



Handbook of Communication and Emotion

Research,
Theory,
Applications,
and Contexts



Edited by

Peter A. Andersen
Laura K. Guerrero



Handbook of Communication and Emotion

**Research, Theory,
Applications, and Contexts**

To the four most significant people in my life with whom I have shared every conceivable emotion: My wife, Dr. Janis Andersen; my daughter, Kirsten Andersen; and my parents, Alexander and Mildred Andersen

—P. A. A.

To all those who have rocked my emotions and helped fill my life with more positive than negative affect, especially my husband, Vico; my parents, Bob and Carol; my sister, Cindy and her family; and my brother, Mark

—L. K. G.



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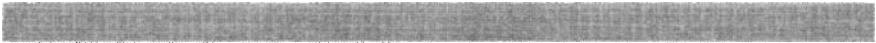
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Foreword

The Role of Affect in Communication, Biology, and Social Relationships

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Is it mere tautology to assert that social beings communicate with one another? Perhaps so, but the questions that follow from that observation are anything but trivial. What forms might communication take and to what end? What other processes provide the scaffolding for interaction? How does communication tie those social beings together or propel them apart?

This book examines one of the essential aspects of the communication process: affect. I call it essential because it figures so prominently in virtually all of the questions that we might pose about communication. Although the individual chapters will make this case far more persuasively than my assertion, in the pages that follow I provide some foundation for the chapters themselves. My arguments depend heavily on a claim that is uncontroversial in most circles, that is, that human beings have evolved to meet adaptive challenges posed by the environment. I develop three points:

1. The primary function of affect is to guide behavior. Affect evolved because it enabled successful interaction with the environment.
2. For human beings, the important environment was the social environment. Affect evolved in the presence and service of social interaction.
3. For better or worse, human beings strategically manage their affective states. The relative utility of these efforts can be judged only by reference to the environment.

INTERACTING WITH THE ENVIRONMENT: BASIC PROCESSES

Organisms of all sorts strive to maintain inclusion in their respective gene pools (Mayr, 1982). From *Paramecium* to *Homo sapiens*, these organisms must acquire resources from the environment if they are to survive and reproduce. This entails two problems. For one, whenever some change in the environment takes place, the organism must discern its relevance and nature. Does it matter to me? And, if so, is it hostile or hospitable? This is the problem of appraisal. It can be simple and straightforward, as when someone wins the lottery, but often it is not. A curved stick may be mistaken for a snake, a water pistol for a genuine Smith & Wesson .357. Because of the ambiguous and polysemic nature of the environment, particularly the social environment, accurate appraisal of environmental changes is no simple task.

Then there is the problem of response. At base, the behavioral options and their corresponding motivations are only two: approach and withdrawal (Schneirla, 1959).¹ People seek sustenance and lovers, whereas they attack enemies. These are all forms of approach. Withdrawal can be seen in efforts to avoid toxins and boors.

Choosing² between the response strategies is often difficult because most of the elements in the environment are multivalenced. That is, they present consequences that are both desirable and undesirable. High fat foods, for instance, offer the gratification of flavor against the downside of weight gain and coronary threat. Further complications are introduced because the relative strength of the approach and withdrawal motivations change as a function of distance from the issue under consideration. When organisms are far from the stimulus, the approach motivation is relatively stronger than the withdrawal motivation. The relationship between the two motivations reverses itself when the organism is in close proximity to the stimulus (Miller, 1959).

Making the appropriate response to relevant elements in the environment is clearly important to any organism. It serves the long-range goal of inclusive fitness, the mid-range goal of survival, and the immediate goal of, for example, satiating one's hunger. But in addition to the complexities introduced by multivalenced elements and varying proximity to those elements, there is time pressure. Some environmental changes are imperative. They demand an immediate response. At the extreme, the contemplative organism is the dead organism.

Evolution has provided affect as a solution to the problems posed by interaction with the environment. The primary function of affect is to guide behavior. There are numerous lines that might be drawn within the conceptual domain of affect (see

¹Of course, there are distinctly different forms of approach, ranging from nurturance to attack, and different forms of withdrawal, as seen in fright versus contempt. These are important distinctions, but space does not permit a thorough examination of them.

