

# Mimicry not needed for the recognition of emotions

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(Medical Xpress)—'Mimicry', the imitation of the facial expression of the other person, does not play a major role in the ability to recognise the emotion of another person. This is apparent from research conducted by Agneta Fischer, professor of Social Psychology at University of Amsterdam. Fischer's article is the first scientific publication to emerge from the Groot Nationaal Onderzoek.

Fischer investigated the mimicry and recognition of the emotions 'disgust' and 'pride'. Her research revealed that people mimic less than was previously thought. The imitation of emotions mainly occurs among people who know each other and during laughing. Strangers do not mimic the emotion of the other person. Moreover, study subjects who did mimic the facial expression of [disgust](#) were found to be no better at recognising the emotion than people who did not mimic. 'It is often assumed that mimicking emotions helps a person to better recognise the emotion of the other. However this research reveals that mimicry hardly plays a role. The facial expression of the other person and the extent to which you feel empathy for him or her are far more important factors for recognising emotions,' says Fischer.

## Mimicry in a natural environment

Little research has been done so far into the mimicking of emotions in a 'natural' environment. Fischer based her article on an experiment that she carried out for the Groot Nationaal Onderzoek during the Libelle

Zomerweek (women's magazine event) in May 2011. Almost 300 volunteers took part in the experiment. Their [facial expressions](#) were filmed while they sat opposite each other carrying out tasks. A total of more than 15,000 people took part in the study into the recognition of emotions, mostly via online [questionnaires](#).

The article by Fischer and her colleagues Daniela Becker and Lotte Veenstra entitled "[Emotional Mimicry in Social Context: The Case of Disgust and Pride](#)" was published in the online Open Access journal *Frontiers in Emotion Science*. A new article based on the emotion research is currently under preparation. Fischer is writing this together with her fellow researchers Joost Broekens and Valentijn Visch from Delft University of Technology.

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