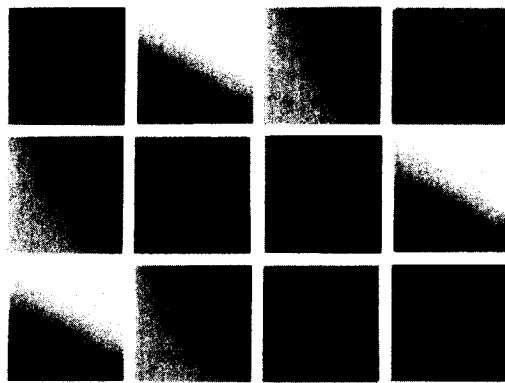


HANDBOOK OF EMOTIONS

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EDITED BY MICHAEL LEWIS,
JEANNETTE M. HAVILAND-JONES,
AND LISA FELDMAN BARRETT



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CHAPTER 25

The Cultural Psychology of the Emotions

Ancient and Renewed

RICHARD A. SHWEDER, JONATHAN HAIDT, RANDALL HORTON,
and CRAIG JOSEPH

*Great, deep, wide and unbounded, the ocean is nevertheless drunk by
underwater fires; in the same way, Sorrow is drunk by Anger.*

—Translation of an unidentified Sanskrit stanza from India
in the early Middle Ages (GNOLI, 1956, p. 35)

This chapter elaborates, revises, and partially recapitulates an evolving description of the cultural psychology of the emotions, versions of which appeared in the first two editions of this handbook. We define and illustrate a cultural/symbolic/meaning-centered approach to the study of the emotions, using some sources that are quite ancient (e.g., the 3rd-century A.D. Sanskrit text, the “Rasādhyāya” of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*) and others that are quite new. The chapter updates a componential approach to the cultural study of emotions, with special attention to comparative analyses of two emotion categories: those often translated and labeled in English as “anger” and “shame.” The chapter also examines the moral context of emotional functioning in different cultural and religious traditions (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam), while suggesting that the character

and meaning of particular emotions are systematically related to the ethics (e.g., the ethics of autonomy, community, or divinity) prevalent in a cultural community (Haidt, 2001, 2003; Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Jensen, 1995, 1998, 2005; Shweder, 1990b, 1994a, 2002; Shweder & Haidt, 1993; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997).

The major goals of “cultural psychology” are to spell out the implicit meanings that give shape to psychological processes, to examine the distribution of those meanings across ethnic groups and temporal-spatial regions of the world, and to identify the manner of their social acquisition. Related goals are to reassess the principle of psychic unity or uniformity, and to develop a credible theory of psychological diversity or pluralism. The emphasis in cultural psychology is upon the way the human

mind can be transformed and made functional in a number of different ways, which are not equally distributed across ethnic and cultural communities around the world (see Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1998; Shweder, 1991, 1996; Shweder & LeVine, 1984; Shweder et al., 1998).

One hallmark of cultural psychology is a conception of "culture" that is symbolic and behavioral at the same time. Culture, so conceived, can be defined as the range of ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient that are made manifest in the speech, laws, customary practices, and other purposive actions of the members of any norm-sensitive and self-policing group (Goodnow, Miller, & Kessel, 1995; Shweder et al., 1998; Shweder, 1999a, 1999b). In research on cultural psychology, "culture" thus consists of meanings, conceptions, and interpretive schemes that are activated, constructed, or brought "online" through participation in normative social institutions and routine practices (including linguistic practices) (see, e.g., D'Andrade, 1984; Geertz, 1973; LeVine, 1984; Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990; Shweder, 1991, 1999a, 1999b). According to this view, a culture is the subset of humanly possible or available meanings that, by virtue of enculturation (informal or formal, implicit or explicit, unintended or intended), has become valued and active in giving shape to the psychological processes of the individuals in a particular norm-sensitive group.

A second hallmark of cultural psychology is the idea that interpretation, conceptualization, and other "acts of meaning" can take place rapidly, automatically, and un-self-consciously. Indeed, it is assumed that "acts of meaning" (e.g., the judgment that the human body may become polluted or desanctified because it is a temple for the soul; or that illness is a means of empowerment because it unburdens a person of accumulated spiritual debts; or that shyness, shame, modesty, and embarrassment are good and strong emotions because they are displays of civility signaling that people are playing their part in upholding and controlling the social order) can take place so rapidly, automatically, and un-self-consciously that from the point of view of an individual person they are indistinguishable from "raw" experience or "naked" consciousness itself (see, e.g., Geertz, 1984, on "experience-near" concepts, and Kirsh, 1991, on "thought in action"; see also

Fish, 1980; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). According to this view, many rapid, automatic, and un-self-conscious psychological processes are best understood not as "pure," "basic," "fundamental," or "intrinsic" processes, but rather as content-laden processes, which are contingent on the implicit meanings, conceptual schemes, and ideas that give them life (Haidt, 2001; Markus et al., 1998; Mesquita, 2003; Nisbett & Cohen, 1995; Shweder, 1990a; Stigler, 1984; Stigler, Chalip, & Miller, 1986; Stigler, Nusbaum, & Chalip, 1988).

