

# Understanding Social Interaction With Affect Control Theory

David R. Heise  
Department of Sociology  
Indiana University  
Bloomington, IN 47405

Chapter 2 in Joseph Berger and Morris Zelditch (Eds.), *New Directions in Sociological Theory*. Boulder CO: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002. See book for final text.

---

Professionals at a collegial gathering engage in a variety of social actions like talking to one another, confiding, consulting, toasting, treating, complimenting, congratulating, and so on. These actions are rational in the sense that just such behaviors are required of professionals as they go about their work with each other. Yet professionals rarely are involved in structural-functional or cost-benefit analyses while engaging in these behaviors. Their actions emerge from their hearts. This anomaly--that individuals' sensible actions usually are unfolded intuitively rather than by rational analysis--might be called the principle of affective rationality. Rational actions often are affectively generated.

Affectively-generated actions are a central focus of affect control theory (Heise, 1979; 1999; Smith-Lovin and Heise, 1988; MacKinnon, 1994). This theory elaborates three basic ideas. (1) Individuals create events to confirm the sentiments that they have about themselves and others in the current situation. (2) If events don't work to maintain sentiments then individuals re-identify themselves and others. (3) In the process of building events to confirm sentiments, individuals perform the social roles that operate society--the principle of affective rationality.

Nothing in this formulation is concerned with rational choice or functional analysis. Instead humans are viewed as meaning-maintainers, who continually reconstruct the world to fit intuitive knowledge generated from sentiments, within cognitive and logical constraints. In this perspective, rational analysis is rare rather than routine. When successful problem solving does occur, it quickly is assimilated into the affective meaning system and replayed thereafter as intuitive knowledge.

## Affective Meaning-(1)

A psychologist, Charles Osgood, laid the foundation for studies of affective meaning with cross-cultural research substantiating three universal dimensions of affective response (Osgood, May, and Miron, 1975). Indigenes in more than two dozen societies were presented with a list of concepts that exist in every culture--like father, mother, girl, water, moon--and asked to respond to each concept with a modifier. Later, indigenes were asked to name the opposite of each modifier, the modifier opposites were formed into rating scales, and indigenes used the scales to rate the concepts. Pan-cultural correlations were computed comparing mean ratings of the concepts, on scales administered in the same society and in different societies. For example, one pan-cultural correlation compared mean ratings of the concepts on a sweet-sour scale used in the U.S.A. and on a buen-malo scale used in Mexico.

Statistical analysis of the pan-cultural correlations showed that scales clustered into three major groups--Evaluation, Potency, Activity--and every culture contributed scales to each group. For example, concepts rated as sweet by Americans tended to be rated good by Americans and buen by Mexicans, so all three of these scales--sweet-sour, good-bad, and buen-malo--contributed to the Evaluation cluster.

*Evaluation* concerns a sense of approval or disapproval that can elaborate into judgments of morality, aesthetics, functionality, hedonism, or other standards. *Potency* relates to an entity's impact, and might elaborate into assessments of physical magnitude, strength, forcefulness, social power, expansiveness, etc. *Activity* indexes an entity's spontaneity, which can elaborate into judgments of animation, speed, perceptual stimulation, age, propensity to be an agent, etc. An entity's affective meaning is measured by averaging judgments from multiple respondents on bi-polar rating scales assessing Evaluation, Potency, and Activity (EPA).

## Sentiments

Fundamental sentiments are the enduring affective meanings prevailing in a society that allow individuals to orient quickly and automatically in different situations. For example, most Americans feel that doctors are helpful, powerful, and reserved--that's the fundamental sentiment about doctors. Americans' sentiment about children is quite different: good, weak, and lively. Gangsters provoke still another sentiment: bad, powerful, and active.

