# Culture and Emotion (pt. II)

Psychology of Emotion
Lecture 9
Professor David Pizarro

# Cultural "Display Rules"

- Perhaps there is much more cultural variability in the expression of emotion than in actual experience.
- Display rule: Cultural rules that dictate how emotions should be expressed and when and where their expression is appropriate
- Often, a society's display rules require people to give evidence of certain emotions that they may not actually feel or to disguise their true feelings

- Appropriateness of negative emotions in public, social setting.
  - Between Japanese and U.S. Americans
  - Minangkabau of West Sumatra
  - Between Costa Rican and U.S. Americans
  - In the U.S., differences found across racial and gender groups.

# Early influence of Display Rules

- 3-year-old (American) girls, when given an unattractive gift, smiled nevertheless
  - They had already learned a display rule and signaled an emotion they very likely did not feel

# Back to Friesen (1972)

- American and Japanese Study
- Viewed movie depicting surgical procedure
  - alone
  - then with experimenter
- Japanese students were stone-faced in the presence of the authority (experimenter)
- But showed JUST AS MUCH disgust when alone.

# Cross-Generational Differences

- Cultural Display Rules exert a powerful effect across generations (Tsai, 2003)
  - Americans of Scandinavian vs. Irish descent
  - Differences in valuing of emotional expression
  - During a “Reliving Emotions” task, American Scandinavians were less expressive than American Irish
  - Difference up to 3rd generation of US residence

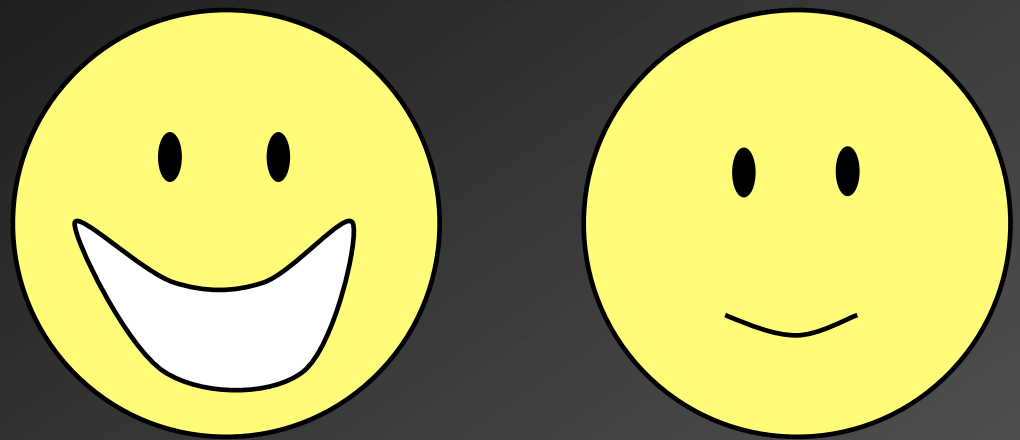
# Display rules and bi-cultural individuals

- Pose a particular problem for individuals who have a different home culture
- Nonetheless, individuals seem to be able to smoothly transition across cultures.
  - (transitions are harder if they are *essentialists* about race; Chao et al, 2007)

# Affect Valuation Theory

- Cultures differ in the kinds of emotions they value (Jeanne Tsai)

