

Book Review

Robert Plutchik. *Emotions and Life: Perspectives from Psychology, Biology, and Evolution*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003.

Marketers are interested in the roles that emotions play in buyer behavior and marketing practice. Recently the importance of emotions has been illustrated in *The Marketing Power of Emotion* (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2003). This excellent book contains many examples of the use of emotions in marketing along with discussions of relevant theoretical and research issues.

Given the importance of emotions to marketing, readers of *Psychology & Marketing* may wish to expand their reading on the topic. A rich overview of research and theory relevant to emotions is given by Robert Plutchik in his book *Emotions and Life: Perspectives from Psychology, Biology, and Evolution*. This book should be of particular interest to readers of *Psychology & Marketing*, given that it is written from a psychological perspective and firmly places emotions within the context of psychological theory.

It should also be of interest to *Psychology & Marketing* readers given the recent emphasis on evolution in psychology (Barrett, Dunbar, & Lycett, 2002; Buss, 1999; Gaulin & McBurney, 2004) and the recent special issue of *Psychology & Marketing* dealing with evolutionary influences on buyer behavior and marketing. Plutchik includes the evolutionary perspective in his discussion of most topics in the book and presents his own "psychoevolutionary" theory of emotions. *Emotions and Life: Perspectives from Psychology, Biology, and Evolution* is intended as a psychology text, but for readers of *Psychology & Marketing* it can serve as an excellent overview of the concept of emotions, as well as a reference book for information relevant to doing research and teaching buyer behavior.

CONTENTS

The first chapter deals with the wide range of topics that are related to emotions and is titled “The Landscapes of Emotions.” Defining *emotions* is much like defining any other important term in psychology—very difficult. Plutchik notes that many definitions exist, and he provides a historically representative listing of definitions by famous psychologists. He also describes some major issues in defining emotions and some common themes that emerge in definitions of emotion. He concludes by citing a consensus definition developed by Kleinginna and Kleinginna (1981, p. 371) as a good first approximation:

Emotion is a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated by neural/hormonal systems, which can (a) give rise to affective experiences such as feelings of arousal, pleasure/displeasure; (b) generate cognitive processes such as emotionally relevant perceptual effects, appraisals, labeling processes; (c) activate widespread physiological adjustments to the arousing conditions; and (d) lead to behavior that is often, but not always, expressive, goal-directed, and adaptive.

Plutchik emphasizes that although this definition can be seen as a first approximation of a consensus definition of emotions, many definitions of emotions are associated with particular theories and can best be understood within their theoretical context. It is only by further reading that one begins to grasp the full “landscape of emotions.” This definitional first chapter is followed by 12 additional chapters that allow the reader to more fully understand the history and theoretical perspectives related to the study of emotions. The following chapters provide a broad discussion of psychological and biological research relevant to emotions. The chapter topics include historical traditions in the study of emotions, emotions and cognitions, the language of emotions, theories of emotions, the measurement of emotions, facial expressions and emotions, emotional development, emotions and evolution, emotion and communication, emotions and the brain, love and sadness in everyday life, and understanding of emotional disorders.

THE PSYCHOEVOOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

Although Plutchik presents a broad overview of existing research on all the topics listed above, his general perspective implies the importance of evolution in understanding emotions. This emphasis is perhaps most evident when he discusses the existence and measurement of emotions in animals. However, the evolutionary perspective runs through the entire book and is particularly evident in his chapters on theories of emo-

tions, measurement of emotions, facial expressions and emotions, emotions and evolution, emotion and communication, and emotions and the brain.

Perhaps Plutchik's overall perspective can be best understood by considering his own theory of emotions, the psychoevolutionary theory. The psychoevolutionary theory includes three major components: the structural model, the sequential model, and the derivatives model.

The structural model is based on research dealing with the language of emotions. With respect to the language of emotions, Plutchik describes studies that have been done to determine what words people commonly recognize as emotions, and how those words are related to theories of emotion as well as one another. There are literally hundreds of words people think of as describing emotions in the English language; however, only a few of these words are recognized by researchers as describing basic human emotions. A survey of the literature on the basic human emotions yields lists by researchers from 3 to 11 words long.

It is thought that the basic human emotions tend to be culturally universal, have physiological effects, and are related to evolution in that they have survival value. Researchers' lists of such basic human emotions almost always include fear, anger, sadness, and joy. The lists less commonly include surprise, disgust, curiosity, expectancy, shame, and guilt. Plutchik's own list of eight basic emotions includes fear, anger, joy, sadness, acceptance, disgust, expectation, and surprise. The many other words describing emotions are thought by Plutchik to be subtle combinations of these more basic emotions.