An individual's sentiment about an object is a result of private encounters with the object and interactions with others. For example, an individual's own experiences with children are one source of the individual's sentiment about children. The individual expresses her sentiment in public actions toward children and in talking about children with her associates. These public acts influence others' sentiments. Others' public behavior and talk--both face-to-face and in mass media exposures--also influence her sentiments. A shared sentiment toward child emerges. That shared sentiment affects the individual's private experiences with children in the future, whereupon even her private experiences will tend to support the shared sentiment toward child. Public interaction and discourse causes an individual's sentiments to be almost the same as another individual's sentiments, so each individual's sentiment is an indicator of the shared cultural sentiment, and averaging over a few individuals to get rid of effects of each individual's recent private experiences provides a good estimate of the cultural sentiment. This "ethnographic simplification" contrasts with the sampling procedures required to assess uncorrelated characteristics in a population. For example, an individual's age does not influence anyone else's age, so we cannot take any one person's age as a reliable indicator of other individuals' ages or of the population mean age.

In affect control theory, a cultural sentiment about an entity is measured as the average EPA rating of the entity outside of the context of any event, typically by 50 to 60 indigenous raters, split evenly between males and females. These numbers are small by survey-research standards, but the numbers are substantially larger than the minimum number of informants required to assess cultural norms according to mathematical analyses of the ethnographic simplification by Romney, Weller, and Batchelder (1986).

*Cross-culture Variations.* Empirical studies show that sentiments in different cultures are both similar and different. As an example consider sentiments for father, mother, and child as measured among indigenes of the U.S.A., Canada, Japan, China, Germany, and Northern Ireland. Raters in all six cultures agree that fathers, mothers, and children are not bad, and mothers are the nicest of the three. Additionally all agree that parents are powerful and children are powerless. However, aside from these general agreements, major differences arise.

- Japanese evaluate family members less positively than people in the other cultures, and a child actually is felt to be neither good nor bad in Japan.
- Chinese evaluate family members most positively; and the Chinese are different from people in the other five cultures in feeling that mothers are more powerful than fathers.
- Generally, parents are evaluated more positively than children, but not in Germany where fathers are felt to be less good than either children or mothers.
- Mothers generally are felt to be nicer than fathers, but this difference is negligible in the U.S.A. The power difference between fathers and mothers also is negligible in the U.S.A.

In general, people in these six cultures largely agree about what kinds of individuals are relatively good or relatively bad, and they agree about who is relatively powerful and who is relatively powerless. Feelings about who is relatively active or passive--who is likely to exercise agency--are moderately shared across the cultures. The six cultures also largely agree about what kinds of actions are relatively right or wrong, while being quite diverse in assessing the weightiness and spontaneity of social actions. Of course, even where there are substantial correlations across cultures, each culture does maintain some unique meanings, as was the case with father-mother-child.

## Impression-Formation Processes

An event changes pre-event feelings about actor, behavior, object, and setting into new feelings. For example, suppose an employer cheats an employee. Previously we might have felt positive toward the employer and employee. However, cheating the employee makes the employer seem very bad, and the event detracts from the employee, too, as if we allow that this employee might have earned victimization. Cheating is palliated as a workplace happening: it is bad, but not as bad as usual. The office or factory where cheating occurred is defiled, fostering suspicions that the place might house other iniquities.

Social psychologists have developed equations for accurately predicting post-event impressions from the set of EPA profiles for pre-event feelings (Heise, 1979; 1985; Smith-Lovin and Heise, 1988; Britt and Heise, 1992). Each of the many terms in these equations represents a mental process that occurs while interpreting events. Three terms are especially notable.

Every equation has a *stability* term. That fact means that the mind always transfers some pre-event feeling toward an event element to the post-event feeling involving the same event element. For example, actors are likely to seem good after events if the actors were good to begin with, and actors may continue to seem bad after events if they were bad beforehand.

In the *morality* effect, evaluation of an actor's behavior strongly influences the impression of the actor's goodness or badness. For example, anyone rescuing another gets evaluative credit for engaging in a noble act. Anyone killing another is discredited for engaging in a horrible act.

At the same time, though, we also are influenced by how evaluatively *consistent* the behavior is with the object of action. For example, an actor who performs a bad action on a good person violates a consistency principle--that good people deserve good treatment--so the actor seems bad not only because of the morality effect but additionally because of behavior-object inconsistency.