# Smile Preferences



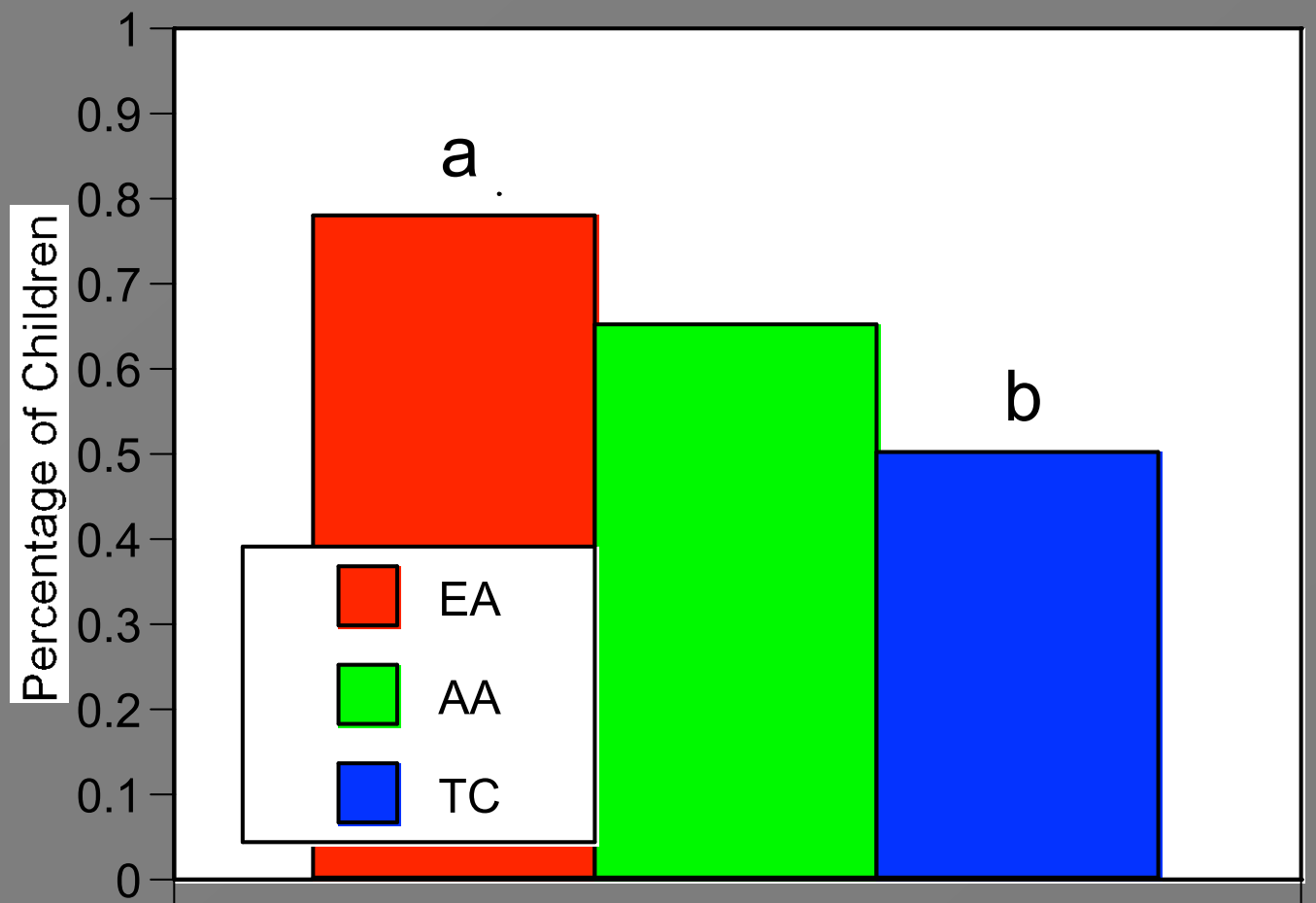
Excited

Calm

1. Which one would you rather be?
2. Which one is more happy?

Tsai, J.L., Louie, J., Chen, E., & Uchida, Y. (2007). Learning what feelings to desire: Socialization of ideal affect through storybooks. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 33,* 17-30.

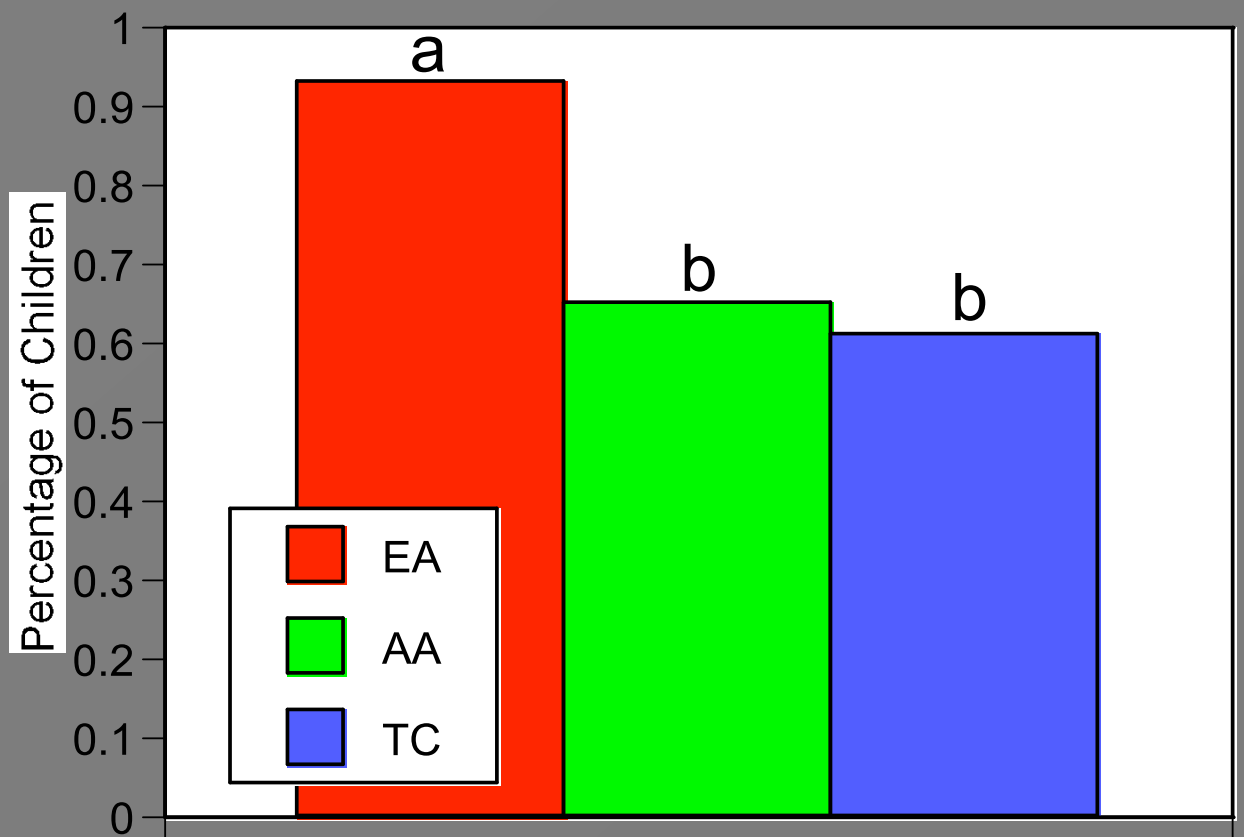
# European American Preschoolers Prefer Excited Smile More Than Do Taiwanese Chinese Preschoolers




