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*Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 15. (1986), pp. 405-436.

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*Annual Review of Anthropology* is currently published by Annual Reviews.

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# THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF EMOTIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

Interest in "the emotional" has burgeoned in the last decade, not only in anthropology, but in psychology (e.g. 5, 77, 113, 141), sociology (e.g. 72, 81), philosophy (e.g. 153, 177), history (e.g. 180), and feminist studies (e.g. 176). A concern to understand the role of the emotional in personal and social life has developed in response to a number of factors, including dissatisfaction with the dominant cognitive view of humans as mechanical "information processors," renewed concern with understanding sociocultural experience from the perspective of the persons who live it, and the rise of interpretive approaches to social science that are more apt to examine what has previously been considered an inchoate phenomenon. The past relegation of emotions to the sidelines of culture theory is an artifact of the view that they occupy the more natural and biological provinces of human experience, and hence are seen as relatively uniform, uninteresting, and inaccessible to the methods of cultural analysis. In going beyond its original psychobiological framework to include concern with emotion's social relational, communicative, and cultural aspects, emotion theory has taken on new importance for sociocultural theory proper. These cultural approaches have made it possible for a broad range of anthropologists, including those traditionally hostile to "the psychological," to sustain an interest in emotion so construed.

This review examines approximately the last decade of anthropological research on emotions. While some cross-cultural work by psychologists is included as well as some non-American anthropological research, the emphasis is on American anthropology. Although research is being conducted in all geographic areas, a disproportionate amount has been done in the Pacific, reflecting both an indigenous focus on emotional idioms and Oceanic ethnography's traditional psychocultural emphases. We begin by examining some of the theoretical and epistemological tensions which, often implicitly, serve to structure both debates and silences on the relationship between emotion and culture. One of those tensions is between universalist, positivist approaches and relativist, interpretive ones; and it serves to organize the review that follows. Those concerned with cross-cultural regularities in emotion bring with them an interest in the ethological and evolutionary, the psychodynamic, commonsense naturalism, and in language universals. Those concerned primarily with the social and cultural construction of emotion draw on a number of different traditions, including the ethnopsychological, the social structural, the linguistic, and the developmental. Like any schematic organization of a diverse set of ideas, this one cannot do justice to the full complexity of each individual approach, but does, we think, capture a central set of dimensions that orients researchers toward the problem of emotion. In conclusion, existing ethnographic descriptions of emotions are organized via a suggested comparative framework for looking at emotions as one cultural idiom for dealing with the persistent problems of social relationship.

## TENSIONS IN THE STUDY OF EMOTION

A number of classic theoretical or epistemological tensions are found in the emotion literature. These include divergences on the issues of materialism and idealism, positivism and interpretivism, universalism and relativism, individual and culture, and romanticism and rationalism. While many of these may be rejected as false or unproductive dichotomies, they continue to structure much anthropological discourse on emotion. The positions each observer has taken on these matters are crucial for the way emotion is conceptualized and evaluated and for the methods used in its investigation. While some of these issues have been debated explicitly as they relate to emotion, most have remained implicit positions, impeding communication among emotion researchers.

*Materialism and idealism*, nature and culture, mind and body, and even structure and agency can be seen both as dichotomies and as the ends of a continuum of positions (60) related to each other and central to emotion theory. The dominant paradigm in the study of emotion in the social sciences

has been a materialist one. Emotions are treated as material things; they are constituted biologically as facial muscle movements, raised blood pressure, hormonal and neurochemical processes, and as "hard-wired" instincts making up a generic human psyche. This perspective is found in both the evolutionary and some of the psychodynamically oriented anthropological literature on emotion (e.g. 40, 105). Although culture is often conceptualized as influencing these material forces, individuals and societies are primarily seen as "coping with" emotion's given materiality.

The view that emotions may be construed as ideas as much as or more than psychobiological facts is evident in some recent research on cultural knowledge about person and emotion. Emotions are treated as evaluative "judgments" (106, 129, 155, 156; after 177), and more emphasis is placed on their volitional and cognitive aspects. The relationship between the body and emotions is often ignored or treated as a metaphorical connection with cultural ramifications (e.g. 181). For many who focus on emotion as judgment, however, the ideal aspect of emotion is embedded firmly in the real by virtue of the fact that emotional judgments are seen to require social validation or negotiation for their realization, thereby linking emotion with power and social structure. Emotions are thus seen as ideological in at least one of the term's marxist senses, that is, as aspects of consciousness linked to class and to domination more generally.

The mind-body dichotomy is particularly evident in what can be termed a "two layers" approach. In this, a distinction is made between natural, bodily, precultural emotion and ideal, cognitive, cultural sentiment or second-order emotion (85, 103, 131). The stratigraphy of body and mind in emotion study overlaps significantly with the layering of individual and society (see below).

A second contrast in emotion study is found between the approaches of *positivism and interpretivism*. Although positivism is purported to be on the wane in anthropology, it remains strong in psychology, the discipline most identified with the study of emotion. The perspective of academic psychology (which has both incorporated and reformulated the popular western views of emotion) has been substantially imported into the cultural study of emotion. The positivist emphasizes discovery of the emotional (or motivational) causes for behavior. The experiential epistemology of positivism has meant that the discovery process is seen as relatively unproblematic, whether proceeding through empathy with one's informants or through the observation of behavior more generally. Supracultural truth about the relationship between emotion and culture can be known and is accessible through careful observation and recording of behavior.

The recent trend toward interpretivism has also had an impact on the anthropology of emotion. Emotion is treated as a central aspect of cultural

meaning, with a corresponding interest in historical and cross-cultural variation in emotional meaning. Because the emotions are seen as embedded in socially constructed categories, truth about emotion becomes problematic. Interpretivism's social epistemology, in which knowledge is constructed by people in relationship with each other, has entailed a new emphasis on the language of emotion and the negotiation of emotional meaning. This negotiation occurs not only both among the people being observed, but also between anthropologist and informant (e.g. 21, 26, 134). Both strong and weak versions of constructionism are represented, including the view that emotional experience is almost endlessly mediated through language and culture (144) and the alternative view that psychology is a privileged internal domain which may, in theory, remain untouched by culture (e.g. 46).

The tension between *universalism and relativism* is evident in how frequently and how precisely the question arises as to whether or in what ways emotions can be said to be universal. Usually positivist in epistemological orientation, the universalist focuses on emotion as a panhuman ability or process that is invariant in its essence (typically defined as an internal feeling state) and distribution. Any phenomenon acknowledged to be culturally variable (e.g. the language available for talking about emotion) is treated as epiphenomenal to the essence of emotion (e.g. 157, 179). Those concerned with the ways in which emotions vary cross-culturally tend to define emotion more as a socially validated judgment than an internal state, and hence they focus their research largely on the translation of emotion concepts and the social processes surrounding their use (e.g. 109, 144). Relativists vary in the degree of constructionism to which they subscribe, and many note universals in some aspects of emotion as, for example, in the types of situations associated with them.

The debate over the universality of emotion parallels, in many ways, earlier discussions about cross-cultural variation in cognition. Both come down to struggles over concept definitions and over what differences matter, that is, over what cognitive or emotional differences are either crucial or interesting. Most would agree, however, on the truisms that all humans have the potential to live emotionally similar lives and that at least the emotional surfaces of others' lives may appear different to the outside observer.

