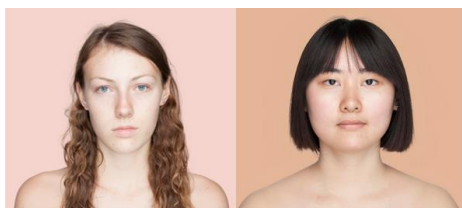


If the eyes are 'Windows to the Soul' – are the windows the same in the East and the West?
– Yuki et al (2007).



There are differences in the way that people from North America and Europe, and people from East Asia express their emotions.

Aim

Ekman (1989) had already demonstrated that **basic facial expressions** were **universal**, however other social psychologists had begun to find evidence that there were **subtle differences** in the way people from different **cultures** interpret emotions. Yuki et al wanted to explore if there was a difference between the way Japanese (the 'East') and American (the 'West') people interpret facial expressions.

Hypothesis

Given that the **eyes are more difficult to control** than the mouth when people express emotions, Yuki et al predicted that individuals in cultures where it is normal to hide your emotions (such as Japan) would focus more strongly on the eyes than the mouth when interpreting others' emotions. By contrast, they predicted that people in cultures where it is normal to be open about your emotions (such as the US) would tend to interpret emotions based on the position of the mouth, because it is the **most expressive part of the face**.

Procedure

The participants were 118 American volunteers, and 95 Japanese volunteers. All were university students. The participants completed a questionnaire in which they ranked the emotional expression of six different computer generated faces (emoticons). These had combinations of '**happy**' and '**sad**' eyes, and '**happy**' and '**sad**' mouths. Participants were asked to rate how happy the face was, on a scale from 1 (Very Sad) to 9 (Very Happy).

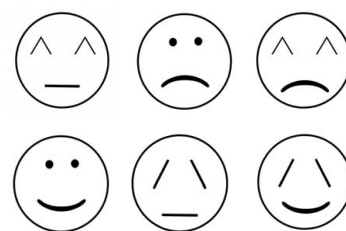
Results

The results showed that the two cultures responded differently to the emoticons. **Japanese** participants gave higher ratings for **happy eyes**. American participants gave higher ratings for **happy mouths**.

There are cultural differences in how emotions are expressed and interpreted in faces. This suggests that our **upbringing** and **cultural background** influences the way we understand **non-verbal communication** – **nurture** has an influence as well as **nature**.

Evaluation

1. The experiment **lacks ecological validity** – we are never asked to 'rate' our emotional responses to faces like this in the real world. The dependent variable was measured using a psychological scale, 1-9. This is over simplifying a complex emotional response.
2. The participants were all from the same age group and the sample is therefore **not representative**. There are only two cultures represented in the study – our societies are more complex than this, and growing up in a multicultural place might impact on the way we interpret faces.



The top row of emoticons have 'happy eyes', whilst the bottom row of emoticons have 'sad eyes'.