

# Emotions Section News

Volume 15, Number 3

Summer 2001

## From the Chair

David Franks

### Chair

David Franks  
Virginia Commonwealth U.  
dfranks@saturn.vcu.edu

### Chair-Elect

Rebecca Erickson  
University of Akron  
rericks@uakron.edu

### Past Chair

Michael Flaherty  
Eckerd College  
flahermg@eckerd.edu

### Secretary-Treasurer

Jennifer Lois  
Western Washington U.

### Council

Cathryn Johnson (2003)  
Emory University  
cjohns@social-sci.ss.emory.edu

Dawn Robinson (2002)  
University of Iowa  
Dawn-Robinson@uiowa.edu

Jonathan Turner (2002)  
U. of California-Riverside  
jonathan.turner@ucr.edu

### Newsletter Editor

Leslie Wasson  
5109 17th Ave S  
Gulfport FL 33707  
727-323-6964  
lesliewasson@usa.net

What a time to be chair of the emotions section; what an opportunity for the study of emotions to prove its worth academically as well as in application! I'll get right to business to save space for all of the copy that has been drummed up by our editor in this time of vague but intense urgency.

**Membership:** The policy regarding membership will be to concentrate on the quality of our subsection activities, namely programs, awards and the dissemination of knowledge. I urge all of our established professors to look up the membership form at <http://www.asanet.org/forms/sectionform.html>. Donate a section membership to a deserving graduate student who belongs to the ASA. This contrasts with setting up a committee that invariably decides that every one should ask their friends to join. They have already decided not to and are doing you a favor that lasts for one year at best. Let's spit in the eye of custom and be for real. Give the subsection a chance to woo them forever by quality content. You get subscribers and we will try to keep them. **List Serves:** In spite of our hopes, the list serve for ISRE (The International Society for Research in Emotions) is not available to all members. However, I do now have access to the subsection list serve and as a member of ISRE can forward selected comments that should be of interest to our membership.

**Planned Newsletter Formats.** Our newsletter editor is planning a section in each issue describing research agendas for those of us that have been active in the section for some time and newly minted Ph.Ds. We will try to represent the different major frameworks in our selections. This will give a more intimate glimpse of what is going on, befitting our emotional field. This winter we will have a special issue that will be devoted to the study of emotions

*Continued on page 10...*

## In This Issue

<i>Chair's Statement</i>	1
<i>Current Projects in Emotion: Kathryn J. Lively</i>	2
<i>Review and Response: How Emotions Work</i>	3-7, 11
<i>Theories of Emotion: Dmitri Shalin</i>	8-10

# Agency, Structure, and the Social Production of Affect

## A Research Note

*Dmitri Shalin*

this is an attempt to find an order in the emotionally-charged narrative schemes that Western culture offers to people variously situated in social structure and struggling to make sense of their affective life. The assumption is that we interpret and label our emotions according to our station in life, agency status, and bio-socially framed temperament. The four quadrants in the chart represent four basic emotions-happiness, anger, fear, and ataraxy (<http://www.quinion.com/words/weirdwords/ww-ata1.htm>). These broad families of emotions coincide with the familiar distinctions among four temperaments-sanguinic, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic. The coordinates point to the intensity/valency of affect and the empowerment/disempowerment of agency. The intersection of the coordinates stands for a zero point where affect is neutralized and the enabling propensities of agency turn into disabling ones. The terms situated close to the intersection highlight affects with lower intensity and decreased agency; they are more likely to connote bodily states and feelings than mental states and emotions. The farther away from the intersection, the greater affect arousal and agency mobilization; such affective states are likely to signify strong emotions.

The pragmatist perspective embodied in this chart takes its clue from Spinoza, who defined emotions as a substance that diminishes or increases our capacity for action. Bodies poised for action are emotionally charged; the emotions they reveal serve as clues to the kind of selfhood we are apt to body forth. Emotions signal that things are getting personal, that stakes are rising, that one may be forced to take a stance, that behavioral options are being considered, evaluated, aborted, tried out and acted upon. Emotions can be seen as

---

**“Bodies poised for action are emotionally charged; the emotions they reveal serve as clues to the kind of selfhood we are apt to body forth...Emotions can be seen as nondiscursive narratives, exquisitely expressive means through which organisms narrate their emotions to themselves and to others.”**

---

nondiscursive narratives, exquisitely expressive means through which organisms narrate their emotions to themselves and to others. Not all such emotionally charged narratives are self-conscious; the onlookers may glean emotional stirrings that escape the agent's control and that sign in the flesh the agent's state of bodymind.