²As a matter of convenience, I will use the language of choice throughout this chapter. However, I do not mean to imply that people are necessarily aware of their options nor that they make considered judgments concerning the course of action that they pursue.

Guerrero, Andersen, & Trost, Chapter 1, this volume), but whether we are talking about moods, emotions, or other feeling states, the function is the same. Affect advises behavior.

I want to emphasize that it is not the environment itself that presents the adaptive problem, but rather the question of how to interact with it (Burleson & Goldsmith, Chapter 9, this volume; Lazarus, 1991). This point is vital because it reveals that the solution must be two-sided. On one side is the state of the environment and the *phasic* responses made to it. On the other side is the *tonic*, or preexisting, affective state that the organism brings to the interaction. Both require consideration.

Affect as Phasic

Environmental imperatives are dealt with by coarse programs that run very rapidly, that is, by emotions. The emotions can be likened to computer programs in that they accept certain forms of information, analyze that information, and then output instructions that shift the organism into a mode of operation suited to dealing with the change (Oatley, 1992). The alterations in mode of operation are both swift and global. They sweep through the physiological, cognitive, motivational, and expressive systems, mobilizing resources from each so as to yield a mode of operation suitable for dealing with the environmental change.

These programs must be considered coarse in that the input they accept is very limited and the range of values they output fairly small. Some writers take the position that the human emotional system has only a few basic output values. Oatley (1992), for example, contends that there are only five such states: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and disgust. Each one has implications for some form of engagement or withdrawal depending on environmental conditions. However, there are compelling reasons to treat these emotions, and perhaps others, as conceptually and operationally distinct. Different affects are designed to accommodate different configurations of person-environment relations. These differences are reflected in the physiology (Ekman, Levenson, & Friesen, 1983; Sinha, Lovallo, & Parsons, 1992) and phenomenology of the emotions. There is more to emotion than *just* approach or withdrawal.

Affect as Tonic

If we view emotions as phasic responses to the environment, the other side of the solution is the tonic (baseline) state of the organism. Any decision as to the appropriate course of action (i.e., engagement versus withdrawal) must depend on the resources available to the organism at the time the action is required. The experiential aspect of moods can be thought of as a readout of the operating level of the

organism's various biopsychological systems. When the individual is fatigued, malnourished, or overcaffeinated, these conditions are typically manifested in mood. Bad moods might warn of the depletion of resources and the inadvisability of engaging in some challenging interaction with the environment. Good moods, in contrast, signal a "full tank" and a corresponding potential for successful interaction (see Guerrero et al., Chapter 1, this volume).

A single continuum running from good to bad is probably not the best way to conceptualize mood. In fact, there is considerable evidence that two separate dimensions, one positive and one negative, provide a more theoretically precise and empirically valid conception of mood. Factor analytic work on mood consistently reveals a two-factor structure labeled positive and negative affect by Watson and Tellegen (1985) and energetic and tense arousal by Thayer (1989). These two affects are statistically independent of one another (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). Furthermore, there is evidence that their neural substrates are differentiated in the left and right hemispheres of the brain, respectively (Fox, 1991). The left hemisphere is the biological substrate of approach behavior and positive or energetic affect, whereas the right hemisphere contains the withdrawal or inhibition systems that generate the corresponding behaviors and negative or tense affect (Davidson, 1993; Gray, 1987).³

All of this suggests that one's tonic affective state is a function of the interaction of two systems. Any given individual might be high or low on both or either dimension. One's tonic state is determined by both the absolute values of the two systems and their activation levels relative to one another.

The Complexity of Affect in Practice

With the ideas of tonic and phasic affect in place, it is possible to see how interaction with the environment occurs. Emotions are evoked by environmental imperatives, but their type, intensity, and trigger points are shaped by the tonic state of the organism. An individual at full strength may respond to a threat with anger. At another time, suffering from depleted resources, he may experience fear upon exposure to the same threat. Yet the manner in which either emotion is instantiated as behavior is influenced by the environment. For example, fear is an emotion that one would normally associate with movement away from the threatening stimulus. However, fear can also provide the basis for defensive aggression, such as when an otherwise docile animal is cornered. The organism-environment interaction is a multifaceted process.

