8

Emotions

Far from being primitive reflexes that interfere with social process (a view that once was common), emotions are vital for social organization. Emotions allow individuals to sense structure and change in social relationships.

8.1 Emotions as Signals

An emotion translates the impression of you created by an event into a physical feeling that lets you sense the event's impact viscerally. Additionally, your facial expression and other somatic manifestations of your emotion are visible to others, allowing them to form an impression of you that reflects your internal assessment of the scene.

For example, if an event makes you feel especially pleasant, strong, and lively, you acquire the glow and smiley face of happiness. Your emotion display lets others identify you as happy, yielding an impression of you as being especially pleasant, strong, and lively in the circumstances.

Thus, your emotions help others figure out how you define situations and how you assess recent events. (Sometimes you yourself consider your emotions to better understand your interpretations of situations and events!) Similarly, others' emotions help you figure out how they interpret a situation and recent happenings.

Can you use emotions to communicate a particular impression to others—like being especially pleasant, strong, and lively, even if you don't really feel happy? Yes. People sometimes construct emotion displays like they are supposed to have in a situation, and sometimes they show a false emotion to mislead others about their private assessments of a situation. Moreover, some businesses require employees to display emotions that they may not feel, in order to make customers feel good about themselves—businesses that provide "service with a smile"!

However, displaying inauthentic emotion is work—masking the emotion you really feel, and then shaping your face and body and voice to simulate a different

emotion. Your real emotion can slip out despite your efforts to suppress it, and your simulated emotion can fall apart without guidance from a real internal state. In fact, an effective way to display an inauthentic emotion is actually to experience the desired emotion by reliving some scene where you had that emotion. This technique is taught to aspiring thespians in the method school of acting.

Table 8-1. Sample emotions organized in terms of evaluation, potency, and activity

Profile	Emotions, From Quiescent to Activated
Pleasant*	peaceful, serene, humble, touched, thankful, contented, pleased, glad, proud, delighted, happy, thrilled, ecstatic
Unpleasant, Superior	sorry, upset, disgusted, spiteful, indignant, contemptuous, aggravated, mad, alarmed, irate, furious, enraged
Unpleasant, Vulnerable	depressed, blue, disheartened, sickened, ashamed, embarrassed, worried, frightened, terrified, horrified, agitated, panicked

* English provides no names for pleasant emotions that involve vulnerability.

8.2 Impressions and Emotions

Different emotions have different levels of evaluation (pleasantness vs. unpleasantness), potency (superiority vs. vulnerability), and activity (activation vs. quiescence). Table 8-1 illustrates how emotions vary on these dimensions.

The different emotions create a variety of impressions when combined with an identity. Here are some examples.

- A happy doctor seems very pleasant, potent, and lively.
- An angry doctor seems somewhat unpleasant, neither strong nor weak, and neither lively nor quiet.
- A depressed doctor seems unpleasant, neither strong nor weak, and quiet.
- A happy invalid seems neither pleasant nor unpleasant, neither strong nor weak, and neither lively nor quiet.
- An angry invalid seems unpleasant, weak, and neither lively nor quiet.
- A depressed invalid seems unpleasant, very weak, and very quiet.

The pleasantness, superiority, and activation of your emotion at the moment reflect whether the current event is making you seem especially nice or awful, potent or impotent, and lively or quiet. If an event makes you seem especially good, potent, and active then you feel an emotion like happiness. If the event makes you seem unusually bad and lively and not too impotent, then you feel an emotion like anger. If the event makes you feel bad and lively and helpless then you feel an emotion like terror.

Your identity as well as your impression of self also is involved in your emotion. For example, you may look somewhat positive in a situation and yet feel an unpleasant emotion, if someone's action creates an impression of you that is not as good as your identity warrants.

Example: it's your birthday and your sweetheart gives you an unsigned mass-produced birthday card—that's all. Your sweetheart remembered your birthday, which creates a somewhat positive impression of you. But the impression created is so much less than you deserve as a sweetheart. No present? Not even a note or signature on the card? You're indignant! Or perhaps you now worry about the relationship.

