**17 Emotion**

The nature of emotion

* Emotions are short-lived psychological states characterized by a physiological state and a characteristic subjective experience.
* The majority of emotions are negative experiences.
* Emotions serve some distinct functions. For example, they help with decision-making and they help structure our social interactions.

Basic emotions

* According to Ekman there are a small number of basic emotions, each easily identified by ourselves and others. Basic emotions include fear, anger, pleasure, surprise, disgust, and sadness.
* Emotions are displayed in facial expressions, which can be categorized by means of the Facial Action Coding System.
* Much of the time we experience complex emotions, which are derived from the basic ones. So a blend of happy memories and current sadness can lead to the experiences of *saudade* and nostalgia.
* Although we all experience similar emotions, there are cultural differences in which emotions have a name and in how we display and read emotion from facial expression.
* We regulate our expression of emotion when we lie. We tend to tell altruistic lies to those with whom we are close and selfish lies to others.
* Concealing emotion when we lie creates cognitive load. This can be exploited in order to catch people out.

Theories of emotion

* Early theories of emotion were concerned with the relationship between physiology and emotion. The earliest theory, the James–Lange theory, proposed that physiological state triggers the experience of emotion.
* The Cannon–Bard theory emerged in opposition, suggesting that the thalamus produces both physiological changes and the experience of emotion in response to emotion-provoking stimuli.
* More recent theories have been concerned with the relationship between cognition and emotion. Schachter and Singer proposed the two-factor theory; emotion is determined by physiological state and our interpretation of it.
* Lazarus suggested that in fact cognition comes first, and that we only experience the physiological state of an emotion when we have appraised the situation.
* It appears likely that some emotions can be experienced with minimal cognition; for example, fear. This has led LeDoux to propose a high road and a low road to fear, the former involving more cognition.
* An alternative view of emotion sees it as embodied; rather than seeing emotion as a cognitive experience embodied emotion theorists see it as encoded neurologically as associated with bodily sensations and experienced as such.

Anger

* Anger involves a sense of antagonism towards others.
* Anger is often experienced as a ball of liquid or energy that requires release. This release is called catharsis. Evidence for the benefits of catharsis is very mixed.
* Forgiveness may be an effective alternative to catharsis; it has been shown to reduce physiological signs of anger like blood pressure.

Happiness

* Most people describe themselves as at least reasonably happy, there being a bimodal distribution of scores.
* There appears to be a fairly strong genetic influence on individual differences in set point happiness. However, life events cause significant upward and downward change in well-being from this set point.
* There are individual and cultural differences in what state is considered happy, with some craving excitement and others tranquillity.
* Lifestyle is associated with happiness, with some notable gender differences in the lifestyle factors associated with happiness. Thus exercise, marriage, and retirement predict happiness in men, whilst healthy diet and separation appear to make women happy. Happy people of both sexes tend to spend less time alone.
* Although people spend considerable time and energy seeking wealth the relationship between wealth and happiness is complex, with absolute wealth, relative wealth, and taxation possibly exerting separate influences.

Income correlates positively with happiness up to a certain level, whereafter increased wealth has no additional effect.