As an example, Jorgensen (Chapter 15, this volume) makes the point that the

³In the service of clarity, my discussion of this research glosses over a great many complexities and even some contradictions. For instance, it is not clear that mood and brain researchers would equate these systems to nearly the degree that I have done here.

study of persuasive communication must embrace both tonic and phasic conceptions of affect. Although we can and should devote attention to understanding emotional appeals, it is also important to recognize that persuasive messages are not processed in an affective vacuum. Current theorizing suggests that preexisting mood states may shape message processing through a variety of mechanisms. Positively valenced moods seem to discourage close scrutiny of the message, by reducing processing capacity, motivation to process, or both.

Because of the twin challenges to appraisal, ambiguity, and polysemy, we might expect that organisms frequently experience multiple emotions.⁴ Given one interpretation of the environment, the corresponding emotional program is activated and run. Yet because multiple interpretations are possible and there is a need for accuracy, individuals may consider several alternatives, which in turn result in several emotions. In fact, studies report evidence of multiple emotional responses to discussions of politics (Dillard & Backhaus, 1997) and nuclear energy (Penner, 1996), to news of the Gulf War (Hoffner & Haefner, 1993; Kinder, 1994), and to AIDS-related public service announcements (Dillard, Plotnick, Godbold, Freimuth, & Edgar, 1996).

But if the presence of multiple emotions means the presence of multiple, and perhaps conflicting action tendencies, how then does one settle on the proper interpretation and the corresponding course of action? Planalp (Chapter 2, this volume) suggests an answer: individuals make use of multiple cues in multiple channels. Participants in her intriguing study were asked to monitor someone they knew well and, when they noticed that person experiencing an emotion, to keep a record of how they arrived at that conclusion. Her results revealed that the modal number of cues used to infer an emotion was four. Most often, the cues came from three or more different categories (e.g., vocal cues, verbal cues, facial cues). Of course, the meaning of these various cues and the weighting accorded them are surely shaped by developmental processes (Feeney, Noller, & Roberts, Chapter 18, this volume; Wilson & Smith, Chapter 20, this volume) and cultural experience (Porter & Samovar, Chapter 17, this volume).

Transition

Affect enables organisms to address the challenges posed by interaction with the environment. One fundamental problem is how to acquire the resources that enable survival and reproduction. Social life-forms have adopted a strategy for solving that problem, which depends on cooperation and role specialization. This strategy gives rise to a new problem, one of dividing acquired resources among members of the social group, the focus of the next section.

⁴I suspect that these are not blends, but oscillations. If emotions occur more rapidly than the procedures designed to measure them, they would appear as blends because they aggregated over too large a time unit to distinguish between them.

INTERACTION WITH THE ENVIRONMENT: SOCIAL PROCESSES

It is no accident that humans are such social creatures. Much more so than the physical makeup of the environment, the social group constituted the selection environment for *Homo sapiens*. Throughout the development of the species, group life has had numerous advantages over more solitary modes of existence. Whereas individuals were easy targets for large predators, groups of humans could more successfully defend against attack. Individuals acting in concert could track and kill large prey—an unachievable end for the lone hunter. In addition, the division of labor into hunting and gathering could not be accomplished without sufficient numbers to form a group. But these are only problems of survival. Because evolution operates as a function of differential reproduction, not simply differential survival, there were other, probably more important, adaptive challenges that arose not from large predators but from the group itself.

Reproductive success is directly and indirectly enhanced by cooperation. The attraction and retention of a mate require a certain degree of cooperation between partners. During the lengthy period that human young are unable to care for themselves, two parents working collaboratively are better able to ensure the survival of the offspring than is one parent. And in groups other than mating dyads, the formation of intrasexual alliances (i.e., friendships and coalitions) has the potential to enhance inclusive fitness. Thus, the social, communicative environment in which humans evolved selected for adaptations such as cooperativeness, kindness, and fear of social exclusion (see Andersen & Guerrero, Chapter 3, this volume; Brewer & Caporael, 1990). The resulting networks of affiliation provide a mechanism for the distribution of resources.