These three processes--stability, morality, and behavior-object evaluative consistency--influence evaluation of an actor in all cultures that have been examined so far: U.S.A., Ireland, Lebanon (Smith-Lovin, 1987), Canada (MacKinnon, 1985/1988/1998), and Japan (Smith, Matsuno, and Umino, 1994). In fact, research results indicate considerable cross-cultural similarity overall in forming impressions of an actor's goodness and activity. On the other hand, research indicates that there may be fairly substantial differences in how people in different cultures interpret the potency of an event's actor.

Similarities across cultures notwithstanding, on every dimension of impression formation, each different culture weights the processes differently and brings in a few unique considerations, thereby creating subtle cross-cultural differences in the interpretations of events.

### Likelihood

Expected events create impressions confirming sentiments (Heise and MacKinnon, 1987). For example, a mother hugging her baby creates impressions of mother and baby that are very close to sentiments about mothers and babies, and the affective meaning of hugging is sustained as well. So this event seems likely, to the point of being an action that is normative for mothers. On the other hand, a mother abandoning her baby creates impressions that depart substantially from basic sentiments. The mother seems much less good, less powerful, and more active than she should be; abandoning gains aberrant significance in this context; and an

abandoned baby seems less good and lively than a baby should be. With impressions of mother, abandoning, and baby deflected so far from their fundamental affective meanings, this event seems unusual, to the point of being a form of deviance for mothers.

Occasionally an event wrenches impressions so far from sentiments that individuals have trouble believing such an event really could happen, as in a mother murdering a baby. Some events undermine sentiments still more and seem literally impossible. For example, a beloved leaving an individual through death creates an impression of the loved one and of the individual so far from fundamental sentiments that the event doesn't seem credible; so when it happens, the loved one may be conceived as living on, supernaturally.

In affect control theory, an event's likelihood is predicted from the degree to which the event generates impressions that deviate from sentiments. A difference between the fundamental sentiment and the transient feeling about an entity, cumulated over all three EPA dimensions, is a deflection. Cumulating over all entities involved in an event yields a total deflection, and values of total deflection translate to assessments of event likelihood. Total deflection is small in the case of likely events, whereas a large total deflection implies an unlikely event.

Total deflection also is an indicator of the psychological stress produced by an event. Experience that undermines fundamental affective meanings, creating a sense of strangeness, is stressful--even experiences that may be emotionally pleasant.

### **States of Being**

Impression formation research focuses on action events, as just discussed, and also on copular assertions about an individual's state of being (e.g., the father is angry), mainly in the form of modifier-identity combinations (the angry father).

Modifier-identity combination in the U.S.A. averages the pre-existing impressions, with the modifier having about twice the impact of the identity. For example, in the case of Evaluation, noticing that a person has a good attribute like gentleness makes the person seem more pleasant, and noticing a bad attribute like surliness makes the person seem less pleasant. Characterized people also seem more pleasant if they have valued identities, and they seem more unpleasant if they have stigmatized identities--compare, a gentle father with a gentle drunk. Moreover, evaluative consistency between attribute and identity makes a person seem more pleasant, and inconsistency makes a person seem more unpleasant. The net impact of all three factors together is that people with good attributes and good identities seem pleasant, but someone with a bad attribute or a bad identity seems unpleasant.

Copular impressions have been studied in the U.S.A. (Averett and Heise, 1987; Heise and Thomas, 1989) and Japan (Smith, Matsuno, and Ike, Forthcoming), and, overall, Americans seem to process states of being more simply than Japanese. For instance, Americans do not distinguish between trait modifiers (like irascible) and emotion modifiers (like angry), whereas Japanese are prone to stigmatize someone characterized by an unpleasant emotion more than someone characterized by an unpleasant trait.

