in its expression. The speed of people's ability to communicate these days, powered by technology, makes it increasingly likely for sports fans across the globe to express their elation in similar ways. In short, sadness is sadness no matter where you live: Mexico, Bosnia, Nigeria, or Vietnam. However, sadness manifests as blue eye shadow in one culture versus purple eye shadow in another.

A second vantage point focuses on both the cultural origin and cultural specificity of emotion. According to this view, all human emotions develop in specific cultural conditions and are therefore best understood primarily within a particular cultural context. For example, an observer may identify a sarcastic smile on the face of a Polish worker if the observer understands both the nature of sarcasm—a form of expression in which meanings are conveyed obliquely—and the surrounding circumstances in which the sarcastic reaction is displayed.

Which one of these perspectives has received stronger empirical support? Consider evidence from both sides of the argument.

When We Laugh We Are Happy: Similarities of Emotional Experience

People can generally tell other people's emotions. Even though we do not speak someone's language, we intuit whether this person is happy or sad by looking at her facial expression. If you understand what other people feel by judging their emotional expressions, and if they, in turn, can judge your emotions correctly, this implies human feelings should be similar, even universal. This is exactly what Darwin (1872) suggested in his famous work, *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. He collected interviews from around the world and concluded that basic human emotional expressions are similar because they serve an adaptive purpose. Both animals and humans signal their readiness or willingness to help, fight, or run through gestures, postures, and facial expressions. Imagine, for example, you see your friend's eyes wide open, you hear his scream, and you observe him throwing away a cup of soda. This combination of reactions might alert you to the fact that it is likely your friend is scared or disgusted by something he found in the cup. Almost immediately, you will check to see if anything—a bug?—is in your cup too. Emotions regulate social behavior and serve to protect people from danger. Fear and anger, for example, produce greater acceleration of heart rate than does joy. This makes sense if one thinks in evolutionary terms. Anger and fear are related to fight-or-flight responses that require the heart to pump more blood to the muscles: All in all, you have to either defend yourself or run away from a threat. In men and women of all cultures, fear causes a particular defensive reaction in dangerous situations. Likewise, disgust prevents us from trying potentially toxic substances such as rotten food or spoiled water (Izard, 1977).

Self-Assessment of Emotional Expressiveness

Although survey-based studies are often used to study emotions, they are associated with at least two methodological problems. Emotions need to be explained in survey questions and verbalized by subjects. This is problematic because some people can neither remember exactly how they express emotions nor describe with precision the specific reactions displayed by others. Moreover, people have a tendency to give socially desirable answers, operating on assumptions that certain emotional expressions are not "good" or "moral" (e.g., laughing aloud or expressing anger openly). This leads subjects to answer in terms of how they think they should react (Oishi et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2006). Emotions can be studied either by experimental methods in natural conditions or in laboratory experiments. What limitations do you see with each of these methods?

Empirical studies demonstrate many similarities in the ways people display their feelings. A comparison of emotional facial expressions of people from Western industrialized countries and non-Western settings showed significant resemblance (Ekman, 1980). Researchers found universal patterns in the vocal expression of emotion (Van Bezooijen et al., 1983) and cross-cultural invariance in the behavioral expression of complex emotions such as jealousy and envy (Hupka et al., 1985).

A large-scale comparative study involving 37 countries revealed that people in both Western and non-Western countries displayed the same general expression patterns with regard to emotions: Generally speaking, men as a group are prone toward the expression of anger, while women as a group are prone toward the expression of sadness and fear (Fischer et al., 2004).

Another interesting argument about similarities in human emotion derives from numerous studies about the process of identification, description, and explanation of an emotional expression, for short, **emotion recognition** (Ekman, 1980; Izard, 1971). For instance, in one such study, subjects in five countries—the United States, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Japan—were shown photographs of people, each of whom displayed one of six emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, or disgust. Most subjects correctly identified these emotions (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). People show remarkable accuracy in the interpretation of eyebrow positioning and smiling (Keating et al., 1981). For instance, smiling is universally understood as a sign of happiness and lowered eyebrows as a sign of anger or domination. In another study, which included subjects from Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Scotland, Sumatra, Turkey, and the United States, Ekman and colleagues (1987) demonstrated that mixed emotional expressions, such as shame and frustration, are also easily recognizable across countries.

Research on cross-cultural recognition of emotional intonation in subject's voices has yielded similar results: People typically identify the speaking person's emotion in a recording of a speaker using a foreign tongue (Albas et al., 1976; Van Bezooijen et al., 1983). In another study, subjects from Western and non-Western cultures were asked to make the face they would show when they were happy to see somebody, angry with someone, sad about bad news, and so on. These facial expressions were recorded and later analyzed. The findings suggested the existence of the same facial muscular patterns in both groups of subjects (Ekman & Friesen, 1978). In other words, people across cultures can not only easily recognize basic emotions but also use the same muscle groups to express their feelings. Most people across the world are able to infer emotion from vocal cues. A study was conducted in nine countries in Europe, the United States, and Asia on vocal emotion portrayals of anger, sadness, fear, joy, and neutral voice as produced by professional German actors. Data show an overall accuracy of more than 60 percent across all emotions and countries (Scherer et al., 2001).

There is an amazing similarity in the way people name emotions across different cultures and languages (Russell, 1991). In other languages, there are equivalent words for virtually every English term for emotions (Scherer & Wallbott, 1994; Scherer et al., 1988). All languages make distinctions between positive affect and negative affect, and this distinction is explained to young children, who begin to use words and phrases such as "nice," "mean," "good," "bad," "I like," and "I don't like" at a very early age. There are also similarities in the way in which different languages define so-called basic emotions. Although theorists may generate slightly different lists, most classifications include from five to nine emotions. Anger, fear, happiness, sadness, and disgust are present in almost every national classification. Surprise, contempt, interest, shame, joy, trust, anticipation, and guilt are present in others (Lynch, 1990; Russell, 1991; Vekker, 1978).

People living in distant parts of the world can develop relatively similar linguistic labels for certain complex emotions, which is indicative of common, universal roots of human emotional experiences and their interpretations. For example, in the Japanese and Middle English dialects, there are two words—*amae* and *mardy*—both apparently indicating an individual's need for affection (Lewis & Ozaki, 2009).

CROSS-CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

A study of samples in 32 countries (including India, China, Turkey, Israel, Russia, Zimbabwe, the United States, Germany, and Mexico) showed that individualism was positively correlated with higher expressivity of emotions, especially happiness and surprise. Individualism was negatively correlated with the expression of sadness. These findings suggest that cultural individualism, in general, is associated with the endorsement of positive emotions (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Contempt, disgust, and fear were the least endorsed emotions in all samples. Most probably, negative emotions, particularly contempt and disgust, are perceived as disruptive to social relationships, particularly in collectivist cultures (Butler et al., 2009). Sadness also signals distress (Izard, 2004), which is interpreted as a clear sign of a person's weakness. However, these findings do not justify an assumption that individuals from predominantly collectivist cultures are always reserved in their emotional expressions, while people from mainly individualist cultures are not. When judging other people's emotional expressions, think about these people's unique personality features, the circumstances of the situation, and your role in this situation, in order to avoid a self-fulfilling prophecy (see Chapter 3).

All in all, supporters of the idea of the universality of human emotion argue that we share a great deal in common with others, regardless of our cultural origins. We react to external events and bodily signals with essentially similar facial expressions, physiological changes, mixed feelings, and subjective experiences of pleasure or displeasure. Cross-culturally, individuals are emotionally sensitive to the loss of relatives and friends, the birth of their children, the victories of their favorite sports team, and criticism from others. Across cultures, sadness evokes crying, anger provokes aggression, and joy helps people embrace and forgive others.

