**Learning Journal Unit 5**

University of the People

PSYC 1504-01: Introduction to Psychology-AY2025-T2

Tabitha Copeland

20 December 2024

# Learning Journal Unit 5

**Reflection on Week 5 Discussion**

The Week 5 discussion provided me an opportunity to explore the sexual orientation and cultural perspectives on late adulthood. Reviewing the contributions of my peers highlighted both similarities and differences in their responses, as well as the emotional and theoretical implications of this aspect. Reflecting on their discussions through the lens of emotional theories, particularly James-Lange, Cannon-Bard, and Schachter-Singer theories, provides deeper insight into how emotions influence and shape perceptions, values, and attitudes on sensitive issues.

**Similarities and Differences**

Both topics—societal involvement in sexual orientation and cultural views on late adulthood—address fundamental aspects of human identity and experience. The similarity lies in their connection to societal norms, values, and personal emotions. In both cases, the emphasis was on the role of culture in shaping perspectives. For instance, Opolot Robert and Oluwadabira Adebayo discussed how traditional respect for elders in Ugandan and Nigerian cultures aligns with Erikson's stage of *Integrity vs. Despair*, highlighting the importance of communal bonds in late adulthood. Similarly, Abigail Simpeh and Ssegwanyi Billgates emphasized the need for societal inclusivity and understanding of sexual orientation, citing its biological and environmental influences.

However, the key difference between the topics lies in the emotional responses and societal challenges they invoke. Discussions on sexual orientation often focused on issues of discrimination, stigmatization, and the need for acceptance. This contrasts with the predominantly respectful views of late adulthood in most cultures, where elders are often revered and celebrated, albeit with challenges like isolation arising from modernization. For example, Ssegwanyi Billgates highlighted the cultural value of *filial piety*, where elders are cared for, while Abigail Simpeh pointed out that modernization in Ghana may erode traditional support systems.

**Emotional Responses and Theories**

The emotional theories of James-Lange, Cannon-Bard, and Schachter-Singer provide a framework for understanding how students approached these topics. The **James-Lange Theory** suggests that physiological responses precede emotional experience. For instance, individuals may first feel discomfort or tension when discussing sexual orientation in culturally restrictive societies, and this discomfort translates into fear or resistance. This might explain why some cultures respond with rejection rather than acceptance.

In contrast, the **Cannon-Bard Theory** argues that emotions and physiological responses occur simultaneously. For example, when students discussed societal respect for elders, their emotional response of reverence or nostalgia occurred alongside recognition of the challenges older adults face. Both Opolot Robert and Oluwadabira Adebayo demonstrated this balance, acknowledging the dignity afforded to elders while recognizing the realities of physical decline and marginalization.

The **Schachter-Singer Theory** (also called the Two-Factor Theory of Emotion) integrates cognition with emotion, suggesting that emotions result from physiological arousal combined with a cognitive label. This theory aligns with how students framed societal involvement in sexual orientation. For instance, Abigail Simpeh and Ssegwanyi Billgates emphasized education and societal awareness as tools for fostering acceptance. Their responses reflect how cognitive reframing—challenging preconceived notions and learning about biological and environmental influences—can transform emotional responses from prejudice to empathy and inclusivity.

**Personal Reflections**

The discussion invoked a range of emotions, particularly when considering the experiences of individuals facing discrimination due to their sexual orientation. It is encouraging to see peers advocating for societal involvement to foster acceptance and protect human dignity. However, the reality of stigmatization, as highlighted by Oluwadabira Adebayo and Ssegwanyi Billgates, also evokes concern and sadness about the challenges still faced in many parts of the world.

Conversely, the discussion on late adulthood inspired a sense of admiration and respect for the cultural practices that honor elders. The emphasis on familial bonds, legacy-building, and communal support aligns with Erikson's theory of achieving *ego integrity* over despair. However, as Oluwadabira noted, the societal pressure to remain productive in old age can be emotionally taxing. This raises important considerations about how modernization and shifting cultural values impact the well-being of older adults.

Overall, these discussions reinforced the importance of emotional awareness and cultural sensitivity. While progress has been made in fostering inclusivity and respect, challenges remain, particularly in addressing stigmatization and balancing traditional values with modern realities.

**Conclusion**

Reflecting on the Week’s discussions through emotional theories highlights the interplay between emotions, cognition, and societal norms. The similarities between the topics—their cultural and emotional significance—were apparent, while the differences underscored the unique challenges each issue presents. The responses demonstrate empathy, intellectual engagement, and a commitment to understanding diverse perspectives. While discussions on sexual orientation evoked feelings of concern for marginalized groups, reflections on late adulthood inspired respect for cultural traditions and the resilience of older adults. These discussions serve as a powerful reminder of the need for ongoing dialogue, education, and emotional understanding in addressing complex societal issues.

**References**

Cannon, W. B. (1927). The James-Lange theory of emotions: A critical examination and an alternative theory. *The American Journal of Psychology, 39*(1/4), 106–124.

Erikson, E. H. (1982). *The life cycle completed*. Norton & Company.

James, W. (1884). What is an emotion? *Mind, 9*(34), 188–205.

Schachter, S., & Singer, J. (1962). Cognitive, social, and physiological determinants of emotional state. *Psychological Review, 69*(5), 379–399.