Events involving you produce impressions of who you seem to be, and your identity defines who you are supposed to be. Your emotion connects the two. Your emotion, combined with your identity, creates the impression of you that is emerging in the current event. The impression generated by the conjunction of your emotion and identity duplicates the impression of you generated by the event.

Thus, seeing your emotion and knowing your identity, others can infer what kind of impression you think you are making in the scene. Or, combining your emotion with their own impression of how you are faring, others can infer what identity you're trying to maintain.

8.3 Characteristic and Structural Emotions

An event producing impressions that perfectly confirm an individual's identity would generate an emotion characteristic of the individual's identity. For example, a gangster getting perfect confirmation would feel alarm. A prostitute perfectly confirmed would feel agitation. A heroine getting perfect confirmation would feel joy. A perfectly confirmed minister would feel thankfulness.

Feelings get tugged away from characteristic emotions in actual interactions. You typically have to forego confirming your own identity perfectly in order to confirm the identities of your interaction partners simultaneously. Events created to confirm both identities as much as possible produce impressions that do not confirm either of the identities perfectly.

A structural emotion is the emotion you experience when you are in a specific identity, your partner is in a complementary identity, and your interaction together is confirming each individual's identity as much as possible. A structural emotion gives specific emotional flavor to the different kinds of relationships that you have while occupying an identity. For example, a minister with a sinner does not feel a minister's characteristic emotion of thankfulness, but instead feels indignation as interaction with the sinner unfolds. In his or her personal relationship with God, the minister enjoys emotions of satisfaction and reverence.

8.3.1 Solidarity

Individuals typically have different emotional experiences when they are in situations where everyone has a different identity. Divergence in emotions encourages the individuals to view themselves as autonomous.

However, suppose that everyone has the same identity, and all are interacting as a group with an external entity. Then everyone experiences the same structural emo-

tion, and the consonance of emotion yields a sense of unified consciousness, a feeling of one-ness with the group. Add a conviction that the shared identity gives all a common motive with regard to the external entity, and a sense of solidarity emerges.

Crowds sometimes put everyone into a single identity, all relating to an outside entity, in a setting where individuals can personally observe the concert of parallel emotions and actions in others. Thus, crowd experiences can be transcendental, making you feel connected to others.

8.4 Emotions And Motivation

Humans act to maintain meanings, including their sentiments about themselves and others. This motivational axiom can be translated into emotion terms, as follows. You strive to experience the structural emotion for the relationship in which you find yourself, and you act to eliminate disparate emotions.

This view of emotions as motives implies that an emotion—other than a desired structural emotion—instigates behavior that is opposite in nature to the emotion producing it.

For example, consider feeling jealous. For most people a flash of jealousy signals that events have made one seem less good and more vulnerable than is warranted by one's identity in a relationship. To restore the usual valued and potent sense of self, one might engage in some affectionate behavior toward a loved one—for instance, hugging and caressing one's sweetheart. So jealousy is followed by predictable behavior, but the relation between the emotion and behavior is oppositional—agreeable behavior follows the disagreeable emotion.

Yet we sometimes think of emotions, as causing behaviors that are consistent with the emotions—jealous people acting vindictive, depressed people disengaging, elated people regaling their associates.

Emotions become straightforward motivational states when they get incorporated into identity. For example, an individual starts acting not just as a husband but as a jealous husband, or a depressed husband, or an elated husband. An emotion amalgamated with an identity indicates a mood—a temporary particularization of identity.

Individuals act to confirm their moods. Thus, mood-generated behavior fits with the mood in a straightforward way—vindictiveness confirming a jealous mood, disengagement confirming a depressed mood, regaling others confirming an elated mood. Of course, the manner of behaving during a mood varies with different partners and changing circumstances, just as behavior produced by an institutional identity varies in different conditions. But overall the mood generates behavior that befits the mood.

8.5 Stress

Deflection arises when impressions produced by an event differ from sentiments. Deflection that cannot be resolved produces psychological stress, a serious condition that can undermine one's health.

