Sense, Culture, and Sensibility

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A genuine appreciation of the intricate relations between emotion and culture must involve consideration both of similarities across cultures and of cultural differences. By now, it should be abundantly clear that some aspects of emotion are very general across cultures, and possibly universal, and that people's emotional lives are profoundly influenced by the culture to which they belong. It seems to me that the interesting questions begin with the assumption that nearly all emotional experiences, everywhere, reflect both human nature and cultural context. The questions are these: "What is shared?", "*How* do cultures shape emo-

tional experiences, expression, behavior, understanding?", "How do people go about the difficult task of understanding the feelings of someone from a different culture, and in what ways are they likely to succeed or fail?"

In some ways, the statement that emotional experience reflects both nature and culture seems like a shallow platitude; nonetheless, very little research has been informed by this assumption. Researchers have been far more likely to take sides and to argue that emotions are basically innate and universal or that emotions are basically constructed by one's culture. In part, this tendency toward oversimplification reflects disciplinary preferences, with psychologists and biologists tending to overlook the cultural differences that anthropologists emphasize, whereas the anthropologists' interest in documenting human variability leads them to overlook similarities (cf. Lutz & White, 1986). In part, it reflects the pendulum swings of intellectual trends and the tendency for each new generation of scholars to discredit the ideas of their parents, often by rediscovering the forgotten ideas of their grandparents.

When I began my study of emotion in the 1960s, the prevalent point of view in psychology was that, aside from a general undifferentiated physiological arousal, there were no emotional universals; emotional experience was socially or culturally constructed in particular contexts (Birdwhistell, 1970; LaBarre, 1947; Lindsley, 1951; Schachter & Singer, 1962). As a graduate student, I worked in Paul Ekman's lab on studies of the cross-cultural recognizability of certain facial expressions of emotion (Ekman, Friesen, & Ellsworth, 1972). From my point of view, this research was done partly in an attempt to temper the excesses of the dominant one-sided cultural relativism of the time; I saw myself as a revolutionary.

The revolution was largely successful. The old textbook demonstrations of the meaninglessness of facial expressions were eventually replaced by reproductions of the photographs used by Ekman, Sorenson, and Friesen (1969) in their research on "pan-cultural" facial expressions. Now, a new generation of psychologists (e.g., Fridlund, 1991; Russell, in press), in rebellion against the establishment point of view that many aspects of emotional experience are universal, is attempting to correct

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our oversimplifications by returning to cultural relativism under the postmodern rubric of *social constructionism*. If this means a return to the view that there are no similarities across cultures, it will be a regrettable distraction from the ever-neglected interesting questions, as well as a distortion of the evidence. Recently, Mesquita and Frijda (1992) conducted a comprehensive review and analysis of cross-cultural research on emotion and, finding abundant evidence for both culturally specific and universal emotional processes, concluded that "global statements about cross-cultural universality of emotion, or about their cultural determination, are inappropriate" (p. 198). In an exhaustive examination of one particular domain of emotional phenomena, humiliation, Miller (1993) concluded that "different cultures share more than the social constructionist orthodoxy would allow, but ... we surely share a lot less than the constraining and complacent univeralism of the positivist sciences unquestioningly assumes" (p. 196).

It makes sense that there should be similarities across cultures. Human beings belong to the same species; our brains, our bodies, our autonomic nervous systems, our hormones, and our sense organs are similarly constructed, and our consciousness is shaped by the constraints and opportunities that they provide. At a general level, human environments also resemble each other; they include novelty, hazard, opportunity, attack, gratification, and loss, which people must perceive with some accuracy and respond to appropriately. These are the kinds of events that generate emotion, and many scholars believe that the primary function of emotion is to move the organism to appropriate action in circumstances consequential for its well-being (e.g., Arnold, 1960; Lazarus, 1968; Plutchik, 1980; Scherer, 1984, and many others).

It makes sense that there should be differences across cultures. Cultures differ in their definitions of novelty, hazard, opportunity, attack, gratification, and loss, and in their definitions of appropriate responses. They differ in their definitions of significant events and in their beliefs about the causes of significant events, and these differences affect their emotional responses. Illness, for example, may be seen as caused by germs, God, chance, witchcraft, or one's own moral failure, and a person's emotional response to illness will reflect these beliefs. Finally, cultures

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differ in their beliefs about the meaning of emotional experiences, expressions, and behaviors.

Thus, it is obviously fatuous to assume that emotional responses to significant events are the same the world over, to mindlessly invoke "human nature" or "inclusive fitness" to explain and homogenize emotional experience, to assume and privilege sameness. It is no better to assume that the apparent similarity of emotional events in different cultures, such as the smiles of a mother and child when they are reunited, is necessarily misleading, to mindlessly invoke "culturally constructed meanings" to explain and fragment emotional experience, to assume and privilege difference. What is needed is a framework that allows consideration of the general and the particular at the same time. In this chapter, I suggest the appraisal perspective as one possible framework, and I explore some of the implications of the application of this perspective to questions about the role of culture in emotion.

Appraisal Theories

In the 1980s, a number of psychologists, working independently, came up with rather similar theories about cognition and emotion (Frijda, 1986; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Stein & Levine, 1989; Weiner, 1985). None of these theories were particularly focused on cross-cultural issues. The basic premise is simple and commonsensical: It is that emotions result from the way in which people interpret or appraise their environment and, consequently, that differences in emotions result from differences in the way people interpret or appraise their environment. Sorrow is different from anger because people who feel sad see their situation, and themselves in relation to their situation, differently from people who feel angry. Two people observing the same situation may feel very differently if they interpret the situation differently.

