**The Authenticity of Emotion Expression: Understanding the Pattern of Emotion Perception Across Cultures**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this three-paper dissertation is to investigate how East Asians and European Americans perceive and express emotions. Broadly, I look at emotion expressions through facial expressions only, with face and the context combined, and emotion expression with emoticon on-line. In the first paper, I use multiple methods and present evidence that East Asians perceive more mixed emotions from facial expressions than European Americans. In the second paper I present a series of studies that show that East Asians might not believe the facial expressions are the authentic indicator of genuine feelings. In the third paper, I demonstrate that the East Asians are more expressive on-line as opposed to off-line and sometimes more expressive than another group. For this dissertation prospectus, I propose additional research to bolster each paper for eventual publication.

**Outline of the Prospectus Document**

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**I. Introduction to Multi-paper Dissertation Process**

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the mechanism explaining the cultural difference of emotion perception and expression between East Asians and European Americans. By cultural difference, I refer to the difference in perceiving mixed emotion, interpreting facial expression, and expressing emotions on-line. Given the broad scope of this research aim, I propose a multi-paper format in which three distinct papers collectively address the dissertation aim.

I begin by discussing general background information motivating my dissertation and study aims. For each paper, I briefly describe background literature, the theoretical framework, methods, and findings. I have also included three corresponding manuscripts to provide more details. I am currently in the process of revising each manuscript to submit it for publication. For the dissertation prospectus meeting, I have specific questions (methodological and theoretical) I wish to receive feedback from the committee to bolster each paper for eventual publication.

**II. Background and Study Aims**

Decades of empirical work indicate that there is cultural difference of emotion perception and emotion expression. For instance, In European American culture emotional expression is more valued, and correspondingly, expressive suppression is considered not only undesirable but also unhealthy (Kim and Markus, 1999; Mauss and Gross, 2004; Butler et al., 2007). Notably, a recent review of the current emotion expression literature argued that East Asians are trained to attenuate the overt expressions of their feelings, while European Americans are encouraged to express emotions fully (Rothbaum et al., 2000).

However, despite the plethora of compelling evidence, the reason for having these cultural differences in affective patterns is not well understood and speculative. One stream of scholarship argues that independence/interdependence is related to this cultural differences. These authors argue that … (cite XXXX). While this explanation is supported in the literature, the question remains: ( ).

Moreover, new technology has rapidly changed how people communicate and express themselves. The bulk of previous work focuses on emotional expression in other context, but the internet and social media offer unparalleled opportunities for investigating emotions. We still yet do not know how each cultural group would express and perceive emotions in new modern channels, such as, facebook, twitter, and texting. Thus, a better understanding of the mechanism of cultural difference as well as testing the theory in multiple formats is necessary.

This three-paper dissertation investigates the mechanisms of cultural difference on emotion perception and emotion expression. Using a large cross-culturally representative sample of young adults, Chapter One first shows that Japanese perceive more mixed emotions than European Americans. Subsequent studies replicate this tendency and test possible explanations for such cultural differences by investigating the appraisals generated by participants. Chapter Two investigates the relative weight of the context as compared to facial expression. Specifically, it investigates whether people follow facial expression or the context when they are provided with contradictory information: on the one hand, much research suggests that facial expression is more important than the context information; on the other, research shows that context outweigh the information facial expressions convey. Also, this line of research has only been done with European American samples. To address these contradicting results from limited samples, I test whether people follow facial expression or the context information across cultures when face and the context are incongruent (i.e., a smiling face in a negative situation). Finally, Chapter Three investigates the idea that East Asians have different emotion expression pattern on-line, where there is less pressure to control their feelings. Emotions are conveyed via multiple channels of communication, and investigations of emotion expression and recognition outside of facial channel would bring more ecological validity.

**III. Summary and Specific Questions for Members for Prospectus Discussion**

**Chapter One Summary**

The first chapter of my dissertation examines cultural differences in mixed emotion perception. Previous cross-cultural comparisons of experiencing mixed emotion found that East Asians experience positive and negative emotions simultaneously more than European Americans. However, not much is known regarding differences across cultures in how people perceive mixed emotion from facial expressions.

By presenting facial expressions varying in valence, race, and gender to participants, we tested whether East Asians not only experience but also perceive more mixed emotions than European Americans. Study 1 compared the mean number of opposite-valence emotions perceived across 80 facial stimuli (i.e., perceiving happiness when presented with a frowning face), and found that Japanese participants perceived more mixed emotions than European Americans. Study 2 replicated the findings with different pool of subjects from both Japan and the United States, using more facial stimuli.In study 3, we used open-ended essay format to ask what the person in the picture is feeling and replicated the findings from study 1 and 2. The attached manuscript (Cho et al) is ready to submit for publication. Based on the feedback from reviewers, I plan to run more analyses or add more studies to bolster this package.

**Questions for prospectus meeting discussion**

**Chapter Two Summary**

Chapter two of my dissertation investigates the perception of the authenticity of facial expression across cultures. Both scholarly (Graham, 1993; Zhang et al., 1989; Brett et al., 1998; Adair et al., 2001) and non-scholarly observations (Salacuse, 2004; Shonk, 2015) have been made about cultural differences in communication in negotiation settings, arguing that it is hard to read the intention of Japanese businessmens’ facial expressions, compared to American businessmen. In particular, negotiators from Western cultures see Japanese people’s expressions as ambiguous and contradictory. Is this masked expression of Japanese businessmen only observed in negotiation settings, or is this a more general characteristic of East Asians’ expression patterns?

This cultural anecdote suggests a set of intriguing questions about the authenticity of facial expressions across cultures, and why we see those cultural differences. Do East Asians more often express emotions that are incongruent with their true feelings? And do East Asians have different assumptions about the authenticity of the facial expression when they perceive other people’s emotion? There has not been systematic experimental research investigating this questions. Thus, Chapter Two attempts to provide insight into this questions.

**Questions for prospectus meeting discussion**

**Chapter Three Summary**

The last chapter of my dissertation investigate cultural differences in emotion perception and expression on-line. New technology has rapidly changed how people communicate and express themselves. The most of previous work on culture and emotion focuses on emotional expression and perception other situations (in-lab, imagined context, and the like), Thus, whether they translate to online social context is unclear. Addressing this issue is important because online social networks are changing they way people communicate, provide, and receive ideas and support.

**IV. Tentative Dissertation Time line**