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Introduction

The following paper discusses the chapter “Cultural Variation in Emotion” from the book by Parkinson, Fischer and, Manstead. The authors explore the peculiarities of cultural framework regarding the processes of expression and decoding of emotions by the representatives of different cultural settings. They indicate that in general, communities split into collectivistic and individualistic, which influences on their model and choice of expression of emotions and their strength. Furthermore, the paper provides a personal reflection on the characterized material along with the analysis of individual experiences of intercultural communication. Therefore, the writing concludes that the proposed framework of individualistic and collectivistic models of expression and decoding of emotions is valid and relevant. The reason for this is that it is supported by individual experiences of the author in the sphere of intercultural communication and explains the emotional behavior of the communicants. Consequently, the unity of obtained knowledge and experience may be used in order to create successful intercultural contact including the emotional aspect of social interaction.

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Introduction

The world's societies differ in numerous ways, which people can observe visually and from the behavior of their counterparts. Typically, people differentiate the representatives of other societies on the basis of the stereotypes about the countries, which they represent. However, scholars identify key principles, which allow discovering the differences not only from the perspective of social representation and behavior but emotions. These aspects are described in the book "Emotion in Social Relations" by Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead. The book discusses the role of emotions in different societies on the basis of their individualistic and collectivistic structure. The authors suggest that understanding emotions can be a difficult task for the representatives of different communities. This paper provides an overview of a chapter, which discusses cultural variations in emotions. Moreover, it presents personal reflections regarding the topic along with their application to real-life experiences. Such reflection and analysis enhance the understanding of the issue along with the gaining insight into specific aspects of one's life.

Summary

The chapter "Cultural Variation in Emotion" in the book by Parkinson, Fischer and Manstead discusses the variations in emotional perception and

expression by representatives of different cultures. It characterizes such aspects as basic emotions and expressions, emotion decoding rules, cultural differences in emotion depending on the representative of a culture and other. Thus, the basic milestone of the discussion of the societies into individualistic and collectivistic ones. The authors claim that this division leads to a collective determination of the principles of encryption and decryption of emotions. Thus, people of collectivism and status orientation follow the cultural display rule to mask negative emotional expressions and expect this practice from their counterparts. On the contrary, in individualistic cultures “emotions are important not as indicators of social position and relation but in their own right and for their own sake, because they ... reflect inner self”. Consequently, the representatives of Japanese and Anglo-Saxon cultures may decode the demonstration of specific emotions differently. In such cases, the stakeholders from Japan expect a more restrained demonstration of emotions whereas the Americans are assured that people experience true and sincere emotions at their full capacity. Therefore, cultural misunderstanding may occur on the basis of incorrect decoding of emotions. Furthermore, scholars demonstrate the statistics, which explores that there is direct proportion dependence between the remoteness of the culture and the occurrence of falsely recognized emotions. Thus, the more remote is the culture from its counterpart, the more evident is the decrease in correct labeling of emotions. The only one emotion, which is adequately recognized in all communities, is happiness because there were “near-perfect results for smiles” during the experiments. Additionally, the authors classify emotions into basic and pleasant and unpleasant in order to classify the results of

their investigations regarding collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Among their further discoveries is that collective cultures associate anger with aggression whereas the Western decoding of this emotion corresponds to assertiveness. Furthermore, the feeling of shame has more social implications in Asian cultures where a person fears of conducting immoral conduct in order not to involve the shame of the family. Similarly, different cultures have a different perception of sadness and grief. For instance, in Tahitian culture, there are no words to express sadness which is substituted by the concept of “loss of emotions”. Consequently, the authors conclude that it is important to evaluate the cultural differences in the perception of one’s counterparts in order to achieve the appropriate social and emotional contact. Therefore, this approach can enhance the productivity of intercultural communication and benefit to its initiators.

Response

Furthermore, there is a need for a provision of the response regarding the specific aspect of the discussed chapter. The selected part is the one which discusses the differences of the perception of happiness and joy. I have chosen this part because the discussed materials coincide with my individual experience of intercultural communication. Thus, the authors claim that self-esteem is closely connected with the display of happiness in American culture. They stress that for Americans, “feeling good or being happy is strongly associated with personal achievement, success, and self-promotion”. On the contrary, the representatives of collectivistic cultures demonstrate that happiness for them has the association with

connectedness with other people. Thus, Americans are more focused on self-esteem, self-appraisal, and one's ego whereas the Japanese are led by social comparison and "other appraisal". As a representative of the American culture, I understand that in the case I get a good mark for this paper, I would feel happy. Otherwise I would feel sad because I put a lot of efforts, and I assume that they should be adequately assessed. At the same time, I realize that in the case a person from China writes this paper, he or she would be happy to make one's family be proud of one's positive mark. On the contrary, it would be a shame for this individual and the shame for one's family. I suggest that this is the motivation for the Chinese children to do well at school. They want their parents to be happy with their academic success and fear of social shame. Judging from my individual experiences, these assumptions are correct because they coincide with the observations of my friends.

Experience

My personal experience of intercultural communication supports the statements of the authors regarding the difference in expression and decoding of emotions. I have a plenty of friends, which represent other cultures. Some of them are from Swedes, others from Russia, Japan, China and other countries. Occasionally I communicate with some of them via video phone services whereas I am in touch with my American friends every day. Judging from my personal experience of communication, I have always thought that Russians are mostly grim and unemotional whereas my friend from Russia wondered why I smiled without any reason. Moreover, the

Asian representatives lack in terms of the overall expression of emotions whereas Italians tend to explode out of their emotions when we discuss something. Initially, I was confused by the emotional differences, but then I got used to their manner of expression and started taking it as it was. The discussion of the chapter increased my awareness in intercultural differences and provided me with the theoretical basis for my experiences of intercultural communication. Therefore, I know that people of the world differ not only in terms of language and cultural traditions. Moreover, they differ in the way they express their emotions and render the emotions of the others.

Conclusion

Summarizing the presented information, one comes to a conclusion that the chapter by Parkinson, Fischer and Manstead discusses an important issue regarding the intercultural perception of emotions. The authors claim that the societies differ regarding their collectivistic and individualistic principles of evaluation and demonstration of emotions. These social constructs serve as a framework, which influences on the decisions of regarding the way and strength of emotional expression. Similarly, people use the frameworks of their cultures in order to decode the emotions of their counterparts from other countries. As a result, misunderstanding can emerge because different cultures differ in their attitudes to emotions. These assumptions are supported by personal evidence, which includes communication with the representatives of Italian, Russian, Japanese, American and Chinese cultures. The analysis of these experiences allowed

understanding that the reactions of surprise regarding different emotional perceptions were guided by the cultural framework, which shapes the emotional reaction. Consequently, the analyzed chapter enhanced the individual understanding of the reasons for the problems in intercultural contact. The application of this knowledge would benefit in terms of establishing an efficient intercultural contact.