Still, there are distinct limits to the advantages of cooperation. If all members of the group are striving for reproductive fitness, then they are, necessarily, in competition with one another. Scarce resources, ranging from food to breeding opportunities, must be allocated among members of the group. This problem of resource distribution is likely to be recurrent in that each time new food reaches the group, it must be distributed. Similarly, as the young move toward maturity and gain the ability to reproduce, they too become resources because members of sexually dimorphic species need mates to reproduce. It seems that such an environment would select for aggressiveness. Although this may in part be true, there is considerable risk to resolving every occurrence of a distribution problem through physical combat. A status hierarchy is one means of avoiding the need for constant renegotiation of resources. This hierarchy provides another means of resolving the distribution of resources problem.

In line with the reasoning outlined above, Hogan (1982) suggested that the challenges of social life are reducible to just two overarching issues: getting along and getting ahead. The human group creates status hierarchies and networks of affiliation that correspond to these two issues. Together they constitute social structure.

Locating oneself in this social structure is an essential element of human existence. In fact, Segrin (Chapter 8, this volume) reminds us that the absence of social ties is closely associated with emotional dysfunction.

Dominance and affiliation relations are efficient means of regulating resource distribution and arguably the defining ingredients in the human experience. The communication of emotion is central to the development, maintenance, and modification of these structures. Hogan's two challenges are worked out in social episodes, that is, thematically interwoven strings of behaviors produced by two or more persons. Individual actions or utterances convey the speaker's conception of the relationship (cf. Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Rogers-Miller & Millar, 1979). Over the course of one or more social episodes the interactants negotiate their relationship in terms of dominance and affiliation. Affect plays a pivotal role in such negotiations (Bailey, 1983).

Elsewhere, I have argued that affect in the communication process might be viewed from at least three, nonexclusive perspectives (Dillard, 1993; see also Buller & Burgoon, Chapter 14, this volume). First, affect might precede and serve as the basis for communication. Words driven by anger or anguish are instances of *emotion-motivated* communication. Second, communication is *emotion-manifesting* when it provides information about the internal state of the actor. This can occur explicitly as when one announces "I am sad" or inexplicitly, as when we wear our feelings on our sleeves. Finally, communication can be *emotion-inducing*. This occurs whenever one party elicits an affective response in the other. Whereas these distinctions are useful to researchers, all three perspectives are part of any interaction to varying degrees. The instance of the exasperated parent who shows his irritation and, in so doing, produces shame in the misbehaving teenager illustrates the point. Also inherent in the transaction is the reconstitution of social structure. The parent has reasserted his authority and the child has accepted, emotionally, that relational definition.

The set of relational definitions that emerge from interaction constitutes social structure. It consists of two aspects that are conceptually separable but remain behaviorally intertwined: the dominance hierarchy and the affiliative network. "Bright side" affects (to borrow a term from this volume) such as liking and loving are social adhesives insofar as they bind individuals together in friendships, coalitions, and mating pairs. In so doing, they contribute to the stability of the social structure. But feelings of liking, loving, and sexual desire are not fixed with regard to target or intensity. The instability of affiliative emotions is of considerable significance to the social group because relationships not only determine the distribution of resources, but are themselves resources. Mating relationships provide the mechanism for attaining inclusive fitness. Thus, shifts in affiliative relationships may ripple through the social network, causing destabilization and a host of other "dark side" affects such as anger (Canary, Spitzberg, & Semic, Chapter 7, this volume) and jealousy (Guerrero & Andersen, Chapter 6, this volume).

Dark side affects underlie threat and attack, two other means of acquiring resources. Rather than relying on physical assault, however, people typically rely on

anger displays. Among the primates with higher brain-to-body ratios, status tends to be established via verbal and nonverbal communication (Mazur, 1973). We begin to get a glimmer that certain communication skills (e.g., impression management and argumentativeness) might enhance an individual's inclusive fitness. In line with this thinking, Canary et al. (Chapter 7, this volume) suggest that aggression is the strategy of last resort: individuals who suffer from deficits in argumentative skill are most likely to behave aggressively.

In short, it is convenient to group the affects into those associated with affiliation and solidarity and those associated with dominance and social control. Although the distinction will ultimately fail (in just a few pages), it is serviceable for the moment. It will allow us to examine the chapters of this volume in greater detail.