Usually deflection gets allayed after a few more events occur. However, deflection from some events persists over time.

For example, a loved one dying is high-deflection event because it creates an impression of the loved one far from one's sentiment about that individual. The deflection lasts because it is difficult to get another event that terminates the death event, or ameliorates it. Interaction with the loved one is impossible, and interactions with others do not change the aberrant impression of the loved one. Since it cannot be put into the past, the death gets relived over and over. Eventual relief awaits fading of the event in time, or imagining supernatural events that undo the aberrant impression of the loved one, or lowering one's sentiment about the loved one in order to have a sentiment closer to the impression left by death.

Another example: a professor is teaching a seminar and her students turn out to be resolute underachievers. The seminar starts okay, but aberrant impressions soon develop from classroom interactions, for both the professor and the students. Trying desperately to repair their identities, the professor acts increasingly authoritarian while the students alternately fawn and grouse. Nearly every action of professor and students makes deflection climb because disconfirmation is built into the relationship between a professor and underachievers. The end of the semester is a relief for all.

Deflection might continue unresolved, thereby turning into stress, because:

- The individual is chronically involved in situations where others define the situation differently. Flight attendants are an example: they see some passengers as rude oafs, but these passengers see themselves as privileged members of an elite class, and the passengers are supported by airline managers who require attendants to provide service with a smile.
- The individual is in a relationship that produces deflection structurally. For example, an individual in a potent identity who frequently becomes the object of another's actions will feel stressed by the depreciation of the potent identity.
- The individual cannot easily or quickly repair a distressing happening—like death of a loved one.

8.5.1 Self-Sentiments and Stress

Many individuals think of themselves as extremely nice, quite potent, and quite lively. If you are such a person, then you are not stressed when your friends, loved ones, and other valued individuals perform nice acts toward you. Extremely good events like becoming a parent or getting a promotion can be stressful, but not extremely stressful because the deflection from such events is limited—overly good impressions cannot be all that much more positive than what you want them to be. Having to interact with evil people would be emotionally unpleasant and would generate moderate to high levels of stress. However, the highest levels of stress arise when valued individuals treat you badly, thereby disconfirming sentiments about both you and the other. In other words, the worst stress results from good relationships going bad.

Individuals with negative selves run a general risk of seeming too nice—either because they are treated somewhat badly by others who dislike them, or because they are treated nicely by others who don't know about their negative self-concepts. In

general, such individuals more often experience stress and its consequences than do individuals with positive selves.

8.5.2 Emotions and Stress

Deflection is related to unlikelihood: the more deflection an event produces, the stranger, more unique, even inconceivable the event seems. Thus life is stressful when it has turned persistently strange, unique, or inconceivable.

Deflection has no straightforward relation to emotion, and emotion is not an indicator of stress. Life can be intensely emotional and yet not stressful at all, when one is experiencing the emotions that are appropriate to one's identity. On the other hand, an emotionally flat life can be stressful for an individual who is trying to maintain a valued self.

For example, the joy and gleefulness of a mother playing with and chatting to her daughter are intense emotions, but they are close to the structural emotion for a mother with a daughter, and so frequent events of this sort produce little deflection and no stress. On the other hand, a mother catering to a sponging houseguest might feel no emotion as she repeatedly indulges the sponger, even as deflection is accruing and stress building. The stress is signaled by a sense that her life has turned unconventional, not by her lackluster feeling.

Any event that produces deflection can become stressful if repeated, and that includes events that produce pleasant emotions. For example, a fireman repeatedly acclaimed as a hero for acts of braveness is deflected in a positive direction, and if the accolades repeat over and over, a looming sense of peculiarity signals the growth of stress, even though the individual is feeling pride.

Events involving unpleasant emotions often produce great stress. That is not because negative emotions are inherently stressful, though. Rather, unpleasant emotions typically signal impressions of self that are far distant from the good, potent, and active self-sentiments that most people are trying to confirm, so the event producing unpleasant emotions also is producing massive deflection.