As an initial illustration of these points, we begin our discussion in the 3rd century A.D. in India with a brief examination of a Sanskrit text (the "Rasādhyāya" of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*) that was written relatively early in the historical record of systematic human self-consciousness about the emotions. It is through an analysis of this venerable text—an ancient example of a cultural psychology—that we address contemporary concerns. The "Rasādhyāya" is a useful intellectual pole star on which to concentrate a discussion of the cultural psychology of the emotions, for three reasons: (1) The text, although ancient, compares favorably with any contemporary treatise on the symbolic character of emotional experience; (2) the text, although famous among Sanskritists and scholars of South Asian civilization, is hardly known at all by emotion researchers in anthropology and psychology; and (3) the text provides the opportunity for an object lesson about the universally appealing yet, in some sense, culture-specific character of all accounts about what is "basic" to the emotional nature of human beings.

THE CULTURALLY CONSTRUCTED "BASIC EMOTIONS" OF THE "RASĀDHYĀYA"

Between the 3rd and 11th centuries A.D., Hindu philosophers of poetics and drama, interested in human emotions as objects of aesthetic pleasure, posited the existence of eight or nine basic emotions (*sthāyī-bhāva*) and developed a relatively detailed account of the symbolic structures that give them shape and meaning. There is no standard English translation of the Sanskrit terms for the postulated basic emotions. Indeed, there is no agreement about whether they should be translated as "emotions," "mental states," or "feelings," or

about whether they should be translated as “basic,” “dominant,” “permanent,” “universal,” “natural,” or “principal” emotions (or mental states or feelings). The eight basic (or dominant) emotions (or mental states or feelings) are variously translated as follows: (1) sexual passion, love, or delight (*rati*); (2) amusement, laughter, humor, or mirth (*bāsa*); (3) sorrow (*śoka*); (4) anger (*krodha*); (5) fear or terror (*bhaya*); (6) perseverance, energy, dynamic energy, or heroism (*utsāha*); (7) disgust or disillusion (*jugupsā*); and (8) amusement, wonder, astonishment, or amazement (*vismaya*). Some early medieval commentators mention an additional basic (or dominant) emotion (or mental state or feeling), (9) serenity or calm (*sama*). To simplify our exegesis, we refer to the eight (or nine) as “basic emotions,” and we label them “sexual passion,” “amusement,” “sorrow,” “anger,” “fear,” “perseverance,” “disgust,” “wonder,” and “serenity.”

The canonical Sanskrit text on the “emotions,” attributed to Bharata, is the sixth chapter, the “*Rasādhyāya*,” of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which is a book about drama. In Sanskrit drama, the primary aim of the aesthetic experience was psychological; indeed, it was the symbolic representation of emotional states per se that set the stage for aesthetic and revelatory experience (see Dimock et al., 1974). The famous sixth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is about the narrative structure (the causes, consequences, and concomitants) of eight basic emotional states and the most effective means (via facial expression, voice, posture, setting, character, action, and physiological response) of their representation in the theatre. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* was probably written some time between the 3rd and 5th centuries A.D. The most famous of several commentaries on the text is by the 10th- and 11th-century Kashmiri Brahman philosopher Abhivānagupta (partial translations and contemporary commentaries can be found in Masson & Patwardhan, 1970, and Gnoli, 1956; see also Dimock et al., 1974, and Keith, 1924).

THE WONDER OF THE SANSKRIT EMOTIONS: A CULTURAL ACCOUNT

Contemporary non-Hindu researchers in the United States and Europe are likely to find the account of the “basic emotions” in the “*Rasādhyāya*” both familiar and strange. In-

deed, one of the hazards of doing research on the emotions is the temptation to presumptively universalize a content-laden and culture-specific mental process and theorize that it is a basic or intrinsic mental process. Here we find it instructive (and a useful corrective to unbounded generalizations) to compare two such posited theories about “basic emotions” across historical time and cultural space. If we compare the Sanskrit list of nine (eight plus one) basic emotions (sexual passion, amusement, sorrow, anger, fear, perseverance, disgust, wonder, and sometimes serenity) with Paul Ekman’s well-known contemporary list of nine (six plus three) basic emotions (anger, fear, sadness, happiness, surprise, and disgust, plus interest, shame, and contempt), which Ekman (1980, 1984) has derived from the analysis of everyday facial expressions, the two lists do not seem to us to be closely coordinated, although they are not totally disjoint either.

In his volume *Performance Theory*, Richard Schechner (1988) presents a series of photographs of facial expressions that he claims are iconic representations of the nine basic emotions of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. This, of course, is a risky thing to do. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* never abstracts out facial expressions as the key markers of the basic emotions, but rather treats them as one element in an array of constituents; and there is every reason to believe that in Hindu drama facial expressions unfold dynamically in a sequence of movements, which are not easily frozen into a single frame (Hejmadi, Davidson, & Rozin, 2000). Nevertheless, Schechner posits direct analogies between six of his facial expressions for the Sanskrit basic emotions and the six facial expressions from Ekman’s primary scheme—equating, for example, Ekman’s representation of the face of surprise with the Sanskrit face of wonder, and Ekman’s representation of the face of happiness with the Sanskrit face of sexual passion. Schechner thinks he sees a universal pattern reflected in the two schemes: He states, “Human-kind has countless gods, but I would be very surprised if there were not some agreement concerning the basic emotions” (1988, p. 266). But how much agreement?