Without further specification, this proposition does not lead to much. But these researchers have tried to provide further specification by defining the kinds of appraisals that are fundamental in generating and differentiating emotions, and to describe the combinations of appraisals

that correspond to emotions such as joy, fear, sorrow, and other commonly studied emotions. Most of these theories propose a small number of dimensions of appraisal (more than 2 but typically fewer than 10) that account for major differences among emotions, and there is now a good deal of evidence that emotions such as joy, fear, and sorrow are characterized by different patterns of appraisals (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Scherer, 1988). For example, in our initial study of appraisals, Craig Smith and I (1985) found that each of 13 different emotions has a distinctive pattern of appraisals that reliably differentiates it from the others. Table 1 gives examples of the appraisal dimensions that have commonly been found to be most important. It is illustrative only. Different theorists propose slightly different lists; nonetheless, there is an encouraging consensus at the core.

As an example of the differentiation of emotions by means of appraisal dimensions, consider fear, anger, sorrow, and guilt. They are all unpleasant, but they differ on other dimensions. In our research, fear is

TABLE 1

Examples of Proposed Appraisal Dimensions

Dimension	Smith and Ellsworth (1985)	Scherer (1984)	Frijda (1986)	Ortony et al. (1988)
Attention/Novelty	X	X	X	X
Pleasantness/Valence	X	X	X	X
Certainty	X	X	X	X (likelihood)
Effort/Obstacle	X	X	X (open/closed)	X
Control/Coping potential	X	X	X	X
Agency	X	X (secondary dimension)	X	X
Norm/Self-compatibility		X	X (value) plus others	plus others

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associated with moderately high levels of anticipated effort and very high levels of uncertainty; anger is associated with similarly high effort but much more certainty, and with a very strong perception that some other human being is responsible for one's adversity; sorrow is associated with a somewhat lower anticipated effort, lower attention, an intermediate level of certainty, and a very strong perception that one's misfortune is the result of circumstances beyond anyone's control. Guilt resembles sadness in anticipated effort and relative lack of attention, and anger in relatively high certainty, but it was the only negative emotion to be characterized by high levels of self-responsibility. Appraisal theories may be seen as an elaboration of Schachter and Singer's (1962) claim that differences in emotions are due to differences in the perceiver's interpretation of the environment. They go beyond Schachter and Singer in that they attempt to define the kinds of interpretations that contribute most fundamentally to emotional differentiation.

Appraisal theories are particularly compatible with a view of emotions as processes that develop in time, because the component appraisals of an emotional experience need not be simultaneous. In many instances, they cannot be simultaneous because the situation is not immediately clear to the perceiver; as new information is incorporated, the emotional experience changes. An infinity of emotional states and nuances is possible, and steady states are rare or possibly nonexistent.

Most appraisal theories, then, are fundamentally different in their assumptions and implications from categorical theories, which propose a limited number of discrete, innate, universal emotions. The most common of these hypothesized "basic emotions" are fear, sadness, happiness, and anger; beyond these, each theorist has a slightly different list (Ekman, 1972; Izard, 1971; Tomkins, 1962, 1963). In the strongest statements of this point of view, these basic emotions are described as hardwired, holistic neural programs, built into the species, which cannot be broken down into meaningful components and which cannot be modified except by the person's subsequent learned response to the firing of the program.[1]

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[1] A theory that combines the idea of appraisals as components of emotions with the idea of basic, categorically distinct emotions is that of Roseman (1984). In his theory, appraisals are dichotomous rather than continuous judgments and the combined outcomes of these judgments constitute the basic emotion categories.

Categorical models, then, imply the existence of several culturally universal emotions. Given that the program fires in the same way always and everywhere, the major mechanism available to the categorical theorist to account for cross-cultural differences in emotion is the *display rule* (Ekman, 1972).[2] Although the basic emotions are universal, cultures differ in their beliefs about the meaning of these emotions and about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of emotional expressions and emotional behaviors in different social contexts. It is not only a matter of visible behaviors; cultures also differ in their beliefs about the appropriateness of even feeling certain emotions in certain contexts. Among the Utku Eskimos, feelings of anger are strongly condemned (Briggs, 1970), but among certain Arab groups, a man's failure to respond with anger is seen as dishonorable (Abu-Lughod, 1986). In any case, in theories that consider basic emotions to be innate and universal, the regulation of emotion is the major mechanism invoked to explain cultural differences.

There can be no doubt that emotional regulation is an extremely important source of cultural variation. Emotions are socially significant events, often potentially disruptive, and it is not surprising that most cultures have developed fairly complex theories about desirable and undesirable feelings and displays, and more-or-less elaborate sets of prescriptions and restrictions in the emotional domain. The socialization of emotions is one of the major tasks in raising children to be culturally acceptable adults.

