

The Classification and Coding of Emotions

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Introduction

The classification of emotions was one of our most difficult tasks. The problem of reducing the hundreds of words in the English language that represent affective states to a fairly small number of classes that seemed to be fairly comprehensive, yet discrete in coverage, was a formidable one. Another stumbling block involved the question of extensity of coding, e.g., should we try to classify the types of situations that caused the emotion as well as consequences following the emotion? After experimenting with a large number of coding schemes, we eventually arrived at the answer to this question and several others by limiting our emotional states to five in number and simply indicating which characters experienced these emotions.

When coders go over dream reports they are generally surprised at how few emotions are actually reported, unless the dreamer is specifically and strongly urged to state what emotions are being experienced during the dream. Situations that would undoubtedly be terrifying or depressing for the average individual may be reported in some detail, but a description of their emotional impact upon the dreamer is often curiously lacking.

Classes of Emotions

Anger

(Coding symbol: **AN**.) This class of emotions is generally easy to identify. Representative of some of the terms coded under anger are: annoyed, irritated, mad, provoked, furious, enraged, belligerent, incensed, and indignant. As with the following emotional classes, all degrees of intensity are included within each class, and no coding distinction is made between weak expressions of anger such as being peeved or strong expressions such as being infuriated.

Apprehension

(Coding symbol: **AP**.) The emotions included in this class can be considered related to fear, anxiety, guilt, and embarrassment. Although differences are recognizable among them, all these conditions lead to conscious concern on the part of the person experiencing them. The person feels apprehensive about the possibility of physical injury or punishment, or the possibility of social ridicule or rejection. Thus the common denominator underlying these emotions is that the person is uncomfortable because the threat of some potential danger exists. The following terms, which are not meant to be all inclusive, refer to various degrees of apprehension: terrified, horrified, frightened, scared, worried, nervous, concerned, panicky, alarmed, uneasy, upset, remorseful, sorry, apologetic, regretful, and ashamed.

Sadness

(Coding symbol: **SD**.) All the words that describe an unhappy emotional state are coded in the sadness class. References to physical pain or physical distress are not included in any of the emotional classes. Some examples of terms that would be coded as sadness are: disappointed, distressed, hurt, depressed, lonely, lost, miserable, hopeless, crushed, and heartbroken.

Confusion

(Coding symbol: **CO**.) Although it may be debatable as to whether confusion is a condition possessing the same degree of autonomic involvement as the preceding emotions, we have chosen to place it in the classification of emotions. It is true that confusion resides more in the head as a state of cognitive ambiguity than it does in the viscera as a gut-type reaction. However, the feeling state accompanying uncertainty may begin to shade toward a type of free-floating anxiety, toward frustration, or toward depression. Since confusion is therefore "emotionlike," and also because it is reported fairly frequently in dreams, mention of it seems to belong most appropriately in the classification of emotions. Confusion is generally produced either through confrontation with some unexpected event or else through inability to choose between available alternatives. Some words that may indicate confusion are: surprised, astonished, amazed, awestruck, mystified, puzzled, perplexed, strange, bewildered, doubtful, conflicted, undecided, and uncertain.

Happiness

(Coding symbol: **HA**.) All the words that describe a general state of pleasant feeling tone are included in this class. Some of the terms that would be coded as happiness are: contented, pleased, relieved, amused, cheerful, glad, relaxed, gratified, gay, wonderful, elated, joyful, and exhilarated.

Coding Procedures

Since emotions are often not described, the coder may be tempted to infer emotions on the basis of the physical surroundings or activities mentioned in the dream report. This temptation should be resisted. If a dreamer says that he or she was in a torture chamber or being chased, the coder should not assume that apprehension was being experienced unless the dreamer says that such an emotion was being experienced. We make only one exception to this. If the dreamer describes definite autonomic activity accompanying an event, and it is clear from the combination of context and the autonomic description that the dreamer was experiencing an emotion that could be clearly classified as one of the five scorable emotions, we will code an emotion. For example, if the dreamer says, "Tears began running down my face when I received word of my mother's death," we would code an SD for that description. We would code AP if the dreamer said, "As the monster approached, I began to sweat and tremble and tried to cry out but no sound would come." The above situations appear infrequently, however, and restraint is urged as the general rule in attributing any emotion to a character unless the dream report provides ample material to do so.

The coder should not attempt to automatically assign an emotion on the basis of its listing in the preceding groups. In some cases, the same word may take on quite different meanings in different contexts. For example, the statement "I was shocked" might possibly indicate any one of the five emotional classes, depending upon how the dreamer goes on to describe his reaction. The coding procedure followed in the last two sections is also employed for emotions. A comma is placed after the coding symbol for the emotion and then the coding symbols for the characters are presented. As usual, multiple characters are joined by plus signs.

"I became FURIOUS when I saw my boyfriend holding this girl's hand."	AN, D
"Suddenly, I realized that I was walking down the street with no clothes on. I became terribly EMBARRASSED."	AP, D
"My buddy and I were OVERJOYED when we finally found the treasure."	HA, D+1MKA
"My sister was very DISAPPOINTED when she didn't get the job."	SD, 1FTA

"My aunt and uncle were SURPRISED to see this half-dog and half-cat creature walk across the floor."

CO, 1FRA+1MRA

Additional Coding Rules

1. If the terms used to describe a reaction to a particular event all belong to the same class, that class of emotions is only coded once for that event.

"I was so PLEASED and happy to hear the news."

HA, D

2. The same class of emotion may be coded more than once if it appears as a reaction to different events.

"I was MAD at my wife for not fixing coffee. Then I got MAD at the bus driver because he wouldn't give me change for a ten-dollar bill. When I arrived at work, I became MAD at my boss because he asked me to do someone else's work besides my own."

AN, D

AN, D

AN, D

3. If more than one class of emotion is described as a reaction to the same event, each class is coded separately.

"I was SAD when I saw the damage to the roof but was GLAD that the rest of the house had not been damaged."

SD, D

HA, D

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