In our view, several of Schechner’s equations are dubious. For example, in Ekman’s face of surprise, the mouth is wide open; it is not similar to the mouth of the Sanskrit emotion of wonder, which is closed and faintly suggestive of a smile. (The mouth is closed in all of the fa-

cial expressions of the medieval Hindu emotions, which, we speculate, may be related to a cultural evaluation concerning the vulgarity of an open mouth.) And in Ekman's photo of the face of happiness, the eyes are directly frontal; they are not similar to the eyes of the Sanskrit emotion of sexual passion, where the gaze is conspicuously averted to one side, perhaps suggestive of coyness, secrecy, or conspiracy. More importantly, because Schechner's equation of American "happiness" with Sanskrit "sexual passion" seems peculiar from the start, it should also be noted that Ekman's photo of the face of happiness bears no resemblance whatsoever to the face of amusement, which is the Sanskrit emotion one might have intuitively expected to be connected to the Western conception of "happiness."

We doubt that most Americans could spontaneously generate accurate descriptions for the majority of the nine facial icons of the Sanskrit "basic emotions" displayed in Schechner's book. (Curiously, one of the faces that American graduate students seem to identify without much difficulty is the Sanskrit face of serenity, which as far as we know is not a "basic emotion" on any Western list. In informal experiments conducted in classes at the University of Chicago, they also converge in their responses to faces of fear, disgust, and sorrow, but not to the other five.) Indeed, we believe one can plausibly argue that happiness, surprise, and most of the other basic emotions on Ekman's list do not have close analogues among the basic emotions of the "Rasādhyāya," and any sense of easy familiarity with the Sanskrit list is more apparent than real.

As we read the "Rasādhyāya" and commentaries, three of the nine basic emotions (anger, fear, and sorrow) are genuinely familiar, in the sense of possessing an equivalent shape and meaning for medieval Hindus and contemporary Americans. Of course, to acknowledge those three points of dense similarity is not to suggest that those three emotional meanings must be cross-cultural universals. Wierzbicka (1992) has brought to a halt facile claims about translation equivalence by showing that "sadness" as understood in European and American conceptions of the emotions is not an empirical universal and is neither lexicalized, important, nor salient in most of the languages of the world. She claims that from the point of view of the study of the linguistic semantics of emotion terms around the world, there may be

no basic or universal emotions, although she allows that feelings that are more or less "shame-like" are quite widespread.

Nevertheless, anger, fear, and sorrow are easy to recognize in the "Rasādhyāya." Sorrow, for example, is said to arise from misfortune, calamity, and destruction, and from "separation from those who are dear, [their] downfall, loss of wealth, death and imprisonment." "It should be acted out by tears, laments, drying up of the mouth, change of color, languor in the limbs, sighs, loss of memory, etc." (Masson & Patwardhan, 1970, p. 52). Sorrow is said to be accompanied by other mental states, including world-weariness, physical weariness, lifelessness, tears, confusion, dejection and worry. Anger and fear are also easy to recognize in the text (see Masson & Patwardhan, 1970, pp. 52–53).

For three of the nine basic emotions described in the "Rasādhyāya," it is easy to recognize the underlying script, to readily see the self in the other, and to arrive at a cross-cultural and transhistorical agreement about what is basic in emotional functioning (at least for them and us). Yet as one moves beyond sorrow, anger, and fear to disgust, amusement, wonder, perseverance, sexual passion, and serenity, the way in which consciousness is partitioned or hierarchically structured into basic and nonbasic states in the "Rasādhyāya" seems less and less familiar, despite any initial appearances to the contrary. This decline in familiarity is similar to the "gradient of recognition" that Haidt and Keltner (1999) found when studying facial expressions in India and the United States: Some expressions are very well recognized across cultures, some are less well recognized, and there is no neatly bounded set of "universal" facial expressions.

Thus it becomes clear upon examination of the relevant Sanskrit texts and commentaries that medieval Hindu "disgust" overlaps with but also differs from modern American "disgust." Medieval Hindu disgust is partitioned into two subtypes. The first includes aspects of horror and disillusionment, as well as world-weariness associated with the quest for detachment, transcendence, and salvation; the second includes horror at the sight of blood. Medieval Hindu disgust is, as the anthropologist McKim Marriott has suggested to us, more like a domain of the loathsome, and it gathers together within its territory a broad range of human responses to the ugly, the nasty, and the odious.

It also becomes clear upon close examination that nuances make a difference, and that medieval Hindu "wonder" is not contemporary American "surprise," but rather a state of mind closer to admiration than to startle or shock. For Hindu wonder has less to do with a sudden violation of expectations and more to do with one's reactions to the opportunity to witness divine, heavenly, or exalted feats, events, or beings (including, e.g., the amazing feats of a juggler). It is even possible to do such witnessing with the mouth closed, as long as the eyes are wide open!