Appraisal theories suggest an additional source of cultural differences, one that provides some specification of cultural variation in the elicitation of emotions, and that also provides a framework for understanding culturally general emotional phenomena without postulating the existence of basic universal emotions. The hypothesis is that the dimensions of appraisal identified in studies of Westerners are culturally general, that similar patterns of appraisal will result in similar emotions across cultures. Cultural differences in emotion are a result of cultural differences in the perception and interpretation of events: Cultures differ in

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[2] Categorical theorists also agree that there can be widespread cultural variation in the kinds of event that elicit different emotions, but there is very little theory on the processes or mechanisms by which an elicitor becomes attached to one of the neural programs.

the kinds of events that attract attention; arouse immediate pleasant or unpleasant feelings; are seen as one's own fault, or someone else's, or no one's; or are perceived as obstacles. If people from two different cultures have different appraisals of an event, they will also feel different emotions. But if they appraise an event (the "same" kind or a "different" kind of event) in the same way—for example, as bad, irreparable, and produced by uncontrollable circumstances—people from both cultures will feel a similar emotion: in this case, sorrow.

Evidence is accumulating that suggests that several dimensions of emotional appraisal are consistent across cultures ([Gehm & Scherer, 1988] 27 countries, mostly European; [Matsumoto, Kudoh, Scherer, & Wallbott, 1988] Japan and the United States; [Mauro, Sato, & Tucker, 1992] the United States, Japan, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China; [Frijda & Mesquita, chapter 3, this volume] Dutch, Surinamese, and Turks in the Netherlands; and [Roseman, Rettek, Dhawan, Naidu, & Thapa, 1991] the United States and India). Attention to changing conditions; a sense of pleasure or distaste; a sense of uncertainty (or certainty); the perception of an obstacle; the sense of being in control or out of control; the attribution of agency; a sense of the likely praise, censure, or ridicule of one's group; and an ultimate judgment of the value or fitness of what has happened—these turn up with remarkable consistency in the emotional worlds of different cultures (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992).

Attention/Novelty

Probably the simplest and most inevitable appraisal is that of novelty, of a change in the environment (or, occasionally, in one's stream of consciousness) that deflects one's attention. This is the appraisal that commonly initiates the emotion process. LeDoux (1987) found that novel events trigger an identifiable neural circuit, activating something like a state of readiness for emotion, and, on many grounds, we would expect this activation to be universal. This initial, orienting attentional response probably corresponds to the posterior attention network described by Posner (Posner & Peterson, 1990; Posner & Rothbart, 1991). Arousal of this network does not necessarily lead to emotion. Often, a novel stim-

ulus—an odd noise, a faint tickling sensation—is easily explained: a helicopter flew over, a dog's tail brushed your skin under the table. The person's attention returns to the conversation, and no particular emotion is aroused. Although such a change in attention is not a sufficient condition for emotion, it is possible that it is a necessary one. Emotion without such an attentional focus may correspond to what we typically call *mood*.

The stimulus that attracts attention need not be an external event; it can be the intrusion of a thought ("Did I turn off the stove?") or a memory (in reading a research report on sexual abuse, a scientist recalls an episode from her own past). Although some researchers define emotion-eliciting events as those that have significance for a person's present well-being (Lazarus, 1968), it is plausible that similar processes operate for memories of events that affected one's well-being in the past, for events that suggest previously unconsidered eventualities in one's future, or even for fictional events that trigger the emotion system before a woman can coolly remind herself that the cinematic killer is only an image on the screen.

It seems likely, then, that the basic orienting response—the uncontrollable kindling of attention by novel stimuli—is general across cultures. Of course, what is novel or worthy of attention in the physical or psychological milieu of one culture may be commonplace in another. In modern suburban America, physical stimuli such as snakes, leeches, people who are badly disfigured, and the starry sky are rarely seen and attract attention—apprehension or awe; in other cultures, the noise of a power mower, flashing neon signs, a talking toy, or a mall may seem equally awesome. The same is true for psychological stimuli. A broad grin or an immediate answer to a question may be noteworthy in some cultures; their omission may be equally noteworthy in others. In providing the background of the familiar, culture defines the unfamiliar.

Valence/Pleasantness

An immediate, unthinking response to stimuli as positive or negative is common to many, perhaps most, emotional experiences, and it too is very likely general across cultures (Zajonc, 1980). Most theories of emotion

include valence as a fundamental attribute[3] and typically valence accounts for more variance than any other dimension in research designed to discover the underlying dimensions of emotional experience. From a psychoevolutionary point of view, the timely evaluation of a stimulus as "good for me" or "bad for me" is as crucial as the initial appraisal that it is worth noticing at all (Arnold, 1960).

As in the case of novelty, however, there is wide latitude for variability in what members of different cultures consider good or bad, benign or malevolent, beautiful or ugly. Even at the most primitive "biological" level, foods that are considered delicious in some cultures are considered repulsive or even deadly in others. In the realm of social behavior and social relationships, the potential for variability is enormous. The receipt of a valuable gift may elicit joy, shame, fear, or rage (Miller, 1993). What is common across cultures, according to the appraisal hypothesis, is that events are rapidly appraised as good or bad, and that this appraisal is an essential component of the emotional experience.

That valence is of fundamental importance does not imply that the perceiver always knows immediately whether a novel event is good or bad. If an event is unfamiliar or complex, the person may initially be uncertain whether the event is good or bad; the appraisal of uncertainty is salient. However, valence is still central to the experience of emotion because even in these situations, the person is uncertain *about* the valence of the event; the event is emotionally significant because it *might* be good or bad.