***Letters indicate significant differences (p<.05)***

Tsai, Louie, et al., (2007). *PSPB. Study 1.*

# European American Preschoolers Perceive Excited Smile As "More Happy" Than Do Taiwanese Preschoolers



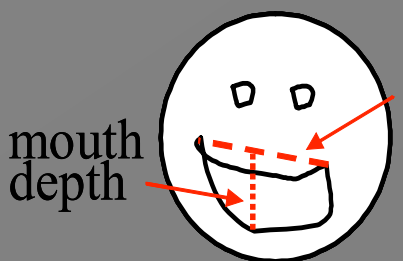
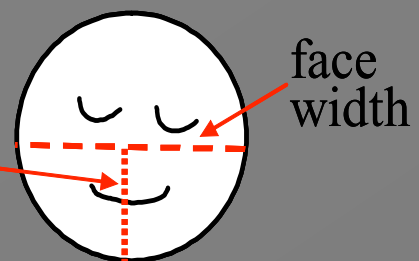
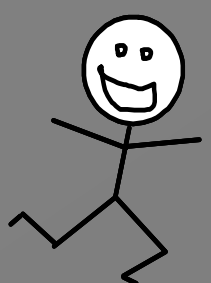
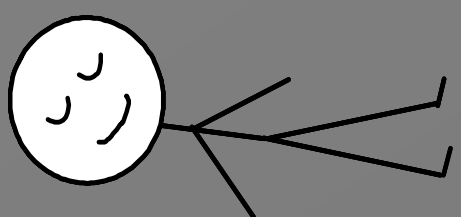