You Cannot Explain Pain If You Have Never Been Hurt: Differences in Emotional Experience

Despite similarities in emotional experiences across cultures, there are differences in the way people describe basic emotions. In the Buddhist tradition (accepted in the Chinese language, for example), the seven basic emotions are described as happiness, anger, sorrow, joy, love, hate, and desire. There is no disgust in this lineup. Also, Russell and Yik's (1996) review of studies of ancient Chinese texts, reflecting dominant philosophies including Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, found various sets of noted emotions, ranging from five to seven. Their English translation of a total of 12 labels of emotion did not include disgust. Interestingly, recent studies of emotion recognition revealed subjects in China had more problems with recognition of disgust on photographed faces than subjects from other groups. Then again, other studies involving physiological measurements indicate Chinese subjects tend to identify six basic emotions in the same way that people of other nationalities do (Wang et al., 2006). Differences in the expression of emotional experience, linguistic variety in the labeling of emotions, and distinct socialization practices all suggest culture-specific origins of human emotions. In short, according to this view, people's emotions vary from culture to culture and from group to group because these emotions originate and develop from different culture-specific experiences.

Cultural groups differ with respect to the frequency and significance of common emotional reactions (Matsumoto et al., 1988). For example, some studies have pointed to cultural differences in the degree to which some groups experience positive emotions, such as joy (Markus & Kitayama, 1994b), and negative emotions, such as anger (Solomon, 1978). Shigehiro Oishi (2010), a Japanese American psychologist, and several of his colleagues surveyed more than 350 college students in Japan, Korea, and the United States. They found that, on average, European Americans report being happier than Asian Americans, Koreans, or Japanese. However, European Americans become emotionally distracted by negative events (getting a parking ticket or receiving a bad grade) and recover from these setbacks more slowly than their counterparts of Asian ancestry. Alternatively, Koreans, Japanese, and, to a lesser extent, Asian Americans report that they are less happy in general but "recover" to their normal emotional state faster than European Americans. The researchers found that European Americans needed nearly two positive events to return to their normal level of happiness (e.g., getting an encouraging call or earning an A). The Koreans, Japanese, and Asian Americans, on average, needed only one positive event to recover emotionally (Oishi et al., 2004). Cultures also vary in linguistic descriptions of emotion. The Tahitian language, for example, has 46 different words for anger but no word for sadness. In some African languages, the same word can represent both sadness and anger. In some local Russian dialects, the phrase "I pity you" can indicate "I love you," one's condolence, or even one's

contempt.

Despite obvious similarities in the facial recognition of emotions outlined earlier in the chapter, subjects from various cultures also vary in their degree of agreement concerning specific emotions. In one study, for example, happiness was correctly identified by 68 percent of African participants and by 97 percent of their European counterparts (Izard, 1969). In another study, U.S. and European groups correctly identified from 75 to 83 percent of emotions in the facial photographs, whereas the Japanese group scored 65 percent and the African group only 50 percent. The recognition rate of facial expressions on photographs was lower when subjects had little previous contact with other cultures (Izard, 1971). Schimmack (1996), after conducting a meta-analysis of the existing studies of emotion, showed that white participants were better than nonwhite participants in recognizing happiness, fear, anger, and disgust but not surprise and sadness. Other research has demonstrated cultural differences with regard to the accuracy and speed with which other emotions are judged (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2003).

Disgust, as an emotion, is associated with cultural requirements to reject certain foods or avoid particular situations related to eating. Once accepted, these requirements are supported by a powerful emotion and thus become less subject to temptation or modification. The classic cross-cultural study of disgust emphasized that people develop expectations about how children should react to particular foods and food consumption (Rozin & Fallon, 1987). For example, most of us would feel disgust and refuse to eat food that we just chewed and spit out. Most of us wouldn't mind sucking our own blood from a cut finger, but a majority would be repulsed by the idea of ingesting our own blood after it had been accumulated onto a spoon. There is a worldwide aversion to eating animals that are physically similar to humans (e.g., monkeys) or that have close interactive relations with humans (e.g., cats and dogs). Most criticize and condemn cultures that deviate from this rule. The tendency to avoid disgust-inducing situations is usually learned early in our lives. This behavioral avoidance happens almost automatically, without significant conscious effort.

Disgust is associated with the perception of food contamination. Someone who believes, for instance, that a glass of juice is contaminated is not likely to drink out of the glass until something is done to "clean" out the contaminated juice. People vary in their perceptions of which food products or drinks are contaminated. Some cultural differences exist as well. A study of 125 Hindu Indian and 106 U.S. children between the ages of four and eight showed that most rejected food contaminated by contact with a cockroach, a human hair, or if the juice was tried by a stranger. Indian children, however, were more sensitive than U.S. children to contaminants. The Indian children responded significantly more strongly to stranger or cockroach contamination and did not accept "purifications" (such as boiling or a mother's touch). Specialists suggest that interpersonal disgust and contagion are a more substantial aspect of Hindu Indian culture than of most Western cultures. Any contact with the mouth, either direct (through biting or sipping) or indirect (through the hand or saliva), can make the food

unacceptable. In particular, in this study, for Indian children no purification was accepted in removing stranger contamination; boiling of the juice was effective for most Americans (Hejmadi et al., 2004).

It was also found in several studies that Japanese participants used relatively less often descriptions such as "afraid" and more often used "surprised," compared with participants from Indian and North American groups. Americans relatively more often, in comparison to other groups, endorsed expressions as "afraid" and less often as "surprised" or "disgusted" (Elfenbein et al., 2002).

Differences in emotion recognition between representatives of two cultures may exist because some emotional expressions are cultivated in children during the socialization process and some are not. In an earlier example about the Japanese and English idioms standing for the need for affection, the English "mardy" is considered childish in most cases and thus less acceptable than the Japanese "amae," which is treated kindly and supportively (Lewis & Ozaki, 2009). On the other hand, the public display of emotions may be seen as disruptive and thus inappropriate. This may affect the Japanese perception of people from other cultures who do display their emotions freely. For instance, a Japanese observer may see such individuals as being hyper and disorderly. Differences in the perception of emotions were found in many other countries. When Greek and British individuals observe other people in embarrassing situations, the Greeks usually overestimate the intensity of the observed emotion of embarrassment, whereas the British observers usually underestimate the intensity (Edelman et al., 1989). Such a difference may be caused by more developed norms of collectivism in Greece compared with Great Britain. Therefore, people in Greece feel

more interconnected and group oriented, making their embarrassment more intense than it is for the British.

Several studies found that both men and women identified angry expressions equally quickly. But they also found that anger was more quickly identified on a male face than on a female face (Williams et al., 2007). Most likely, the reason for this is that being able to spot an angry individual quickly has a survival advantage—and, since anger is more likely to turn into lethal violence in men than in women, the ability to spot angry males quickly is particularly valuable.

Now that we have learned about two distinct approaches to understanding the relationships between culture and emotion, how do we know which is correct? The first approach advocates cross-cultural universality, whereas the second suggests cultural origin and specificity of human emotion (Ekman, 1994; Mead, 1975; Russell, 1994). Before we suggest an answer, consider the following case.

Emotions: Different or Universal?

Is severe pain after a stumble likely to cause a negative emotion in any two individuals? Perhaps. What if one is born and raised in Puerto Rico and the other came from Iran? There is no difference: A stumble causes physical pain that is, in turn, supposed to cause a negative emotion. Should leaving a person you love make you sad? Possibly. If you are really thirsty and get a glass of cool water, will you experience joy? Most likely yes. But will you necessarily feel and express your emotions exactly in the same manner as others under similar circumstances? Not really. How we feel and how we express our feelings is based on our personality, experiences, immediate circumstances, presence or absence of people, and many other factors. For example, you may hide frustration after a clumsy fall in a public place but scream and curse if such a fall happens in your home where no one can see you. Emotions can be seen as similar or different because we often perceive, analyze, and think about them from different points of view.

Cultural differences in emotions tend to expand, as the level of description becomes more specific and detailed. We can generally consider jealousy as sadness. Alternatively, by applying a "magnifying psychological lens" for a more detailed analysis, jealousy may be interpreted as a blend of anger, fear, sadness, and frustration. High levels of abstraction cause us to see people from different cultures or social groups as similar in their emotions. Here we can all recall public stereotypes about "emotionless" Finns and Japanese, "hot-blooded" Italians and Brazilians, and "sensuous" Arabs and French. What other stereotypical assumptions can you suggest here?