The longstanding antagonism between *individual* and *social* approaches to understanding the person has been both bridged and continued in recent research on emotion and culture. The individual remains the ultimate seat of emotion in both evolutionary and psychodynamic approaches (e.g. 105), confronting a social and cultural pattern into or against which the emotions are placed. This same schism, which is also maintained by British social anthropology and symbolic culturology, makes necessary a distinction between

emotion, defined as private feelings that are usually not culturally motivated or socially articulated, and sentiment, defined as socially articulated symbols and behavioral expectations (46). From this perspective, cultural views about appropriate emotions “do not control the feelings of the individual, which are sovereign” (73, p. 197). Others downplay the importance or utility of a distinction between a psychological and a social analysis of emotion (e.g. 2, 155).

*Romanticism and rationalism* represent two strains of thought that can be detected in anthropological treatments of the emotions. For the rationalist who makes use of the general Western equation of irrationality with emotion, the emotions are, if not symptoms of the animal in the human (e.g. 49), at least disordering and problematic; they are “vague and irrational” (73, p. 34), “the results . . . of . . . the impotence of the mind” (99, p. 71). The antipathy between science and emotion that this position posits may even lead to the exclusion of emotion as a proper object of study.

In the romantic view, emotion is implicitly evaluated positively as an aspect of “natural humanity”; it is (or can be) the site of uncorrupted, pure, or honest perception in contrast with civilization’s artificial rationality. The ability to feel defines the human and creates the meaningfulness in individual and social life (e.g. 81, 157, 177). A hybrid position is represented by those who would elevate the emotions to an important ordering place in society by linking them with cultural logic (144), or by defining them as occasional or potential sources of correct knowledge about the social world (103).

Each of these very basic stances has implications for the way emotion is investigated. As a result of them, emotion may be treated as something to be explained by other variables (such as the body, social structure, or childhood experience), as something that can explain cultural institutions (such as hospitality, avoidance customs, or individual participation in religious ritual), or as an inseparable part of cultural meaning and social systems. These tensions determine whether an investigator claims to study emotions directly either as affects or ideas about emotion, or both. And they influence the types of methods that are used, including behavior observation, empathy, introspection, or cultural analysis. The various stances just described help to determine whether the focus of investigation is on emotional development (either to observe the learning of cultural norms about emotion or the development of a universal process), on the incidence of emotional pathology (such as depression), on the parallels between the structure of society and the structure of emotion, on the language of emotion (either as potential labels for feelings or as constituting emotion as a social and communicative process), on ritual (either as the product of emotion or its generator), or on the social context of the social scientific study of emotion.

## CROSS-CULTURAL UNIVERSALS IN EMOTION

*Ethological and Evolutionary Approaches*

Research on the relationship between emotion and culture has often used the evolutionary paradigm first outlined by Darwin in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. Darwin's interest in the universality and taxonomy of emotions has been replicated as has his view that emotion and expression contribute to the organism's chances for survival. The emotions are portrayed as adaptive in that they function to organize human behavior in ways appropriate to environmental demands. Emotional expressions (particularly facial expressions) are seen as functioning primarily to signal the individual's intentions, thereby informing others about one's likely future actions. Several traditions of cross-cultural work on emotion draw on Darwinian insights, including ethology (39), cross-cultural psychology (41, 42, 165), sociobiology (187), and biological anthropology (88), as well as that psychoanalytic anthropology (98, 105) which draws on the evolutionary theories of Bowlby (19).

The most ambitious and widely cited cross-cultural research program on emotion is led by Ekman, a program he terms "neurocultural" (40-42). His studies of facial expressions of emotion (see 41 for a summary) included asking the Fore of New Guinea to identify the emotional state of persons photographed displaying particular patterns of facial muscle movements. They were also asked to pose the facial expression of a person undergoing a number of experiences such as a child's death or seeing a decaying pig carcass. On the basis of the results, Ekman and his colleagues concluded that happiness, surprise, fear, anger, disgust, and sadness are universal emotions, expressed with the same distinctive configuration of facial muscle movements.

Although Ekman uses emotion terms such as anger, fear, and sadness to refer to a complex of facial expressions, elicitors, interpersonal behavior, and physiological changes, the essence of emotion remains for him the "affect program," or biological system which stores the patterns for each distinct emotion, including the muscle, facial, vocal, behavioral, autonomic and central nervous system responses. These programs for the six universal emotions (plus perhaps interest, shame, and contempt) are automatically triggered by their elicitors, some of which are culturally acquired.

Ekman posits three central areas in which culture influences emotion. First are *cultural display rules*, or acquired conventions, norms, or habits that dictate what emotion can be shown to whom and in which contexts (also see 6, 81); some rules are followed automatically and out of awareness, while others exist simply as ideals. These display rules "interfere with" the emotional responses that are dictated by the innate affect program. Culture is seen as

having a strong influence on individual *coping*, or cognitive and behavioral attempts to deal with the emotion and its causes. Although evolution has resulted in some predispositions, such as coping with anger by attacking its source, these can be overridden by cultural learning. The specific situational *elicitors* of emotion are also culturally variable. Although Ekman has stated that there is "no emotion for which there is a universal elicitor, uniform in its specific details" (40, p. 85), he posits universality in emotion elicitors when the latter are defined in an abstract way (cf 16).

The ethologist Eibl-Eibesfeldt (39) has focused on filming and analyzing a range of emotion-expressive nonverbal behaviors in a large number of societies. The goal is to examine chains of behavioral events in which emotional expressions function to control and communicate with others. Universality has been claimed for some sequences (such as when pouting at the aggressive act of another results in the elimination of the latter behavior). Many expressive movements (e.g. smiling, lowered gaze) are seen as innate motor patterns which act as signals that usually "trigger" a particular response in the receiver; the facial expression is an uncontrollable and unconscious signal of the sender's intentions to which others are programmed to attend. Thus, not only interaction sequences but the meaning of some expressive signals and their contexts of elicitation are said to be universal.

Several anthropologists have drawn on both ethological and psychoanalytic perspectives on emotion in positing universals of emotional need. Lindholm (105) proposes, after Bowlby, that the emotions surrounding attachment to others represent universal needs that arise from the evolution of the instinct for proximity to caretakers. These emotions include anxiety, jealousy, fear, and aggression on separation and love when attachment is achieved. Following many earlier theorists, a panhuman emotional structure based on this dialectic of love and hate is seen as the driving force behind much human behavior, and as constituting needs which each culture may or may not satisfy particularly well, but which culture must allow to be expressed.

Several aspects of these lines of evolutionary research stand out, including a shared concern with the role of emotional expression in maintaining social positions. The emphasis on the way in which emotional expressions maintain the dominance hierarchy makes these primarily equilibrium models. In addition, most have focused on involuntary emotional expression, perhaps implying that it is more adaptive than voluntary expressive control. And finally, many of these emotion theorists (e.g. 39, 88, 187) have taken pains to describe or at least mention the socially useful or moral ends to which their ideas about the biological and innate nature of emotion might contribute. One question that has been neglected is how patterns of facial expression are incorporated into larger cultural and linguistic signaling systems.