8.6 Emotions of Deviants

Clinical observations indicate that individuals with very negative self-esteem often have unstable emotions, or emotional lability. In fact, emotional lability should occur whenever an individual occupies a negatively evaluated identity (as does happen more often for those with negative self-esteem).

Think of a dissolute deviant, like a rapist. Imagine this individual grinning. Or imagine his face in an expression of woe. Such displays of emotion may strike you as insignificant in someone so bad, telling you little about his real assessments of things. The grin should signal that he is experiencing things as highly pleasant, but you doubt that because happiness is so inconsistent with his nature. The woeful attitude should signal that he is more tormented than usual, but you question that because wretchedness is so appropriate to his nature. Indeed, if the rapist thinks of

himself as others do, he has to exaggerate his emotions in order to keep his self-feeling appropriate to his circumstances.

A simple smile or frown has little significance for individuals who understand themselves as being fundamentally bad. They have to be more demonstrative in order to experience somatically a small amount of deviation from their self-sentiment. When involved in social events producing overly positive impressions of themselves, they have to work themselves into emotional beatitude or euphoria in order to get to a somatic state that makes them feel as deflected from their negative identity as the external events make them seem. When involved in exceptionally negative events, they have to evoke emotional hell to obtain a somatic state that lets them experience themselves at the same levels of badness as the external events make them seem. Their emotions may swing from pleasant to unpleasant no more than others' do, but they have to emote more intensely to register the swings.

8.7 Further Readings

The decades-long research of psychologist Paul Ekman revolutionized thinking about emotion displays. An introduction to his work is available in his 2004 book *Emotions Revealed: Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life*.

The emotional dilemmas of flight attendants were analyzed in Arlie Hochschild's (1983) classic book in the sociology of emotions, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Another classic book in the sociology of emotions is T. David Kemper's (1978) *A Social Interactional Theory of Emotion*, which introduced the notion of structural emotions.

Some of the words referring to emotions in this chapter are not emotion words, strictly speaking. Andrew Ortony, Gerald Clore, and Mark Foss (1987) provided the definitive list in their article, "The referential structure of the affective lexicon."

Christine Averett and I developed the model of how impressions develop from emotion-identity combinations in an article that is included in the book *Analyzing Social Interaction* (Smith-Lovin and Heise 1988). Lisa Thomas (now Thomassen) and I replicated and extended the model in our article "Predicting impressions created by combinations of emotion and social identity" (Heise and Thomas 1989). A Japanese version of the model was developed by Herman Smith, Takanori Matsuno, and Shuuichirou Ike (2001).

I discussed the place of emotions in group solidarity in my essay "Conditions for Empathic Solidarity" (Heise 1998).

A selection of key articles on how experiences create stress is available in Thomas Holmes and Ella David, *Life Change, Life Events, and Illness* (1989). A control-theory approach to stress was developed by Raymond Pavloski (1989) in his chapter, "The physiological stress of thwarted intentions." Peggy Thoits emphasized intractability as a dimension of stress in her 1994 article, "Stressors and problem-solving: The individual as psychological activist." Linda Francis (1997) analyzed strategies for coping with partner loss in her article "Ideology and interpersonal emotion management: Redefining identity in two support groups."

9

Changing Sentiments

Individuals with comparable sentiments who share the same definition of a situation all have similar expectations about what should happen next. Thus their interaction generally proceeds routinely, each individual's action being anticipated by others. Even individuals' emotions are anticipated, seeming appropriate to their predicaments.

So behaviors and emotions that violate your expectations imply that others are not sharing your definition of the situation and your sentiments. One way to deal with that problem is to re-define the situation. If others seem to be affirming different identities than you supposed, then choose new identities for them that account for their conduct and emotions.

9.1 Re-Identification

You can re-identify an individual with an entirely new identity—that is the focus of labeling theory in sociology. Assigning a new identity amounts to accounting for the individual's recent actions in terms of revised role expectations. Alternatively, you can re-identify a person by combining a personal characteristic with the individual's current identity—that is the focus of trait attribution studies in psychology. Combining a trait modifier with the individual's original identity amounts to interpreting recent actions in terms of the individual's unique personality or character.

