

Cultural approaches

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Culture, language and emotions

Now we have arrived to three of the most difficult concepts to define, together...

- I start with psychologists' approaches
- and end with more "hard-arts" approaches

In any case, the focus is on language as an undeniable fact of culture.

Two approaches

From Oatley & Jenkins (1996), there is a general dichotomy:

- componentialists: emotions can be divided in different components
- some emotions are basic, the others are mixtures of them

Different in time frames

An emotion can also span over many different time frames:

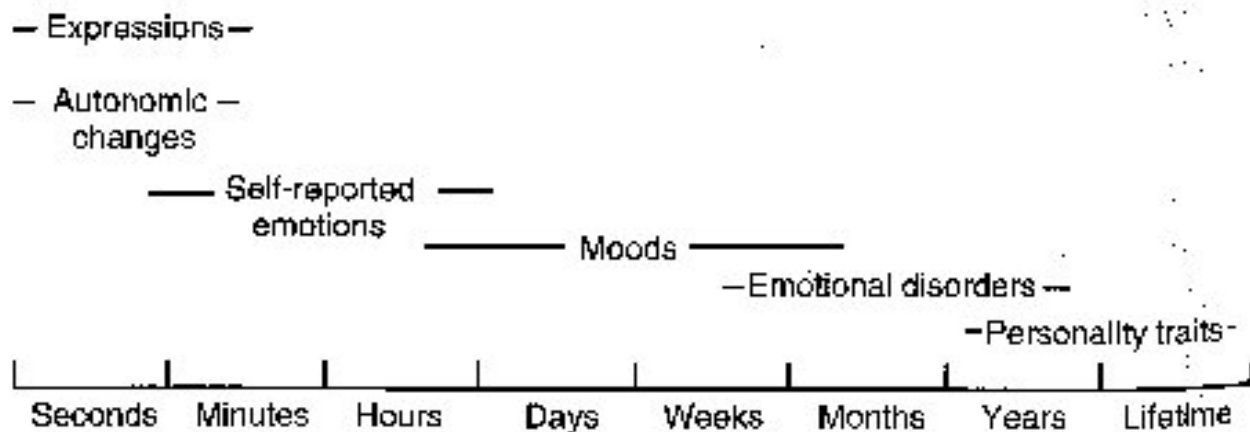


Figure 4.6 A spectrum of affective phenomena in terms of the time course of each.

According to Haidt (2003), moral emotions do

a tremendous amount of work in the creation and daily functioning of human morality

- difference between homo sapiens and homo economicus
- four (traditional Indian) emotion families: **other condemning** (contempt, anger, disgust); **self-conscious** (shame, embarrassment, guilt); **other suffering** (compassion), **other praising** (gratitude, elevation)
- two axes: degree of disinterestedness of elicitors; degree of pro-social action tendencies
- he argues that anger is a highly moral emotion

Relation with the body

There are two basic ways an emotion is linked to body:

- physical expression, especially facial expression
- description of an emotion through the bodily posture/action

Other relevant relations

- Some theories claim that one can induce emotions by doing body movements
- There are a lot of embodied metaphors for emotion (cognitive linguistics)

The difference (?) between emotion and opinion

There are many cases where it is hard to distinguish between the two: by displaying an emotion we express an opinion

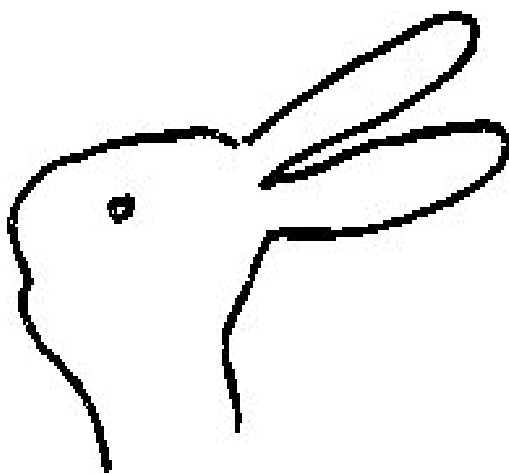
- He sneered: “bla bla”
- *franzir o sobrolho*
- *um coração nas mãos*

by doing a gesture that displays an opinion we show a feeling

Not all emotions have bodily correlates

And some emotions share the same or similar forms: According to Oatley & Jenkins (p.117),