For a more comprehensive cross-cultural analysis of emotions, we should look "inside" the emotion. First, looking again at the definition, we should try to understand emotion as a multicomponential process (Frijda, 1986; Scherer, 1984). First, an emotion is initiated, there is an underlying physiological process for the emotion, the emotion is experienced, then it is displayed or remains hidden, it somehow affects our decisions, the emotion may cause other emotions, and it eventually fades away. Are there any cross-cultural findings that shed some light on what role culture may play in these stages? In the beginning of the chapter, we indicated that emotion includes physiological arousal. Let us describe that in some detail.

Physiological Arousal

There are significant cross-cultural similarities in the underlying physiological mechanisms of emotions. Universally, we detect stimuli from our surroundings and our body. The signal then goes to the brain. The amygdala serves as the brain's "emotional computer." It assesses the affective significance of the stimulus. Therefore, irrelevant stimuli may cause no emotion. Then the hypothalamus, as a part of the limbic system, activates sympathetic and endocrine responses related to emotion. The brain's cortex also plays several roles with respect to emotion, particularly in the appraisal of stimuli. Moreover, the right hemisphere is believed to be responsible for the facial displays of emotion (Borod, 1992). Current research also suggests that pleasant emotions are associated with the activation of the left frontal cortex, whereas unpleasant emotions are mostly associated with the activation of the right frontal lobe (Davidson, 1992).

Experimental studies show that when people of various national groups express their emotions, their blood pressure changes as well. Cross-culturally, embarrassment has common physiological responses, and one of them is increased body temperature (Edelman et al., 1989). In a classic study, researchers gave participants specific directions to contract their facial muscles in particular ways characteristic of anger, sadness, happiness, surprise, or disgust (Ekman et al., 1983). Subjects held these expressions for 10 seconds, during which particular physiological reactions were measured. The researchers found a connection between the simple act of changing facial expressions and patterns of physiological response. Different emotions produce differences in variables such as acceleration of heart rate, finger temperature, and a measure of sweat on the palms related to arousal or anxiety, also known as galvanic skin response. A comparison between the physiological changes reported by subjects from Southern and Northern European regions also yielded interesting results. The "hot-blooded" southerners reported significantly more blood pressure changes while experiencing joy, sadness, and anger, compared to the "cold" northerners (Rime & Giovannini, 1986). However, in another study, Asian Americans compared to European Americans expressed significantly larger increases in blood pressure when they were expressing negative emotions (Butler et al., 2009). But what may cause such diverse physiological reactions?

The Meaning of Preceding Events

> Take away the cause, and the effect ceases; what the eye never sees, the heart never rues.
>
> Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616)—Spanish novelist and poet

There is always something that causes or initiates an emotion. A pain in your body, a lost softball game, a meeting with a person you adore, a windy and rainy day, or an annoying flow of music streaming from a satellite radio—many **preceding events** in our everyday lives bear particular emotional significance for us. However, do people across cultures agree that certain situations should elicit similar emotions? Do all people concede that the loss of a friend is a sad event and that the birth of a child is a happy one? There is more than ample research data to confirm that this is the case: Cross-culturally, basic emotions are generally marked or caused by similar types of events. Let us illustrate this statement with the results of several cross-cultural studies.

Subjects from the United States, South Korea, and Samoa were asked to write stories about an event causing one of six emotions: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, or surprise (Brandt & Boucher, 1985). Then these stories were presented to other subjects for evaluation. Substantial similarities were found in the assignment of emotions related to stories among the examined cultures as well as within cultures. In another study, Wallbott and Scherer (1986) examined situations in which people experienced joy, fear, anger, sadness, disgust, shame, and guilt. Data collected in 27 countries suggested that although there were some differences among the samples, these differences were much lower than the ones within the countries. Evidence for similarity in preceding events is also shown in a study conducted by Scherer and his colleagues (1988), in which subjects were asked to describe a situation that had caused them to feel happy, sad, angry, or scared. After the task was complete, these situations were grouped into several categories. In essentially all cultures, the most important event categories were birth and death, good and bad news, acceptance or rejection in relationships, meetings with friends, dates, temporary and permanent separation, listening to music, sexual experiences, interaction with strangers, and success or failure. In another study, both U.S. and Malay subjects were equally accurate in their identification of emotions caused by 96 different types of events (Boucher & Brandt, 1981). Matsumoto and colleagues (1988) found a large degree of cultural agreement in how people in Japan and the United States evaluate situations that evoke particular emotions. Cross-cultural similarities were found in the perception of events that cause people to experience jealousy and envy (Hupka et al., 1985).

CRITICAL THINKING

An Example of an Emotional "No-Show" If we limit our analysis of human emotion only to the question of whether an emotion is expected to occur, we will find many cross-cultural similarities among human feelings. Indeed, any starving person presumably will be happy to have a piece of bread. However, if we focus on how emotion is experienced and displayed in human activities, we are more likely to see cultural differences. Consider, for example, Japanese sumo wrestlers. If you have a chance to watch a sumo tournament (they are often broadcast on U.S. television), you will discover that the wrestlers never show their emotions. Even if a wrestler experiences a tough loss, spectacular victory, excruciating pain, or the spectators' loud ovation, he remains emotionless. Not a single muscle moves on his face. After seeing these pictures, one may conclude that sumo wrestlers do not experience emotions. However, it is more plausible to assume that the wrestlers feel the emotions but do not display them. It takes many years of practice, education, and dedication to become a professional sumo wrestler. During this time, the candidates patiently learn how to hide the obvious expressions of their joy, frustration, and other feelings during the competition. In contrast to sumo wrestlers' training, South American and European soccer players are not trained to hide their emotions on the field. Instead, they may find it beneficial to exaggerate their expression of pain after a collision with an opponent because referees—observing the player's display of pain—might feel obliged to penalize the opposing team. What other examples of cultural impact on emotional displays can you think of?

Other Examples

We have to pay special attention to a particular level of abstraction on which emotions are described. The very same emotion of joy, for example, may be culturally similar or cross-culturally different, depending on the level of generalization chosen for its description. Perhaps many similarities in emotions are likely to be found when they are described at a high level of generality or abstraction. An emphasis in one's observations on specific emotional characteristics would perhaps highlight cultural differences. Many authors, for example, write about a "specific" fear that existed and still exists in people of totalitarian political cultures: These individuals are afraid of political persecution for speaking up (Gozman & Edkind, 1992; Smith, 1976). However, a more abstract analysis may yield an interpretation of a different kind: These individuals experience a typical fear based on an absolutely adequate evaluation of a threat. As soon as the threat of persecution is eliminated, the fear may disappear as well (Shiraev & Bastrykin, 1988). Likewise, millions of undocumented aliens may experience fear of deportation from the United States. This fear is unfamiliar to U.S. citizens if we see it as a special type of fear. Described in a more general way, this emotion loses its specificity, and fear of deportation becomes nothing more than a state of reluctant anticipation of an unpleasant event.

Grief diminishes when it has nothing to grow on.

Publilius Syrus (first century B.C.E)—Roman writer

Nevertheless, the same situations can be interpreted differently across cultures and therefore lead to different emotions. There is also scientific and anecdotal evidence for cultural differences in emotion-eliciting events. Most Europeans, as well as North and South Americans, for instance, consider the number 13 as unlucky, and some are even afraid to live in an apartment numbered 13 or on the thirteenth floor. People of many other ethnic groups, on the contrary, would pay little attention to this number. People in Russia, for example, are afraid to keep an even number of flowers in a vase: An even number of flowers is typically brought to a funeral. A Canadian or Mexican student, however, is likely to be unaware of this foreign superstition and would be thrilled to receive six flowers from her fiancé.

Consistent with other studies, Chinese students were found to experience higher levels of anxiety in mathematics compared to students from Germany. They were also found to experience more enjoyment, pride, and shame, as well as less anger than German students (Frenzel et al., 2007). Liem (1997) analyzed the experience of shame and guilt in first- and second-generation Asian Americans and European Americans. The

participants were asked to describe situations in which they felt guilty or were embarrassed. Some differences were found between the first-generation immigrants. According to this study, Europeans experienced guilt as an anticipated moral transgression: Guilt indicates that a person violated an internal standard of ethical behavior even though there is no public notice of such violation. In the stories reported by first-generation Asian Americans, the typical guilt-related situation is based on the feeling of failed or unfulfilled duty. For European Americans, shame centers on the presence of other people: It is shameful that other people discover your inappropriate actions. For first-generation Asian Americans, shame also involves the presence of outsiders. However, another element is present that is not typical in the picture of shame among European Americans. This is a group to which the person belongs, usually his or her family. Therefore, shame is also felt as regret for letting important people down. It is interesting that the differences in experiencing shame and guilt are insignificant between the second generation of Japanese Americans and European Americans.