Affects Associated with Getting Along

There are specific affects associated with development and maintenance of various sorts of affiliative relationships. Friends like one another. These relationships are characterized by "relatively high levels of emotional (but not physical) intimacy" (Gaines et al., Chapter 19, this volume, p. 508). Romantic partners experience warmth and love for one another (Andersen & Guerrero, Chapter 11, this volume; Taraban, Hendrick, & Hendrick, Chapter 12, this volume). Such feelings contribute to the stability of the social network, by linking individuals to one another in ways that provide for sharing resources. These affects, warmth, liking, and loving, can be seen as relational analogues to tonic intrapersonal states. The parallel lies in their relative permanence. Relative to rapid emotions such as fear and anger, they are fairly enduring states. This is true as well of their counterparts, which include disliking and hating.

Still, these long-lasting affects are built from experiences that occur within particular social episodes. Relationships provide a forum where varying ranges of emotions are presented. Speaking of friendships, Gaines et al. (Chapter 19, this volume) note that "joy is likely to be expressed in a variety of friendships, whereas sadness is likely to be expressed only in the closest of relationships" (p. 511). Similarly, Burleson and Goldsmith (Chapter 9, this volume) point to a certain level of trust as requisite for the discussion of negative emotion. These observations have potentially interesting implications for the definition and investigation of personal relationships. In a field that typically defines intimacy in terms of the frequency and depth of interaction, perhaps there is an alternative. Is the real meaning of a relationship determined by the range and type of feelings that are discussed?

Metts, Sprecher, and Regan's contribution (Chapter 13, this volume) takes up the question of whether sexual desire should be considered an emotion. Their position stretches the envelope of lay definitions in certain respects, but sexual desire does seem to possess many of the defining features of affect. It is a subjective feeling state with motivational properties and clear implications for behavior. With regard to the framework developed in this chapter, it is clearly an affiliative affect. And

in line with the previous paragraph, the expression of sexual desire is a signal event, a turning point, in relational definition.

Affects Associated with Getting (and Staying) Ahead

Anger is an approach emotion in that individuals move to engage the source of their anger. And the experience and expression of anger are intimately bound up with issues of social hierarchy and aggression.⁵ As Canary et al. (Chapter 7, this volume) note, anger may arise from a variety of sources (e.g., aggression by others, perceptions of unfairness) and take a variety of forms ranging from rage to irritation. Despite this diversity, all the various interpersonal instigators of anger can be seen as perceived threats to one's notions of how social relations should be conducted. When individuals attempt to influence one another, their efforts vary in perceived dominance (Dillard & Harkness, 1992). They are saying, in varying degrees, that they intend to control the target and, by implication, that they are *not* status peers. Furthermore, it is the degree of perceived dominance that determines the extent to which anger is aroused in the target of those messages (Dillard & Kinney, 1994; Dillard, Kinney, & Cruz, 1996). Success in influencing another produces feelings of positive affect in the message source, whereas failure yields anger and guilt (Segrin & Dillard, 1991).

In line with the evolutionary logic on which this chapter builds, LoPreato (1984) defines power as the "capacity of an individual or group within a dominance order to impede the access to fitness-enhancing resources by others and to facilitate it for oneself" (p. 346). From here it is but a short step to see that a threat to one's mating relationship poses a danger to one's place in the gene pool.⁶ As Guerrero and Anderson discuss (Chapter 6, this volume), potential disruption of a relationship may evoke that distinctive form of anger known as jealousy. This, in turn, activates a complex sequence of events including information acquisition (to deal with the appraisal problem), evaluation of one's options (to deal with the response problem), and action. A rich variety of communication behaviors are possible at each step of the sequence. As a whole, the sequence is oriented toward reestablishing accessibility to resources.

⁵Although I am classifying anger here as an approach emotion because it encourages movement toward the stimulus (i.e., attack), it can also be instantiated as a withdrawal tendency as in the case of "cold anger." While space does not permit an elaborate discussion of this point, I believe that most, if not all, emotions can underlie either approach or withdrawal depending on the circumstances in which they arise. For example, fear generally suggests movement away from the threat, but if escape is not possible it can produce defensive aggression (as when an animal or a person is cornered).