*Psychodynamic and Psychiatric Perspectives*

Psychological approaches to emotion across cultures fall within two general disciplinary rubrics: anthropological (traditionally, "culture and personality") and psychological/psychiatric. These fields, diverse as they are in aims and methods, share an important assumption in the "psychic unity" of human emotional experience, such as the complexes of anger/hostility, fear/anxiety, and sadness/depression. Whereas the anthropologist may find emotional unity in recurrent dilemmas of psychosocial experience such as attachment/loss (105, 173), grief (89, 96, 157), and oedipal conflict or aggression (70, 179), the psychologist/psychiatrist is likely to find it in psychobiology (41) or in eliciting situations (16). In either case, the result is the kind of "two layers" theory mentioned earlier in which universal emotions are located in an underlying layer of affect. Much like Freudian primary and secondary process thinking, the uniform or universal aspects of emotion are variously "shaped," "filtered," "channeled," "distorted," or "masked" by cultural "molds," "filters," "lenses," "display rules," or "defense mechanisms." Within this general perspective, cultural forms and institutions are analyzed in functional terms for the work they do in insulating the experiencing subject from the vicissitudes of emotion (see below on ritual). The kinds of problems dealt with by psychoanalytic anthropology are often cast in terms of the fit between the emotional life of individuals and the shape of cultural institutions that function to regulate or transform individual experience (70, 89, 98, 100, 133, 134, 179). Recent work in this area has moved away from strictly positivist approaches to explaining cultural forms in terms of emotional function (179) toward hermeneutic concerns with interpreting emotional meanings (26, 56, 133, 134).

Oddly enough, the anthropological subfield that has been most concerned with relations between emotion and culture has generally not attended to emotions per se as a problem for research. "Culture and personality" theorists generally assume that emotions are the basis for motivational constructs such as needs, wishes, and desires, linking them to both action and symbol systems. Their role in thought and behavior is articulated in theories of personality, usually psychoanalytic in persuasion, which are used in anthropological analysis, but which are not themselves an object of investigation. In line with Bateson's (7) influential concept of "ethos" as a culturally organized system of emotions, numerous studies have described the operation of certain "core" emotions [usually posited as universal, but see (34)] in particular cultures or regions, thus drawing emotive links among a variety of behaviors or institutions (44, 93, 170).

Anthropological studies of the person have frequently viewed emotions as a major source of evidence about unobservable and often unrecognized (unconscious or preconscious) motives. As the public and observable counterpart of

personal experience, expressions of emotion have figured importantly in efforts to develop a person-centered ethnography (21, 89, 98, 100, 133, 134). As in earlier culture and personality studies, recent work has analyzed symbolic systems as expressions of unresolved, culturally patterned emotional conflicts, but with more rigorous standards of ethnographic evidence and description. See, for example, Hutchins' (74) study of implicit emotional propositions encoded in a Trobriand myth.

The study of ritual has been an important focus for research on the cultural transformation of personal experience. The relationship between emotion and ritual has been an anthropological concern with academic ancestors as varied as Durkheim and Freud, and more recently Radcliffe-Brown (146) and Turner (183; see also 25, 64, 68, 79, 133, 167, 186). One of the central debates has concerned the extent to which ritual form and process can be explained by emotions, particularly when they are defined as universal propensities to respond in particular ways to events such as death. Using funerary ritual as a paradigmatic case, some have argued that ritual allows for the expression or control of certain universal feelings (e.g. 89, 96, 158, 163). Those of a Durkheimian bent (e.g. 73) who have rejected such an approach as reductionist have in turn been criticized for ignoring spontaneous emotion through an overconcern with order in ritual (157). Ritual has been examined as a culturally constituted method for distancing individuals from emotional experience, particularly from emotions that express forbidden interests (112). For example, Scheff (163), modifying Freud's concept of catharsis, posits that ritual functions to regulate the individual's experience of the core affects of grief, fear, embarrassment, and anger. Others see ritual as only occasionally aiding people in their "emotional work" (73, 157). Some ethnographers have attempted to distinguish "genuine" from "conventional" emotional expression in ritual (e.g. 73, 79), although emphasis on this dichotomy may emerge from local concerns with "sincerity" and the conjunction between inner and outer lives (cf 50) and may be too simple to do justice to the variety of ways in which cultural thought and ritual act together to construct emotional experience. Ritual has also been examined for what it reveals about the indigenous conceptualization of emotion, person, and morality (64); for the disjunction and conjunction between personal and cultural emotion-laden symbols (133); for its relation to more general everyday cultural scenarios of emotional interaction (167); and as a narrative that articulates emotional understandings of self and other (96).

In contrast to culture and personality approaches, cross-cultural psychology and psychiatry frequently have focused on particular affects as problems for investigation. The psychological/psychiatric interest derives from the clinical definition of emotional disturbance as *illness*, including the "affective disorders" of depression, anxiety, and a host of "culture-bound syndromes." The

focus on particular types of emotional experience cross-culturally has opened up possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration while revealing serious differences of theory and method, and sharpening debates about the universality of emotional experience (58, 60, 86, 115, 117). As critics have pointed out (86), the typical cross-cultural psychiatric study applies standard Western diagnostic techniques in two or more cultures, thus sacrificing relevance and validity for reliability and replicability. Efforts to save this “checklist” genre (e.g. 10, 24) have involved constructing questions, scales, and inventories with culture-specific meanings rather than second-order English ones (114, 115). Despite these attempts, anthropological critics have called the entire enterprise into question on more fundamental grounds than insensitivity to indigenous meanings. For example, Obeyesekere (135) argues that attempts to operationalize abstract measurements of depression across cultures are doomed to impose medico-centric interpretations on decontextualized observations. These methodological disagreements stem ultimately from divergent epistemologies or theories of language and interpretation (9, 56). The emphasis upon socially constructed meaning in anthropological views of language leads investigators to doubt the validity of single words or sentences as invariant representations of knowledge or experience.

In other areas, anthropologists and psychiatrists have been jointly concerned with the role of emotion in crisis events such as migration (57), episodic mental disorders such as the “culture-bound syndromes” (e.g. 175), and suicide (14, 49, 159). A continuing anthropological concern has been the problem of interpretation, of determining what counts as a problem and how it is constructed in actors’ experience. For example, an investigation of epidemic rates of suicide among male adolescents in Micronesia (159) shows that the expected dynamics of anger and depression which figure in Western suicides do not appear in any obvious way. Rather, an understanding of actors’ motives requires articulation of indigenous concepts of emotion in the context of family conflicts. Other studies have examined the role of emotion as an idiom for thinking and talking about personal distress (86, 132), noting marked cross-cultural differences. For example, the finding that Chinese talk relatively less about emotions than Americans in accounting for psychosocial problems (87) reflects a contrast in culturally constituted rhetorics of complaint, such that Chinese use a somatic idiom where Americans speak in terms of psychology.

### *Commonsense Naturalism*

A view of emotion that can be termed “commonsense naturalism” is at least implicit in many anthropological treatments of emotion. The assumptions it makes, however, may prevent it from being heavily represented in this literature as an explicitly espoused approach. Commonsense naturalism is

based on the view that emotions are primarily to be understood as feelings, and that those feelings are universal in their essential nature and distribution, if not in the cultural attention and subsidiary meanings that accompany them. Sad or angry feelings, for example, are everywhere the same, and those feelings are the essence of emotion. Commonsense naturalism takes as its implicit conversational partner those who espouse the view that understanding emotions across cultures is either unimportant or immensely difficult.