Solitude is the play field of Satan.
Vladimir Nabokov (1899–1977)—Russian-American writer

As already demonstrated, a variety of preceding events can produce similar emotional responses in most human beings, regardless of their cultural origin or current identity. These studies suggest a high degree of similarity in human emotional sensitivity to particular life events or conditions. There is also evidence that particular emotions can be elicited by culture-specific events. People who are not familiar with various cultural norms and traditions may not recognize such emotions and may make mistakes in communications. What kinds of mistakes? Imagine, for example, a host who unwittingly offers a roast beef sandwich to a Hindu guest at a party.

Emotion as an Evaluation

We are usually aware of our emotions, and we feel good or bad, scared, surprised, frustrated, or relieved at different times. Despite tremendous individual variations, there are some cultural norms and rules that regulate our **evaluations of emotions**—our individual assessment of emotions according to certain criteria or principles. There is evidence that people may carry cultural beliefs about which emotions are most significant or suitable to particular social roles or social settings (Ellsworth, 1994; Markus & Kitayama, 1994a; White, 1994). Shame of fear for our own "loss of face" is launched when other people are present (Lin & Yamaguchi, 2011). For example, some emotions could be considered inappropriate and therefore suppressed, such as feeling envious of your brother's or sister's success in landing a great job. Other emotions may be absolutely legitimate and even desirable, such as feeling joy after eating a slice of birthday cake. These evaluations are attached to the situation in which an emotional response is anticipated. Pay attention, for example, to how many people react to so-called ethnic jokes. They may laugh at a joke that ridicules members of a particular ethnic group if the joke teller is a representative of that ethnic group, for example, a Russian person who jokes about Russian people. However, if there is no ethnic "match" between the teller and the joke, or if the teller is not your good friend, you may feel disappointed or even angry.

Being Alone

Have you ever had some time on your own when nobody was near you? How did you feel? Did you enjoy the time of being alone, or did you long for someone to come and break the silence surrounding you? People perhaps would give different answers to these questions. "The way one feels about being alone depends on the circumstances," most of us would say. Researchers give more specific answers. In Western cultures, for example, being alone is likely to be regarded as an occasion of privacy that causes feelings of gratification or happiness (Mesquita et al., 1997, p. 271). On the contrary, for some Eskimo groups, the state of being alone is interpreted as a cause of sadness. Tahitians perceive loneliness as causing weird feelings and fear. For some Aboriginals of Australia, "sitting alone" prevents one from experiencing happiness (see Briggs, 1970; Levy, 1973; Myers, 1979). Do you find such a distinction between Western and non-Western experiences of being alone a bit simplistic? Do you think that all human beings consider a long stretch of isolation unpleasant? Some studies suggest that, cross-culturally, loneliness is supposed to be seen negatively (Bowbly, 1982). Could you think of examples (maybe personal ones) connecting long periods of "being alone" with positive emotions? Distinguish between conditions such as "to be alone" as a temporary situation and "loneliness" as a permanent state in one's life.

People of different cultures evaluate words that indicate particular emotions in similar ways (Frijda et al., 1995; Roseman, 1991). To illustrate, words that stand for anger are appraised similarly by Japanese, Indonesian, and Dutch subjects as indicating the experience of something unpleasant, as preventing one from reaching one's goals, or as standing for something that is unfair and for which something is responsible.

Stipek (1998) examined how people would evaluate some hypothetical situations in a comparative Chinese–U.S. study that involved 200 students from Zhejiang Province in China and the University of California at Los Angeles. The participants were given six written stories. Half the situations involved the participants themselves: as a person who is caught cheating, who is expecting admittance to a prestigious university, and who participates in a sports game. The other half of the cases suggested the involvement of significant others. The study showed that, in general, U.S. students tended to attribute pride to the cases of personal accomplishments. On the contrary, Chinese were more likely to experience pride for outcomes that benefited others. Moreover, compared with Americans, Chinese respondents reported stronger positive emotional reactions to other people's achievements. For example, Chinese participants claimed that they would feel more pride if their child was accepted into a prestigious university than if they

themselves were accepted into that same university. U.S. respondents claimed that they would feel equally proud in both circumstances.

The author of this study proposed these differences might best be explained by the emphasis on the collective nature of emotional experiences in China. The Chinese social orientation is based on the Confucian ideal that individuals should be mainly concerned about their place in the network of human relations. This is not a completely original explanation. As many scholars point out, Chinese people tend to identify themselves in the context of significant others (Triandis, 1990). The authors also state that the findings of their study examined earlier are consistent with the demands of prevailing communist ideology of the People's Republic of China. This ideology—as all other types of Communist ideologies—demands the primacy of the group over individual interests. Note that, considering the study was conducted back in the late 1990s, the pressure of the ideology has probably diminished in China these days.

The results of this study can be critically evaluated, in part, from another point of view. The Chinese system of higher education is quite different from the U.S. system because college admission is based on highly competitive written and oral examinations (some other countries have the same system of college entrance exams). Every year, a substantial number of students are not accepted, and many have to wait another year to try again. In the United States, a person who is not accepted to one school can apply to another school that accepts students with lower SAT scores and grade point averages. Therefore, it is expected that Chinese participants will rate these acceptance-to-college situations as more stressful than U.S. participants will. As to sporting events, the differences in emotional experience can also be traced to public attitudes about sports in general. Because the government sponsors sports activities, a loss or victory becomes a public issue. If you win, you make a contribution to your group, school, province, or your entire country.

We Are Expected to Feel in a Particular Way

Emotional experiences can certainly be influenced by social norms or popular expectations. **Feeling rules** refer to particular cultural rules about how to feel in particular situations. We often consider whether our laughter (an expression of joy) or head shaking (an expression of disappointment) might evoke either positive or negative reactions from others. Emotional experiences that contradict some basic social norms could be quite different from those emotions that are in line with the existing customs. Moreover, an emotion can be felt differently considering the context in which it is displayed or observed. A Chinese father may be deeply saddened by the fact that his son is leaving home for college. However, the father's emotion may also be suppressed by his unwillingness to show his weakness in front of other family members and neighbors. Joy may be experienced in a totally different way when it is accompanied by the loss of something or somebody significant.

There is evidence suggesting that individuals feel more certain about the meaning of events and give more certain emotional responses when there are clear norms about how to interpret these events and how to respond to them (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992).

Emotional complexity, or the co-occurrence of pleasant and unpleasant emotions simultaneously, has been found to be more prevalent in East Asian than in Western cultures (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2010). In the West, on the level of folk beliefs, pleasant and unpleasant emotions are typically conceptualized as discrete, short-lived, and oppositional phenomena that seldom co-occur. In East Asia, constructs such as happy –sad are viewed as mutually dependent in a state of balance. (See Figure 6.1.)

Sometimes, however, our anticipation of what people should or should not feel leads to errors in judgment. In one study, Tsai and Levenson (1997) compared 22 Chinese American and 20 European American dating couples, all of whom were college aged. The participants were asked about the emotion they experienced when they tried to resolve interpersonal conflicts. The study also included physiological measurements of the participating couples. A common expectation would be that Chinese Americans would place a greater emphasis on emotional moderation (see Chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter) than European Americans. However, the results of the study drew a different picture, there being neither a disparity in feelings nor differences in most measures of Chinese American's physiological responses. Perhaps the college campus environment created particular norms that reinforced certain types of feelings similar in the two ethnic groups. What other factors could have contributed to these similarities?