Agency/Control

We have consistently found that the attribution of agency is important in differentiating among the negative emotions of anger, sorrow, and shame/guilt. Furthermore, in describing these emotions, people commonly include their perceptions of agency as part of the experience. In part this may reflect a general tendency among human beings to make causal

[3]General arousal theories such as those of Lindsley (1951) and Schachter and Singer (1962) are one sort of exception.

attributions for events (Jones et al., 1972). In part, it may reflect a more specific motive to understand negative events so as to be able to cope with them (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; Rozin & Fallon, 1987). In our American subjects, negative events seen as caused by other people evoke anger; negative events seen as caused by oneself evoke guilt (or regret, if no one else is hurt); negative events seen as caused by fate, or chance, or circumstances beyond anyone's control evoke sorrow (see also Frijda, 1986; Ortony et al., 1988; Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984).

Cultural belief systems provide a framework for understanding the causal structure of one's universe and especially for interpreting the forces that control human endeavor. The relative importance of one's own efforts, the behavior of other people, the laws of physics, fate, and the supernatural, as influences on significant events, varies enormously across cultures. Some cultures, such as our own, emphasize human agency and individual enterprise (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, chapter 9, this volume), and we might predict that in such cultures anger would be a prevalent emotion readily experienced and readily recognized. Other societies assign greater power to destiny or to supernatural forces not easily controlled by human efforts, and we might hypothesize that in these cultures sorrow and resignation would be more common emotions. Still others, the collectivist or interdependent cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, chapter 9, this volume), emphasize the social reference group, and in these cultures, shame is far more salient than it is in America, where our research subjects often use the term synonymously with guilt and tend to provide rather trivial and impoverished accounts of their experiences with shame.

There is little relevant research, and the evidence for these hypotheses is mixed. Roseman et al. (1991) compared American subjects (from New York City and Long Island) with Indian subjects (from Allahabad) and found that the Americans more commonly appraised negative events as the work of other people and experienced higher levels of anger than the Indian subjects. Matsumoto et al. (1988) found that, compared with American subjects, Japanese subjects were reluctant to assign responsibility for emotional events (positive as well as negative) and simply responded "not applicable" to questions asking about responsibility.

Borke and Su (1972) found more disagreement between Chinese and American children about sad and angry stories than about happiness and fear stories; however, they found that the Chinese children were *more* likely to categorize stories as anger eliciting than were the American children. A similar pattern appeared when the children were asked to describe situations that produce different emotions. Mauro et al. (1992), studying Americans and three Asian groups, found high levels of cross-cultural generality for most of the appraisal dimensions they examined, but the greatest cultural differences were found on the dimensions of responsibility, control, and anticipated effort. (Their responsibility and control dimensions are both aspects of what I refer to here as agency.) Studies that have touched on the relation of perceptions of agency and negative emotions in single cultures generally support the idea that where there is little blame, there is little anger (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992).

Thinking about agency in cross-cultural terms suggests major causal influences that have been neglected in American research, potentially distorting our view of human emotions. In particular, American psychologists have little to say about the supernatural. Although a substantial number of Americans, including the American college students who provide so much of our data, believe in God, attend religious services, and pray regularly, they do not refer to Him in describing their emotional experiences. Neither positive nor negative events are attributed to divine intervention. We do not know whether this is because they really do not consider supernatural forces as a significant influence in their emotional lives or because they feel that reference to God is taboo in the at-best-agnostic atmosphere of a university laboratory.

In many cultures, supernatural forces matter much more, and members of the culture are much more willing to attribute emotional events to supernatural causes, but we (at least we psychologists) have little understanding of their role. From an appraisal point of view, various roles are possible, and perceptions of agency and perceptions of control need not vary together. In some cases, supernatural agents may show a great deal of resemblance to human agents (e.g., fairies, some witches, and the Gods of the ancient Greeks and Romans, who often seemed barely distinguishable from the worshippers and, indeed, could interbreed with

them). Such supernatural beings might evoke an anger similar to that evoked by a powerful neighbor or boss. In some societies, supernatural forces are relatively impersonal, as in religions that emphasize fate, pre-destination, or the movements of the stars. Sorrow and resignation might be more common in such societies. Or a religious belief system may place special emphasis on the behavior of the worshippers themselves so that misfortune is seen as the consequence of one's own sin, failure to observe a taboo, or mistake in carrying out a religious ritual. In these cultures, guilt or shame might be expected to be common, depending in part on the publicity of the transgression. It is possible that supernatural forces elicit appraisals and emotions that are similar to those based on natural causes.

Norm/Self-Concept Compatibility

Scherer (1984) proposed an additional appraisal (or "stimulus evaluation check," as he called it) that he labeled "norm/self-concept compatibility." He defined it as a "comparison of stimuli, particularly one's own actions or the actions of others and their results, with external and internal standards such as social norms and various aspects of the real or ideal self-concept" (p. 308). In simpler language, a person sees that he or she (or someone else) has lived up to, surpassed, or fallen short of some standard defined by the community or the self. In the initial formulation of the Smith and Ellsworth (1985) version of appraisal theory, I assumed, without giving the matter much thought, that seeing onself as the cause of a negative outcome was sufficient to cover the situations that Scherer had in mind when he proposed this appraisal: situations eliciting guilt, shame, and embarrassment. I am now considering the possibility that this was a somewhat ethnocentric omission, reflecting contemporary Amer-icans' relative lack of engagement with these emotions.[4] My recently re-newed acquaintance with works by anthropologists has served as a useful reminder of the extraordinary importance of living up to the standards