⁶Here again, I want to emphasize that I am not suggesting that individuals have inclusive fitness as their goal. Rather, that is the aim of genes. Individuals do not rise up in the morning with a fresh plan to propagate their genes on a daily basis. They do behave in ways that enhanced reproduction in an earlier era.

Earlier I reported research claiming that “higher” primates prefer communication to combat as a means of constructing status hierarchies and influencing one another (Mazur, 1973). Questions concerning the form and content of those messages were left unaddressed. Witte (Chapter 16, this volume) suggests some answers. Taking a position similar to the one I have advanced here, Witte argues that fear might encourage either approach or withdrawal depending on the relevance of the stimulus to the individual and his or her power to deal with the threat. The thrust of her argument is that individuals respond by engaging threats to their well-being when they are able to do so. But they tend to withdraw when they see their capacity to effect change as absent. Barbee, Lawrence, and Cunningham (Chapter 10, this volume) draw similar lines in their analysis of social support. They argue that coping behaviors can be examined in terms of two dimensions: approach–avoidance and problem-focused versus emotion-focused.

The Interplay between Status Hierarchies and Affiliative Networks

I have treated dominance and affiliation relationships as cleanly separable. However, studies of nonhuman species provide a clue that such distinctions are more convenient than real. For example, McKenna (1978) reported that aggressive interactions between langurs significantly increase the likelihood that grooming will occur. Similarly, de Waal and Roosmalen’s (1979) work revealed that chimpanzees have a heightened tendency to make body contact with their opponent following an aggressive interaction. This contact usually takes the form of kissing. Both studies suggest that dominance and affiliation are intimately bound up with one another (de Waal, 1986). Following episodes in which dominance relations are negotiated, there is a tendency to repair or solidify the affiliative component of social structure.

Guilt is an emotion that clearly demonstrates the degree to which the issues of dominance and affiliation are intertwined. Vangelisti and Sprague (Chapter 5, this volume) report that guilt is most commonly elicited in the context of very close relationships, presumably as a result of failure to meet the role requirements of that relationship. Substantial numbers of people attempt to induce guilt in their conversational partners as a means of social influence. Although the evidence is limited to health-related persuasion attempts, there is some indication that such appeals have a dual effect (Rook, Thuras, & Lewis, 1990). While they are successful at inducing behavioral compliance, they also produce negative reactions such as anger that ultimately degrade tonic relational affects (see also Coulter & Pinto, 1995).

In Chapter 4 (this volume) Bradford and Petronio strike several fundamental themes. They argue that embarrassment is an inherently social emotion that arises from the perception that one is being judged by others. Although we have all committed some public blunder that left us feeling foolish, Bradford and Petronio focus on those instances in which one individual *deliberately* embarrasses another. Creation of the situation and the resulting emotion are often used to dispute the existing social hierarchy. One example that comes quickly to mind is the ceaseless efforts of

Republicans and Democrats to expose errors of judgment in members of the opposing party. However, as Bradford and Petronio note, some strategic embarrassment episodes are constructed by well-meaning others so that one individual has the opportunity to strengthen an affiliative bond with another. Here again, we get a glimpse of how emotions are used episodically to both challenge and stabilize social structure.

Another layer of complexity is added by the possibility of deception. In their review of Interpersonal Deception Theory, Buller and Burgoon (Chapter 14, this volume) point out that there is no necessary correspondence between felt emotions and expressed emotions. Individuals smile in desire and in deceit. Emotional deception is used for all the same ends as emotional truth-telling and, in fact, both can be conceived of simply as information management conducted with an eye toward the social environment. The capacity and propensity to prevaricate is surely a social adaptation for there is little gain in deceiving inanimate objects.

Transition

Social beings constantly juggle the opportunities and challenges posed by their associations with conspecifics. These relationships, in both their episodic and stable forms, address the interdependent issues of affiliation and dominance. And these relationships are accomplished through the exchange of affect. An already complex task is rendered even more formidable by the possibility of deception. At the evolutionary level, such pressures result in a “cognitive arms race” (Dawkins, 1976; Trivers, 1971) the physical manifestations of which can be seen in the rapid development (in evolutionary terms) of the frontal lobes. With the ability to reason came a recognition of the flaws and foibles of the affect system.