FIGURE 6.1   Emotions: Western versus Eastern Attributes

INTEGRATIVE
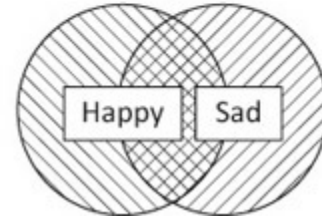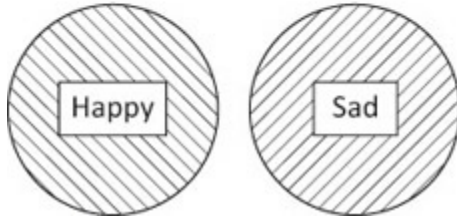(continuum between the two conceptual polarities)

WESTERN ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ **EASTERN**

emotions discrete   emotions mutually dependent
reason superior to emotion   co-existence of reason and emotion
avoid ambiguity, dissonance   embrace ambiguity, dissonance

dichotomy of pleasant versus   co-occurrence of pleasant versus
unpleasant emotions   unpleasant emotions

One important application of the study of feeling rules is a growing understanding that people can manage their emotional states. There is cross-cultural evidence, for example, that people can influence their level of happiness by learning how to feel positive. We will return to this subject later in the chapter when we discuss research on happiness.

How People Assess Emotional Experience

When people try to evaluate their emotional experience, they make assessments not only about the experience of the emotion along the dimensions of pleasure or displeasure but also along several other dimensions. For example, people try to determine whether their emotions (1) are caused by a familiar or unfamiliar event, (2) suggest the existence of an obstacle, (3) create a sense of being in charge or being out of control, (4) increase or decrease self-esteem, and (5) cause praise, reproach, or mockery by one's group (Ellsworth, 1994; Frijda, 1986; Matsumoto et al., 1988; Wallbott & Scherer, 1986). Expectedly, the frequency with which these dimensions are used in emotional assessment can vary. For example, those events that may have an impact on the individual's family or social group have greater importance in collectivist than in individualistic cultures. On the contrary, the events that may affect one's self-esteem, material success, and professional achievement become the primary emotional concerns of most people in individualistic cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1994b). Research also suggests that some of our emotions are evoked by cultural beliefs (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Rosaldo, 1980). For instance, a simple phrase such as "an independent Palestinian state" may have little significance for a welder in Michigan. The same phrase, however, will bear emotional meaning for millions of people living in the Middle East. For some, it will indicate pride and honor, and for others it will evoke frustration.

Appraisal of emotions may be linked to more complex psychological assessments such as guessing a person's cultural identity. For example, have you ever guessed a stranger's nationality by looking at his or her photograph? An individual's smiling face, apparently, contains some information that helps other individuals to make judgments about this person's ethnic group or nationality. Comparing pictures of Japanese subjects to Japanese Americans and Australian faces to American faces, people tend to guess nationality from photographs showing emotional rather than neutral facial expressions. In other words, if a person is smiling, people have a better chance to guess his or her nationality (Marsh et al., 2007). Socialization practices may also affect the process of appraisal (Williams et al., 2002). Markham and Wang (1996) compared samples of Chinese children in Beijing and Australian children in Sydney. The children were compared in terms of their ability to evaluate faces—both Chinese and Anglo—and in their ability to express their opinions about the emotions they judged. An initial hypothesis was that the wide range of resources available to Australian children, plus a diversity of social experiences that a child has in contemporary Australian society—including television and the Internet—would improve the child's ability to evaluate emotional expressions. However, the authors did not find any substantial differences in responses between the studied groups. Moreover, some Chinese children received better scores than their Australian counterparts. Why was this difference found? The authors explain this phenomenon by referring to the family norms in both societies. Typically,

Chinese parents demand a higher degree of discipline from children than Australian parents do. The more consistent Chinese socialization might reduce the range of evaluations applicable to emotional interpretations compared with the range of such interpretations in Australia. The authors also indicate that children from smaller families have been found to be superior in recognizing emotions. As you know, China's official demographic policy had for many years been "one family, one child." Therefore, the sample included people from small nuclear families.

Another study yielded comparable results. Jolley and colleagues (1998) studied how children in China and Great Britain described the mood of some picture characters. The study revealed that Chinese children were able to interpret emotions in pictures at an earlier age than the British children. The authors explain such a difference as a result of the two countries having different traditions of education. According to the Chinese art program for elementary schools—which is regulated by the central government—children are supposed to learn techniques of drawing, and teachers should concentrate on how to interpret exact messages conveyed by picture characters. In Great Britain, as in most Western countries, the art education curriculum may differ from school to school.

Expression of Emotion

Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow.

Swedish proverb

Worries go down better with soup than without.

Yiddish proverb

A human being should be aware how he laughs, for then he shows all his faults.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)—U.S. poet and philosopher

Eight-year-old Tom is looking at the scene of a car wreck with his eyes opened wide in a fixed stare. He is not hiding his fear. Anybody can read it on Tom's face. Tom's parents, who came from Taiwan, did not teach him how to express fear by turning his lips down. His U.S. schoolteachers did not train him to lower his eyebrows in case of a threat. He expresses his fear in the same way billions of people on earth might display it through their facial expression, posture, and gestures.

The rules of emotional expression—called **display rules**—are acquired primarily during socialization (Birdwhistell, 1970). Every culture has particular sanctions that support display rules or patterns of emotional expression considered appropriate within that culture (Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Ekman et al., 1983). Throughout the history of human civilization, one way of managing an emotion has been to learn how to control its manifestation. It is interesting that such display rules are primarily concerned with the restraining of emotional expressions (Ekman, 1982). Beginning presumably with the Chinese thinker Confucius (fifth century B.C.E.) and the Greek philosopher Plato (fourth century B.C.E.), emotion has been viewed as a disruptive force in human affairs. Plato asserted that reason must restrain the passions, which otherwise distort rational thinking. Aristotle and Democritus (fourth century B.C.E.) had a similar view, suggesting that emotions are located in the "lower," more primitive level of the soul, whereas thinking is located on the "higher," more advanced layers. Stoicism, an ancient Greek and Roman school of philosophy, held that human beings should be free from the power of passion in order to accept both the fortunes and misfortunes of life. Most major world religions, for example, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity, introduced the rules by which human beings could become independent of "destructive" emotional forces, such as envy, pride, vanity, and jealousy (Smith, 1991).

There are at least two criteria for assessing emotional expressions: frequency and intensity. For example, in the United States, many parents commonly say "I love you" to their children and vice versa. Contrarily, in the Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, such a verbal expression of affection between parents and siblings is considered too "strong" or hyperbolic and is therefore expressed in only a few critical life situations.

If emotions are cultural and social products, cultural norms and environmental factors should regulate the ways people express their emotions (Kitayama & Markus, 1995). Expectedly, surveys reveal a very low admission level of personal happiness and lower overall expression of one's satisfaction with life in countries going through economic and social crises. Russia and Ukraine, for instance, scored the lowest on individual expression of happiness among other European countries studied (Glad & Shiraev, 1999). Russia continued this pattern of scoring low on later surveys of happiness. Likewise, an ongoing social conflict may elicit and reinforce particular emotional responses. To illustrate, in several experimental situations, Israeli subjects responded more aggressively than their U.S. counterparts (Margalit & Mauger, 1985). When a social situation requires an individual to be "tough," one's display of anger may become an adaptive response to stressful situations of ethnic conflict.

There are some cultural variations in the display of sadness. Tahitians report feeling tired in response to losses (Levy, 1973). Crying among the Bedouins in the Egyptian desert (Abu-Lughod, 1986) is considered a sign of weakness, whereas in other Islamic cultures, such as the Turkish, it is considered an acceptable social response in particular circumstances. Display rules differ not only by culture but also by gender. Some evidence suggests that women probably express emotions more intensely and openly than men do. This is true for all emotions except anger. Women are generally more comfortable in displaying emotions such as love, happiness, shame, guilt, and sympathy, which foster affiliation and caretaking. Men, however, avoid these "soft" emotions that display, in their opinion, male vulnerabilities (Brody & Hall, 1993). For men raised in traditional cultures, a complex emotion of honor consists of being in control of their own family and of outperforming or impressing other men. Women's honor in these cultures consists of conforming to the rules of modesty and faithfulness. Likewise, shameful events have been reported to elicit different reactions in men and women: Men try to restore their honor by showing off through aggression or by retaliation; women will react to shameful events with submissive behavior and avoidance (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Blok, 1981). During the process of anticipatory socialization (see Chapter 8), boys and girls receive different sets of instructions about the display rules for various emotions. Indeed, children as young as three years old recognize that females are more likely to express fear, sadness, and happiness, and males are more likely to display anger (Birnbaum, 1983).