[4] Even in contemporary America, there may be groups for which the peer-group collectivity is intensely important and shame occupies a central role in emotional life. In junior high school and the early years of high school, for example, the perils of nonconformity may be far more salient than they are earlier or later.

of the socially and morally correct behavior expected by one's reference group, and it may well be that failing to do so is a negative outcome that is different in kind from others and that is general cross culturally. The threat of ostracism from one's group, Gray (1971) suggested, may universally elicit fear, and behavior that risks such rejection may be a universal elicitor or emotion as well. Mauro et al. (1992) found considerable generality for the dimension of norm/self-concept compatibility. Whether the emotions elicited by behavior that violates shared *group* standards and the emotions elicited by failure to live up to one's *own* idiosyncratic standards are in fact similar is an open question. I expect that often they are not.

Other Dimensions

Other dimensions for which some evidence of cross-cultural generality has been found include certainty–uncertainty, perception of a goal obstacle, and perceptions of one's own ability to cope with the situation (or of the amount of effort required). There may be a correspondence between these and other attentional networks described by Posner and Rothbart (1991), the posterior attentional network and the vigilance network, but again, a common brain structure does not imply identity of experience. Understanding cultural similarities and differences in these dimensions follows the model we laid out for the others: Uncertainty, the perception of obstacles, and the sense of one's power to cope are important dimensions of emotion in most cultures, but what shakes one's certainty, what seems like an obstacle, and which obstacles one sees as surmountable are affected by one's cultural belief system. The same reasoning that we developed in relation to attention, valence, and agency applies to these other dimensions.

Evidence for the cross-cultural generality of these appraisals and for their relation to emotional experience continues to accumulate. There is no particular reason to believe, however, that these are the only appraisal dimensions that are significant in differentiating among emotions. One cannot discover anything about a possibly important dimension unless one asks about it and, so far, most research has been restricted to

six or eight dimensions or fewer. Asking about six or eight dimensions allows us a richer, more differentiated picture than the traditional (and current) circular or conical models derived from research that only asked about two or three dimensions (Russell, 1980; Woodworth & Schlosberg, 1954; Wundt, 1903), but there is no reason to believe that even six or eight dimensions represent an exhaustive list.[5] There may be other dimensions of appraisal that play an important role in differentiating emotions, and some of these may also prove to be broadly general across cultures.

On the other hand, there may be dimensions of appraisal that play a powerful role in defining emotional experience in some cultures but not in others, and possibly even some that are unique to a single culture. A Westerner might study this possibility by taking an emotion term from another culture that has no close analogue in our own, such as *amae* (Japan; Kumagai & Kumagai, 1985), *liget* (Ilongot [Philippines]; Rosaldo, 1980), or *watjilpa* (Australia; Morice, 1977), and by trying to find out whether it can be understood in terms of the appraisal dimensions that have emerged from Western research or whether something else is needed.

One can imagine several possible outcomes of such a study. The "new" emotion might be described in terms of the dimensions already discovered, but might occupy a region of dimensional space that is relatively empty in Western cultures. For example, in our American subjects, we have not so far found any emotions that are very high on uncertainty but very low on attention. It seems "natural" to us that any situation that is fraught with uncertainty must compel attention. Yet, according to Bateson and Mead (1942), when faced with intense uncertainty about consequential events, Balinese people frequently fall asleep. Their emotion resembles our fear in some ways (negative, highly uncertain) but differs in that the drive to attend closely to the situation is replaced by a drive to shut it out entirely.

Another possible outcome might be that previously discovered dimensions cannot provide a satisfactory account of the new emotion and

[5]There are also some differences in the lists of appraisals generated by different appraisal theorists. I consider these to be minor and, in any case, my purpose here is to speculate about the implications of the general appraisal point of view for the cross-cultural study of emotion.

that some other dimension is relevant. Markus and Kitayama (1991) described a dimensional study of several Japanese emotion terms: *amae*, the sense of being accepted and cared for by others in a passive relationship of reciprocal dependence; *fureai*, feeling closely linked with someone; *oime*, feeling indebted to someone; and others. They found that an appraisal dimension of *engagement with others* was necessary to discriminate among these emotions: "the Japanese respondents clearly and reliably discriminated between ego-focused emotions and other-focused emotions on the dimension of interpersonal engagement" (p. 238).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) did not claim that this new dimension is culture specific, unique to Japan. The fact that it has not emerged in studies of Americans may simply reflect the fact that no one has looked for it. *Amae* is a difficult concept for Americans to grasp, but it is not a completely bewildering one. Very close friends, or siblings, or couples (perhaps particularly the females) may find the sense of reciprocal acceptance and dependence familiar. *Oime*, the unpleasant sense of indebtedness, is certainly recognizable. Although, relative to people from many other cultures, Americans consistently underplay the role of honor and obligation in their lives and (aided by the advertising industry) speak of gifts and favors as kindnesses that brighten the lives of the recipients, according to Miller (1993), we also understand that a gift or an invitation makes a claim on us, particularly if it is too large. We do not feel unalloyed pleasure when we receive an unexpected Christmas present from a colleague who is not a close friend. A neighbor may give us a jar of homemade preserves if she is giving them to other neighbors as well or a bag of tomatoes if it is clear that she needs to get rid of them, but if she shows up uninvited with a sweater that she has bought for us or even a jar of fancy preserves that came from a store, we feel awkward. The very fact that we have such a fine sense of what is and it not appropriate is an indication that gifts and favors have grim implications of reciprocal obligation and we do not like to feel beholden (*oime*). Words like "beholden," "indebted," and "obliged" have an archaic ring in late twentieth-century America, particularly in reference to emotions; they are not central to our lives, as they are in Japan, but they are by no means unknown. As a general dimension, the dimension of engagement may be unique to Japan,

but it may not be; it may simply be much more salient and publicly acknowledged in Japanese culture than in ours. A Japanese can explain what the rules are; we can only tell if they have been broken. By looking for analogues of other cultural emotions and dimensions in our own society, whether or not we find them in any particular instance, we may extend our capacity to understand our own culture as well as the other.

