Cultural history in a global perspective.
The history of the social use of emotions as an example for evolutionary shaped aspects of cultural global history

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• Culture is (directly and indirectly) adapted and adaptive to the environment, but is transmitted by learning and imitation, not genetically.

• Dual inheritance theory.

• Two questions:
  – Is there culturally transmitted pre-scientific knowledge about “cultural adaptations”?
  – How are specific adaptations used in different cultures to regulate group behavior?

• Example: The history of shame as a pro-social emotion
• Current research about Emotions and their background in culture and biology:
  – NCCR Affective Sciences Geneva: “Emotion in individual behavior and social processes”

• Current research in history about emotions
• Two theories about the origin of emotions:
  – Constructivist (emotions are constructed in every society / no common basic emotions)
  – Cognitivist / Darwinian (Shame as a basic emotion is shared by all humans and was shaped under evolutionary pressure. It is a physiologically based feature (blushing, to lower the view, shrinking) of the human body that can have a strong impact on human social life. Cultures differentially elaborate on or ignore various emotions, including shame. Charles Darwin, The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals, New York 1872.)
Shame in evolutionary anthropology

- Fessler & Haley (2003): Shame is the negative emotion experienced when an actor knows that others are aware that the actor has behaved in a blameworthy fashion …. Shame thus constitutes a subjective penalty for norm violation.

- Bowles & Gintis (2003): aversive stimulus that leads the agent experiencing it to avoid such situations in the future.
Selective advantages of shame:
- shame may raise the fitness of an agent who has incomplete information.
- groups in which shame is common can sustain high levels of group cooperation at limited costs on within group punishment.
• Is this view of emotions as evolutionary shaped feature of the human body common academic knowledge?

• „Many experts now believe that emotions are not genetically hard-wired, but learned responses. Plentiful evidence shows that they vary dramatically in time and space. Emotions have a history. We do not necessarily know, without careful examination, what Romans "felt" when they looked at gladiatorial combat, why 18th-century courtiers cried when they watched Rousseau's opera, or what Chaitanyaite worshipers of Krishna feel when they contemplate his favorite gopi, Radha.“

William M. Reddy (wmr@duke.edu) in the description of his course „The History of Emotions“ Duke Univ. Fall 2003: History / Cultural Anthropology
• Physiology of shame:
  
  - blushing is caused by the nervus sympathetic as could be shown by experiments with mit Sympatectomy. (Mariauzouls, Charles; Psychophysiologie von Scham und Erröten. Diss München, Zürich 1996.)

- Intercultural study about the dissemination of metonyms and metaphors that shows how basic emotions (in this case shame) are related to physiological processes.

- Results: 98 out of 135 languages know color metaphors to describe a change in the emotional state of a person. There is a very high correlation between the color red and the emotion shame. Languages without such an correlation are spoken predominantly by people of dark complexion.
Figure 12.3  Frequency of associations between colours/colour change and the emotions shame, anger and rage in 98 languages.
Figure 12.4a  The distribution of 98 languages/dialects in which colour metaphors or metonymy indicating shameful blushing are used.
Figure 12.4b  The distribution of languages recorded in which no metaphors or metonyms indicating shameful blush ing are used.
– Implication for research on the history of emotions:

• Shame is an universal emotion that is associated today in many languages with the color red because of a physiological reaction linked to the feeling of shame (the blush). It emerges in situations, where the own behavior is seen as inappropriate compared to specific norms of the group.

• The use of the color red can indicate not only shame, but also anger and rage. In historical texts, contextual information is needed to determine the emotional state of a person described as blushing.
– The social use of shame in Western Europe in the late middle ages and early modern times:
  • The emotion shame has been used to regulate the social Interaction in Western Europe in different ways through time.
  • Specific needs for collective cooperation (like in process of emerging cities in the high middle ages) should entail a particular need for shame and shaming rituals within a group to regulate social conflicts and to reintegrate deviants from in-group norms (as long as the offence is not qualifying for banishing).
• Germany (17th century)
  – Women in the so-called „violin“

Stadtarchiv Degendorf, Germany.
• Germany (ca. 15th to 17th century A.D.)
  – Shaming masks and tools

Kriminalmuseum Rotheburg o.d.T., Germany.
• England (ca. 1650)
  – Skimmington (Charivari)

Fries of Montacute House, Somerset, GB.
• Questions open for further research:
  – For which reasons dishonorable-punishments in the older criminal law were imposed?
  – Which offenses led to which dishonorable-punishments? When was reintegration possible?
  – How can the simultaneous rise and vanishing of punishments between approx. 1200 and 1800 in Western Europe be explained?
  – Can any report be found on the blushing of offenders during a public shaming? Was this noticed and commented?
  – Did terms for emotional feelings change their meaning in the course of time? Which terminology was used?
Did public shaming lead in the context of the dishonorable-punishments of the late Middle Ages and the early modern times to a reintegration of the delinquents? Was this intended at all?
Relevant ressources on the internet:

www.shamestudies.de

www.mve-liste.de

www.hbes.com
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Thank you for your attention!