The presence or absence of other people may also have various impacts on emotional expressions. Ekman and Friesen (1975) asked Japanese and U.S. students to watch stressful films in isolation and in the presence of an experimenter. Without the subjects' awareness, the emotional expressions on their faces were recorded in both conditions. For the two samples, similar expressions were found in reaction to the same movie episodes when the subjects were alone. However, in the presence of the experimenter, the Japanese subjects showed far fewer negative expressions than did the Americans. Does this experiment partially explain why others often see the Japanese as unemotional?

In another study, researchers asked U.S. and Japanese students living in the United States to report on the frequency with which they experienced certain emotions in daily life (Markus & Kitayama, 1994b). The Americans reported an overwhelmingly greater frequency of experiencing positive than negative self-relevant feelings, but there was virtually no such effect among the Japanese. One can suggest that such differences could be caused by the Japanese subjects' unwillingness to reveal their emotions to strangers. There are also data suggesting that in Japan, for instance, the happiest people are those who experience primarily the "socially engaged emotions" of interdependence (such as friendly feelings). In the United States, on the contrary, the happiest people are generally those who experience the socially "disengaged" emotions of independence, such as pride (Matsumoto, 1994).

Researchers suggest that in the West, high levels of expressiveness are seen as signs of competence and likeability, in contrast to Asian cultures. Educators report that Asian American college students are less expressive than European Americans, which is probably based on Asian cultural traditions valuing emotional self-restraint and attentiveness to others (Butler et al., 2009; Kim & Markus, 2002).

However, these trends in expressive behavior were not supported by a follow-up study. The participants from both countries were asked to rate their anticipated degree of comfort in the expression of independent and interdependent emotions (Stephan et al., 1998). The results did not reveal substantial differences between the samples. In another study, Aune and Aune (1994) studied three groups of subjects, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, and European Americans; each group completed self-report questionnaires in which they evaluated both positive and negative emotions experienced and expressed in romantic relationships. The participating students were asked to think about the relationship they have with their partner and the emotions they felt and expressed. The participants were also asked to rank their emotions using a special scale. The researchers did not find substantial cultural differences in how negative emotions are experienced and expressed in romantic relationships. Low scores on anger expression among the U.S. participants were perhaps due to substantial societal pressure to suppress the expression of negative emotions in daily settings.

How can we interpret the results of these studies? Can we say, then, that collectivism and individualism have little impact on how people feel and communicate their emotions? We shouldn't rush to such a categorical judgment. Do not forget that the subjects in these studies were people of "mixed" cultural backgrounds: They were born in the Philippines and Japan and were studying in the United States. Perhaps in the contemporary world, people learn from other cultures and begin to understand many issues and behaviors that have not been available to them prior to the present era of satellite television and the Internet. Japanese and American society are more interconnected today than they were ten years ago. For instance, if a Japanese woman from a traditional family is shown a photograph of a nude beach, this could cause a reaction of extreme shame. However, this woman can travel abroad, to Europe or Brazil, for example, and learn more about other cultures and their practices related to

nakedness. Her experience may not change her negative opinion about public nudity; however, her emotional response will perhaps change.

Exercise 6.1

Embarrassment is regarded as a form of social anxiety, an unpleasant emotion excited by the realization of impropriety in one's behavior. A study of five European cultures (Greece, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, and Germany) showed that blushing and increased temperature, plus smiling and grinning, were reported consistently across cultures (Edelman et al., 1989). There are some other observations of embarrassment, such as sticking out one's tongue, as people in the Indian Orissa culture do (Menon & Shweder, 1994). Ask at least ten people, preferably from various cultural backgrounds, to imagine that they encounter a very embarrassing situation. How would they react in terms of facial expression and body language? Ask a person to imagine a very embarrassing situation in which the person is hypothetically involved. Ask this person to describe this situation. Then ask him or her to "play" the role of the embarrassed person, using facial expressions, gestures, etc. Immediately write down what you see or record a video on your phone with the person's consent. What did you observe? Did the person touch his or her face? Did they scratch their head, wrinkle their nose, or stick out their tongue? Or did they smile and turn away? Repeat this procedure with at least one other person. Which reactions were common in your observations, and which were not? Did you notice similarities and/or differences in these individuals' reactions? Describe your observations.

The best answer to anger is silence.

German proverb

Emotion and Inclination to Act

Cross-culturally, the influence of emotions can cause us to avoid and reject some people, help and accept others, dominate or submit to some, and respect or despise others (Frijda, 1986; Frijda et al., 1995).

Some cross-cultural studies show similarities regarding action readiness evoked by certain emotions. In the extensive cross-national study cited earlier (Scherer & Wallbott, 1994), subjects were asked whether their emotional experience had led them to move toward, move away from, or move against the object of emotion. Significant cross-cultural similarities were found. Joy caused more approach behaviors, anger elicited more aggressive behaviors, and withdrawal was the most common reaction to sadness, disgust, shame, and guilt.

Some cultural differences are found in how emotions affect behavioral readiness. In a comparative study of Japanese, Dutch, and Indonesian subjects, an impulse toward a hostile behavior, as a response to anger, was more common for the Dutch group. A more "internal" impulse was common in the Indonesian and Japanese groups. The Japanese group more often reported feelings of helplessness and urges to protect themselves. They also expressed a wish to depend on someone else and a feeling of apathy at a higher level than participating Dutch and Indonesian subjects (Frijda et al., 1995). These results partly support findings obtained in other studies that suggest that personal dependence on intimate others as well as acceptance by others are significant components of emotional experience in Japan (Lebra, 1983; Markus & Kitayama, 1994b).

An emphasis on the mastery of one's environment is more typical of highly technologically developed societies. Other cultures emphasize harmony and natural order. Therefore, active coping styles can be preferable in some cultures but not in others (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). One of the lessons we can learn is that coping with stress is relative to its cultural context. More important, some stress-coping therapeutic strategies that have been proven successful in one culture may not work well in other cultures.

Emotion and Judgment

The tongue of a wise man lays behind his heart.

Ali ibn-abi-Talib (600−661)—fourth caliph of Muslims

In the famous classical American TV series *Star Trek*, one of the main characters, Mr. Spock, is a half-human, half-alien being who is naturally free from any emotions. His behavior is directed by pure logic. He is, of course, a fictional character, a product of creative imagination that often has little to do with real-life experiences. In reality, emotions and thought are closely linked. Emotions can influence the way people make judgments and predictions (Mayer et al., 1992). Vice versa, people's thoughts and beliefs influence their emotions. There is ample evidence that emotional states may shape cognitive processing in different ways. People who are depressed, for example, tend to underestimate the probability of their own success and overestimate the probability of bad events occurring in the future (Beck, 1991). People who experience positive affect differ from those who experience negative affect. The former have better memory and use different strategies for problem solving and categorization (Clore et al., 1994). Anger has been found to lead to more personal accusations, whereas sadness leads to a tendency to understand negative circumstances as more due to fate, chance, or unluckiness (Keltner et al., 1993).

Emotions lead to belief changes: Certain emotional appraisals can cause perceptual generalizations and stereotypes. For example, an individual's negative experience with and emotional feeling toward a representative of a particular ethnic group can cause prejudice toward all members of that group. There was a significant difference found between Japanese and U.S. subjects in their attribution of anger. Apparently, the Japanese subjects were comparatively more reluctant to identify anger as being caused by other people than the Americans (Matsumoto et al., 1988; Scherer et al., 1988). Japan is a collectivist culture, and perhaps societal interdependency is a factor that makes the inclusion of anger in cognitive attributions, which can be a potentially destructive force, difficult. Physical violence may be interpreted in accordance with individual beliefs. Researchers have found that prisoner activists with particularly strong political or religious convictions show the most emotional resilience to torture compared to those who do not hold such beliefs (Basoglu et al., 1994).

