

Chapter XLIV

Self-Report Measures of Discrete Emotions

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BACKGROUND

According to appraisal theories of emotion, negative emotions arise from the perception that the environment is in an incongruent relationship with the individual's goals (Dillard, 1997; Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). In contrast, when an individual judges that the current environment is likely to facilitate his or her goals, positive emotions follow (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). However, both within and across these broad categories, individual emotions can be discriminated along several lines (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Oatley, 1992; Roseman, Weist, & Swartz, 1994; Scherer, 1984).

First, emotions vary in terms of their *signal value* (Table 1, column 2). That is, emotions are a source of information regarding the state of the person-environment relationship. For example, surprise follows from the perception of novelty in the environment, and registers that perception in conscious awareness (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus,

1991; Oatley, 1992; Roseman et al., 1994; Scherer, 1984). Emotions also signal the mobilization of psychological and physiological resources correspondent to that person-environment relationship. The subjective experience of an emotion also relays this information to consciousness. In this sense, an emotion may be viewed as a summary readout of the changes taking place in the body (Buck, 1997).

Emotions can be understood further in terms of their *function* (see Table 1, column 3). At the most general level, emotions operate as rudimentary information processing systems designed to deal with a certain, limited set of person-environment relationships. Given a particular understanding of the person-environment relationship, an emotion shifts the organism into a state of being designed to address that relationship (Lazarus, 1991; Oatley, 1992). For example, fear instigates efforts at self-protection, whereas anger provides the motivational basis for subduing the offending stimulus.

Table 1. The signal values, functions, and action tendencies associated with various affects

Affect	Signal Value	Function	Action Tendency
Surprise	Novelty	Orient	Allocate Attention
Anger	Obstacle	Remove Obstacle	Attack /Reject
Fear	Danger	Protection	Revise Existing Plan/Create New Plan
Sadness	Failure	Learning	Review Plan/ Recuperation/Convalesce
Guilt	Transgression	Self-Sanction	Strive to Attain Standard
Happiness	Progress toward Goal	Self-Reward	Bask/Bond
Contentment	Absence of threat	Conserve Resources	Immobility

One of the central premises of most theories of emotion is that these affects are evolutionarily designed to direct behavior. Thus, each emotion has associated with it an *action tendency* of a specific form that aligns with the function of that emotion (Table 1, column 4). Two points in particular are important to understanding the concept of action tendencies. First, although all action tendencies are forms of engagement and withdrawal, particular emotions produce particular variations on these broad themes. For instance, happiness and anger promote quite different types of engagement. And, though sadness and fear may both be considered withdrawal emotions, their behavioral manifestations are notably distinct; sadness is characterized by lethargy while tension is typical of fear. Contentment is a special case in that it is an affect that inspires passivity rather than action. Awkwardly, but accurately stated, its action tendency is one of nonaction.

A second important point bears on the relationship between the emotions and their associated action tendencies. Although statistically significant associations have been reported between particular emotions and the tendency to withdraw or engage (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989; Roseman et al., 1994), these findings probably are *not* the result of an identity relationship between affect and action tendency that has been measured with error. Rather, they are associations that result from

both regularities in the social environment and limits inherent in the affect programs themselves. In fact, we believe that within the limits defined by social regularities and action possibilities, the relationship between affect and action is highly context dependent. Fear, for example, causes freezing in some instances and flight in others. Guilt may prompt efforts to redress the failure, but only if the transgression can be remedied. Thus, when researching the impact of various emotions on persuasion, it is essential to remain cognizant of various contextual factors such as setting, message topic, and response options. It is useful to distinguish emotions in terms of their action tendencies, but equally important to bear in mind that when context is taken into account, tendencies may be translated into distinct forms of behavior.

Over a series of studies, we have developed a set of close-ended scales designed to measure discrete emotions. The scales and their corresponding items are as follows: *surprise* (surprised, startled, astonished), *anger* (irritated, angry, annoyed, aggravated), *fear* (fearful, afraid, scared), *sadness* (sad, dreary, dismal), *guilt* (guilty, ashamed), *happiness* (happy, elated, cheerful, joyful) and *contentment* (contented, peaceful, mellow, tranquil). The 5-point response scale runs from 0 = None of this emotion to 4 = A great deal of this emotion. To facilitate interpretation and to create

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