Emotion templates in the chart signify variable-intensity affective states; each should be judged relative to other terms in the same column and in the neighboring columns. The relational position of the term in the chart determines its emotion/affective value. In practical discourse, the same term may designate a somewhat disparate emotion and may represent a different affect strength. The specific context helps select the term's meaning. Few individuals

fall squarely into one quadrant or embody a fixed energy level. Nonclassically-propriety objects that we are, we quantum leap from one semantic emotional field to another. We should bear in mind that the same emotional episode can be labeled alternatively: What I see as "assertive," the other may experience as "pushy." It is one thing "to judge, punish or lecture" and quite another "to be judged, punished or lectured." The labeling of affect depends on the attribution process, with the same affect mapped into different segments of the rhetorical space designating different families of emotions. It is possible that an emotional qualia registered in a particular quadrant has counterparts in each other quadrant.

The emotion template chart may facilitate the formation of hypotheses. Thus, we can hypothesize that anger and fear are generated by events that threaten to disempower agents, lower their self-esteem, and confound their expectations. Agents are likely to respond with anger to threats perceived to be surmountable and with

**HAPPINESS**

**Sanguinic**

- 1 -

1.6 electrified  
exhilarated  
inspired  
blissful  
blessed  
adventurous  
undaunted  
brave  
proud  
magnanimous  
powerful  
heroic

1.5 energized  
empowered  
revitalized  
liberated  
free-spirited  
enthusiastic  
thriving  
bold  
generous  
determined  
assertive

1.4 animated  
excited  
playful  
cheerful  
optimistic  
ambitious  
committed  
confident  
caring  
persistent  
proactive

1.3 interested  
curious  
game  
humorous  
hopeful  
compassionate  
supportive  
engaged  
active

1.2 rested  
refreshed  
content  
trustful  
sympathetic  
friendly  
accepting  
prudent  
poised

1.1 calm  
peaceful  
quiet  
relaxed  
comfortable  
laid back  
agreeable  
composed  
patient

**Strong  
Positive  
Affect**

**ATARAXY  
Phlegmatic**

- 4 -

4.6 entranced  
mesmerized  
hypnotized  
spellbound  
enraptured  
ecstatic  
transcendent  
sublimated  
nirvanic

4.5 enthralled  
engrossed  
captivated  
enchanted  
cherished  
ravished  
indulged  
carried away

4.4 stoned  
besotted  
filled  
high  
giddy  
mellow  
bemused  
spoiled

4.3 infatuated  
enamored  
diverted  
entertained  
titillated  
tickled  
snug  
complacent  
nonchalant  
pampered

4.2 nursed  
nurtured  
comforted  
lulled  
cuddled  
consoled  
sheltered  
heartened  
taken care of

4.1 becalmed  
pacified  
quieted  
numbed  
tranquilized  
unconcerned  
unbiased  
unruffled  
stoic

**Agency  
Enabling  
Qualia**

**Agency  
Disabling  
Qualia**

3.1 sluggish  
placid  
frigid  
blase  
disaffected  
apathetic  
indifferent  
guarded  
nonresponsive

3.2 shy  
plaintiff  
subdued  
saddened  
afraid  
disappointed  
disheartened  
apprehensive  
retiring  
withdrawn

3.3 worried  
aggrieved  
bereft  
disillusioned  
estranged  
alienated  
pessimistic  
self-absorbed  
anxious  
resigned

3.4 harassed  
intimidated  
frightened  
defeated  
dispirited  
gloomy  
mournful  
depressed  
embarrassed  
submissive  
dependent

3.5 abused  
oppressed  
ostracized  
humiliated  
ashamed  
anguished  
desperate  
hopeless  
impotent  
guilt-ridden  
trapped  
indentured