When Emotions Signal a Challenge: Cross-Cultural Research on Stress and Anxiety

The realization of a challenge to a person's capacity to adapt to inner and outer demands is called **stress**. This definition points to two important aspects of stress: (1) It is a psychobiological process, and (2) it entails a transaction between people and their environments (Lazarus, 1993). If the challenge does not decrease, the organism remains constantly aroused, and the body continues to divert its resources to respond to the demands (Cannon, 1932). One of the most stressful events any individual can experience is the death of a family member or close friend. Daily hassles—from the absence of food to a lack of free time—can also be sources of stress. Catastrophes and disasters such as earthquakes, floods, violence, and other traumatic events affect millions of people around the world. Cross-culturally, many survivors of such traumatic events continue to experience recurrent nightmares and difficulties in relationships and are prone to anxiety and depression (Allodi, 1991; Herman, 1992; Koopman, 1997; Nadler & Ben-Shushan, 1989).

The actual amount of stress and anxiety is difficult to measure because people have different coping strategies and evaluate stress using dissimilar criteria. The ways people evaluate stress, as well as the situations they consider stressful, are culturally determined, but they also may depend on individual traits (Lin & Peterson, 1990). Poor living conditions, political instability, violence, and many other factors can also contribute to people's evaluations. Even educational systems may have an impact on how students experience stress. For example, test anxiety has repeatedly shown as being lower in the United States than in other countries, such as Brazil, South Africa, and Egypt (El Zahhar & Hocevar, 1991; Guida & Ludlow, 1989).

Studying stress in African Americans, Jenkins (1995) suggested that blacks have developed a special emotional style of behavioral response that reflects the cultural value placed on the individual's ability to manage stressful life events. In African American culture, from the author's view, emphasis is placed on the active managing of difficult situations without displaying nervous tension. Thus, a difference between European Americans and African Americans may be found in their emotional assessments of reality. In blacks, their emotionality is displayed more often than it is in whites. This type of African American emotional response may be passed on from generation to generation as a cultural norm.

Self-critical, pessimistic evaluation of one's own life may be viewed as a cultural norm in other ethnic groups. For instance, higher levels—in comparison to other groups—of negative emotions, including anxiety and sadness, were measured in elderly Russian immigrants living in the United States (Consedine & Magai, 2002). Although most immigrant groups experience stress and a variety of negative emotions caused by the difficult process of adjustment to a new culture, Russian immigrants as a group typically

report more anxiety and pessimism. This difference may be explained by a variety of reasons, including the fact that the majority of Russian immigrants are highly educated and most of them have to lower their aspirations and hopes for quick and effortless success in the United States (Kliger, 2002).

Researchers also found that Asians consistently score higher than European Americans on measures of emotional distress, including anxiety, sadness, and fear of negative evaluation (Norasakkunkit & Kalick, 2002). The difference may be explained by cultural norms as well. From the Western perspective, the absence of anxiety in most social situations is seen as a desirable characteristic associated with positive mental health and healthy interpersonal functioning. However, from an Asian perspective, a certain level of anxiety about social situations is expected and can even be desirable (Okazaki et al., 2002). While following this social expectation, many individuals develop a particular sensitivity to their own behavior and to other people's negative appraisals.

When Emotion Hurts: Cross-Cultural Studies of Anger

Cross-culturally, **anger**—an emotion aroused by one's perception of being interfered with or threatened and/or overt or covert activities of attack or offense—is seen as an interpersonal emotion because its experience usually involves some norm violation committed by other people. There are several universal anger-evoking events. They include problems in relationships, injustice, interaction with strangers, inconvenience, achievement, bad news, death, and several separation-related issues (Averill, 1982; Mauro et al., 1992; Wallbott & Scherer, 1986).

However, when a person speaking in a foreign language says, "I am angry," one should be careful not to rush to judgment because most human languages have several labels for anger (Klineberg, 1938; Tanaka-Matsumi, 1995). As an example, it is interesting to compare "anger," as an English word, and, for instance, "song" in the Ifaluk (Pacific region) language. Both of these words refer to emotions involving the appraisal of harm from another person. However, they can differ in the kind of action they bring about. *Anger* often leads to the tendency to return the other person's harm. *Song*, however, produces action that aims to alter the behavior of the offending person. Such action may include, of course, aggressive behaviors, but it may also consist of avoidant behavioral reactions, such as refusing to eat and attempted suicide (Lutz, 1988).

People get angry and interpret this emotion according to the norms of the culture in which they live. For instance, Japanese cultural traditions, as exemplified by the opening vignette in this chapter, strongly inhibit the public display of private emotions, particularly negative ones. Japanese culture emphasizes homogeneity and conformity as necessary conditions for the maintenance of their society's network of interdependence (Johnson, 1993). In collectivist cultures, anger is seen as an emotion of disengagement from society, a threat to its integrity (Markus & Kitayama, 1994b), and therefore is generally discouraged. Individualistic societies, such as the United States, are more open to displays of anger, since people's right to independence and self-expression are given greater valence.

Just as courage imperils life, fear protects it.

<div align="right">Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519)—Italian artist and thinker</div>

Building Positive Emotions: Cross-Cultural Studies of Happiness

Cross-cultural psychology critically examines various views of happiness that have existed in different cultures and in different academic traditions for centuries. According to the *materialist* view, an individual can become happy through the accumulation of material wealth, such as money. Happiness also involves the possession of power and high social status. Things that make an individual's life more comfortable—a cozy home, an impressive savings account, a new car, or the latest version of a smartphone—are important "triggers" of happiness. The higher the social status of an individual, the more power she or he has, and thus status and power translate into happiness. Most of us are aware that, although material possessions can make a person happy, this emotional state does not last long. Studies show that happiness and wealth (economic success) are not necessarily correlated (Harari, 2014). In the United Kingdom, for instance, various indicators of happiness haven't changed much for the past four decades and through difficult economic periods. Overall, people in Britain score higher on happiness than people in most other countries (Suh et al., 2008). The *progressive* view adds an important element to the recipe for happiness, social care. Supporters of this view argue that if every individual is guaranteed and given basic social services—including health care, affordable housing, a decent salary, paid vacations, and free tuition, to name a few—then there will be practically no external factors that contribute to this individual's unnecessary suffering. In other words, if one's basic needs are secured, the individual ought to be happy. Indeed, people in Denmark or Finland, the Scandinavian countries with the most developed social welfare system, receive very high scores on the measures of happiness. Other studies indicate, to the contrary, that the amount of social welfare does not necessarily affect people's happiness. For example, although Iceland spends significantly less on social welfare than Sweden, subjects had higher ratings of happiness in Iceland than in Sweden (Suh et al., 2008). Many well-known psychologists in the past, such as Freud, expressed skepticism in relation to the idea that social reforms alone make people happy (Menand, 2014).

The *situational* view maintains that happiness is not necessarily about material possessions or social services. Rather, the cumulative life situation in which individuals find themselves determine how happy they are (Lyubomirsky, 2007). The presence or absence of major tragedies in one's life, the quality of an individual's relationships (especially within the family), and access to opportunities are some such factors that contribute to happiness. Yet other psychologists point out, even under favorable conditions, individuals have a happiness-defying tendency to compare themselves with others.

The *perception-comparative* view suggests that happiness is a state of mind based on appraisals and comparisons. An individual who is doing better than others tends to

feel better about life. Yet what if others do better than us? Comparisons, unfortunately, often lead to envy: "I wish you did not have it," we may say about others who have more than us (Fiske, 2010). Envy leads to scorn and contributes to unhappiness. Studies also show that in individualistic cultures, people rely on their emotions when they assess their own happiness. In predominantly collectivist cultures, people rely on social cues or other people's responses in making this judgment (Suh et al., 2008). In individualistic and collectivistic cultures alike, other people influence our evaluation of personal happiness.

The *expectation* view refers to the goals that the individual had in the past and the degree to which a person has accomplished these goals. Happiness depends less on material conditions or other's feedback and more on what we expect from our lives. If your experiences today match or exceed your expectations yesterday, then you feel happy. Yet our expectations change. When life is getting better, expectations tend to increase, thus increasing our dissatisfaction. The better the outcomes we expect, the less happy we become if these expectations are not met.

The *biological* view suggests that whether people are happy or less happy primarily depends on their genetic and biological makeup. The brain and the body are mainly responsible for pleasant sensations, and some people are predisposed to have more of such sensations than others. Evolutionary psychology maintains that happiness is a temporary state that organisms try to achieve. Accordingly, it is quite normal for individuals to remain mostly dissatisfied, since in the process of survival they are always striving to achieve more (Harari, 2014). In sum, unhappiness is biologically predetermined, yet some individuals could be happier than others due to their genetic makeup.