Two methods have been used for exploring emotional life in this vein, including empathy (e.g. 14, 21, 89) and the notion of social positioning (157). The former is the more common of the two and is based on the idea that all humans have the ability to understand another's emotional state. That understanding is effected through the special channels of empathic (and usually nonverbal) communication and is conceptualized as either an intellectual understanding or a more direct emotional one. In the latter case particularly, people's emotions are seen as passed, sometimes in a contagion-like process, to those around them. The anthropologist, therefore, must simply be in attentive and intensive proximity to the everyday lives of others in order to apprehend their emotions. The paradox and problem in this view, it has been pointed out (178), lies in the fact that the concept of empathy presumes what it often is used to prove, which is the universal and transparent nature of an emotional experience construed as internal (for other critiques see 21, 51). In his "introspective ethnography" of the Fulani, Riesman (147) historicizes the question of emotional empathy in the field by noting the ways in which alienation in the West and the nature of the field encounter itself make empathy problematic (also see 145).

R. Rosaldo (157) has recently applied Bourdieu's (17) notion of the "positioned subject" to the methodological question of how the cross-cultural study of emotion ought to proceed. Each person is seen as occupying a position in society which affords a particular view of events. This position is structured by such factors as age, gender, and status and typically gives the individual a set of life experiences, experiences which "naturally" and universally produce certain kinds of feelings. To understand the other's emotions, therefore, requires that the ethnographer has shared the basic life experiences that evoke those feelings (such as the death of one's child or a sustained threat to one's life). From this perspective, adequately understanding others' emotional lives is impossible through cognitive means; verbal description or "mere words" cannot give access to the essence of emotion to which one is admitted only by lived personal experience. This view draws on the commonsense notions that emotion is ineffable and that understanding requires "walking in the other person's shoes." The perhaps uncommon sense that it promotes is that the youth of the typical ethnographer is a liability in the cross-cultural investigation of emotion insofar as limited life experience

makes her or him unprepared to understand some things about the emotions of those met.

### *Language Universals*

Investigations of the representation of emotion in language bear significantly on epistemological debates about the universality of emotional experience. Most researchers who posit emotional universals also expect them to be reflected cross-culturally in linguistic and cultural codes. Color terms research initiated by Berlin & Kay (11) has been a seductive model for many who hypothesize that emotion lexicons will be shaped in systematic ways by the biological constraints of universal core affects. For example, various writers have borrowed the notion of "prototype" categories to suggest that the central or "focal" meanings of emotion terms will overlap cross-culturally, even though there may be variation in the full range of their culture-specific meanings (28; 54, p. 142; 103, p. 229). As far as we know, no one has yet proposed an evolutionary ordering of emotion words analogous to the type demonstrated for color lexicons.

Most speculations about universals in emotion language have been based on lexical studies. The strongest claims are made by psychologists who have applied formal techniques to the analysis of emotion lexicons cross-culturally. Boucher (15) reports that cluster analysis of the emotion vocabularies of eight Asian, European, and Pacific languages shows major semantic groupings in each language corresponding to the six emotions found by Ekman in facial expressions. This finding so far has not been replicated by lexical studies with other languages (53, 106). In other comparative work (160), multi-dimensional scaling of emotion words in several languages produces similar lexical configurations structured by two dimensions: "pleasure-displeasure" and "arousal-sleep". The cultural relevance of these findings is unclear in light of the study's procedure of beginning with a set of English emotion words and then translating them into each of the target languages.

Perhaps the most widely known cross-cultural research to have produced evidence of universal dimensions of "affective meaning" is that of Osgood and his associates (139). Research with the "semantic differential" technique does not focus on the meaningful aspects of emotion so much as the derived, connotational features of language—primarily the three well-known "affective dimensions" of evaluation, potency, and activity that have been related to descriptive words in a large number of languages. These findings do not speak directly to the sense of emotion words, but do provide clues about the basis for highly reliable similarities in metaphorical associations across cultures. Thus, it has been shown (29) that both Mayan Indians and English-speaking Americans make similar judgments about colors associated with emotion.

Studies that have examined the culturally relevant properties of emotion

words conclude that such words derive their meanings from a broad range of understandings and practices, especially those which pertain to social relations and interactions (see sections below). Both linguistic theory (e.g. 9) and ethnographic studies indicate that emotion words do not function solely, or even primarily, as labels for feeling states or facial expressions. Hence it is not likely that semantic studies will yield direct evidence for universal physiological dimensions of affective experience. Consistent with this, others have suggested that emotion words may reflect universals in the social relational matrix of emotion (81, 189).

## THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EMOTION

### *Emotion and Ethnopsychological Understanding*

In contrast with the traditional view of emotions as irrational forces, some recent work has focused on the formulation of emotion in conscious understanding and in interactive discourse. Detailed analyses of concepts for, and talk about, emotion have emphasized the *primary* importance of cultural meaning systems in emotional experience, challenging in some cases such basic oppositions in our theoretical vocabulary as reason/emotion, culture/personality, and public/private. While some ethnopsychological research is primarily concerned with the psychological functions of emotional understanding (54, 100), most focuses on problems of interpretation and the “translation” of emotional worlds.

A key theoretical concept in much of this work on cultural understandings of emotion is that of the culturally constituted self, positioned at the nexus of personal and social worlds (see 66, 94, 116, 174, 192). Concepts of emotion emerge as a kind of language of the self—a code for statements about intentions, actions, and social relations. Thus, Levy, who has given one of the first and fullest accounts of emotional understandings in social context (100), underscores the role of emotions in forming the actor’s sense of his or her relation to a social world. Consistent with this point of view, numerous ethnographic studies have noted that emotions are a primary idiom for defining and negotiating social relations of the self in a moral order (2, 6, 76, 111, 127, 154, 191). In these studies, emotions emerge as socially shaped and socially shaping in important ways (see next section).

Perhaps the most fundamental difference among recent studies of emotional understanding is in the degree to which emotions are granted an a priori pancultural status as opposed to being seen as culturally created. Differences in theoretical stance on this issue translate into clear differences in methodological strategy. Compare Gerber’s (54, p. 159) argument that “because these basic affects are panhuman, they will provide a basis for comparison

and translation between systems of emotion in different societies” with M. Rosaldo’s (155, p. 136, n. 4) plea that, “as anthropologists interested in affect, we might do well to work *from* [emotions that involve conscious cultural components] where the relevance of culture is clear, *towards* cases where it is more problematic, instead of starting (a la Ekman . . .) with presumed physiological universals and then ‘adding culture on’ ” (emphases in original).

These contrastive approaches are associated with differing views on the status of emotional understanding and experience in actors’ awareness. For those who begin with a universal emotional “keyboard” (173) made up of basic affects, manifold discrepancies between the pancultural model and culture-specific understandings pose the question of how universal affects are variously muted, amplified, or distorted in actors’ awareness. Thus, for Gerber (54) there are “inner experiences” left implicit and uncoded; and for Levy (102), cultural understandings of emotion are preceded by “emotional feelings” which are themselves informed by a kind of intuitive “primary knowing.” Levy (100, 102) has coined the terms “hypocognized” and “hypercognized” to refer to the tendencies of cultures to variously mute or elaborate conscious recognition of particular emotions. So, for example, Tahitians talk little of sadness in situations where we would expect them to, and show heightened concern with anger, marking numerous varieties with special terms. The model of Tahitian “hypocognized” sadness allows the observer to posit *mis*interpretations of emotion, as in Levy’s example of a person who suffers sadness following a loss but complains of “illness.”

