

## Chapter 6 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 in one's observations on specific emotional characteristics would perhaps highlight cultural differences.

- It is useful to understand emotion as a multi-componential 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, there are some cultural norms and conditions that 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 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, suppress others, and 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, overt (explicit) or covert (hidden), wrongdoing, attack, or 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.