### **Emotions**

In affect control theory, emotions manifest emergent affective meanings of an individual and also indicate how emergent meanings relate to the fundamental affective meanings of the individual (Averett and Heise, 1987; Heise and Thomas, 1989; Heise and Weir, 1999; Smith-Lovin, 1990; 1991; 1994). On the whole, an individual who seems bad as a result of an event should have unpleasant emotions, and an individual who seems good should have pleasant emotions. An individual who seems powerless as a result of an event should experience vulnerable emotions, and an individual who seems powerful should experience dominance emotions. An individual who seems passive as a result of an event should have tranquil emotions, and an individual who seems animated should have activated emotions. However, emotions also result from comparing impressions with sentiments associated with one's identity. For example, an individual who

seems somewhat favored in a situation nevertheless should have an unpleasant emotions if the impression of the individual is not as good as the individual's very positive identity warrants.

A characteristic emotion is the emotion that would be experienced were an individual's identity confirmed perfectly. For example, a gangster getting perfect confirmation should experience anger and contempt. A heroine getting perfect confirmation should experience cheerfulness and friendliness. A minister should experience generosity and compassion. A prostitute should experience impatience and aggravation.

The characteristic emotion for an identity is only partly achieved in real relations because individuals with the identity interact with people in other identities, and there has to be some trade-off in maintaining one's own identity as opposed to others'. Others' identities tug emotions in different directions, and this process gives emotional character to different kinds of relationships. For example, a minister interacting with a sinner does not achieve perfect confirmation of self, but instead is deflected such that expected emotions include apprehension, and feeling overwhelmed. On the other hand, gratefulness and relief are the kinds of emotions a minister should enjoy in his or her personal relationship with God.

Recurrent emotions experienced in different relationships--structural emotions (Kemper, 1978)--allow interactants to perceive the social structure within which they are situated. Norms for structural emotions may be imposed as a way of producing desired social structures (Hochschild, 1983).

Most commercial and professional transactions are expected to be emotionally charged in orderly ways (Heise and Calhan, 1995). Emotional control, masking emotional displays, and denial of felt emotions occur in social situations, not to remove emotions from social life, but to achieve conformity with emotion norms (Heise and Calhan, 1995) or in response to social control (Hochschild, 1983; Staske, 1996; Heise and Weir, 1999).

Affect control theory's model of emotions leads to a non-intuitive hypothesis about how emotions arising from unexpected events relate to subsequent actions. A subsequent action will be designed to undo the uncharacteristic emotion that precedes it. For example, a husband theoretically would follow a flicker of jealousy with solicitous behavior rather than vindictiveness, in order to reclaim the positivity of himself and his spouse. Such a prediction goes against the commonsense notion that an emotion is a motive, producing behavior which is consistent with the emotion. In affect control theory, behavior is driven and controlled not by emotions but by the propensity to confirm fundamental affective meanings.

Making an emotion into a motivational state requires incorporating emotion into a person's fundamental affective meaning as an identity modifier defining a mood. For example, a man might turn himself into a "jealous husband" as a way of understanding a situation where his wife seems aroused and raunchy but is trying to escape him. Attributing jealousy to himself expresses his predicament, and being jealous sets a mood generating behavior and feelings that are generally consistent with the mood, though the tenor of behavior and feeling can vary with different partners, just as role behavior varies from one partner to another. Whereas an individual generates experiences that eliminate uncharacteristic emotions, the individual acts to maintain a mood, because a mood is a fundamental--though temporary--aspect of self that the individual is actualizing. Cessation of a mood occurs by relinquishing the temporary definition of self, as when a series of happenings contradicts the mood identification.

Another hypothesis deriving from affect control theory's model of emotions is that emotions swing wildly between pleasant and unpleasant for individuals with extremely negative identities--a prediction that accords with clinical observations of emotional lability in individuals with very negative self-concepts. The affect control theory explanation is this. Variations in emotionality--sighing, smiling, frowning, etc.--have diminished impact on the self-experience of individuals who understand themselves as being fundamentally bad. So when events warrant a positive impression of themselves individuals with negative selves have to over-react emotionally, and work themselves into emotional beatitude. When circumstances warrant an impression of themselves as extra bad, they have to evoke an emotional hell internally in order to experience their downward deviation. Numbed in negativity, they have to magnify their feelings in order to experience an affected self.