Upon closer examination, it becomes apparent as well that medieval Hindu "amusement" (which includes contemptuous, indignant, or derisive laughter at the faults and inferior status of others) is not contemporary American "happiness," which has celebratory implications. Indeed, happiness, shame, indignation, arrogance, and some contempt-like emotions are explicitly mentioned in the "Rasādhyāya" for inclusion among 33 nonbasic ("accompanying") mental states. Thus it seems reasonable to assert that the basic emotion designated by medieval Hindu philosophers as "amusement" is not adequately translated as "happiness" or as "contempt." (It should be noted that while the text provides little basis for determining equivalence of meaning for the terms used to translate the 33 nonbasic mental states, there is good reason to doubt that "shame" or "happiness" have the same implications and associations, or play the same psychological role, in India as they do in the contemporary United States. See Menon & Shweder, 1994, and Shweder, 1996, 2003, on the positive qualities of "shame" in India, where it is a virtue associated with civility, modesty and an ability to rein in one's destructive powers in support of the social order rather than with the diminishment of the ego; see also Parish, 1991, and below.)

Similarly, it becomes clear upon examination of the text that medieval Hindu "perseverance" is not contemporary American "interest," but is rather deeply connected to heroic determination and a willfulness to engage in acts requiring endurance and self-sacrifice. In the context of the early medieval Hindu scriptures, when the Hindu goddess Durga (or Kali) endures trials and tribulations yet persists in a seemingly hopeless battle against uncountable demons in an effort to save the world, her efforts are said to display the heroic *rasa* of perseverance. Mere interest has very little to do with it. She

would probably rather be doing something else (see below).

In summary, the two lists of nine basic human emotions closely and truly overlap at only three points. All the other apparent points of similarity (amusement as happiness, their disgust as our disgust, wonder as surprise, perseverance as interest) turn out to be merely apparent; and for several of the emotions (sexual passion, serenity, shame, contempt), there is not even an illusion of transcultural equivalence. In the end, most of the items cannot be easily mapped across the two lists without a good deal being lost in translation.

There are other ways in which the "Rasādhyāya" presents us with a somewhat unfamiliar portrait of the way consciousness is organized. According to the text and commentaries, the four primary basic emotions are sexual passion, anger, perseverance, and disgust. The four secondary basic emotions are amusement, sorrow, wonder, and fear. The ninth basic emotion, serenity, is sometimes viewed as a primary basic emotion and either substituted for disgust or associated with disgust (through a causal sequence that begins with horror and revulsion over attachments in the world, and ends with the serenity of ego alienation, detachment, and salvation).

In commenting on this scheme, it is worth noting that Sigmund Freud might find much of value in a conception of human personality that treats sexual passion and anger (and perseverance and disgust) as the deepest aspects of human experience. One wonders whether Freud would have interpreted perseverance and disgust as analogues to the life and death instincts. More notable, however, is the fact that the primary basic emotions are thus named because they are the "emotions" associated in classical and folk Hindu thought with the four worthy ends or goals of life. One of those goals of life—pleasure (*kāma*)—is linked to sexual passion. A second goal—control, autonomy, and power (*artha*)—is linked to anger. A third goal—social duty and moral virtue (*dharma*)—is linked to perseverance. The fourth and perhaps highest goal—purity, sanctity, salvation, or the attainment of divinity (*moksha*)—is linked to disgust and/or serenity. In other words, presupposed by this famous formulation about the organization of human emotions is a special and local theory of morality and human motivation and a specific way of life. Thus it is hardly surprising that this particular medi-

eval South Asian conception of the hierarchical structuring of consciousness into basics versus nonbasics and primary basics versus secondary basics should seem somewhat strange or alien to emotion researchers in North America, and vice versa. In other words, in the "Rasādhyāya" one finds a relatively elaborate account of the symbolic structures that give shape and meaning to a selected subset of mental experiences, which, because they have been privileged for local symbolic elaboration, have become transformed into mental experiences that people regard as "basic" in their particular culturally constituted world.

COMPARING AMERICAN "ANGER" AND TIBETAN *LUNG LANG*

The strategy adopted in the "Rasādhyāya" is to define a basic emotion by the implicit symbolic structure that gives shape and meaning to that emotion, and then to define that symbolic structure by resolving it into its determinants, consequences, and accompanying side effects. This strategy is directly parallel to various contemporary approaches to the cultural psychology of the emotions.

One aspect of this symbolic (or "cognitive," "interpretive," or "meaning-centered") approach is the view that kinds of emotions are not kinds of things like plants or animals. Instead, they are embodied interpretive schemes of a particular script-like or narrative form that give shape and meaning to the human experience of those conditions of the world that have a bearing on self-esteem (see Shweder, 1994b). The components that are proposed as slots in these emotion schemes may vary slightly from scholar to scholar, although most of the components or slots in use today can be found in the "Rasādhyāya."

