Embodied brains, social minds: Neural and behavioral correlates of social emotion in Los Angeles and Beijing

Cultural differences in emotion norms, ideals and expectations, especially in social contexts, have been well documented in psychology and anthropology. However, a persistent question is whether there exist cultural differences in the underlying affective process, or whether these differences reflect only conventions for emotional expression and display, adopted in accordance with individuals’ temperaments. Here we report the results of a cross-cultural social-emotion induction experiment carried out in Los Angeles and Beijing using neuroimaging, psychophysiological recording and naturalistic emotion-induction interviews with the same participants. We find cultural and individual differences in neural activation patterns during the strong feeling of admiration, elevation, empathy and compassion in brain regions involved in feeling and regulating the body. These differences are related to naturalistic emotion behaviors and subjective reports of experience. Results suggest that the affective process, and people’s experience of this process, are shaped by an interplay between social factors attributable to culture and biological factors contributing to temperament.

Speaker:
Mary Helen Immordino-Yang
University of Southern California
Assistant Professor of Psychology at the Brain and Creativity Institute,
Neuroscience Graduate Program Faculty
3641 Watt Way Suite B17 Los Angeles, CA 90089-2520
Assistant Professor of Education at the Rossier School of Education
Waite Phillips Hall, Room 601D
Los Angeles, CA 90089-4038
(213) 821-2969
immordin@usc.edu
http://rossier.usc.edu/faculty/mary_helen_immordinoyang.html
http://www.rcf.usc.edu/~immordin/