## **Constructing Events**

According to affect control theory, individuals seek experiences that confirm fundamental affective meanings. During a social interaction individuals intuit behaviors which would produce impressions validating fundamental affective meanings, and they are inclined to enact such behaviors, or ask others to enact them, in order to obtain confirming experiences.

Affect control theory's mathematical model (Heise, 1987) delineates how an individual selects interpersonal behaviors that best confirm fundamental affective meanings. The model utilizes sentiment measurements, impression-formation equations, and mathematical minimization procedures to identify the EPA profile for ideal behaviors that would least deflect emergent affective meanings from fundamental affective meanings in a social situation. The EPA profile can be used to select behaviors that could be performed in the social interaction. The following example, based on analyses with affect control theory's mathematical model implemented in a computer simulation program called *Interact* (Schneider and Heise, 1995), portrays the minded processes simulated by the model.

Suppose an individual sees herself as a doctor and her interaction partner as a patient. In U.S.A. culture, this definition of the situation leads her to feel that she is fundamentally quite good and powerful and neither lively nor still, and the patient is fundamentally neither good nor bad, quite weak, and slightly quiet. Suppose that the interaction is just beginning so nothing has happened to deflect transient meanings away from the fundamental meanings.

Now what behavior should the doctor perform to best confirm the fundamental meanings of both individuals in the situation? She might perform a behavior that is neutral in goodness, powerfulness, and liveliness (like *study* or *evaluate*), and such a behavior is not too bad a choice because it confirms the meaning of patient almost perfectly. However, such a behavior makes a doctor seem less good and potent than she really is. So the doctor increases the niceness of her behavior to quite good to get around that problem. A behavior that is quite good and neutral on potency and activity-like *talk to*, or *understand*-confirms the meaning of patient well, and it almost perfectly confirms the evaluation and activity aspects of a doctor's fundamental meaning. This behavior still leaves the doctor seeming not quite as powerful as she is supposed to be, but a more powerful behavior would detract from the goodness she is trying to confirm. So she reasonably settles on talking to the patient and understanding the patient's problems.

Doing so produces a transient meaning of the doctor as quite good, slightly powerful, and neither lively nor still. This emergent meaning is less powerful than a doctor should be, so her next action has to be somewhat more potent to avoid straying too far from the fundamental meaning of doctor. She needs to perform a behavior that is quite good, slightly powerful, and neutral on activity-like *console*, or *soothe*.

Consoling and soothing the patient leaves the doctor's emergent meaning still lacking the ideal level of potency, and meanwhile the patient begins to seem excessively indulged. In fact, the doctor's consideration of the patient, creating an excessively high evaluation of the patient, provides a context in which the doctor now can be more domineering. Now the doctor can employ behaviors that are only slightly nice, more powerful, and slightly quiet--like *direct*, or *counsel*.

As the interaction continues, the doctor seems somewhat less good and powerful than ideal, and the patient seems better and less powerless than a patient is in general. These emergent meanings of doctor and patient combine with sentiments about doctors and patients to produce the structural emotions of the relationship--the doctor feeling secure and compassionate, and the patient feeling at-ease and grateful.

Affect control theory offers some interesting hypotheses about the actions of individuals who operate with stigmatized selves. One such possibility is an individual who acquires a transient self impression that is much more negative than the individual's identity--say, as a result of being derogated in public. Affect control theory predicts that the stigmatized individual will engage a valued other in an especially positive action in an effort to pull the transient impression of self up to a more positive value. This prediction was confirmed in a behavioral experiment designed to test the prediction (Wiggins and Heise, 1987).

On the other hand, individuals with negative self sentiments--especially those who are too submissive and passive to depend on active behavioral strategies--need assurance from others that their low opinion of themselves is justified. They seek others who criticize them, even when the derogations are emotionally painful, because being criticized is an experience that confirms their negative self sentiments. This influences their choices for relationships.