Mesquita and Frijda (1992; see also Ellsworth, 1991; Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Lewis, 1989; Lewis, Sullivan, & Michalson, 1984; Lutz, 1985; Russell, 1991; Stein & Levine, 1987), for example, parse each emotion script into a series of components including "antecedent events," "event coding" (type of condition of the world), "appraisal" (judged implications for self-esteem and well-being), "physiological reaction patterns," "action readiness," "emotional behavior," and "regulation." Shweder (1994b) suggests a parsing of emotion scripts into components such as "self-involving condi-

tions of the world" (e.g., loss and gain, protection and threat), "somatic feelings" (e.g., muscle tension, pain, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, breathlessness), "affective feelings" (e.g., agitation, emptiness, expansiveness), "expressive modes" (e.g., face, posture, voice), and "plans for self-management" (e.g., to flee, to retaliate, to celebrate, to invest). (See also Shweder, 1991, where a slot is provided in the emotion narrative for variations in "social regulation" or the normative appropriateness of certain emotions being experienced or expressed.)

The primary assumption of the symbolic approach is that the "emotion" (e.g., sadness, fear, or love) is not something independent of or separable from the conditions that justify it, from the somatic and affective events that are ways of being touched by it, from the actions it demands, or the like. The "emotion" is the whole story: a kind of somatic event (fatigue, chest pain, goose flesh) and/or affective event (panic, emptiness, expansiveness) experienced as a perception of some antecedent conditions (death of a friend, acceptance of a book manuscript for publication, a proposition to go out to dinner) and their implications for the self (e.g., as loss, gain, threat, possibility), and experienced as well as a social judgment (e.g., of vice or virtue, sickness or health) and as a kind of plan for action to preserve one's self-esteem (attack, withdraw, confess, hide, explore). The "emotion" is the entire script. It is the unfolding experience of all the components, or, perhaps more accurately, the cohesive experience of the whole package deal.

A second aspect of the symbolic approach is the view that any "emotion" is decomposable into its components, and that these components are what must be compared when we ask whether two emotion experiences are the same or different across cultures. Based on earlier work by Shweder (1994b) and recent work by Horton (2006) attempting to integrate perspectives on emotion from across the fields of cognitive psychology and psychological anthropology, we find it useful to posit eight relevant components, which we describe below. We then illustrate the utility of this approach by using it to compare the emotion of "anger" (as it is experienced and understood by a sample of urban American adults) with the Tibetan emotion *lung lang* (as it is experienced and understood by Tibetan refugees [laity and religious virtuosos] settled in India). The eight components are as follows:

- *Component 1: Somatic experience.* Are people alike or different in introspectively and objectively observable physical changes (e.g., muscle tension, headaches, blood pressure shifts, activation of specific neural pathways) when they experience the emotion?

- *Component 2: Affective phenomenology.* Are people alike or different in their affective experiences (e.g., feelings of emptiness, calm, pleasantness, derealization, soul loss) when they experience the emotion?

- *Component 3: Environmental determinants.* Are people alike or different in the antecedent conditions associated with the emotion (e.g., winning the lottery, a remark from a subordinate, birth of a child, physical contact with a member of an outcaste group)?

- *Component 4: Appraisals of significance.* Are people alike or different in the appraisals of the antecedent conditions that elicit the emotion, and in ongoing construals that may inflect, extend, transform, or truncate the experience (e.g., others' actions were intentional, unwanted, goal-enhancing, expected, disrespectful, or status-degrading; the outcome can or cannot be changed)?

- *Component 5: Normative social appraisals.* Are people alike or different in the extent to which showing, displaying, or merely experiencing the emotion has been socially designated as a vice or virtue or as a sign of sickness or health?

- *Component 6: Self-management.* Are people alike or different in the impulses to action and plans for self-management that get activated in association with the emotion (e.g., to celebrate, to attack, to disengage and avoid the other person, to engage in problem solving)?

- *Component 7: Communication and symbolization.* Are people alike or different in the iconic and symbolic vehicles used for giving expression to the emotion (e.g., facial expressions, voice, posture, and action)?

- *Component 8: Social management.* Are people alike or different in the ways they respond to and manage the communication and symbolization of the emotion by others (e.g., empathically mirroring the emotion, cowering, withdrawing, discussing an individual's behavior with others, collectively shunning the individual)?

Depending on the interests and methodological commitments of investigators, any of these eight domains can be elaborated further. In ex-

tending the seventh component domain (communication and symbolization), for instance, one could ask: Are the cultures alike or different in the symbolic resources they accord their members for naming, evoking, and manipulating discrete facets of the emotional experience for the achievement of important social and individual goals (e.g., through meditations on compassion, death metal concerts, workshops on assertiveness training or anger management, mass political demonstrations, initiation rites, or vulnerability to dissociative states in which the emotion is prominent)?

We recognize that this componential model includes facets of emotion-related experience that many psychological researchers might resist including in a conceptual or analytic definition of emotion. From the perspective of the hybrid symbolic/interpretive/meaning-centered view of emotion that we are advancing, emotional experience is not analytically dissoluble from either the conditions that justify it or the social meaning systems that sustain it. This model offers a context-rich, maximally inclusive characterization of emotional experience—one in which elements of sociocultural and linguistic context provide the necessary background against which one can perceive local variations and transformations of the figural center of emotive processes.

