



# Swiss Center for Affective Sciences



## Distinguished Lecture Series

Wednesday  
January 21st  
2015

17:00 - 18:30

Cisa Conference  
Room  
9, Chemin des Mines  
1202 Geneva

Cultural differences in emotions are adaptive

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Emotions are more than subjective states: They are specific engagements within relationships. As the habitual and normative relationships vary across cultures, so do the most common emotions. In each cultural context, emotions (and emotional varieties) that are conducive to the culturally normative interactions and relationships are promoted. I will illustrate with research from four different cultures (US, Belgium, Japan, Turkey) that cultural shaping of emotions can be understood from the culturally valued interactions and relationships. This socio-cultural shaping of emotions continues throughout the life span: Research on the emotional acculturation of adult immigrant minorities (Koreans in the US, Turks in Belgium) suggests that when immigrants spend time with people from the new culture, their feelings become more alike. Emotions thus become more adaptive to the concurrent cultural environment in which they occur. That cultural differences in emotions serve adaptive benefits is also suggested by research showing that cultural fit of emotions is associated with well-being, relationship satisfaction, and cultural stability. The combined research thus rejects the notion that culture is only a thin layer of varnish on an otherwise universal process, and arrives instead at the conclusion that emotions are essentially cultural ■



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