

Cultural Variation in Emotion: An Interpersonal Perspective

Michael Boiger
Alexander Kirchner
Batja Mesquita

Collaborators:

Yukiko Uchida (Kyoto U)
Yulia Chentsova-Dutton (Georgetown U)

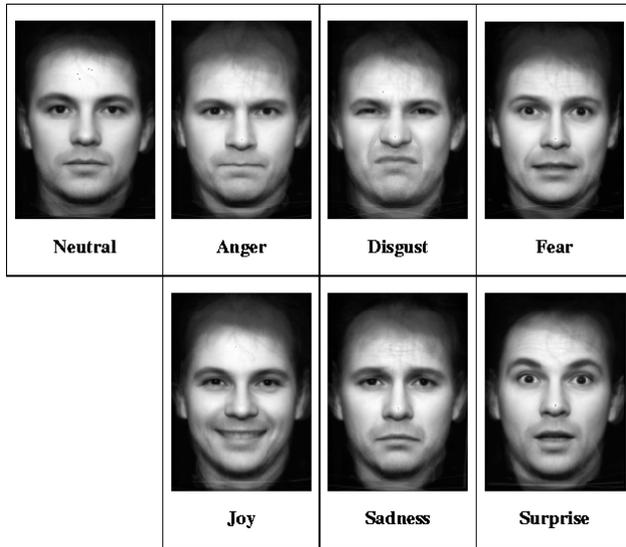


What are emotions?

Emotions as short-lived, intra-individual events

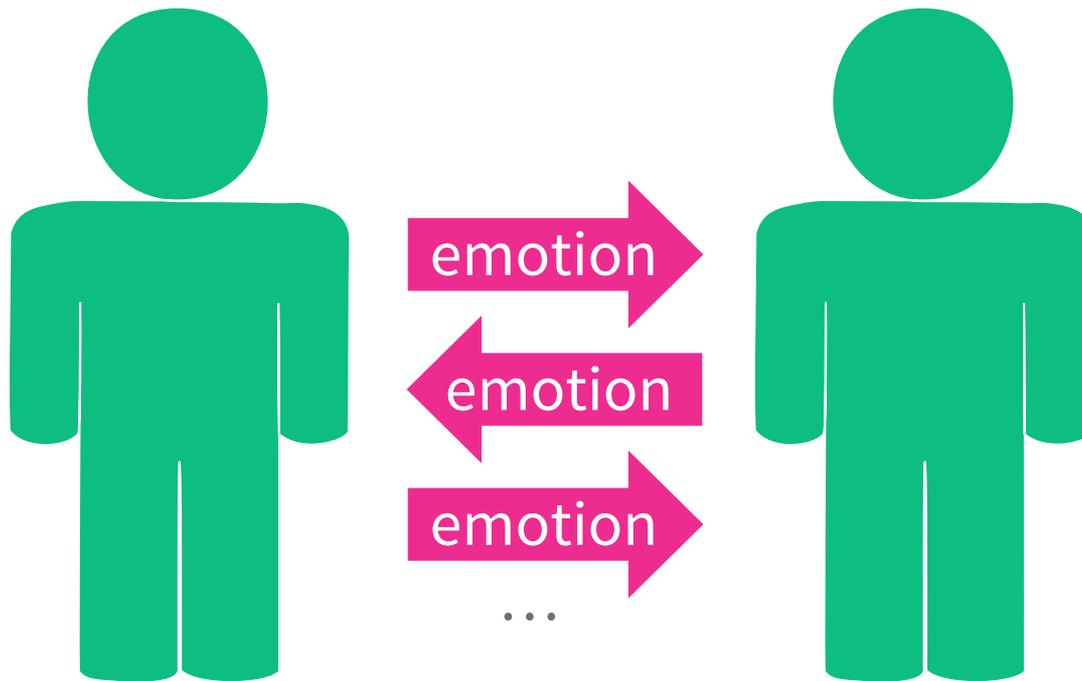


What are emotions?



What are emotions?