For most studies of indigenous understandings of emotion, the assessment of hidden or transformed affects has been less at issue than the problem of translation, of explicating the social meanings of emotion (21, 38, 103, 111, 127, 147, 154, 190). Within this broader field of inquiry, several approaches are evident. Researchers have variously located emotional meaning within the moral fabric of social relations (6, 80, 127), within institutionalized activities such as headhunting (154) or ceremonial grieving (167), within global ideological structures of the person (46, 83, 84) and gender (2), or within folk theories used to interpret events such as developmental changes (21, 142), crisis situations (14, 159), and interpersonal conflict (76, 190). Marking theory has been shown especially useful by Fajans (47) in accounting for a culture’s emotional emphases and meanings, with sentiments arising at moments culturally marked as deviant. While most researchers have tended to look at a range of everyday or mundane discourse for evidence on the ethnopsychological patterning of emotion, others have focused on cultural aesthetics as they relate to affect. This includes studies of the emotions evoked and invoked in indigenous poetry (2), song, music, and sound symbolism (48, 167), dance (61), and the plastic arts (4).

One strain of research on emotional understanding has probed the cognitive structures or schemata used to conceptualize specific emotions. The concern here has been with the representation of cultural knowledge of the person and social situations underlying the meaning of emotion words. Based on the insight that emotion words and concepts encode significant social information, studies of emotion language have sought to identify the inferential structure of emotional understanding (110, 191). These studies note that the inferences which underly talk about emotion refer simultaneously to both evocative situations and appropriate responses. The fullest analysis for an English emotion word is Lakoff & Kövecses' (90) discussion of the conceptualization of "anger" evident in common metaphors and idiomatic expressions. By describing images which English speakers routinely draw upon to think about "anger" as, for example, hot fluid in a container (boiling, steaming, bursting, etc), the authors trace cultural ways of thinking about (and, we would argue, experiencing) "anger" which have significant behavioral implications. Furthermore, this commonsense view of anger can be seen as one instance of the "hydraulic metaphor" that has influenced generations of academic theories of emotion (177).

This cognitive approach and the ideological view of emotions both analyze emotional understanding as pertaining to social situations. Where cognitivists speak of "prototypic event sequences" (144), the more interpretive approach sees cultural "scenarios" of situated action (156, 167, 168). These approaches differ largely in the emphasis given to conceptual as opposed to social and interactive processes in the formation of emotional meaning. In either view, however, actors understand emotions as mediating social action: they arise in social situations and carry implications for future thought and action. Emotional understandings, then, are not seen as abstract, symbolic formulations—not "thinking about feeling" so much as thoughts which are necessarily linked with social situations and valued goals that give them moral force and direction.

At a more global level, questions may be raised about the general role of emotion concepts in ethnopsychological reasoning and discourse. How does the cultural notion of feeling or emotion figure in understandings about perception, intention, motivation, purposeful behavior, and the like? Answers to these questions are likely to bear on the ways in which emotional *understanding* creates constraints and context for social *action*. For example, in the American "folk model of the mind" (28), feelings link perceptions and beliefs with desires and intentions in a causal chain of reasoning applied very generally in the ordering of social experience. We can also ask about the sociocultural sources of ethnopsychological variation, asking, for example, why Ochs's (137) observation *that in Samoa "there does not appear to be much talk about feelings as origins of behavior"* seems interesting to Western



observers. The fact that emotions are, in many societies, a critical link in cultural interpretations of action implies that emotion concepts are likely to be actively used in the negotiation of social reality. Taussig (182) describes one of the most pernicious forms this takes in demonstrating how historical and contemporary forms of torture thrive in a "culture of terror," or an emotional and ideological matrix in which the victim is both experienced and continually recreated in discourse as a terrifying and contemptible being. Attention to emotional rhetoric and discourse, then, should be a fruitful focus for ethnographic investigations of social life as an active and creative process (e.g. 6, 12, 20, 91, 110, 137, 185, 191).

### *Emotion and Social Structure*

Research on the relationships between cultural meaning and emotion is just beginning to expand into an examination of the social structural correlates of each (e.g. 2, 35), and draws on a variety of traditions including structuralism (47), exchange theory (3), and historical materialism (112). Emotion is seen as related to social structure in a variety of ways. In the first instance, emotion can be defined as being "about" social relations; emotional meaning systems will reflect those relations and will, through emotion's constitution of social behavior, structure them. In addition, social and economic structures are related to the way in which persons or selves are constructed more generally. Such things as the degree of individualism, notions of privacy and autonomy, multiplicity of selves, or sense of moral responsibility which result have important consequences for the way in which emotion is conceptualized, experienced, and socially articulated.

More specifically, general principles of social organization construct the size, stability, and status characteristics of the usual audiences for the emotional performances of individuals (e.g. 93, 194). Those characteristics of the social group can also be seen as constituting a child-rearing environment, as in the debate on whether "diffuse affect" is promoted in large households (124, 172). Emotion can be seen as a strategy for defending a group's preferred type of social organization (35). When defined as a mode of action, emotion is presented as an active constitutor of social structures. Appadurai (3), for example, examines the ways in which the particular forms that gratitude takes in South India help to support caste hierarchy and the explicit code of nonmarket reciprocity. Keeler (80) describes how the "fluid" status system of Java, which associates status with the self rather than with a social role, makes one's identity crucially dependent on emotional displays that appropriately acknowledge the hierarchical position of others. The relative absence of social structure has also been noted to have emotional consequences in forcing particular kinds of sentiments (for example, those that center on the expansion and contraction of the boundaries of the self, and those that motivate nonviolence) to cultural prominence (32, 47).

Myers (129) and others have noted the ways in which the distribution of power in a society (for example, by gender, age, or political office) and the ideological structuring of emotion are related. Maher (112) presents one variant of such a framework: ideologically prescribed emotions can be seen as a form of false consciousness, with suppressed emotions being symptoms of the true material interests of a group. Abu-Lughod (2) shows how Egyptian Bedouin individuals assert their acceptance or defiance of the system of social hierarchy through discourses on emotion that are linked to the ideology of honor and modesty. The relations between nobles and ex-slaves in Fulani society are demonstrated by Riesman (148) to correspond with differences in emotional demeanor in the two groups. Work in this vein has often looked at gender (e.g. 2, 111, 112), with class a relatively neglected topic. Scheper-Hughes (164), however, has eloquently demonstrated how the emotions of a mother for her children in a Brazilian shantytown respond to her disadvantaged class position. When class has been examined, lower class status sometimes is seen as entailing either less emotionality, defined as personal subjectivity (71), or more emotionality defined as chaotic affect rather than refined sentimentality (118).

Others have looked at how particular institutions such as courts (91), social movements (35), or uxoricity (126) are supported by cultural views of emotion and emotions. When emotion is defined as a statement about a person's relationship with the world, and particularly problems in that relationship, the most commonly occurring emotions in a society can be seen as markers of the points of tension (or fulfillment) generated by its structure. From a psychodynamic perspective, a universal human emotional structure confronts and may conflict with particular social structures. Lindholm (105), for example, argues that the combination of a segmentary lineage system and land scarcity for the Swat Pukhtun has resulted in a social system that promotes individualistic competition and hostility; the extensive elaboration of hospitality norms is seen as the site at which the more generally denied aspects of emotional structure (i.e. attachment) appear.