The model can provide a useful framework for comparing emotional experiences not just across cultures, but within cultures as well. Horton (2006) has recently used the model to compare "anger" across three groups of individuals: a sample of American adults living in a mixed urban ethnic community, a sample of lay Tibetan refugees living in long-term settlements in India, and a sample of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns living in the same Indian communities.

The Tibetan emotion term *lung lang* (Wylie, 1959, gives it as *rlung langs*) is used by all classes of Tibetans living in the exile settlements of South Asia. It has a denotative breadth similar to that of the English "anger," and almost all modern bilingual dictionaries render it in English as simply "to get angry." The Tibetan expression, however, is actually a conceptual composite derived from two lexemes. The term *rlung*, which denotes the wind humor in the Tibetan ethnomedical system, is joined with the intransitive verb *langs pa*, which means "to rise." The combined expression *lung lang* thus invokes an underlying

psychophysiological model of the emotion as a rising movement of the wind that animates consciousness, upward from the chest. This underlying model articulates with cultural understandings of the sources of vulnerability to chronic anger, the expected long-term effects, and the phenomenology of the experience of the emotion.

In the following discussion, we compare anger and *lung lang*, using the eight components listed above to reveal a complex pattern of similarities and differences. We begin with the domain of normative social appraisals. We do so because we believe that examining the moral and ethical construals of anger in American culture versus *lung lang* in Tibetan culture provides a crucial background for understanding observations in the other component domains.

Component 5: Normative Social Appraisals

Tibetan and American respondents were asked, "In general, if you think about anger/*lung lang*, do you think of it as a good or a bad thing?" They were then asked, "For what reasons is it good or bad?" Citing views grounded in Mahayana Buddhist ethical and metaphysical thought, Tibetan respondents, both lay and clerical, unequivocally viewed *lung lang* as morally bad. They assimilated it to the sentiment *she dangs* (anger/hatred), one of the "three moral poisons" (*dug gsum*) that are commonly accepted by Buddhists to be the root sources of all suffering for sentient beings. Americans, by contrast, viewed anger as a morally ambivalent, neutral, or natural process. Although Americans recognized the potential harmful effects of anger for others, they were less likely than Tibetans to insist on its harmful effect for the person who experiences it. Indeed, Americans emphasized several positive aspects of anger: It gives one an energy that can be used in a positive way; it can lead to problems' being addressed that might otherwise persist; it can be beneficial to society. Tibetans, by contrast, viewed *lung lang* as a fundamentally destructive sentiment, equally harmful to self and others. They viewed it as arising from an intrinsically flawed motivational state (a desire to harm another sentient being) and generative of ultimately bad results. Reflecting upon metaphysical understandings of *karma*, they insisted upon the symmetry of *lung lang*'s ill effects for all parties involved.

In response to the question "If a person gets angry a lot, over and over again, what kinds of things might happen to that person?", Tibetans and Americans were alike in predicting adverse social and health effects. In fact, the most common metaphorical expressions for the anticipated adverse social effects of chronic anger/*lung lang* in the two cultures were identical. Tibetans and Americans agreed that people will "become more distant" (Tibetan: *thags ring po chags*) from the chronically angry individual. For Tibetans, these predicted social effects tended to involve community-level judgments and processes.

Although norms and expectancies were relatively easy to compare across cultural groups, comparing the two emotions across many of the remaining component domains required a somewhat different procedure. The researcher asked American and Tibetan respondents to discuss in detail a recent situation in which they had felt anger/*lung lang*. The interviewer probed for background information on the circumstances in which an incident occurred, who was involved, and particular judgments and appraisals that might have guided respondents as they felt the emotion. The interviewer assessed their subjective physical and affective feelings in the situation, as well as their fantasies, actions and impulses, the reactions of bystanders and other individuals in the situation, and the eventual resolution of the situation. Coded and scored, these data provided the basis for systematic tests of differences across sample groups.

Component 1: Somatic Experience

Tibetan *lung lang* and American anger displayed considerable overlap in the domain of somatic experience. Feelings of tension, shaking/nervousness, and heat were reported as common somatic feelings experienced with anger/*lung lang* in all three groups. Americans, however, produced a broader, more detailed range of descriptions of physical feelings associated with anger.

In terms of the long-term anticipated somatic effects of anger/*lung lang*, individuals from both cultures predicted bad health effects for chronically angry individuals. Some predicted effects were common across all three groups (e.g., heart disease, blood pressure problems) while some differed. Many Tibetans

predicted that such individuals would suffer from *srog lungs na tsha* (literally, a life-wind illness), a serious condition defined in Tibetan ethnomedical tradition. Several Tibetan respondents also asserted that the chronically angry individuals would be likely to die prematurely. Given the list of illnesses that Americans associate with chronic anger, it likewise would have been logically consistent for Americans to connect chronic anger directly with premature morbidity. Yet no American respondents made this connection.

Component 2: Affective Phenomenology

In contrast with other groups, several individuals from the Tibetan clerical sample described the experience of anger in dissociative terms (e.g., "It felt as though I were drunk or crazy at the time"). When asked, "When that situation had just ended, how did you feel?", Americans were far more likely than were Tibetans to report feelings of lingering anger. Tibetans (particularly the Buddhist clergy) were more likely than Americans to report feeling a host of other dysphoric emotional states at the end of the anger incidents. These included emotions similar to the sentiments lexicalized in English as "regret," "shame," and "unhappiness."