***Letters indicate significant differences (p<.05)***

Tsai, Louie, et al., (2007). *PSPB. Study 1.*

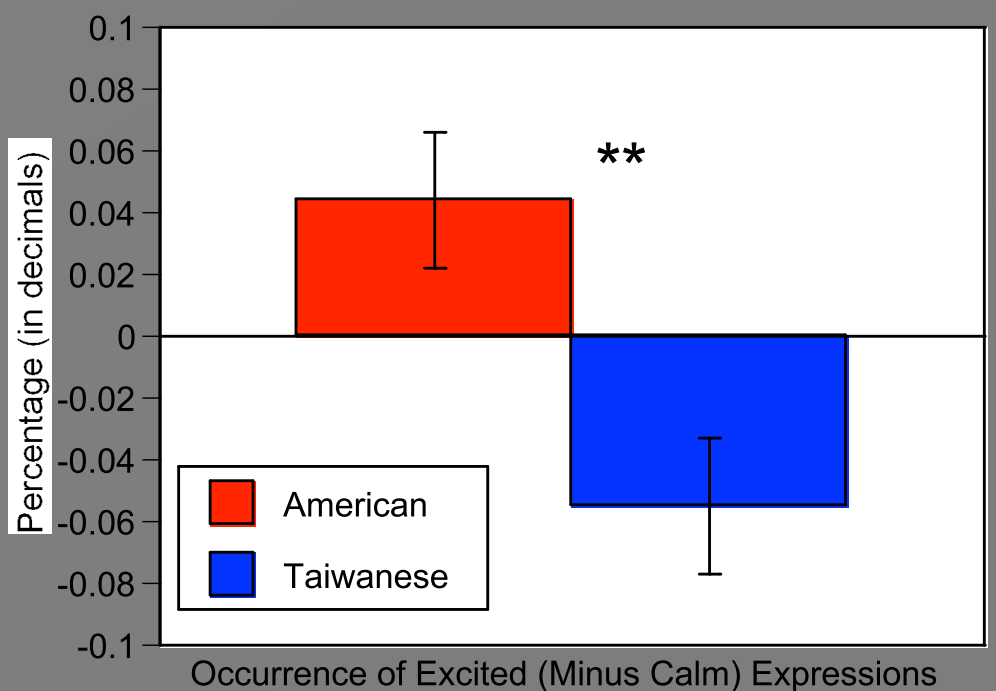
*Where the Wild Things Are*

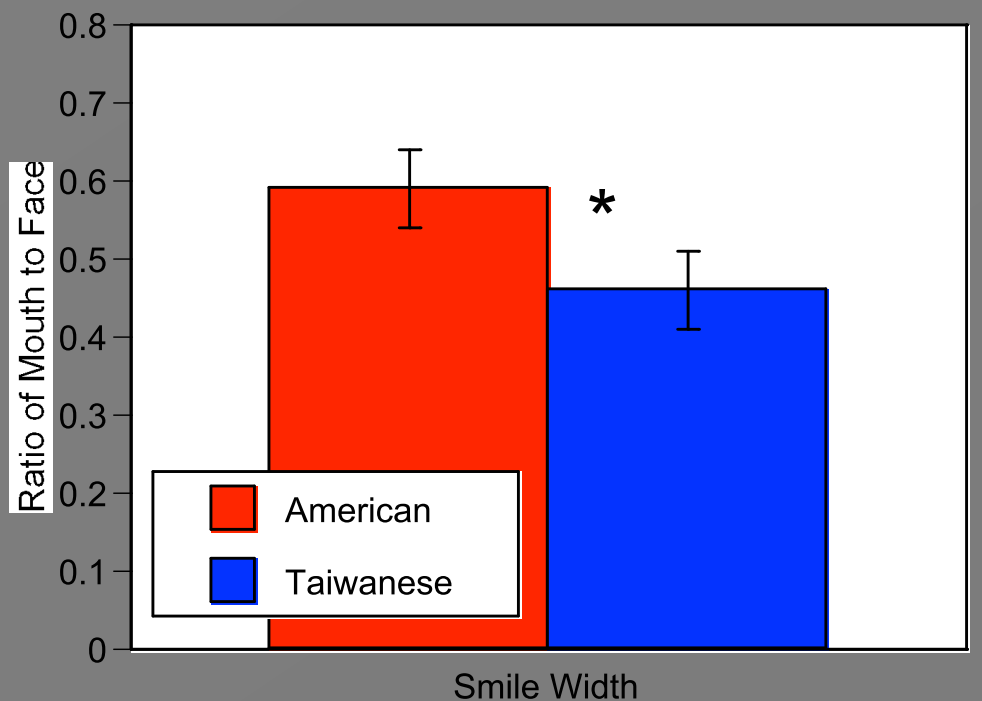
*Xiao er yue de gushi*

Tsai, Louie, et al., (2007). *PSPB. Study 2.*

| | Excited | Calm |
|---|---|---|
| Facial Expression | | |
| Mouth and face depth & width |   |   |
| Activity Arousal (1=low, 3 = high) |  |  |

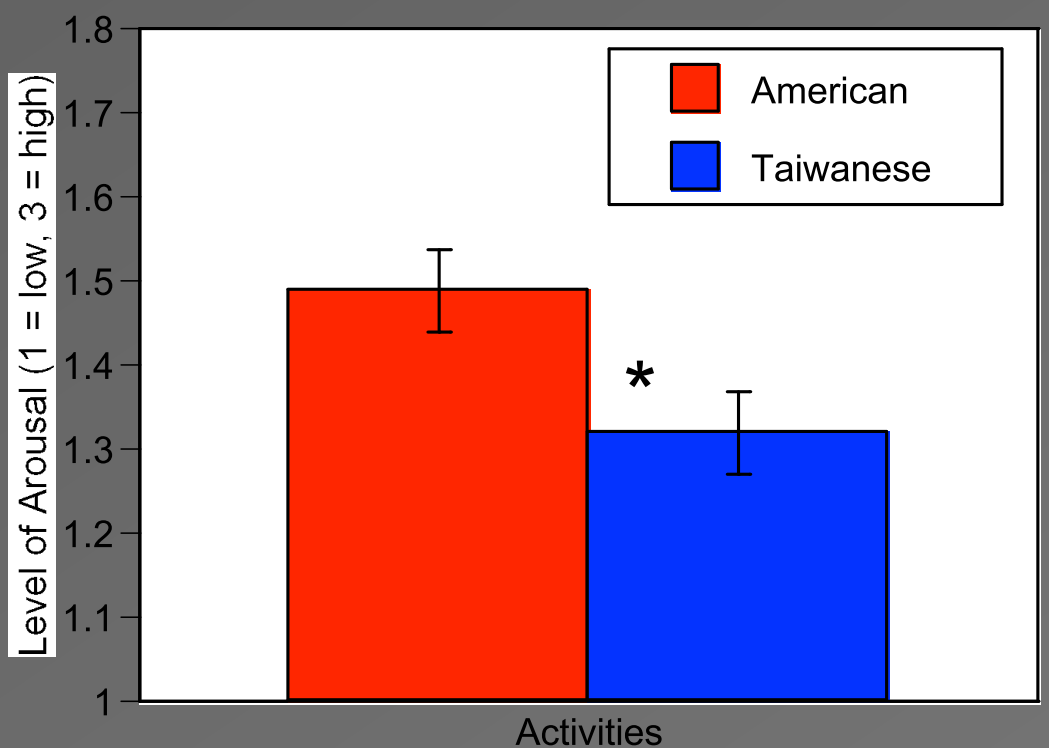
# American Bestsellers Contain More Exciting Faces and Wider Smiles Than Taiwanese Bestsellers