Suppose, for example, that you identify an individual as a doctor and her interaction partner as a patient, and you think that doctors are quite good and powerful and somewhat lively, and patients are a bit good, but weak and quiet. Now suppose you observe the doctor insulting the patient. That is not an act you expect. So how do you reconstruct the situation in order to understand this action better?

Redefining the doctor requires answering the question: What kind of person would insult a patient? The impression of a doctor who insults a patient is slightly bad, slightly potent, and slightly active, so you might try an identity with that affec-

tive meaning—e.g., critic. Such a re-identification works to a degree: a critic insulting a patient does maintain the meaning of patient and also confirms the potency and activity meanings of a critic. However, when the actor's identity is bad then the impression created by insulting is especially bad, so it's better to provide the actor with an even more negative identity, like quack. The impressions created by a quack insulting a patient are close to the sentiments for quacks and patients, so with this re-identification the event produces little deflection and seems plausible. The quack identity helps you understand the doctor's current behavior, and presumably it will help you understand her future behavior, too.

Alternatively, you can try to understand the insult as the act of a doctor with a peculiar character or personality. As just seen, an actor who insults a patient must be quite bad, somewhat potent, and slightly active. So what kind of a trait would make a doctor into such a person? The answer is, a trait that is quite bad, neutral on potency, and a bit lively—like inconsiderate. A doctor insulting a patient could be manifesting her general inconsiderateness. Henceforth you might use that trait to understand her peculiar behavior as a doctor, and her peculiar behavior in other roles, too.

Redefining the patient offers a different route to understanding the doctor's action. In this case, you ask the question: What kind of person would a doctor insult? The kind of person befitting insult from a doctor would be bad, weak, and a bit active. An alcoholic is one identity whose affective meaning is close to this profile. Thus, you could better understand the doctor's insult by viewing the recipient as an alcoholic instead of a patient, assuming that facts do not preclude this. Alternatively you could attribute a trait like self-centered or conceited to the patient. A self-centered, conceited patient plausibly befits a doctor's insult.

The example illustrates a general point. You re-identify participants in puzzling events so that outcome impressions are as close as possible to the sentiments provided by the new identifications. Events revised this way seem likely and no longer puzzling. You gain understanding of observed behaviors by choosing new identifications that minimize deflection.

9.1.1 Identity Filtering

Typically, there are many identities that would be affectively appropriate for an observed behavior. Some don't make sense because they conflict with the institutional setting in which the action occurred. For example, a doctor who insults a patient logically can be re-identified as a quack. However, the doctor cannot logically be re-identified as a burglar, traitor, or bigamist, even though these identities are just as affectively appropriate as quack. A re-identification has to stay true to the identity of the interaction partner, the setting, and the nature of the act performed.

A re-identification also has to accord with essential features of the person being re-identified—especially whether the individual is male or female. The women's movement has made gender less of an issue in the workplace, where many identities like executive, which were implicitly gendered, are becoming ungendered, and where explicitly gendered identities like chairman have been changed to ungendered forms (chair). However, appropriate use of gender still is important in labeling others with some informal identities such as beauty, stud, bitch, and bastard.

Individuals acquire institutionalized identities through ritual commissioning or by ascription from physical features (as in assigning son or daughter identities to newborns). Thus, casting an individual into an institutional identity beyond the one that is current in the situation almost always involves drawing on the individual's repertoire of established institutional identities. Considerable institutional work would be required to assign an institutional identity to someone who does not already have it.

Informal identities, like friend or foe, can be assigned more freely. The logical requirement is that the person is behaving in accordance with the identity, and the person's action does not seem to be confirming or repairing some other identity in his or her repertoire.

You stop using an informal identity when you cannot recollect an instance where the person did the kind of thing characteristic of that identity, as opposed to performing some other role. Thus, feeling embittered, you might withdraw the label of friend from a person after re-examining all your encounters and deciding that each of the other's friendly acts really had an ulterior motivation.