Focal Events

Cultural differences in the centrality or availability of different appraisal dimensions may also reflect differences in what Mesquita and Frijda (1992) referred to as *focal events*: "Event types are called focal when they represent socially defined and shared concerns .... Focal events may be expected to be highly available. This implies, first, that focal events never remain unnoticed to the individual or his environment. When they do occur the individual can hardly escape being emotionally affected" (p. 184). That is, focal events are events that automatically arouse attention and imply valence within a particular culture: They are entry points to the emotions. In Japan, if a social exchange is such a focal event, even a small casual favor—one that might go unnoticed in America—may cause a person to appraise the situation considerably more extensively and elaborately than most Americans would, and to experience a considerably more finely nuanced set of emotional responses.

   To complicate matters further, external events such as social exchanges or competitive interactions are not the only kinds of events that may be considered focal by a culture. An emotion itself is also an event to be appraised, and cultures vary in their beliefs about which emotions are most significant or revealing, which emotions are good or bad, and which emotions are appropriate to particular social roles or social settings. In many American subcultures, for example, to feel and express interest in other people's lives and problems is regarded as appropriate, normal, and not especially noticeable. In other cultures, such interest may be regarded as a highly inappropriate invasion of privacy. To some extent, the process of socialization is a process of teaching children by precept or example how to feel about feelings.

Tomkins (1962, 1963) argued that these evaluations of emotions become part of the emotional experience itself, creating complex emotional scripts that are developed and maintained within the context of the family. His argument applies as well or better to the development and maintenance of emotional scripts within the context of a culture. As I mentioned before, in appraisal theories, emotional experience is a continually changing process, and the evaluation of the emotion itself is a part of that process. The appraisals are perceptions that initiate or elaborate emotional processes or change their course, not stimuli that trigger a fully articulated experience corresponding to a categorically distinct "basic" emotion (cf. Ortony & Turner, 1990). An emotional experience may frequently begin with simple appraisals such as attention, valence, or uncertainty, but as the person responds to the situation, several things happen. First, the person's behavior may change the situation, thereby changing the appraisals of the situation, thereby changing the emotion itself. For example, if the person gains a sense of control over a threatening situation, frustration may turn into interest or into an affectively positive sense of challenge. Second, the person's emotional response becomes part of the situation. When an admired teacher seriously criticizes a student's work as falling short of his ability, the student may feel disappointed and frustrated; but if he then starts to cry in the professor's office, he may respond to his own display of emotion with shame.

I have made this student a male because, in American culture, it is considered inappropriate for a man to cry in most social contexts. But it is not simply the expression that is inappropriate—by extension, it is seen as inappropriate for men to be as deeply moved as women, to feel grief as strongly or as frequently. If boys are trained in this ideology, they may come to experience shame whenever they feel close to tears, so that their actual experience is different and more complex than it was when they were younger. This particular emotional experience may be comparatively rare in women. Each culture's values about emotions and their expression may come to affect the essential experience (and the expression and, ultimately, the definition) of that emotion.

The extreme rarity of anger among the Utku (Briggs, 1970) is often cited as the test case of cultural values resulting in the nearly complete

suppression of an emotion. A slightly different explanation is that the lack of anger reflects a failure to appraise negative events as the fault of other people in the first place. By one interpretation, the emotion is aroused and then suppressed; by the other, the process of cultural suppression has gone on for so long that the appraisals necessary to arouse the emotion in the first place have atrophied.

Cultural values about emotions need not always be negative values resulting in shame or denial. Cultures also favor certain emotions as particularly admirable or suitable. Such cultural esteem may lead to the exaggeration of the expression and of the feeling of the valued emotions in different cultures or in different historical periods within a culture, as in the following exquisitely subtle example of an early nineteenth-century woman:

> But whatever might be the particulars of their separation, her sister's affliction was indubitable; and she thought with the tenderest compassion of that violent sorrow which Marianne was in all probability not merely giving way to as a relief but feeding and encouraging as a duty (Austen, 1811/1961, p. 64).

Caveats and Epicycles

The example of Marianne's grief should alert us to several issues that have so far been set aside in this chapter, not because they are unimportant, but because a certain amount of initial oversimplification is necessary in order to get the basic theoretical position laid out.