Tsai, Louie, et al., (2007). *PSPB. Study 2.*

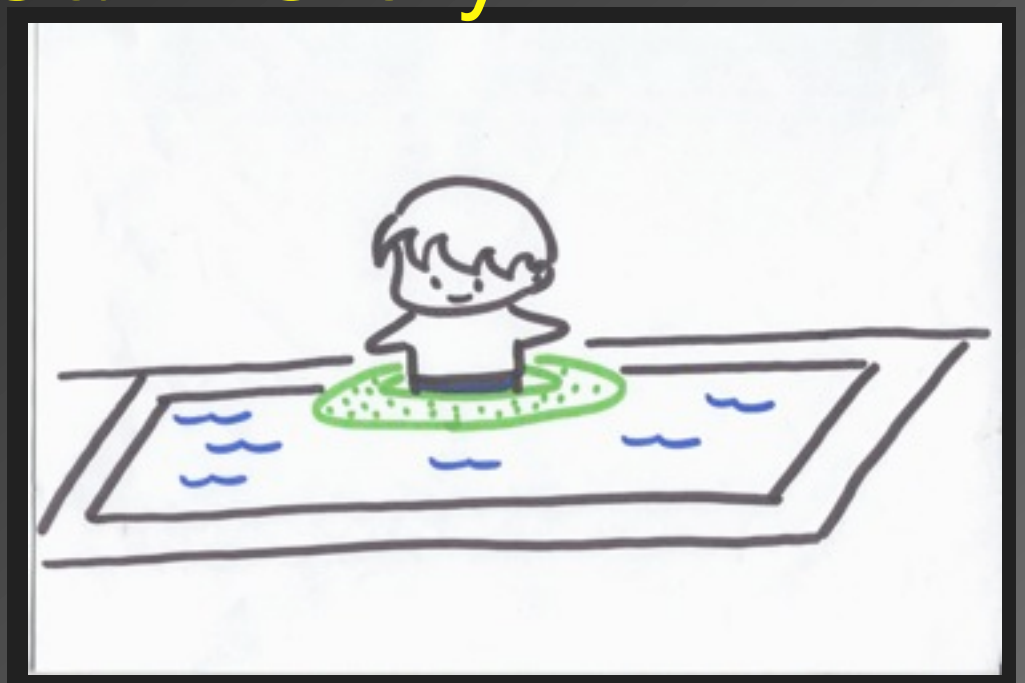
# American Bestsellers Contain More Exciting Activities Than Taiwanese Bestsellers




Tsai, Louie, et al., (2007). *PSPB. Study 2.*

# Exciting or Calm Story

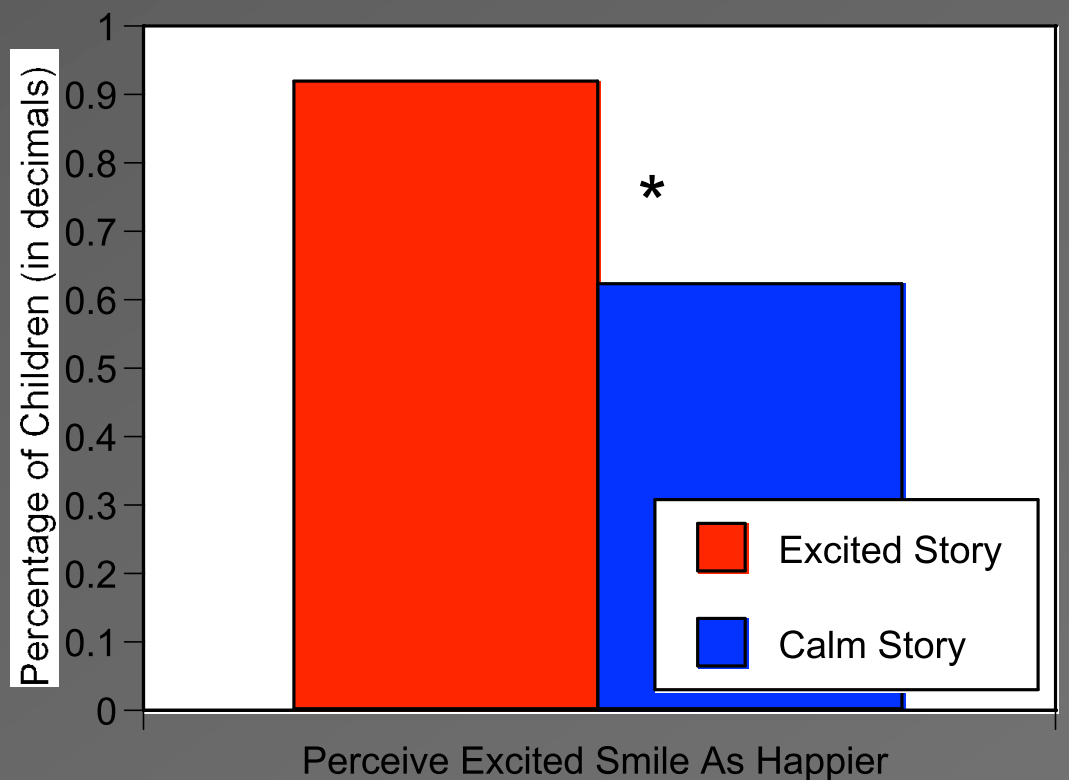
"Alex **jumps in doing a cannonball** in the swimming pool."