AFFECT MANAGEMENT

Human beings actively manage their feelings. Why? Is it simply that revenge (or pleasure) is its own reward? Perhaps there is a deeper reason. Evolutionary processes shape a species through the interaction of the environment and the gene pool. Features of an organism that enhance likelihood of reproduction are retained over generations, while those that diminish fitness are lost. This process of sifting and winnowing genes, generation after generation, yield species that are compilations of information-processing mechanisms, each of which is designed to solve particular adaptive problems. Moods and emotions are one such set of mechanisms.

Most of this gene–environment interaction took place between 2 million and 10 thousand years ago during the Pleistocene era (Tooby & Cosmides, 1989). Because of changes in the environment called human civilization, *Homo sapiens* are now in an unusual position. We are designed for an environment that no longer exists. “Humans are living fossils—collections of mechanisms produced by prior

selection pressures operating on a long and unbroken line of ancestors” (Buss, 1995, p. 10). Affects are part of the human species because of the work they accomplished. The evolved mechanisms so well suited to the Pleistocene era may not lend quite the same benefits as they once did. They may be, at least slightly, obsolete.

One feature of affect is subjective experience. The phenomenological readout informs the cognitive apparatus as to the state of the organism and organism–environment relations. Positive affect signals propitious relations, whereas negative affect indicates that there is a problem to be solved. From an inclusive fitness standpoint, organisms that experienced positive states or resolved negative ones did so because of good or improved person–environment relationships. However, it is subjective experience that makes possible an inversion between the means and the end. At the genetic level, across generations, love operates in the service of inclusive fitness. But for the individual, the pursuit of happiness is a worthy goal in its own right. Affect, which developed as a means of enhancing reproductive success, can become an end in itself. This suggests that, for individuals, emotional regulation can be both functional and dysfunctional.

Functional and Dysfunctional Affect Management

The mechanisms of affect management are often social (Barbee et al., Chapter 10, this volume). We seek others to help us to induce positive states (Andersen & Guerrero, Chapter 11, this volume) and relieve negative ones (Burleson & Goldsmith, Chapter 9, this volume). But simply talking is insufficient. Burleson and Goldsmith (Chapter 9, this volume) consider in detail the ways in which one individual might discursively comfort another. They emphasize that it is not the objective state of the environment that matters so much as it is how the individual evaluates that environment. The effective comforter is able to assist another with the task of appraising and reappraising the person–environment relationship. The authors carefully and convincingly illustrate the complexity of that simple-sounding task through the lens of their appraisal perspective.

Segrin (Chapter 8, this volume) also provides perspective on the delicate complexity of the communication process in affect management. Individuals who suffer from depression are often deficient in the interactive skills required to manage social relationships. Relative to the nondepressed, they speak more slowly and more quietly, pause more frequently, and exhibit longer response latencies and less pitch variation. Others find interacting with the depressed unrewarding and, consequently, reject them. As with the Burleson and Goldsmith chapter, we see that there is a great deal more to effective social relationships than simply their number or the content of the talk.

Functional forms of affect regulation are not, however, restricted to social sources. As Wilson and Smith (Chapter 20, this volume) suggest, individuals who are bored often seek out exciting entertainment. Those who are upset may choose

something calm or distracting. But these affect management processes are not so simple as tuning in a positive show when one is feeling blue. Wilson and Smith note that anxious individuals may consume arousing media in an effort to desensitize themselves. They apparently try to toughen themselves to frightening real-world events by exposing themselves to arousing programming.

Much of the foregoing illustrates the adaptive uses to which people put media and other people. But the potential for maladaptive responses looms large for two reasons that I've outlined already: our emotion systems are out of date relative to the current environment and, as individual organisms, we seek to alleviate negative affects and promote positive affects as ends in themselves. All of this suggests the possibility of "emotional mistakes." People may be drawn to certain forms of media because they present information well suited to an evolved mechanism (Malamuth, 1996). Sexual desire, for example, can be aroused by exposure to a potential sex partner or to images of the same. Pornography may be both effective and problematic because the information-processing mechanisms that produce erotic desire cannot themselves discriminate between fact and fantasy.