3.6 terrified  
terrorized  
paralyzed  
violated  
raped  
tortured  
crucified  
agonized  
mortified  
powerless  
enslaved

2.1 concerned  
uneasy

2.2 aggravated  
weary  
out of sorts  
uncomfortable  
bored  
jaded  
reserved  
aloof

2.3 tense  
stressed  
annoyed  
chagrined  
vexed  
upset  
prickly  
ironic  
unfriendly  
pissed  
resentful

2.4 agitated  
irate  
frustrated  
envious  
acrimonious  
rude  
cynical  
pushy  
disdainful  
harsh  
hostile

2.5 dismayed  
indignant  
incensed  
mad  
bitter  
jealous  
sarcastic  
haughty  
adamant  
offensive  
manic  
violent

2.6 infuriated  
enraged  
revolted  
disgusted  
rabid  
contemptuous  
vehement  
vicious  
manic  
violent

**Strong  
Negative  
Affect**

**- 3 -  
FEAR  
Melancholic**

**- 2 -  
ANGER  
Choleric**

*Shalin, continued from page 8...*

fear to threats deemed to exceed the agent's power to cope. Happiness and ataraxy are generated by events that promise to enhance agents' self-esteem, facilitate their goals, and exceed their hopes. Agents respond with happiness to beneficial events reinforcing their sense of mastery over the situation and with ataraxic emotions to beneficial events diminishing the agent's power and control. One can hypothesize that cultures saturate their narratives with certain emotion templates, valorizing some affective markers and downgrading others. For instance, the Russian folklore bestows raise on Ivan the Fool, a poor village chap unburdened by ambition who achieves the worry-free existence not through hard work but by eliciting patronage from the wish-fulfilling magic pike. By contrast, the Protestant tradition puts a premium on personal initiative and self-control, and it seeks to subordinate emotions to intellect. The right and left brain hemispheres are known to display culture-specific patterns of activity.

Different social groups, castes, and classes experience their agency in emotion-laden terms reflecting their circumstances, life-course stage, and their place in the social structure. Society infuses humans with energy and resources or deprives them of wherewithal and opportunities; the result is the propensity to resort to particular emotion labels and subscribe to specific sentiments. Social position and agency status affect the individual's physiology, leaving a traceable mark on the body's autonomic nervous system, energy levels, neurochemical dynamics, hormonal activity, etc. A structurally reinforced and continually reproduced affect may generate identifiable character/mood patterns inscribed in the body. It is likely that social groups over- or under-produce certain kinds of emotions, that the aggregate levels of affect differ from one social class to another, and that societies evolve their own emotional cultures that can be described at any given historical stretch via a system of the leading emotional indicators.

To understand the social production of affect, I am looking into the narrative of race in late 20th-century America, along with a few other emotionally charged narratives. What got me going was the splendid series on race relations published last year in the New York Times. The respondents interviewed for the series used emotion labels that appeared to reflect the person's station in life. I was particularly struck by the African-American respondents' reference to the "angry black man" syndrome. Their usage and explanation implied that anger could be provoked by outside events as well as intentionally displayed to affect others in a situation. That is to say, we emote on cue as well as spontaneously, we "fly off the handle" and "let it all hang out," we can let our body speak for itself and mobilize the semiotic resources of the body to dramatize a particular agenda.

The emotion template chart sums up well-known things. It remains to be seen whether it is of any use as a research tool in studying agency, social structure, and emotion rhetoric, but the chart is fun to play with. By looking at it, you may be able to figure out where you gravitate in your emotion work, grasp the current balance of affect in a given life sphere, ascertain the degree of emotional volatility, and search for a link between your affect patterns and immediate and long-term social circumstances affecting your agency.

---

*Franks, continued from page 1...*

and our recent national crisis. In following issues we hope to have a section on books of interest. If you have read such a book and can write a few words about what it has to offer the field of emotions please ship it to our editor. Please do not hesitate to email me feedback and ideas on what you find useful in the newsletter and how to improve it. Deadlines for submissions are: November 15, April 15, and September 15. For the Winter issue this year only, the deadline had been extended to December 15.