"Andy **sits and floats using his inner tube** in the swimming pool."

Tsai, Louie, et al., (2007). *PSPB. Study 3.*

# Across Groups, Children in the Exciting Story Condition Perceive Excited Smile As More Happy



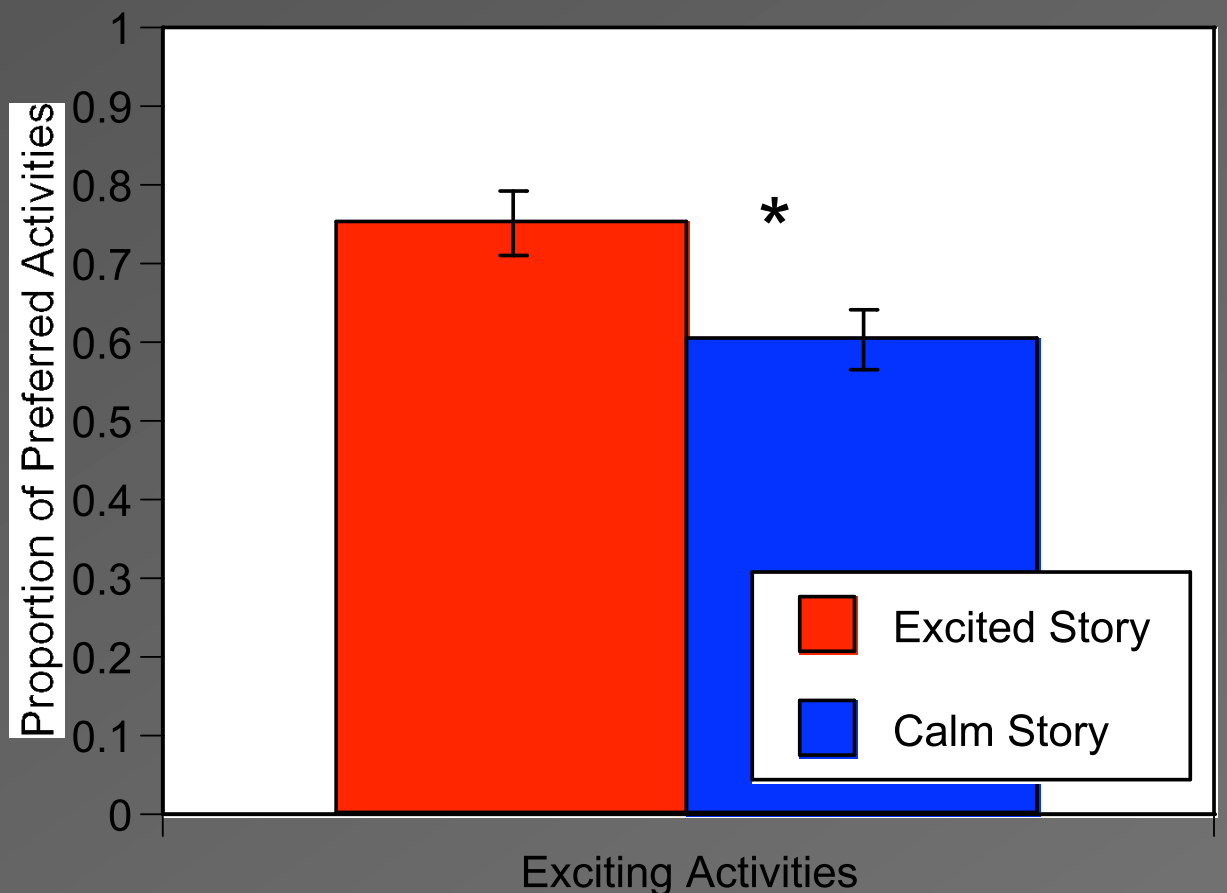

$p < .05$

Tsai, Louie, et al., (2007). *PSPB. Study 3.*

# Activity Preferences

Which one would you like in your “perfect playground”?

# Across Groups, Children in the Exciting Story Condition Prefer More Exciting Activities

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Tsai, Louie, et al., (2007). *PSPB. Study 3.*