The relationship between emotion and the family has been one of the most studied aspects of emotions in society, with a wide range of approaches utilized. Some ethnographic descriptions have noted that kinship is the domain in which emotional appeal is appropriate as opposed to either pragmatic or jural moves (64, 129). Most common has been a concern with the way in which local kinship systems construct the emotional tone of each dyad within the family (e.g. 2, 21, 53, 64, 147). In a related vein, Harris (64) describes how Taita cultural beliefs about anger are used to regulate proper behavior between various categories of kin. Of particular concern has been the way in which marriage and residence patterns as well as property rights and other material forces influence and are affected by authority relations within the

family and the emotional tenor of each type of kin relation (126). Many have attempted to identify the "emotional center" (118) and margins of the family in both their official and more covert aspects. Also treated has been the way in which individual kinship roles are socially articulated and emotionally understood. Maher (112), for example, demonstrates how Moroccan women's fundamentally ambivalent feelings about motherhood are conditioned by the contradiction between their position as property owners and themselves as the property of their husbands.

Elias's (43) seminal work on the relationship between historical change in social structure and emotion has only recently been followed by new research by historians and anthropologists (78, 118, 180). Emotion is treated as a resource that is both structured by changing conditions and structuring of their meaning. This historical cultural research has focused particularly on political economy and gender as they relate to emotional change, as when Hausen (65) looks at how the threat to traditional patriarchal order in Western Europe represented by women's changing work and child-bearing patterns led to the staging of Mother's Day with its ideological construction and intensification of the appropriate emotions of and toward mothers. Anthropologists might follow the lead of the historians and others (e.g. 67, 92, 161) who have examined the implications, particularly as regards gender roles, of the separation of the workplace and the home under capitalism and the concomitant ideological split between the notions of emotion and interest, expressiveness and instrumentality. This would include a critique of the notion that households can be analyzed exclusively as *either* economic or emotional units (118).

A number of the implications of social structure for emotion (many of which are suggested by the work of M. Rosaldo) appear to have broad cross-cultural applicability. These include the relationship between acephalous political and legal structures and the elaboration of informal modes of conflict handling which rely heavily on the idiom of emotion (127, 150, 154, 186), and particularly on an elaborated and extensively used notion of shame (e.g. 44, 130, 155). There is, on the other hand, little to support the commonly voiced notion (e.g. 95) that complex social systems generate a larger and more diverse number of emotions in their members (by contrast see 147, p. 153). A relationship has been identified between egalitarian social structure, autonomous selves, and the configuration of individual emotions insofar as such emotion implies a particular attitude toward the rights and duties of compatriots (155, 168). What M. Rosaldo calls "brideservice societies" maintain a view of shame as generated by conflict and as mitigating anger (21, 127, 155). She has also noted that hierarchical societies appear much more concerned than others with the problem of how society controls an inner emotional self (156).

### *Emotion, Language, and Communication*

Dating at least from Darwin's classic study (30), emotion has been studied on the basis of behaviors and displays that are essentially communicative in nature, even though their semiotic functions and contexts are usually not analyzed. Where emotional communication has been studied, this has been primarily under the rubric of nonverbal communication (13, 39, 40–42), an emphasis that is in line with the traditional association of emotions with the body. Studies of the verbal communication of emotion have only recently begun to emerge (75). The ones that have dealt systematically with emotion and language fall into two general areas: 1. semantic analyses, usually lexical, and 2. studies of the communication of emotion in social situations.

Given the extent to which English emotion words have been used for research, it is somewhat surprising that they have not come in for more attention as objects of research. The work of Davitz (31) and Averill (5) stand as the most comprehensive descriptive studies of English speakers' intuitions about emotional meaning, based largely on formally elicited and interview data (see also 162). Wallace & Carson (184) were among the first to examine English emotion words, showing considerable variation in the content and structure of the vocabularies of individual laypersons and psychiatrists, including differences that affect clinical assessments.

Cross-cultural studies of emotion words are more concerned with problems of translation and have variously focused on just a few key terms (52, 100, 142, 154) or have inventoried the entire domain of emotion (15, 21, 53, 127). For Rosaldo (154), who makes emotion a major focus for her ethnography of Ilongot social life, the task of interpreting the Ilongot term *liget* ("anger") is virtually indistinguishable from the ethnography itself, requiring a mapping of multiple usages across a variety of social contexts. In contrast, some who take a domain-wide view of emotion words examine relations of contrast and similarity among a set of salient words (e.g. 53, 106).

In addition to semantic or cognitive studies, there is renewed interest among sociolinguists and ethnographers of communication in the pragmatic functions of emotion language. Beeman (9), for example, examines the phenomenon of depression from a sociolinguistic perspective and notes that psychological assessments of emotion may err badly because of a naive theory of language that assumes a direct correspondence between emotion words and emotional experience (e.g. 95, 123). Sociolinguistic approaches to emotion note its role in all aspects of language as a communication code: phonological, syntactic, and pragmatic, as well as semantic. Irvine (75) lists a wide range of linguistic devices that encode Wolof affect, as does Besnier (12) for a single Nukulaelae gossip session. The data presented for just these cases suggest not only that all sentences have an affective component, but that no aspect of language is immune from appropriation by the semiotic of emotion.

B. Schieffelin's (166) study of the acquisition of emotional understandings in Kaluli children has been influential in focusing research on emotion communication in socialization and language acquisition (see below). Her work and that of others (121, 137, 185) shows emotion to be a frequent topic in child/caregiver conversations and a frequent strategy in their interactions. Ochs (137) suggests that the production and comprehension of feelings in language are basic to the acquisition of grammar and, furthermore, that they lay the "groundwork" for the acquisition of cultural values and beliefs. The developmental perspective entails important hypotheses about sequences in the acquisition of emotional codes, such as that forms presupposing affect are acquired before those predicating affect in the form of an assertion (137).

Acknowledging his debt to sociolinguistic approaches, Bailey (6) analyzes situated uses of emotional display for their effects in managing impressions and manipulating small group interaction (cf 71, 72). Taking data from a variety of English-speaking groups, ranging from university committees to the Indian parliament, he identifies specific types of emotional rhetoric that function as political or persuasive strategies in those contexts. Bailey's interest in the use of communicative codes in managing situations, identities, and impressions resembles that voiced by Irvine (75) and others who have addressed the politics of emotion (12, 18, 91). Common issues in this work include the problem of sincerity, of actors' abilities to express emotion through multiple channels and to manipulate both overt and covert understandings of events.

In some respects, linguistic, political, and psychological anthropologists converge in their use of naturalistic, situation-centered methods to ferret out the social meanings and effects of emotion language. Future research in this area appears to be headed beyond the simply descriptive task of cataloguing communicative codes to: (a) specification of relations *among* codes (such as verbal and nonverbal, overt and covert, formulaic and ordinary speech) (e.g. 1), and (b) articulation of the pragmatic functions of emotional meanings within broader systems of value (121, 137), identity (75), and ethnopsychological understanding.

### *Socialization and the Acquisition of Emotional Competence*

Those of both universalist and social constructionist bent have been interested in the question of how the child becomes emotionally mature. For the universalist, socialization processes work on a set of universal, distinct, internal feelings as well as on a more general emotionality (52, 173); the child learns to mute or heighten the expression (and perhaps also the subjective experience) of each, much as one adjusts the volume on a radio. Socialization processes also structure the child's environment in ways that make the experience of some emotions more likely. For the constructionist, emotional

socialization is the process by which the child is introduced into an emotional life constituted by the discourse of adults with each other and with the young. Although some have postulated an undifferentiated arousal capacity as the raw material on which socialization experiences work (151), most constructionists remain uncommitted on or uninterested in this issue.