Because affect control theory suggests that only alters who view themselves in a fundamentally negative way will be likely to engage consistently in such negative behaviors, we predict that people with low self esteem will choose one another as interaction partners. This homophily principle leads to a perversely stable social structure: people who think negatively of themselves are locked into dissatisfying, unpleasant relations with similar others, whereas alters with high self esteem have little incentive to intrude into these persistently negative interactions. (Robinson and Smith-Lovin, 1992, p. 27)

Experiments by Robinson and Smith-Lovin (1992) substantiated these hypotheses among people with varying self-sentiments, who had to decide whether critics or appreciators would be their future interaction partners. Individuals with low self-esteem associated with criticizers.

## Re-identifications

Some interactions persistently produce impressions of participants that are far from fundamental affective meanings. This can happen when interactants have different definitions of the situation or when some interactants have special sentiments that others do not share. When interactants are trying to confirm different sentiments, they get caught in a conflict: the more one individual achieves sentiment confirmation, the more the others feel that emergent meanings are diverging from fundamental meanings. Disconfirming interactions also can arise structurally, when interactants' identities cannot be confirmed simultaneously, such as a lady with a mugger.

Sometimes the stress and strangeness of a disconfirming event can be resolved by interpreting a behavior in a way that makes the event less disturbing--e.g., viewing a derogatory comment as just a joke. Another way to recover a sense that one understands what is going on is to redefine the situation, inferring interactants' identities from events that are happening, rather than trying to anticipate behaviors from presumed identities. That is, to cope with a breakdown in understanding, an individual can assign interactants new identities that explain their anomalous conduct.

Re-identification of an individual may involve assigning an entirely new identity in order to account for recent events in terms of revised role expectations. This is the concern of labeling theory in sociology. Alternatively, an individual may be re-identified by combining a personal characteristic with the individual's current identity, interpreting recent peculiarities in terms of the individual's personality or character. This is the concern of trait attribution research in psychology. Affect control theory provides a model of both kinds of re-identification.

Here is an example of how re-identification processes work, according to affect control theory. Suppose an individual is identified as a doctor and her interaction partner as a patient, and suppose the doctor insults the patient. This event stigmatizes both interactants, rather than confirming the doctor as fundamentally good, and the patient as fundamentally neither good nor bad. An observer might wish to redefine the situation in order to understand this event better.

Redefining the doctor requires answering the question: What kind of individual would insult a patient? The transient impression of a doctor who insults a patient is slightly bad, slightly potent, and slightly active, so the observer might try an identity with that fundamental affective meaning (e.g., *fanatic*, *big-shot*). Such a re-identification works--a fanatic insulting a patient does maintain the meaning of patient and also confirms the potency and activity meanings of a fanatic. However, with such a bad actor identity, the transient impression of the actor insulting the patient is worse, so an even more negative identity like *quack* or *lunatic* provides a better solution: someone who insults a patient behaves like a quack or a lunatic. Such an identity explains the focal happening well, and once assigned, the new identity might be used to interpret other events involving that same actor.

Alternatively, an observer can try to understand the event as the action of a doctor with a peculiar personality. An actor who insults a patient is fundamentally quite bad, a bit potent, and slightly active. So what kind of personality trait would make a doctor into such a person? A trait that is quite bad, neutral on potency, and slightly lively--like *self-centered* or *spiteful*. The doctor who is insulting a patient could be expressing her self-centeredness or her spitefulness. Such a trait explains her peculiar behavior in the doctor role, and should explain her peculiar behavior in other roles, too. A related alternative is that the observer might

choose to understand the doctor's unexpected behavior in terms of a mood, like *tormented* or *hostile*. A mood attribution would account for the uniqueness of the doctor's behavior in this one situation, while allowing that she usually acts normally.

Another avenue to understanding the event is redefinition of the patient, asking the question: What kind of person would a doctor insult? Such a person would be quite bad, neutral on potency, and active. Among the identities with fundamental meanings like this are *bigot* and *fault-finder*, so the doctor's insult is more understandable if the recipient is a bigot or fault-finder. Alternatively an observer could attribute a trait like *bossy* or *manipulative* to the patient to explain the doctor's behavior.