9.1.2 Labeling Deviants

Negatively evaluated identities are used to label deviants. Table 9-1 lists some sample identities that have negative evaluation, for males and females in the U.S.A.

Deviants who are weak range from quiet types to noisy types. As the perceived potency increases, however, deviants mostly are highly active.

Table 9-1 shows great variety in the kinds of deviants that exist. For instance, individuals may be deviants because of their social relations, expressive displays, appearance, use of money, means of gaining money, style of work participation, use of substances, mental ability, thought disorders, orientation to rules, trustworthiness, sexual behavior, or propensity to violence. Additionally there are labels to identify deviant youths, family deviants, supernatural deviants, judicial deviants, and those who are stigmatized because they are victims of others.

The diversity of deviants in most cells of the chart demonstrates that affectively appropriate labels might not all "fit the crime." You have to decide which affectively-appropriate label matches the functional significance of an individual's action. For example, you can't explain violent behavior by identifying someone as a safecracker (roughneck would make more sense), or sexual behavior by labeling someone as a vandal (instead of, say, an adulterer).

Something else to remember about labeling is that re-identifications need not occur in response to deviant actions. If your definition of the situation does not predict another's conduct or emotions, you generally try re-interpretation first, going back over actions and seeing if you understood everything correctly. Next you may try attributions about participants' personalities or moods. Only if none of this works are you forced to seek new identities for participants under the assumption that others are acting the way they do in order to confirm identities that you have not acknowledged.

Table 9-1. Some identities that were negatively evaluated in 1970s U.S.A.

	Inactive	Neutral	Active
Potent	stepfather*	mafioso ogre vampire witch	assassin bandit bouncer brute bully cutthroat fiend gangster gunman lady-killer loan-shark mobster pimp pusher racketeer rival roughneck safe-cracker tough vigilante villain
Neutral	miser scrooge tightwad	cynic glutton goon informer killjoy shrew sluggard snob snoop stuffed-shirt traitor wrongdoer	adulterer blabbermouth brat busybody criminal fanatic fugitive gambler gigolo gossip heel hooker hotshot lesbian pickpocket porno-star psychopath rat tease thief troublemaker vandal
Impotent	beggar coward crone deadbeat deadhead drudge dullard fuddy-duddy hag hermit hobo hypochondriac loafer shut-in wino zombie	captive clod degenerate dope drunkard faultfinder flunky halfwit homosexual hypocrite imbecile neurotic paranoid phony prisoner scapegoat sissy slave slob stoolpigeon sucker tramp weirdo windbag	bisexual braggart crybaby delinquent dropout drug-addict fink jackass jerk junkie lunatic peeping-tom pothead prostitute punk scatterbrain shoplifter sinner slut smart-aleck sorehead whore

* Stepfather is not a quiet identity for females, but it is close and gives a sense of what contents the cell could have with a larger sample of identities.

9.1.3 Attribution

An attribution amalgamates a modifier with an individual's identity. Making attributions can be a way of inferring an individual's personality traits. It also can be a way of inferring individuals' moods. Whether you infer a trait as opposed to a mood is essentially a logical matter.

Personality traits (like introverted or hostile) distinguish the manner in which an individual participates in a situation from the manner that is expected due to the individual's identity. Inferring a trait amounts to interpreting abnormal behavior in a

situation as normal for that particular individual, because of the individual's personality.

Several conditions have to be fulfilled for a trait to be inferred. First, you have to notice an individual engaging in actions that disconfirm the individual's identity. Second, you have to note that the individual foregoes opportunities to repair the disconfirmation of identity, implying that the individual doesn't sense a problem. Since traits are trans-situational, a third condition also must be fulfilled: you are not aware of the individual acting elsewhere in a way that negates the inferred trait.

For example, suppose you visit someone who works in the same job as you but in a different establishment, and you observe the individual working in a manner that is low-keyed and taciturn relative to role demands, even in encounters that would excite you and make you talkative. You decide that the individual is introverted. However, that trait attribution could get scotched if you both go to a coffee house after work, and you see the individual visiting table after table, laughing and talking loudly with friends.