Beyond this general distinction, there are at least three streams of research on emotion and the child: social behavioral, ethnopsychological, and linguistic. Following the materialist, ecological, and behaviorist tradition of the Whittings (193), a great deal of research has focused on the ways in which broad aspects of economy and social organization structure the settings in which emotional socialization takes place (e.g. 125, 172, 188). These settings are presumed to have a relatively unmediated impact on the child's emotional behavior (although see 62). The field methods used include behavior observations that focus on acts with observer-inferred emotional accompaniments such as smiling, teasing, mutual gaze, and aggression. Discrete emotion concepts such as anger or fear are generally not used in interpreting these behaviors. Rather, such global (and questionable) concepts as "low affect," "positive affect," or "maternal warmth" are frequently applied (e.g. 55, 82). The emphasis has been on the "amount" of emotion (characterized as positive and/or negative) caregivers direct toward children, and on the social structural causes and personality consequences of that affective "mass." At its most extreme, this concern has led to such oversimplifications as Rohner's (152) cross-cultural classification of societies as either emotionally "accepting" or "rejecting" their children. At the opposite end, LeVine's (97) psychodynamically oriented approach to emotional development uses a fuller range of ethnographic and clinical data to interpret the emotional meaning and impact of caregiver behavior.

Ethnopsychological socialization studies (e.g. 21, 32, 53, 107, 142, 151) often make reference to H. Geertz's seminal article (52) on Javanese emotional socialization which she presents as an example of the process of "socially guided emotional specialization" in which adults define, interpret, or conceptualize situations and feelings for the child. Like the more centrally linguistic approaches to emotional socialization (see below), ethnopsychological studies give a central place in their analysis to the cultural discourse about emotions which is seen as organizing caregiver's understandings and socialization of their children's emotional behavior. Some studies combine ethnopsychological descriptions of the child and emotion with psychodynamic assumptions about emotional development (22, 97, 100–102), as when Briggs (23) examines the role of contradiction and conflict in emotional and value socialization.

Anthropologists have looked at how ethnopsychologies outline stages of emotional development and shape the kinds of emotional behavior considered

appropriate toward and from the child at different ages (62, 63; cf 104; for specific examples see 21, 32, 64, 80, 84, 142, 154). Also examined have been the emotional meaning of children more generally, and specifically of adoption (45, 53, 59, 169); the cultural values and goals into which acquisition of emotional meaning is integrated, such as interpersonal gentleness (23, 107, 122), self-protection (121), or submission (53); the development in the child of particular cultural understandings of emotion concepts, and particularly of the situations in which an emotion is appropriately enacted (108, 136); and the use of life cycle rituals to create concepts of self and emotion (64, 68).

This research has asked a variety of questions about cultural attitudes toward state change *per se*. Does something like emotion exist as an organizing concept for attending to children? If so, is it seen as something that ought to be self-regulated or managed by others? Should it be explicitly addressed or ignored? Is it something that becomes more or less prominent with maturity? Described systems range from the California "pro-natural" families, who believe in promoting both emotional expressiveness and emotional self-regulation by the infant and child (188), to the Kipsigis of Kenya, who combine the notion that others ought to manage the infant's state with inattention to state change in the older child (62), to the Semai of Malaysia, who define all emotional response as dangerous or fearsome (151). In each case, ethnopsychological studies demonstrate that cultural views of emotion and cultural views of the child overlap in crucial ways, giving meaning and motivation to the relations between children and adults.

Finally, linguistic approaches to the socialization of emotion have looked at the ways in which children acquire cultural abilities to communicate their emotional states to others (e.g. 63, 121, 136, 137, 166, 166a). The methodological focus is on the speech acts that occur in the contexts in which children are involved, and more generally on the nonverbal, paralinguistic, and verbal expressions whose acquisition by the child is seen as crucial to emotional development. Several linguistic analyses have looked at the child's acquisition of contextualization cues which indicate how seriously an emotional display is to be taken (121), including direct statements, emotion-linked grammatical constructions, gestures, faces, social rank of the speaker, and the scope of the audience viewing the display (136).

Although research on the relationship between society, culture, and emotional development has generally moved beyond a focus on the isolated individual (62), the overwhelming focus (particularly in the behaviorist and linguistic traditions) remains on the mother-child dyad, a focus that in some cases may reflect implicit normative assumptions about the putative source of emotionality in the domestic and the female. More promising has been an expansion in the range of learning contexts seen as relevant to the acquisition of a culturally distinctive emotional profile in the child, from listening to

parental narratives about emotion (121) to the infant's kinesthetic experience of the adult's emotions (151). Research on emotional development in cultural context has rarely looked, however, at the response of that development to some of the crueller and more common facts of children's worlds, including gender inequality, class (but see 71, 121, 164), and war. Future research might illuminate the ways in which morality, cognition, language, and social context constitute the "essence" of emotion by demonstrating the precise ways in which the developing complexity of the child's social relations, cultural understandings, and cognitive and linguistic abilities make emotional development possible.

### A COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF EMOTIONS

The core of the attempt to understand the relation between emotion and culture lies in ethnographic description of the emotional lives of persons in their social contexts. Although this ethnographic task has only recently been taken on, the number of descriptions is now impressive and raises the possibility of cross-cultural comparison. Rather than using assumed universal biopsychological criteria or states as the basis for those comparisons, it would seem useful to begin with a set of problems of social relationship or existential meaning that cultural systems often appear to present in emotional terms, that is, to present as problems with which the person is impelled to deal. While the force that moves people to deal with these problems may be conceptualized as purely somatic, as tradition, as moral obligation, or in any other number of ways, the emotion idiom is often the central one.

These problems include 1. the other's violation of cultural codes or of ego's personal expectations (or conflict more generally) (see 21, 64, 90, 96, 120, 121, 136, 149, 150, 157, 159, 168, 191); 2. ego's own violation of those codes, including social incompetence or personal inadequacy, and awareness of the possibility for such a failure (2, 18, 52, 69, 103, 127, 181, 194); 3. danger to one's physical and psychological self and significant others (8, 23, 32, 35, 96, 151, 167, 171, 182); 4. the actual or threatened loss of significant relationships (1, 47, 86, 96, 127, 157, 158); and the "positive problems" of 5. the receipt of resources (23, 127) and 6. a focus on rewarding bonds with others (34, 38, 83, 105, 143); for treatments of the full range of problems, also see (21, 53, 100, 106, 111, 147, 154). A single real world event or problem is rarely simply characterized via this typology, either indigenously or by an outside observer. Death, for example, can at once represent danger, loss, and a violation of one's sense of what ought to happen. The ambivalence, ambiguity, and complexity of much emotional experience and interaction is caused by this multiplicity of perspectives on events as well as by



contradictions within ideological or value systems, by the incompleteness of the information people have about an event, and by the fact that much emotion is about the anticipation of future and hence unknown events or consequences.