First, cultures are not static. Focal events, beliefs, and value systems change over time, and we may expect corresponding changes in the emotional lives of the members of the culture. Lebra (1983) spoke of the high value placed on modesty in Japan where situations that threaten one's modesty are viewed as emotionally charged focal events: Ideally, a person should be as undemonstrative and inconspicuous as possible. An undemonstrative, inconspicuous demeanor is far from the ideal in late twentieth-century America: It is labeled as shyness, and therapy is sometimes recommended to correct the "problem." Assertiveness and extraversion are valued; to go unnoticed is a sign of weakness; and introversion is

regarded as a sign of neurosis (Larsen, 1991). In the nineteenth century, however, these same qualities of retiring modesty were highly valued, particularly among upper-class women, but also among men. To be demonstrative and conspicuous was to be "shameless."

Cultures can change in many ways. Circumstances can change, for example, when a society is conquered; the people are likely to experience deprivation, discrimination, and various other hardships that have profound effects on their emotional lives. They may be forced to experience new and painful kinds of interactions with the conquerors, interactions that will rapidly be defined as *focal events*. Natural disasters—plagues, famine, and cataclysms of earth, sea, or sky—or profound economic changes may also restructure the world and, hence, the emotional world.

Appraisals can change—as a culture comes to appraise illness as a consequence of bacteria rather than of the evil intentions of other people, emotional responses to illness will change. As the views of the role of God (or of the gods) in everyday life change, so will the emotional lives of the people.

Finally, as different emotions become fashionable, the emotional lives of the people change, as is illustrated by Marianne's grief. Such fashions are particularly salient, at least in American culture, for emotions that are regarded as mildly pathological. In the 1950s, as any reader of Jules Feiffer knows, Americans suffered from paralyzing anxiety; a decade or so later, anxiety was replaced by depression; currently, people are visited by a variety of debilitating "syndromes" caused by past abuses and victimizations. A general sense of unhappiness is labeled differently as emotional fashions change. This is not to say that the feeling of unhappiness actually is the same—the changing cultural definition modifies the feeling itself and the significant physical symptoms.

These within-culture changes suggest that the intractable problem of translation, of trying to find equivalent words to describe emotions, is not unique to cross-cultural research; it may also confound the social historian who studies a single culture over time. The English word *sad*, a basic emotion label in most categorical theories, originally meant "satisfied," came to mean "sober" or "serious" (a state of mind highly esteemed by the Puritans in the 17th century) and only much later took on

a meaning closer to "grieved." The term *shame*, which once implied grace, now implies disgrace. Several scholars, such as Wierzbicka (1992), have appropriately criticized psychologists for their simple-minded tendency to take English emotion words such as *fear*, *happiness*, and *anger* as representing basic emotional universals rather than as one culture's way of categorizing the world of feelings: "By using English emotion words as their basic analytical tools scholars are imposing on their subject matter an ethnocentric, Anglocentric perspective" (p. 287). Her solution resembles an appraisal model in that she analyzes Western and non-Western emotions into combinations of simpler components involving valence, control, uncertainty, and so on. Rather than taking appraisals as her primitives, she looks for semantic primitives with universal or near-universal meanings in all languages; rather than on complex, culture-dependent terms such as *gratitude*, *happiness*, and *grief*, she relies on simple, "culture-free" terms such as *want*, *think*, and *feel*. Whereas this approach may reduce the problems of variability in linguistic terms, it certainly does not eliminate them. Even within English and within the last three or four hundred years, the usage of these terms has changed enormously. For example, the term *feel* was not generally used to refer to emotional states ("feel sad", "feel ashamed") until the nineteenth century. Before that, one simply *was* sad or ashamed and "to feel something" typically meant to touch it (Miller, 1993). Thus, the phrase that Wierzbicka commonly uses in her prototypical scenarios—"X feels something"—was not emotionally meaningful in English until recently.

Second, even at a given point in time, cultures are not uniform. One of the dangers of cultural psychology is that the welcome focus on differences among cultures may distract us from the differences within cultures. The characterization of Japanese as collectivist and Americans as individualist, while illuminating, can also come perilously close to stereotyping. Some Americans fit the individualistic stereotype beautifully; many do not. The culture of men is not identical to the culture of women: Males and females are expected to differ in their sensitivity to different sorts of events, and they do. Likewise, differences in social status, ethnic background, and region are accompanied by differences in belief systems and emotions. Members of different groups within the same

culture may appraise events differently and respond with different emotions, and the consequences of these within-culture variations may be especially insidious, because the people involved are less likely to think of cultural explanations and therefore more likely to make pejorative dispositional attributions (Jones & Nisbett, 1972), underestimating the role of culture and instead attributing others' "irrational" behavior to biological differences in race or gender, or to character flaws.

Likewise, differences in power create different cultural worlds within a culture. The experience of discrimination may be a dominant theme in the daily emotional lives of groups who suffer it and an organizing principle of their emotional lives. The group at the top, the group that ignores, slights, interrupts, and insults, may be oblivious to an entire range of emotions that go with being ignored, slighted, interrupted, and insulted.

Finally, there are individual differences. As human beings, if not as cultural psychologists, we are acutely aware of differences in the emotional responses of our friends, relatives, and colleagues: Some are cheerful, some melancholy, some anxious, some explosive. Differences in emotional style are one of the major bases for our classification of our acquaintances. People's sensitivity to the emotional idiosyncrasies of members of their own culture undoubtedly blinds them to cultural commonalities and to the role of culture itself. People's appreciation of individual differences within their own culture is probably a major resource to draw on in interpreting the emotional responses of people from other cultures, one that may lead to both understanding and misunderstanding. An American who meets a Japanese who is behaving with deferential modesty may be reminded of a friend who is particularly shy and may "understand" the Japanese person's perceptions and feelings by drawing on knowledge of that friend. Often this process will ultimately result in mistakes, for example, if the American decides that the Japanese needs encouragement to overcome the "problem." Whether such matching helps at all as a useful first step in cross-cultural understanding is an interesting question. Logically, it seems possible that a somewhat deviant member of one culture may resemble a more mainstream member of another culture, and that an understanding of the one could facilitate an understanding of the other. That it could not possibly lead to a thorough un-

derstanding is obvious, because the state of being deviant colors the emotional life of one person but not the other.

