

Mind Hacks

Neuroscience and psychology news and views.

The common language of pride and shame



Wired Science [covers](#) an elegant [study](#) that suggests that spontaneous expressions of pride and shame are innate behaviours that are not significantly influenced by culture.

The researchers came up with the ingenious idea of comparing how judo wrestlers from the 2004 Olympics and blind judo wrestlers from the 2004 Paralympics celebrated and commiserated their matches.

This allowed a cross cultural comparison, but it also allowed a comparison with blind athletes who have never seen another person in the same position to copy their behaviour.

The new research, however, distilled from high-resolution, high-speed photographic sequences of sighted and blind judo competitors at the 2004 Olympics and Paralympics, suggests that most nonverbal responses to wins and losses are almost universal.

No cultural differences were observed among competitors from different countries and, aside from the shaking of the fists after a loss, sighted and blind athletes displayed remarkably similar nonverbal behavior.

In other words, it made virtually no difference what culture each individual came from, or even whether the person had seen another wrestler at the end of a match or not – the expression of pride was indistinguishable, suggesting that this may be a common expression that we all share.

There was a slight effect of culture on the expression of shame – as the researchers note “it was less pronounced among individuals from highly individualistic, self-expression-valuing cultures, primarily in North America and West Eurasia”.

However, as there was no difference *within* cultures between sighted and blind individuals, they further suggest that both pride and shame are likely to be innate, but that shame display may be intentionally inhibited by some sighted individuals in accordance with cultural norms.

[Link](#) to *Wired Science* on elegant study.

[Link](#) to full text of paper.



vaughanbell / August 12, 2008 / Moving

One thought on “The common language of pride and shame”



projektleiterin

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They are blind, but not deaf and it's not as if blind people are living isolated lives without the influence of the media. Who says their expression of joy is not an imitation of what they heard from the sports commentator on the radio?

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