Mood attributions serve the same function as trait attributions, but moods do not have to be trans-situational. Inferring a mood requires that an individual acts abnormally relative to a role, and the abnormality continues even through opportunities to correct abnormal impressions. Disconfirmation of the mood in a different situation does not undermine the inference that the individual was in a mood previously.

Continuing the example, after seeing the individual's volubility after work, you conclude that the individual is not introverted but instead must have been in a heavy-hearted mood at work. You might even query the person to find out the reason for the moodiness earlier in the day.

9.1.4 Inferences From Emotionality

Sometimes people assess each other on the basis of conduct plus the emotional tone displayed while acting.

Malicious action accompanied by anguish damages an actor less than malicious action accompanied by satisfaction. The negative emotion signals that the actor actually is operating within a positive identity even though doing something bad. On the other hand, positive emotion during bad behavior implies that the actor is maintaining a negative identity, because only deviants engage in wicked behavior and feel good about it.

Such considerations become important in courtrooms. Defendants who show remorse about their illegal deeds get reduced punishments! They don't seem as inherently bad as defendants who show no remorse or who grin during accounts of their criminal acts.

Conversely, displaying negative emotion during positive actions leads to negative re-identifications. Imagine how you would classify someone who looks disgusted while kissing you! You expect others to have pleasant emotions when engaged in good actions, and something presumably is wrong with those who emote negatively while doing good.

Emotions displayed by recipients of action also can influence re-identifications of an actor. For example, you might suppose that a woman conversing warmly with a

man is his friend, until you notice that the man is embarrassed. Then you might wonder if the woman is something grander, like a top executive, because smart, authoritative, or famous actors make others feel quiet, uncomfortable, and vulnerable! Thus the identity of an actor is linked to the expressed emotions of both the actor and the recipient of action.

If you have no information on participants' emotions during an action that instigates re-identification, then you ordinarily search for an identity to explain the action while assuming that the person is maintaining the characteristic emotion associated with that identity. Additionally you presume that the other person in the action also is experiencing the emotion characteristic of his or her identity.

9.1.5 Identity Fluctuation

People give up their definitions of a situation reluctantly, even to the point of endangering themselves at times. For example, scores of people died in a 1977 dinner-club fire in Kentucky because they interpreted an announcer's appeals to leave the room as just another comedic routine, rather than as warning of an emerging scene of horror and panic.

Yet definitions of social interactants are fluid, too, as you easily can prove by watching yourself to see how you turn others into grumps and jerks and other things, attribute moods and traits, and do all this with a flexibility that might take someone from hero to fool and back again within a few actions.

People seem to maintain multiple definitions of a situation: a stable proper one along with loose informal definitions. The proper definition of a situation doesn't change easily, and perhaps can't change easily because it is anchored in the material setting and weaved into participants' social networks at and beyond the scene. However, informal definitions, tacit and ephemeral, may last just as long as they are needed to explain occurring actions and emotions.

Arguments and betrayals wouldn't happen if people always maintained the positive identities of proper definitions: parents with children, co-professionals, co-workers, roommates, teammates—all can be only supportive with each other. Actors require negative identities to argue, exploit, nag, lie, abandon, ridicule, heckle, shun, etc. Since such negative actions occur, the implication is that people slip into negative identities without too much resistance. And most interpersonal turmoil is transitory, so returning to positive roles must be possible, too.

9.2 Sentiment Change

Most of the time you assimilate the world into your mental model, making your experiences fit your current knowledge and sentiments. You appraise situations in terms of concepts you know, and you construct and re-construct events so that they confirm the sentiments you have.

Yet at some points in life, you must change your mind, in order to keep a useful mental model that works reasonably well. Under what conditions does your mental model stop being a mold for shaping reality and instead adjust to reality?