Lingering differences in the encoding and retrieval of memories of experiences of anger/*lung lang* were suggested by the fact that when respondents were asked, "If you think about that situation now, do you still feel a little angry?", Americans were much more likely than Tibetans were to say that they still felt angry when recalling the original situations. Americans did so whether the original feelings of anger were intense or mild. For Tibetans, the likelihood of feeling *lung lang* upon recalling the situation appeared driven by the strength of the feelings of *lung lang* in the original situation. Only in situations where original feeling of *lung lang* had been strong were Tibetan respondents likely to feel anger on recall.

Component 3: Environmental Determinants

The failure to meet obligations and disrespectful treatment by others were among the most common provocations to anger/*lung lang* in both cultures. For Tibetans, the experience of public criticisms and teasing (*kyag kyag*) that

had gotten out of hand played a disproportionate role as provocations. For Americans, a waste of the respondents' time served as a more common provocation. Tibetans reported particular difficulties with outgroup incidents of anger, reflecting tensions between the themselves and members of the local ethnically Indian communities where they now live. Socially, *lung lang* incidents displayed an asymmetric, hierarchical character not apparent in American anger incidents. Lay Tibetan respondents reported no incidents of feeling the emotion toward Buddhist monks or nuns, yet Tibetan monks and nuns readily reported such feelings toward lay individuals.

Component 4: Appraisals of Significance

Respondents from both cultures showed a reluctance to attribute a deliberate intent to harm the other party in the incidents they described. Across all groups, however, respondents rated their feelings of anger/*lung lang* as stronger when they said they had made such an attribution. Cultural differences in at least one variety of secondary appraisals were evident as well. Tibetans, both lay and clergy, were much less likely than Americans to judge the other person's provocative actions as typical or usual for that person. American respondents, by contrast, tended—chronically and spontaneously in open narratives—to connect the other person's provocative behavior in the current situation with the person's past behavior, and to assert that a dispositional pattern existed for the individual to act in that way. This attribution bias is consistent with prior cross-cultural research on the fundamental attribution error (cf. Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Miller, 1984). Collectively, this line of emerging research suggests that Americans make character-based, enduring dispositional attributions far more frequently than members of certain other cultural groups do.

Component 6: Self-Management

Tibetans were much more likely than Americans to believe that anger/*lung lang* can be prevented and even permanently transcended. Furthermore, many were able to point to individuals whom they believed had achieved such a state. Americans, by contrast, doubted whether anger-free living was either possible or

desirable. When the hypothetical question “What kind of person would it be who never becomes angry?” was posed, Americans offered responses like these: “People who don’t show it and then one day they explode,” or “Maybe someone who was severely abused as a child.” Some rejected the question outright, saying, for example, “We shouldn’t be talking about this like it’s a good thing.” American respondents thus actively pathologized the hypoexpression of anger; in contrast, the notion that the absence of feelings of anger could be pathological was rejected quite thoroughly by the Tibetans.

Although Americans and Tibetans endorsed different ideal strategies for managing the emotion, in practice they appeared similar in many of the action tendencies and behaviors they reported engaging when the emotional experience had been triggered. Actions ranged from taking time out, practicing patience (a set of specific Tibetan Buddhist techniques), and seeking mediation, to issuing open criticisms or threats and (in some cases) exchanging blows with the other party. Tibetans reported a significantly shorter duration for feeling anger/*lung lang* than Americans in the incidents they described. Tibetan clergy reported significantly less intensity of anger/*lung lang* feelings than Americans or lay Tibetans.

Component 7: Communication and Symbolization

The two cultures accord their members radically different resources for naming, evoking, and manipulating discrete facets of the experience of anger/*lung lang*. If one considers the diverse American social practices in which anger plays a central role (e.g., in spectacle entertainments like *The Jerry Springer Show*, death metal concerts, or professional wrestling; in therapeutic contexts like psychotherapy groups for children of alcoholics or anger management classes; or in diagnostic categories like intermittent explosive disorder), the ambivalent quality of the American view of anger is apparent. These widely differing American cultural practices offer individuals varied opportunities to engage in expressing, channeling, harnessing, directing, and controlling anger.

Tibetans, by contrast, possess a conceptually rich and elaborate tradition of Buddhist ideas and ethical practices—such as the mind-training (*blo sbyong*) tradition—and a set of

cultural institutions and rituals dedicated to the goal of eliminating or transforming *lung lang*. Heavy metal and gangster rap have not caught on with Tibetan settlement youths, among whom performers like the Backstreet Boys and Bryan Adams represent the transgressive edge of global youth culture impingements. Conceptual resources and social practices in Tibetan exile society reflect an unequivocal moral condemnation of anger/*lung lang* and related sentiments. Particularly through the institutional structures and practices of Buddhist monasticism, resources in Tibetan exile society are dedicated to transforming, calming, preventing, and extinguishing *lung lang*, rather than channeling, cultivating, harnessing, expressing and directing it effectively.