# Summary

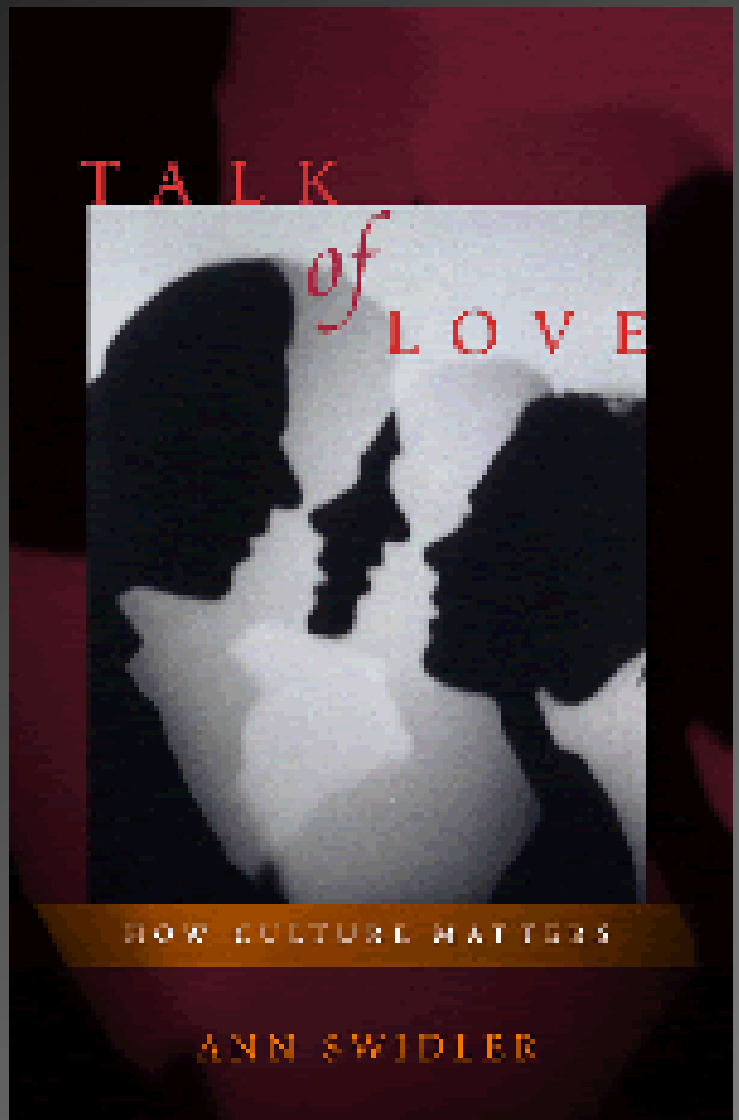
- Real differences in physiological reaction
  - BUT, physiology heavily influenced by culture
- Large differences in cultural norms about the value of affect, and about the appropriate “display rules”
- Next week--more culture...

# What kinds of cross-cultural differences might exist?

1. Physiology
2. Display Rules
3. **Emotion Lexicon**

# The Social Construction of Emotion

- Anthropological Tradition
  - Wide differences in cultural views of the world
  - Must immerse oneself into the culture in order to understand the differences
  - Example: social construction of “love”


TALK
of
LOVE
HOW CULTURE MATTERS
ANN SWIDLER

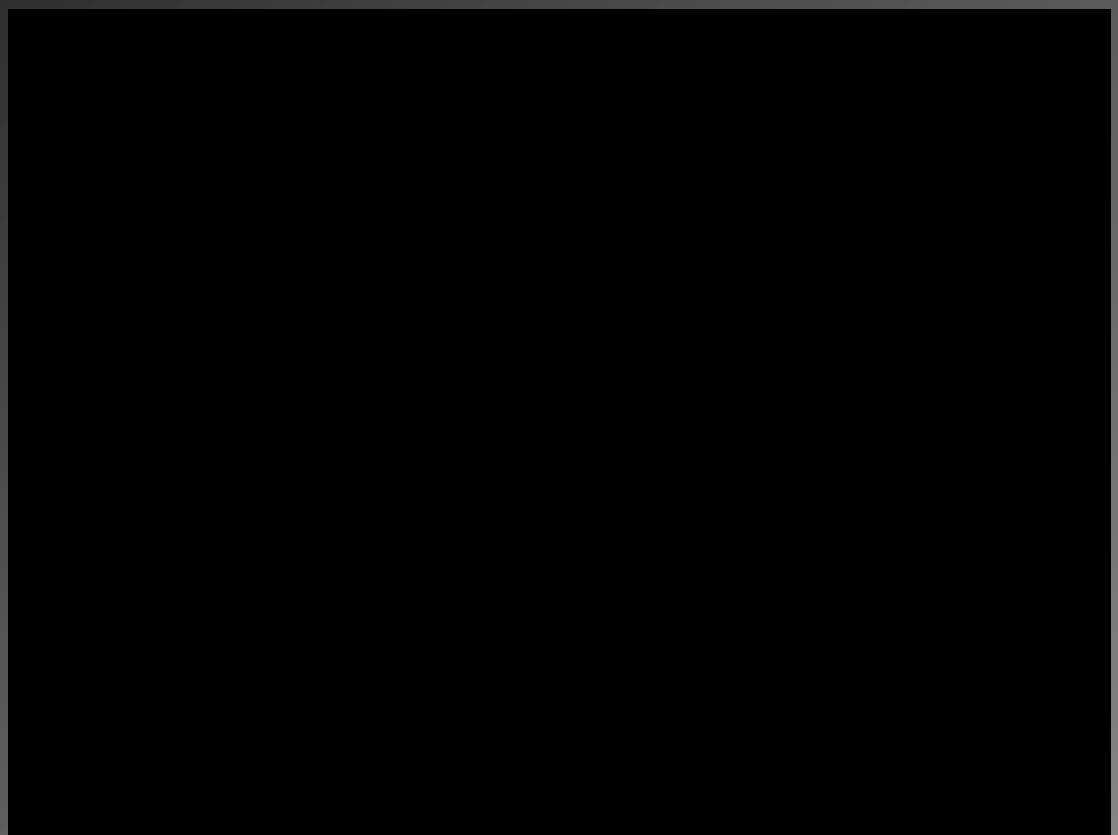
# Two versions of "love" (Swidler, 2001)