Plutchik specifically discusses three major characteristics of the structural model that deals with the language of emotions. The first characteristic of the model is intensity. Differences in emotional intensity can exist for any of the emotions. For example, annoyance, anger, and rage may be seen as representing different levels of intensity of the basic emotion of anger.

A second characteristic of the structural model of emotions is the degree of similarity among emotions. It is possible to empirically study how emotions relate to one another. Plutchik describes his own research, in which he uses ratings of emotions to place them on a circle in which emotions that are more similar to one another appear close together and emotions that are different from one another appear farther away from one another. He shows that 146 terms commonly used to describe emotions can be placed on a circle describing how similar to one another they are perceived to be. Clusters of emotional terms (synonyms or similar emotions) representative of each of the basic emotions appear close to one another on Plutchik's "circumplex."

The third characteristic of the structural model of emotions is that the words used to describe emotions often "express opposite or bipolar feelings or actions." For example, *joyful* and *unhappy* are roughly on opposite sides of the circumplex.

In addition to these three characteristics, the structural model is also based on the proposition that much of the language used to describe emotions can be derived from subtle combinations of the eight basic emotions. For example, contempt might be a combination of the basic emotions of disgust and anger.

The sequential model of emotions maintains that emotions are a part of “complex circular feedback systems.” Plutchik describes these complex systems as typically containing a stimulus event, an inferred cognition, feeling states, physiological arousal, impulses to action, overt behavior, effect, and feedback loops. This process is complex, and sometimes the interpretation of the stimulus event is unconscious. Plutchik gives examples of emotional sequences for each of his eight basic emotions. For the basic *emotion* of fear his sequential model includes stimulus event—threat, cognition—danger, feeling state—fear, overt behavior—escape, and effect—safety.

Plutchik emphasizes two ideas regarding the emotional sequences. First, *emotion*, as he uses the term, refers not only to subjective feeling states such as joy or sadness, but also to the entire chain of events that includes feelings, cognitions, impulses to action, feedback loops, and so on. An individual may not be consciously aware of some components of the system. Second, Plutchik maintains that “at the heart of all these descriptions is the idea that emotions have a purpose in the lives of individuals.” According to Plutchik, “this idea stems from the evolutionary perspective” and implies that emotions are adaptive processes.

The derivatives model is also based on evolutionary thinking and proposes that “certain concepts are derived from other, more primitive events or concepts.” Plutchik uses this idea to describe the relationship between the language of emotions and the language of personality. He notes how certain personality types appear to be related to certain emotions in that they represent emotions that occur in an individual persistently or repeatedly over long periods of time. For example, someone who often is fearful (emotion) may be described as timid (trait/personality characteristic). Plutchik shows how each of the major emotional dimensions, when repeatedly expressed in an individual, can be described as personality traits.

Overall, the psychoevolutionary theory of emotions provides a rich description of the conceptual domain of emotions, emphasizes evolutionary thinking, and illustrates the link between the language of emotions and personality. It seems to be a good description of Plutchik’s perspective, which is apparent throughout the book.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although the entire book will be of interest to *Psychology & Marketing* readers, certain chapters will be of particular interest to those wishing

to gain a theoretical perspective on the field of emotions. One will be the first chapter, with its discussion of the many definitions of emotion. The definitions, along with a discussion of the various issues that influence perceptions of the concept of emotion, will help the reader gain a breadth of perspective that is sometimes missing when marketers discuss emotions. The second chapter, with its discussion of the major historical traditions in the study of emotions, and the third chapter, dealing with cognition and emotion, are also useful in building a broad theoretical perspective.

The fourth chapter's discussion of the language of emotions is useful in showing how researchers identify and define primary or basic emotions. It also helps in describing how much of the language of emotions can be related to the basic emotions in terms of representing combinations of these emotions and/or variations in the intensity of these emotions. The fifth chapter discussion of major theories of emotion is useful, particularly in its presentation of current evolutionary theories by Plutchik and other prominent researchers.

Some readers will be drawn to more specific topics such as emotion and communication, or emotion and the brain. Whatever the reader's interest, the chapters present a broad array of current empirical findings as well as historical and theoretical perspectives. The breadth and depth of explanation makes *Emotions and Life: Perspectives from Psychology, Biology, and Evolution* a meaningful reference for readers of *Psychology & Marketing*.

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