Component 8: Social Management

Consistent with the normative ethical rejection of anger in Tibetan culture, during incidents in which anger/*lung lang* was openly expressed and witnesses were present, Tibetan bystanders were more likely to show disapproval of open displays of anger than were American bystanders.

These comparisons have been extended with ethnographic and ethnolinguistic data (see Horton, 2006). We believe that they illustrate the value of adopting a componential, symbolic/interpretive model of emotions when one is seeking to compare emotional experiences across cultural groups.

BITE YOUR TONGUE: THE CASE OF HINDU LAJJA

When emotions are analyzed in terms of their constituent components, the issue of translation equivalence for mental states becomes a matter of pattern matching. One tries to determine whether the variables in each of those component slots are linked in similar ways across cultures. One benefit of this approach is that it makes it possible to elucidate the way the abstract conceptual or definitional core of any particular emotion takes on a culture-specific character in different historical traditions and is associated with a somewhat different set of mental states across cultural groups. Consider, for example, the contemporary Hindu conception of *lajja* (or *lajya*), which has

been explicated for two communities in South Asia: the Newars of Bhaktapur in Nepal (Parish, 1991), and the Oriyas of Bhubaneswar in Orissa, India (Menon & Shweder, 1994, 1998; Shweder, 2004). *Lajja* is often translated by bilingual informants and dictionaries as though it were equivalent in meaning to the English word “shame”; it is also sometimes translated as though it meant the same thing as the American English words “embarrassment,” “shyness,” “modesty,” or “coyness.” Yet, as should become obvious from the following bit of cultural exegesis, the translation of the meaning of mental states across languages and cultures is a far more subtle and hazardous process than many suppose.

For starters, somewhat unlike the meaning of “shame” current in contemporary Anglo-American circles, *lajja* is something one deliberately shows or puts on display the way we might show our “gratitude,” “loyalty,” or “respect.” It is a state of consciousness that has been elevated in South Asia as a supreme virtue, especially for women, and it is routinely exhibited in everyday life—for example, every time a woman covers her face or ducks out of a room to avoid direct affiliation with those members of her family she is supposed to avoid. Parish (1991, p. 324) describes it as an emotion and a moral state. It is by means of their *lajja* that those who are civilized uphold the social order by showing perseverance in the pursuit of their own social role obligations; by displaying respect for the hierarchical arrangement of social privileges and responsibilities; by acting shy, modest, or deferential and not encroaching on the prerogatives of others; or by covering one’s face, remaining silent, or lowering one’s eyes in the presence of superiors. Like gratitude, loyalty, or respect, *lajja* (which is a way of showing one’s civility and commitment to the maintenance of social harmony through displays of respectful restraint) is judged in South Asia to be a very good thing.

While *lajja* may be experienced by both men and women, it is an emotion and a virtue associated with a certain feminine ideal. It is talked about as a lovely ornament worn by women. *Lajja* is the linguistic stem for the name of a local creeper plant (a “touch-me-not”), which is so demure that upon the slightest contact it closes its petals and withdraws into itself. To say of a woman that she is full of *lajja* is a very positive recommendation. Here is one reason why.

Perhaps the most important collective representation of *lajja* in various regions of eastern India is the Tantric icon portraying the mother goddess Kali, brandishing weapons and a decapitated head in her 10 arms, eyes bulging and tongue out, with her foot stepping on the chest of her husband, the god Siva, who is lying on the ground beneath her. Based on interviews with 92 informants in Orissa, India, Menon and Shweder (1994, 1998, 2003) have examined the meaning of this icon and its significance for our understanding of *lajja*.

The gist of the story, as it is narrated by local experts, is that once upon a time the male gods gave a boon to a minor demon, Mahisasura, to the effect that he could only be killed at the hands of a naked female. They thereby turned Mahisasura into a major demon capable terrorizing all the male gods. In order to destroy the demon, the male gods pooled all their energy and powers to create the goddess Durga and arm her with their own weapons. On their behalf, they sent Durga into battle against Mahisasura, but they neglected to tell her about the boon. She fought bravely, but could not kill the demon; he was too strong and clever. In desperation, Durga appealed for guidance from an auspicious goddess, who let her in on the secret. As one informant narrated the story:

So Durga did as she was advised to [she stripped], and within seconds after Mahisasura saw her [naked], his strength waned and he died under her sword. After killing him a terrible rage entered Durga’s mind, and she asked herself, “What kinds of gods are these that give to demons such boons, and apart from that what kind of gods are these that they do not have the honesty to tell me the truth before sending me into battle?”

Durga felt humiliated by her nakedness and by the deceit. She decided that such a world with such gods did not deserve to survive; she took on the form of Kali and went on a mad rampage, devouring every living creature that came in her way. The gods then called on Siva, Kali’s husband, to do something to save the world from destruction at the hands of the mother goddess. Siva lay in her path as she came tramping along, enraged. Absorbed in her wild dance of destruction, Kali accidentally stepped on Siva and placed her foot on her husband’s chest, an unspeakable act of disrespect. When she looked down and saw what she had