Paying close attention to violence probably contributed to one's longevity in the Pleistocene era. Knowledge of the identity of the instigator, the method of attack, and the circumstances surrounding it provided information concerning one's own relative capacity for offense or defense. However, as Wilson and Smith (Chapter 20, this volume) make plain, a steady diet of violent programming in contemporary times may result in a range of undesirable changes in beliefs and attitudes.

Comedy, sex, and violence readily lend themselves to evolutionary explanation. Feelings such as sadness seem to present more of a challenge. Among humanists, the question of why individuals would willingly expose themselves to narratives that induce sadness is known as the "paradox of tragedy." From an evolutionary perspective, it is important to recall that we are products of a reciprocal interaction with the environment: the environment acts on the person and the person on the environment. Individuals need not wait for the environment to come to them when they can seek out circumstances that engage the mechanisms of which they are constituted. It is quite possible that individuals pursue and evaluate media experiences on the basis of the variety of emotions that are induced and the meta-reactions that individuals make to those experiences. It is not sadness per se that is enjoyable, but the reaction to one's own sadness (Oliver, 1993). Much as people exercise their linguistic abilities with crossword puzzles, they may use media to exercise their affective systems. These efforts may be viewed as either functional or dysfunctional.

The Calibration of Affect Mechanisms

The fact that humans possess information-processing mechanisms that produce affect is a result of our evolutionary heritage. But the manner in which those mechanisms operate in any given individual is a function of interaction with the envi-

ronment during the development of that individual. In humans, affect mechanisms are calibrated by the social relationships experienced during childhood.

In contrast to some species, human infants are helpless for an extended period. For the first several years of a child's life he or she is completely dependent on others to provide sustenance and care. According to attachment theory, those caregivers act as defining influences on the child's conception of relationships (Bowlby, 1969). The manner in which relationships themselves are defined is an issue that is addressed at several points in this volume (Andersen & Guerrero, Chapter 3, Chapter 11; Feeney et al., Chapter 18). Regardless of which of the several approaches to relational definition one takes, there is consensus that much of what is included there concerns emotional regulation. For example, there is evidence that avoidant infants learn to mask their negative feelings. When these babies are separated from their mothers, those classified as avoidant show physiological distress (indexed cardiovascularly), but less behavioral distress (indexed by negative vocalizations) than infants typed as secure. It has been suggested that masking protects the infant from rejection by the caregiver on whom he or she is so dependent (Bowlby, 1988). It would seem that the capacity for emotional deception comes very early in life (see Buller & Burgoon, Chapter 14, this volume).

The relational lessons learned as a child may be replayed in adulthood (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Feeney et al. (Chapter 18, this volume) speak to this issue in their work on emotional expression in romantic dyads. Individuals assessed as secure prefer not to limit their expression of negative feelings, and they see this as aligned with the desires of their partner. In other words, they believe that their partners prefer that they not censor their bad feelings either. Avoidant adults show the opposite pattern. However, the authors go on to make the important point that negative affect is a broad category, one that encompasses some substantially disparate feelings. And dyad members report that they control anger more than sadness and sadness more than anxiety.

Conclusion

Emotions are the simple-minded servants of behavior. Recognizing this, individuals often endeavor to regulate their affective states. Functional efforts can be seen in the commiseration that follows a loss or when an individual puts him- or herself in a good mood prior to job interview. Alternatively, we may dampen our giddiness to deal with something serious or scare ourselves with knowledge of the consequences of a bad habit. Affect management can also be dysfunctional, as when we use television to distract us from a problem that really should be addressed. And the efforts of infants to negotiate emotional balance with their caregivers may entrain strategies that prove counterproductive in adult relationships. Whatever judgment one might render regarding the functionality of affect management, there can be little argument concerning its existence.

SUMMARY

My basic claim has been that the study of communication should be intimately engaged with the study of affect. Within the framework of concepts offered by evolutionary biology, I have tried to make a case by sketching the common origins of communication and affect in the demands of the social environment. Whereas my strokes have necessarily been broad, the chapters that follow explore these issues in detail. As a group, they offer an exciting and contemporary view of the vital relationship between communication and affect.

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