- Interviews with 88 middle-class men and women of various ages
  - "First-sight" love that turns your world upside-down
  - "Slow-growing" love that takes time, is deep and strong, and can happen with more than one person (not only one "true match")
- Is one of these the "real" definition of love?

# What if this is true for most emotions?

- Quite possible that because we are so immersed in our own culture, we feel as if our emotional distinctions/definitions are “True”
  - What if culture influences even the most basic of emotional experiences and concepts?
  - And even our definitions might be “biased” by our cultural notions?

“Discovering Psychology: Cultural Psychology



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cM1qfhyocKw

# Emotion Lexicon

# When is the last time you felt...

- Torment caused by sudden insight into one's miserable self?
- Litost (Czech)
- Pleasure at seeing your enemy fail?
- Schadenfreude (German)
- Seeing someone praiseworthy overcome an obstacle?
- Ijirashii (Japanese)
- Sorrow at the insensitivity of a loved one?
- Obhiman (Bengali)

# Emotion words

- Language is part of culture
- English language has over 2,000 emotion words (though most seldom used. e.g., Vexed?)
- Chewong language of Malaysia has 7 words plausibly translated into English emotion words.
- Russell (1991) reviewed ethnographies describing everyday lives in other cultures.

# Cultural Specificity of "Basic" Emotions

- Most languages do have translations of the basic emotions, but there are some exceptions…
  - No Polish for "disgust" (many words that might be used but none exactly capture it); No Ifalukian for surprise; No Tahitian for sadness
  - Gidjingali doesn't distinguish fear and shame ("run away" seems to be the commonality)

# Culture Specificity of Social Emotions

- No word for guilt
  - Tahitian, Sinhala, Ilongot, Pintupi, Samoans
- Distinctions
  - Indonesian: Embarrassment and shame grouped together, but..
    - one's own deeds ("malu")
    - someone else's deeds ("dipermalukan")
- Unique social emotions
  - Japanese: "Amae"--pleasant feeling of dependence

# Some languages don't have a category label for "emotion"

- Implicit category: Tahitian
  - -Emotions thought to arise in the intestine
  - -Involve whole person, not just a part
  - -Can lead to action
  - -Invoke relationship between person and environment (physical or social)

# Some languages include what we would call "emotion" in another category

- Part of a larger category
  - Samoan
    - Lagona: Feelings and bodily sensations
    - Loto: physical location of lagona
    - Arrogance/submissiveness arise from loto
  - Malaysian
    - Feelings and thoughts are grouped together
    - Both reside in the liver (Chewong)
    - Both reside in the heart (Temiar)

# Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

- Possibility that language *constrains* cognition/ perception.
- Key for this *linguistic relativism* hypothesis is that having the language enables you to have concepts that are unavailable to others
- This claim is about more than just emotion, but about thought/perception in general
  - E.g., colors--do people with no word for “green” really unable to perceive green?

# Does language constrain emotion?

## (Haidt & Keltner, 1999)

- Showed faces to U.S participants, and Eastern Indian participants (speakers of *Oriya* language)
- Pictures included embarrassment and shame.
- Oriya has only one word for both, “ladja”.
  - Indian participants labeled both pictures the same
  - But *were* able to distinguish antecedents in line with the embarrassment/shame distinction

# Language ≠ Experience

- Tahitian--no word for “sad” (“p’ea p’ea”)
  - Describe state as physically ill, tired.
  - But they look sad, sound sad, act sad, and are reliably sad in situations that would make us feel sad (e.g., death of a loved one).
- Although linguistically challenging, cross-cultural studies of emotion need to take all aspects of emotional experience into account.
- Language differs, but experience may be more universal (can’t YOU experience “*schadenfreude*”?)

# language as an example of "context" for perceiving emotion

(Feldman Barrett et al, 2007)

# emotion words may affect how we perceive emotions

- failure to provide a set of labels when judging caricatures displaying emotion, leads to reduction in ‘recognition’ of the emotional display.
- a face ‘morphed’ to be equal parts “anger” and “happiness” is perceived as more angry if paired with the word “anger.” (and even more angry if asked to explain why the faces are angry)

# experiment: "semantic-satiation"

- participants repeat an emotion word (e.g., "anger") either 3 or 30 times.
  - repeating the words 30 times temporarily "erases" its meaning
- asked to judge whether 2 faces match in emotional content (e.g., are these both angry faces?)
  - were slower and less accurate in judgments if they had repeated the emotion word 30 times

good luck wednesday!