

## **Emotional facial expressions: Communicative displays or psychological universals?**

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### **Abstract:**

Emotional feelings permeate our everyday experience, consciously or unconsciously, driving our daily activities and constraining our perception, actions and reactions.

During daily interactions, our ability to decode emotional expressions plays a vital role in creating social linkages, producing cultural exchanges, influencing relationships and communicating meanings.

Emotional information is transmitted through verbal (the semantic content of a message) and nonverbal (facial, vocal, gestural expressions, and more) communicative tools and relations and exchanges are highly affected by the way this information is coded/decoded by/from the addresser/addressee.

The accuracy above the chance in decoding facial emotional expressions suggested they can play the role of psychological universals. However this idea is debated by data suggesting that they play the role of social messages dependent upon context and personal motives.

These open questions are discussed in this talks, at the light of experimental data obtained from several experiments aimed to assess the role of context on the decoding of emotional facial expressions. The reported data support more the idea that facial expressions of emotions are learned to efficiently and effectively express intentions and negotiate relations, even though particular emotional aspects show similarities across cultural boundaries.

Research devoted to the understanding of the perceptual and cognitive processes involved in the decoding of emotional states during interactional exchanges is particularly relevant in the field of Human-Human, Human-Computer Interaction and Robotics, for build and harden human relationships, and developing friendly, emotionally and socially believable assistive technologies