9.2.1 New Sentiments

Events that are totally foreign to you cannot be assimilated into your existing mental model. You have to add concepts and their associated sentiments when you encounter an entirely new world of experience, a world for which you have no model at all.

Suppose, for example, that you turn to running rapids on the Colorado River for the first time in your life. Your guides provide you with concepts and sentiments for phenomena that you never encountered before. The river, your guides tell you, contains holes, stairs, sleepers, stoppers, keepers—phenomena that warrant your respect and perhaps your fear. You must learn life-saving responses to a boat flipping—swimming feet first, throwing bag, and participating in z-drags. River guides, you learn, are heroic figures warranting your respect as they scout whitewater ahead and thread your boat among dangerous rocks. Having acquired the mental model for river running, you must maintain it responsibly through your own actions, for the sake of everyone's safety.

Youths often are tabula rasa, lacking any model for an area of reality, and youths are expected to mentally incorporate whole spheres of culture. However, accommodation to reality occurs throughout life, whenever one moves into new vocational or avocational arenas.

9.2.2 Enculturation

Average high school graduates know about 50,000 words. For each word, they have learned a denotation and also the affective tone—or sentiment—associated with the concept. Thus individuals internalize a huge number of sentiments as they acquire language.

While some words and sentiments are learned via reading and dictionary usage, most sentiments associated with words are learned in interpersonal situations. Those who are more adept at a scene convey sentiments to novices directly by emotional displays, or indirectly by actions.

For example, apprentice builders might learn the sentiment for building inspectors by observing their employers' nervousness when interacting with building inspectors. Alternatively, they might surmise the appropriate sentiment toward building inspectors from a building inspector's actions, like halting a construction project until violations of the building code have been remedied.

9.2.3 Turning Points

Occasionally some event prompts a need to adjust your sentiments, and you deliberately open yourself to sentiment change.

Suppose, for example, that a male acquaintance leading a dissipated life falls in love and marries. Guessing that your old sentiment about him may no longer be predictive of his future actions, you open your mind and let his subsequent actions shape a new sentiment that allows you to generate reasonable expectations about his future behavior.

Catastrophes that leave individuals unable to anticipate the events in their lives can open them to replacement of major portions of their mental models. Religious missionaries make use of this fact, entering disaster areas and generating orderliness through implementation of their religion's conceptualizations and sentiments. Seeing the power of the missionaries' mental models and the inadequacy of their old culture, indigens may abandon in mass their old cultural understandings for the new doctrines offered by the missionaries.

Accommodation occurs when you are not entirely in control of life, implying some impotency, and successful accommodation may even require temporary forfeiting of potency in order to change. Formal accommodation roles—like apprentice, beginner, intern, trainee, and the roles of childhood—all have a pattern of being nice but somewhat powerless.

Having gone into the mode of accommodating to reality with regard to some entity, you stay in that mode as long as your surmised sentiment for the entity keeps changing. However, when you surmise the same sentiment over and over—say, four or five times, you switch from accommodator to assimilator mode, and begin constructing and re-constructing events so as to confirm your stable sentiment.

9.3 Further Readings

Books on affect control theory (Heise 1979; Smith-Lovin and Heise 1988; MacKinnon 1994) discuss re-identification in detail.

The importance of emotional demeanor in courtrooms has been investigated in a series of studies by Olga Tsoudis, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Dawn Robinson (Robinson, Smith-Lovin, and Tsoudis 1994; Tsoudis and Smith-Lovin 1998; 2001; Tsoudis 2000a; 2000b;).

Psychologist Jean Piaget developed the idea of assimilation versus accommodation—e.g., see his 1954 book, *The Construction of Reality in the Child*. I applied the idea in an article on how sentiments accommodate to events: "Sentiment formation in social interaction" (Heise 2006).

The estimate of vocabulary acquisition comes from George A. Miller (1991), *The Science of Words*.

I examined the impact of catastrophes on religious conversion in my 1967 article, "Prefatory findings in the sociology of missions."

My knowledge of white-water boating comes entirely from Lilian Jonas (1999), "Making and facing danger: Constructing strong character on the river."