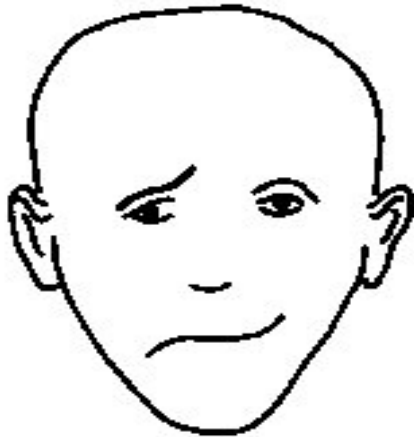
some state of arousal could be interpreted as happiness or anger, depending on the social situation (Schachter & Singer, 1962)



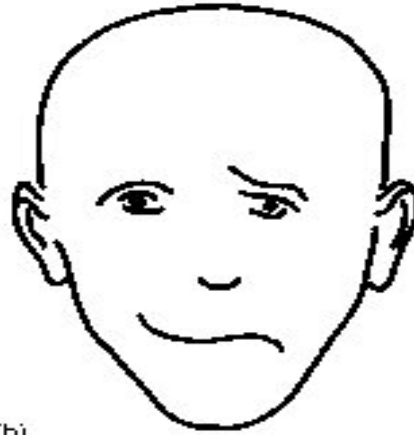
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We are not symmetrical

Which one is happiest?



(a)



(b)

Does one smile for oneself?

According to Fridlund (1994), facial expressions are expressions not of emotions, but of intentions.

According to Lang (1985), there are three separate response systems related to emotions

- 1 cognitive-verbal
- 2 bodily/physiological
- 3 behavioral/expressive

And they have different functions or goals as well, according to Oatley & Jenkins

- 1 ?
- 2 to prepare the body for subsequent action
- 3 social function

It is important to distinguish between experience of an emotion, and expression of an emotion – and subsequent describing of an emotion.

The purpose and reason of emotions

- Emotions are needed to give priorities among multiple goals, especially guiding our relations with others.
- Emotions are heuristics to cope with life, a middle way between automatic reflexes of lower animals... and omniscience of a god.

Emotions and language

An extremely important relationship, which is not always recognized, is that children's emotional development is mainly done through and with the help of language. Very coarsely, the development proceeds this way

- 1 identification of self (only after that one can feel embarrassed)
- 2 recognizing other people's emotions
- 3 understanding the difference between feeling and showing the feelings
- 4 recognising causes and consequences of an emotion
- 5 understanding ambivalence: feeling different emotions towards the same "object"

And in all cases the interaction with parents and others is essential to verbalize and therefore understand the emotions.

In every society there are culturally specific rituals, socially scripted occasions for rejoicing (or mourning).

So, many forms of expression are socially governed and taught.

The cultural reader (Wulff, 2007)

Other areas of study concerned with emotions: anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, ...

- Manipulation of tourists' emotions (by Jonathan Skinner)
- The Performance Hypothesis: practising emotions (by William O. Beeman)
- "Emotion talk", the constructivist Paul Heelas citing :

emotions, such as pride, ambition, guilt or remorse, imply a certain view of ourselves. They are probably not felt in cultures in which little importance is attached to individual effort and responsibility (Peters, 1974)

the emotion words of a culture exert a powerful influence on the actual experience of emotion (Malatesta & Haviland, 1985)

- Nationalistic emotions: feeling of belonging?

Cultural differences on appraisal

- Appraisal of cultural traits depends on your culture (or stereotypes and how they influence one's reception)
- Are cultural traits good or bad?
Real story: "Portugiser og nordmenn er ganske lik: de er begge rolige" (uttered by a Norwegian student of Portuguese – as praise)

What is culture?

- It is a specific ranking of values (Delfim Santos).
- Hence, it can also be a specific ranking of emotions... as the paper by Wierzbicka illustrates: Comparing emotional norms across languages and cultures: Polish vs. Anglo-American