The *spiritual* view underlines the importance of inner factors and emphasizes the search for the higher power within the individual. Philosophers, religious scholars, pundits, and social scientists in many cultures and regions have discussed the ephemeral nature of our sensations and emotions. Buddhist and Hindu teachings, as well as philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome and of Central Asia and China, for example, consistently make references to an individual becoming and being happy after turning to inner strengths. Pleasant sensations coming from the body come and go. Yesterday's source of happiness may become today's source of pain. People we love may depart, and so on. Therefore, the path to happiness lies in circumscribing the influence of the external world of sensation and cultivating inner wisdom and the introspective mind (Harari, 2014).

Psychologists working within the *humanistic* perspective embrace other views on happiness and suggest their own version of how people become and remain happy. There are differences within the humanist tradition, but the most significant similarities can be summarized as follows.

It is quite possible that some individuals are born with a propensity to experience certain emotional states. There are individuals who tend to be happy or sad due to their hormones or the functioning of their brain and the nervous system. It is also possible that material possessions, social protection, and comparisons to other people can bring

joy to some individuals. Yet joy, a passing emotion, is not necessarily the same as the *state* of happiness. Happiness is a state of mind that individuals can control. Stated differently, happiness can be learned and achieved.

The second core idea of the humanistic perspective refers to social and interpersonal engagement. Contrary to some religious teachings that encourage self-reflection coupled with detachment and self-isolation, the humanistic perspective encourages interpersonal action (help!), critical thinking (think!), and engagement in social affairs (engage!). The humanist perspective is rooted in the modern view that scientific knowledge, reasoning, rationality, empiricism, and skepticism have profoundly changed the way individuals perceive morality, justice, and happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Shermer, 2015). The findings indicate, for example, that happy, productive individuals are not significantly happier than others but rather are more often involved in complex activities that, in turn, make them feel better about themselves and increase their self-esteem (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

The third core idea uniting humanists' concerns positive feedback. We, as individuals, seek positive feedback about ourselves, and that feedback should be consistent. There is nothing wrong with encouragement and praise. People often turn to Barnum-like horoscopes for this reason: to receive validation. As in a well-wishing tarot reading, the happier the assessment, the more likely we are to believe it, and the more likely we are to feel happy (Kolodziejski, 2014). In a chain reaction, positive assessments encourage optimism, optimism stimulates joy, and joy adds to happiness.

Self-growth, as already described, is one of several applications of the humanistic perspective's approach to personality. Self-growth is difficult to achieve without dedication to and perseverance in the pursuit of the goals individuals set for themselves. And individuals can achieve happiness through self-growth.

Cross-cultural psychology research supports ancient philosophies that happiness is often based on our own ability to stay positive. Studies give support for the Buddhist view that many people feel unhappy because they choose the wrong goals in life and mistakenly conclude that a desirable job, money, social success, and material possessions will make them happy (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Happiness may be enhanced by these material items, but it is unlikely to last long. Lasting happiness is an emotional state initiated and sustained by an individual. For example, Davidson and colleagues (2003) found that some meditation practices were associated with significantly greater activity in the left prefrontal cortex of the brain, which is associated with positive emotion. Happiness is also a factor of longevity and health. Angela Bryan experimentally demonstrated that optimism is an important factor contributing to healthy habits (Bryan et al., 2004). People who believe they will become healthier tend to achieve more positive results compared to bitter pessimists. David Myers has found evidence in support of the positive impact of our spiritual beliefs on good health (Myers, 2008). Moreover, Sonja Lyubomirsky (2007) has demonstrated, besides biological factors and luck affecting our well-being, people have the capacity to manage their happiness themselves. In short, both Western psychology and Buddhism exemplify that lasting happiness is obtained

through psychological training as opposed to stimulus-driven pleasures (Wallace *&* Shapiro, 2006).

Exercise 6.2

Tietelbaum and Geiselman (1997) examined cross-race recognition for white and black faces with participants from four racial and ethnic groups: whites, blacks, Latinos, and Asians. The researchers found that same-race identifications tend to be more accurate than cross-race assessments. In other words, people tend to evaluate pictorial emotions and moods more accurately when the pictures of the people are of the same group than when the pictures are of people from other social groups. The differences in accuracy were statistically significant in the range of 10–15 percent. It was also shown that a pleasant mood increased the accuracy of facial recognition within same ethnic group's participants. The study also found Latino and Asian participants had less difficulty recognizing emotions on white faces than on black faces.

Question: The authors believe that these results can have implications for everyday life situations. Can you think of some of these implications?

Chapter Summary

- Classic theories of emotion provide little empirical evidence of cultural influences on emotional experiences. Trying to clarify the impact of the cultural factor in human emotions, cross-cultural psychologists have pursued at least two theoretical models. According to one, human emotions are universal, and culture has a limited impact on them. The other view represents an assumption about the cultural origin and cultural specificity of emotion. Supporters of the universality of human emotion argue that similar emotions exist in all cultures and all emotions have similar underlying physiological mechanisms.

- Compelling arguments about similarities in human emotion arrive from numerous studies on consistent cross-cultural similarities in emotion recognition and in the way people name emotions across different cultures and languages. Supporters of cultural specificity of emotion suggest that concrete emotional realities vary significantly from culture to culture. Differences in the expression of emotional behavior, linguistic variety in the labeling of emotions, and distinct socialization practices are all taken as evidence for the culture-specific origin of human emotions. According to this view, people learn how to feel and interpret other people's affects. This learning of emotional experience is related to the culture from which it originates.

- Emotions can be seen as similar or different because we often perceive, analyze, and think about them from different points of view. If we limit our analysis of human emotion to the question of whether an emotion is expected to occur, we will find many cross-cultural similarities among human feelings. We have to pay special attention to the particular level of abstraction on which emotions are described. Moreover, any emotion may be culturally similar or cross-culturally different, depending on the level of generalization chosen for description.

- Perhaps many similarities in emotions are likely to be found when they are described at a high level of generality or abstraction. An emphasis on one's observations of specific emotional characteristics would perhaps highlight cultural differences.

- It is useful to understand emotion as a multicomponential process. It generally includes the following components: preceding event, physiological response, assessment, expressive behavior, and change in some element of cognitive functioning. Cross-culturally, specific types of elicitors mark basic emotions. Despite tremendous individual variations, some cultural norms and conditions regulate emotional experience. Some cultural differences may still be found in the different degrees to which certain emotional responses are tolerated or valued. Human emotional expression is generally acquired in the process of socialization. Cultural differences may result in differences in emotion-related

329

cognitive processes. The prevalence of one particular emotion or of certain ways of experiencing an emotion can affect people's specific attitudes, beliefs, and even views on life. For example, disgust is associated with cultural requirements to reject certain foods or avoid particular situations related to eating. Once accepted, these requirements are supported by a powerful emotion and thus become less subject to temptation or modification.

- Human beings have the potential to experience the same basic emotions. However, our cultural differences and subsequent socialization practices encourage us to experience particular emotions and suppress others and to be emotionally involved in particular issues to which other people remain indifferent. Therefore, psychologists should gain knowledge about cultural norms, display rules, and specific and universal antecedents of various emotions and examine them within particular cultural contexts.

Key Terms

Anger: Emotion of displeasure aroused by a threat, whether overt (explicit) or covert (hidden), a wrongdoing, an attack, or an offense.

Display Rules: Patterns of emotional expression considered appropriate within a particular culture, age, or social group.

Emotion: An evaluative response (a positive or negative feeling) that typically includes some combination of physiological arousal, subjective experience, and behavioral or emotional expression.

Emotion Recognition: The process of identification, description, and explanation of an emotional expression.

Evaluations of Emotions: An individual assessment of emotions according to certain criteria or principles.

Feeling Rules: Particular cultural rules about how to feel in particular situations.

Preceding Events: The environmental circumstances and individual reactions that have a strong impact on particular emotional experiences.

Stress: Perception of a continuous challenge to a person's capacity to adapt to inner and outer demands.