



WHAT IS AN EMOTION?
Dr. Michael Stasik, Step 3.7



Anthropological approaches to emotion

Biological Universalism (1920s ff.)

- Emotions viewed as biological, hardwired responses, consistent across cultures
- Differences per variation of 'basic emotions' (anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise)

Social Constructivism (1970s ff.)

- Focus on how cultural contexts shape emotional meaning and expression
- Different cultures describe and categorize emotions in different ways
- Emotions as products of cultural vocabulary and practices

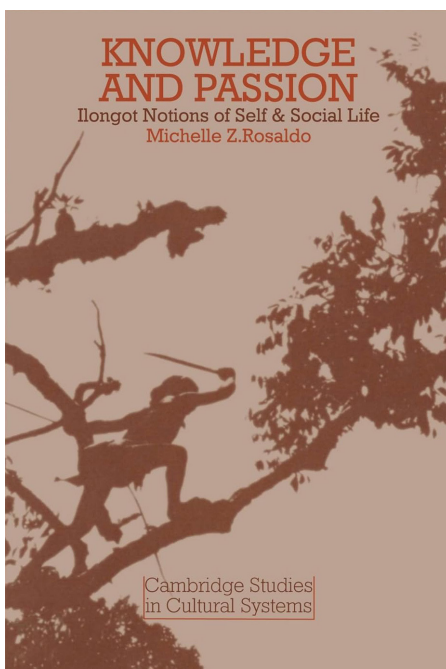


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Influential ethnographic studies I Michelle Rosaldo and the Illongot (Philippines)

- Discusses the emotion **liget**: similar to anger/passion but culturally distinct
- **Liget** = feeling of 'high voltage'
- Demonstrates how **language and ritual** shape experience of emotions



«What individuals can think and feel
is overwhelmingly a product of socially
organized modes of action and of talk»

(Rosaldo 1984: 147)

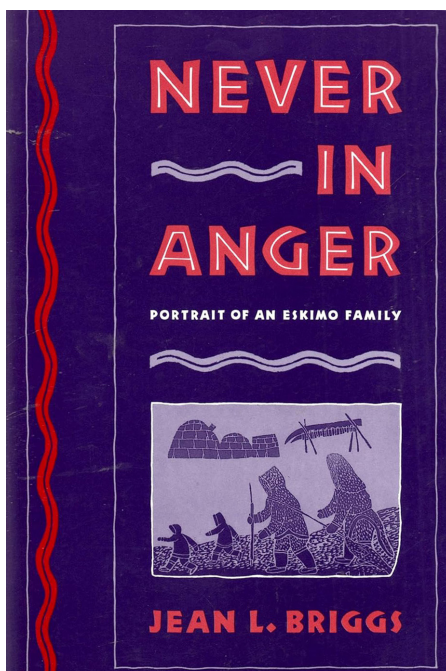


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Influential ethnographic studies II Jean Briggs and the Inuit (Arctic)

- **Observed** suppression of anger **through** **childrearing practices**
- **Demonstrates** how cultural practices **re/shape** supposedly 'universal' or 'basic' emotions





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Anthropological approaches to emotion

Integrated approach (2000s ff.)

- Emotions are viewed as dynamic, relational processes
- Evolving through interaction between:
 - **biological factors:** innate predispositions
 - **social factors:** interpersonal interactions and institutions
 - **cultural factors:** values, language and shared practices

Relevance to loneliness

- Emotion of loneliness exemplifies interplay between:
 - our biological need for connection
 - cultural meanings we assign to social relationships
 - personal experiences and dispositions