It is important to stress that these abstract characterizations of human problems are meant to serve as initial comparative reference points rather than as a priori or final statements about universal situational causes of emotional experience. Emphasis is shifted away from the question of whether a somehow decontextualized emotional experience is "the same" or "different" across cultures to that of how people make sense of life's events. What needs to be explored are the particular ways in which cultural meaning and social structure relate to these general characterizations. Several possibilities exist.

First, each culture will emphasize a particular aspect of the general problem, as when, in problems of type 2 above, the Japanese focus on the audience for their errors (93) while the Ilongot adolescent experiences his inadequacy as a challenge to be overcome (155) and the American might tend to focus on the damage done by the error or on what the error says about one's character. In addition, there is cultural variation in how much emphasis is given overall to each problem type.

Second, the exact nature of the problem as it is typically encountered in everyday life will be affected by cultural interpretations as well as differences and similarities in material conditions. This issue is often treated as a "mere" question of content, but it must be central to any attempt to understand the impact of emotion on everyday behavior and social organization. To know what is considered dangerous, a thing worth having, or a loss is crucial for understanding the motivational basis for all aspects of participation in social life. Are many children a resource or a drain? Is attachment to others at the center of life or life's illusion (135)? Cultural systems go beyond defining such things as the nature of danger, moreover, to describe what risks are worth taking, who ought to take them, what causes or may be held accountable for them (35), and whether or not a specific danger is controllable [a distinction Parkin (140) links to that between "raw" and "respectful" fear]. We would also want to consider such things as the mortality rates which present the objective conditions for loss in any society (e.g. 164), such practices as the adoption of children with living parents and the social structural conditions which make bonds with others tenuous (e.g. 105).

Third, people develop knowledge about the relationships between some of these problem types. Thus, there is often an intrinsic link between the other's code violation and further responses, a link that ties together, in important and complex ways, "justifiable anger" and "fear" among the Ifaluk, "anger" and "shame" among the Ilongot and the Tahitians (100, 155), and "anger" and "admiration" among the Kaluli (168). As another example, one's own im-

proprieties (problem type 2) are often, but not always, seen as emphatically dangerous (problem type 3) for a variety of reasons. Particular emotion-emotion links (cf 77) may then be emphasized as the result of a variety of sociocultural factors, and will sometimes be explicitly coded as yet other emotion concepts. These links reflect both the fact that the problems of social life unfold and develop over time and the deep embeddedness of emotion in symbolic systems.

Fourth, each problem may be scripted for a particular kind of behavioral solution. The tears upon loss and the physical or symbolic attack of other's code violations can be linked to their functions in preserving or eroding psychosocial integrity as can variations in those scripts, as when the Utku walk away from the other's violation (21) and the Kaluli overtly and dramatically call attention to it (167). Although a number of other comparative points suggest themselves (including divergent cultural treatment of a problem when encountered in special contexts such as childhood or drinking), the central task is to contextualize each psychocultural approach to emotional problems within broader ethnopsychological and social structures—within the context of what it means to be a person and of the contours of ecology and power within which the person so construed must live.

## CONCLUSION

At the outset of this review, we outlined a series of oppositions (material/ideal, individual/social, etc) which underlie both popular and academic definitions of emotion. The alignment of emotion with one side of these dichotomous oppositions has consistently shaped and, we would argue, narrowed theories of emotion and social life. The view of emotion which gives primacy to inner bodily experiences has held sway in most psychological theories in part because it is solidly consistent with our highly individuated concepts of person and motivation. The result, however, has been a relative neglect of the phenomenological and communicative aspects of emotion in social science investigations. We suggest that a number of the approaches outlined above, which focus explicitly on cultural formulations of emotion in social context, hold the seeds of a basic reconceptualization that will give renewed emphasis to the public, social, and cognitive dimensions of emotional experience. While this emphasis seems a necessary corrective to the traditional identification of emotions with the irrational, attempts to define and explain emotion solely in terms of the public marketplace of ideas risk their own impoverishment unless links can be forged between the often dichotomized worlds of the rational and irrational, public and private, individual and social.

The oppositions affect/cognition and personality/culture are central to our

ways of thinking. However, the view that affective experience and motivational force are analytically and/or ontologically distinct from cognition is now being questioned on the basis of ethnopsychological research showing that cultural schemata have many of the directive and morally persuasive qualities once associated primarily with affect (27). Challenging theoretical divisions which split the cultural and ideational from the individual and affective, M. Rosaldo argues that emotions are not things opposed to thought so much as "*embodied* thoughts, thoughts seeped with the apprehension that 'I am involved' " (156, p. 143). An analysis of the cultural bases for our familiar contrast of "thought" and "feeling" (111) shows how a broad range of oppositions such as information/energy, rational/irrational, controlled/uncontrolled, culture/nature, truth/value, and male/female support and sustain that view, even as it proves inadequate to the explication of human experience as lived. The point of these critiques is that de-constructing familiar notions may lead us to significant insights into the ways ideas are infused with value, affect, and direction, just as feelings are used to understand and communicate about social events. The enterprise, we suggest, is eminently cultural and comparative.

By way of final conclusion, we note two contributions that the comparative study of emotions might make to ethnography more generally. First, it can aid in the development of the interpretive approach to culture by giving new methodological relevance to the ethnographer's emotional response to fieldwork. This would involve bridging the division of the cognitive product of fieldwork (the ethnography) from its emotional product (the diary, "personal" fieldwork account, and perhaps poetry), as Briggs (21) first did in a groundbreaking way by making problems in the emotional interaction between ethnographer and hosts the center of investigation and the route to cultural understanding. While this bridging has been accomplished to varying degrees by a few recent monographs (26, 36, 37, 145, 147, 154) and articles (89, 157), there might be a more general and systematic attempt to examine the observer's anxieties that Devereux sees as the "basic and characteristic data of behavioral science [and as] more valid and more productive of insight than any other type of datum" (33, p. xvii). It would be important to explore 1. these anxieties as signals of potential observer distortion (33), 2. the distancing techniques involved in methodology (33), and in the methodological literature (such as the notion of "creating rapport"), 3. the ethnographer's own personal and cultural assumptions about self and emotion, and 4. the special characteristics of the anthropologist's social relationships (both in the field and at home), including such things as their impermanence; the possibilities of loss, danger, and alienation they present; and their inequalities of power and social competence. The culturally aided emotional interpretation of these conditions is crucial to the way ethnographic description proceeds, making

this and the other aspects of the field relationship important entrees to improved cross-cultural understanding.

Secondly, one of the promises of the new interest in emotion is that it can reanimate the sometimes robotic image of humans which social science has purveyed. The agricultural decision maker is rarely seen as suffering through a choice between sometimes terrible alternatives; the health system of a society is often presented as if it were peopled by actors rather than family members confronting each other's possible death. Incorporating emotion into ethnography will entail presenting a fuller view of *what is at stake* for people in everyday life. In reintroducing pain and pleasure in all their complex forms into our picture of people's daily life in other societies, we might further humanize these others for the Western audience. That audience finds emotion at the core of being for reasons both cultural and political economic in origin, reasons that should simultaneously come under anthropological scrutiny. At issue is not only the humanity of our images, but the adequacy of our understanding of cultural and social forms.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Lila Abu-Lughod, Jane Collins, Sara Harkness, Fred Myers, Melford Spiro, and Vincas Steponaitis for comments and discussion that contributed much to this review. The bibliographic and typing help of Nancy Chabot and Gloria Gaumer are also much appreciated.

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