Third, the situation becomes immensely more complicated when we recognize that the initial emotional response to an event is in itself a significant event to be appraised, leading to the possibility of exponentially expanding cultural and individual nuances as the emotion develops over time.

Summary and Future Directions

According to appraisal theories of emotion, emotions consist of patterned processes of appraisal of one's relation to the environment along specified dimensions, such as novelty, valence, certainty, control, attribution of agency, and consistency with social norms, along with associated physiological responses and action tendencies. The appraisal perspective may provide a useful approach to the problem of accounting both for cross-cultural similarities and for cross-cultural differences in emotion. The basic premise is that the major dimensions of appraisal that make up emotion are general across cultures, and that similar patterns of appraisal along these dimensions will produce similar emotions across cultures. Thus, for example, if someone has lost something beloved, and if the loss is seen as due to circumstances beyond anyone's control, then the person will feel sad. However, one must know something about the belief system of a particular culture in order to know whether these preconditions are met.

Cultural belief systems define events as due to circumstances, or to a person's own efforts, or to the behavior of others; as good or bad; as controllable or uncontrollable; as certain or uncertain; and differences in these kinds of cultural appraisals affect people's emotional responses to events. Thus, an American who wins a coveted prize may attribute it to his or her own efforts and feel pride, whereas a member of another culture may attribute it to the support and encouragement of his or her mentors and feel gratitude.

No claim is made that the appraisal dimensions suggested here constitute a complete list. Indeed, one promising avenue for future research

is to search for new appraisal dimensions that may be especially significant within a particular culture and to look for analogues in other cultures.

Another line of research that is desperately needed (regardless of one's theoretical point of view) is a series of studies replicating the highly influential but sketchily reported study of Japanese and American responses to emotionally arousing films (Ekman, 1972; Friesen, 1992). Ekman reported that the facial expressions of the subjects from the two cultures were indistinguishable when they believed that they were watching the films alone and unobserved, but were very different when they were in the company of others (muted for the Japanese, exaggerated for the Americans). Studies using this format, comparing members of various cultural groups and measuring appraisals and self-reported emotions as well as facial and physiological responses, would be immensely useful in beginning to assess the role of appraisal in actual experience and to distinguish the role of appraisal from the role of display rules.

Appraisal models suggest that emotional experiences become more complex over time, both episodically and ontogenetically. One implication of this idea is that one is more likely to find universals during the first few moments of people's responses to emotional stimuli, early in the sequence of appraisals than later on when more complex appraisals of agency and social propriety, and appraisals of one's own initial emotional response have entered the picture. The choice of emotional stimulus situations hypothesized to elicit similar or dissimilar patterns of appraisals in members of different cultures presents troublesome problems very likely requiring collaboration among researchers of different cultures and different disciplines. Nonetheless, so little has been done that even the discovery of unexpected problems may contribute substantially to our knowledge of emotion and culture. Despite the methodological problems, the hypothesis that emotions are cross culturally similar in their early stages and become more differentiated as they develop in time is worth studying, and whether there is ever a point of identity is an intriguing question. Psychologists like Posner, LeDoux, and Zajonc would probably say yes; many anthropologists would probably say no.

The capacity to recognize novel events and to appraise them as positive or negative is present at birth, presumably universal in normal

babies. The capacity to make other appraisals, such as the perception of an obstacle or the attribution of agency, emerges later (cf. Scherer, 1984), and, of course, the early sensitivities to novelty and pleasantness become much more elaborated as well. A newborn will orient to a noise or a change in visual or auditory pattern (and will often show a facial expression of intense interest); but with development, the baby begins to have expectations, allowing new occasions for novelty when the expectations are violated. As infants mature, they learn how people in their culture appraise events. Thus, one would expect to find more obvious evidence of cross-cultural universals in newborn than in older children and in older children than in adults.

Campos (1992) quite rightly pointed out that babies from different cultures are not entirely free of cultural conditioning even at birth. They may have different intrauterine experiences and different experiences during the birth itself. I am happy to grant the point, though it could be argued that the salient features of wombs and passage through the birth canal have a lot more cultural similarities than cultural idiosyncrasies. All I am arguing is that members of different cultures are more alike at birth than they will ever be again. A systematic cross-cultural study of the emergence of the different appraisals and their correlation with the emergence of emotional responses (both those that are labeled as such by the culture and those that are not) would be an enormous contribution.

To return to the beginning, I do not think that we will be able to reach the interesting questions about how culture is related to emotion until we get beyond the idea that the statement "emotion is culturally constituted" is fundamentally incompatible with the statement "emotion is biologically based." Both statements are obviously true, and our goal should be to develop ideas, theories, models, and guesses that encompass both diversity and similarity. Theories of appraisal, though none was designed for the purpose, provide one promising approach.

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