Emotions as ongoing, interpersonal processes



Emotions as interpersonal processes



very angry

upset

frustrated

Emotions as interpersonal processes



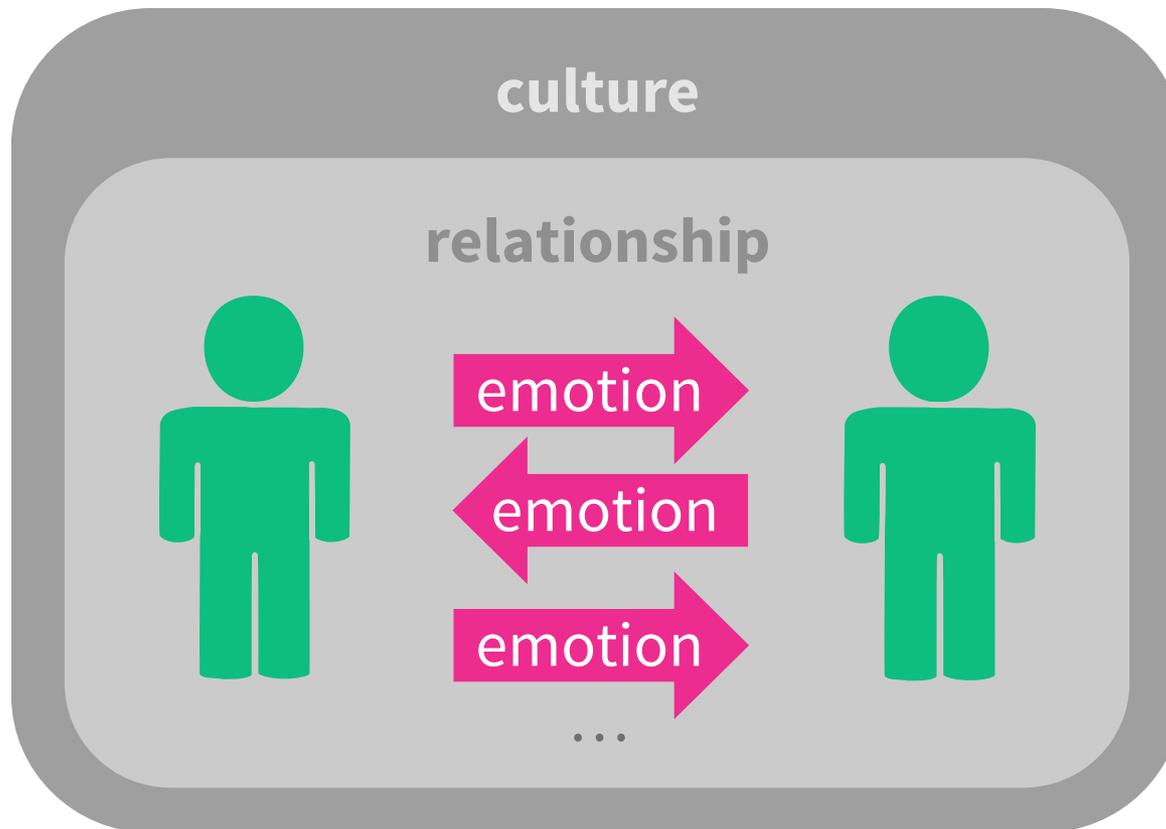
slightly angry

hurt

empathy

What are emotions?

Emotions as ongoing, interpersonal processes that unfold in socio-cultural contexts



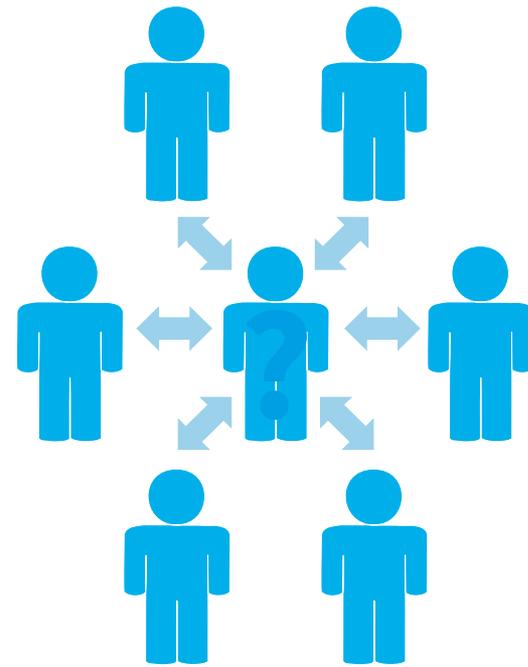
Relationship models across cultures

US: Autonomy



Self-focus
Assertiveness

Japan: Relatedness



Perspective-taking
Self-criticism

Condoned and condemned emotions

US: Autonomy

Japan: Relatedness

Anger



Shame



Do cultural differences in emotion emerge as a function of culturally different social interactions?

Overarching hypotheses

1a. Frequency & Intensity: Interactions commonly involve condoned emotional responses, while steering clear of condemned emotional responses.

1b. Amplification & Dampening: Condoned emotional responses are mutually amplified, condemned emotional responses are mutually dampened

2. Functionality: Interactions highlighting condoned emotions (in terms of frequency, intensity, or amplification) yield good relationship outcomes.

Planned research

Two types of relationships

Couples

(Mothers – adolescent daughters)

Three cultures

US – Belgium – Japan

Emotion domain

Conflict

Planned research

1a. Lab Interactions

($N = 150$ couples)

Establishing the course & functionality of emotional interactions across cultures

1b. Follow-up Study

($N = 150$ couples)

Testing for longitudinal effects of interaction styles

2. Interaction Scripts

($N = 300$ participants)

Establishing the course & functionality of emotional interactions across cultures

Study 1: Laboratory Interactions

Method: Three-step interaction adopted from Levenson & Gottman (1983); Tsai & Levenson (2007)

1 Neutral: Events of the day

2 Conflict: Unresolved conflict in the relationship

3 Positive experience



Participants: $N = 150$ couples (100 participants per culture)

Study 2: Interaction Scripts

Method: Interaction Scripts (e.g., Miller, 1991)

- Guided imagery: Conflict situation vignettes
- Imagined actor responses
- Anticipated partner responses
- Anticipated actor outcome



Participants: $N = 300$ (100 participants per culture)

Unresolved analytical issues

- Power in both scripts and interaction designs
- Identifying responses that lead to amplification/dampening
- Identifying typical trajectories across cultures (taking sequence of events into account)
- Establishing “fit” of individuals with typical trajectories
- Scripts: Doing justice to the complexity of the data, e.g., predicting patterns of responses from patterns

Thank you for your attention!

Boiger, M., & Mesquita, B. (2012). The construction of emotion in interactions, relationships, and cultures. *Emotion Review*, 4, 221-229.

Boiger, M., & Mesquita, B. (in press). A socio-dynamic perspective on the construction of emotion. In: L. F. Barrett & J. A. Russell (Eds.), *The psychological construction of emotion*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Mesquita, B., & Boiger, M. (2014). Emotions in context: A socio-dynamic model of emotions. *Emotion Review*, 6, 298–302.