A re-identification has to be logically connected to the identity of the interaction partner, the setting, and the nature of the act performed. Many identities that are affectively appropriate may not fit the context logically. For example, a doctor who insults a patient logically can be re-identified as a quack because a quack is a kind of doctor. However, without a major re-framing, the doctor cannot logically be re-identified as a burglar, traitor, or bigamist, even though these identities are just as affectively appropriate as quack.

A re-identification also has to accord with features of the person being re-identified--especially the individual's sex. The feminist movement in industrialized societies has made gender less of an issue for workplace identities--e.g., by substituting *chair* for *chairman*. However, gender still is important in labeling with some informal identifications, such as *beauty*, *stud*, *bitch*, and *bastard*.

Re-identification processes get another complication when an observer notices the emotions of interactants during unexpected conduct (Heise, 1989). In general, an actor who displays a sustained emotion that fits the positiveness or negativeness of the actor's actions can be re-identified relatively positively. Notably, negative emotions like guilt or shame accompanying deviant actions suggest that the actor generally operates with a positive self-identification, and therefore the individual's future behavior probably will be normal. On the other hand, maintaining a positive mood while engaged in deviant conduct suggests that the actor is maintaining a negative identity, because only wicked individuals can engage in deviant behavior while feeling good, so observers should acknowledge the individual's negative self with a stigmatization, thereby preparing themselves to expect more negative behavior from that person in the future.

Emotions displayed by recipients of action also can influence re-identifications of an actor. For example, observing a woman speaking to a man and noticing that the man is embarrassed might cause an observer to guess that the woman has a grand identity in the man's eyes. Actors who are smarter, more authoritative, more famous make the objects of their attention feel quieter, less comfortable, more vulnerable; so an object person's embarrassment can warrant an inference about the actor's high status.

Because emotion links so closely to possession of identities and traits, emotion is a prime focus of negotiation among interactants maneuvering for relational position (Staske, 1996; Heise and Weir, 1999). The process can be involuted, as when one sweetheart tries to amplify a mild negative emotion displayed by the partner over forgetting an appointment: "Sorry! You're just sorry?" The underlying worry may be that the partner is insufficiently committed to the sweetheart identity, and indeed, the partner may be emoting with little intensity precisely to signal that the relationship is waning.

## Applications

*Law.* Robinson, Smith-Lovin, and Tsoudis (1994) proposed that affect control theory derivations relating emotions and re-identifications explain why journalists stress emotional reactions in reporting crimes, why lawyers advise clients about appropriate emotional conduct in the courtroom, why deference and demeanor enter into sentencing and probation recommendations, and why judges attend to perpetrators' emotions when considering reductions of sentences. In all of these cases, the presumption is that one cannot know what kind of person an offender really is unless one knows whether or not the offender's emoting in the context of the crime is appropriately negative.



In their research, Robinson, Smith-Lovin, and Tsoudis (1994) presented subjects with transcribed manslaughter confessions, including parenthetical descriptions of appropriate moods (e.g., "sad/unhappy, sits with eyes downcast") or inappropriate moods (e.g., "relaxed facial expressions"). Subjects in the experiment then rated the likelihood that the perpetrator was a habitual offender likely to repeat the offense in the future, and they recommended a sentence in terms of number of years of imprisonment. Emotional distress on the part of the perpetrator strongly reduced the perception of the perpetrator as a habitual offender, and seeing the perpetrator as a non-habitual offender dramatically reduced the recommended years of imprisonment.

Tsoudis and Smith-Lovin (1998) extended the scope of the experiment to include the emotions of the victim, in a study similar to the first, except that subjects read two passages with embedded emotion cues: the perpetrator's confession, and the victim impact statement. Results replicated the first study with regard to perpetrator emotion--inappropriate emotion made the perpetrator and his crime seem worse. Additionally the victim's emotion also had a major impact on the recommended sentence, as predicted. Victims who were sad and depressed by their victimization, as opposed to relaxed about it, were perceived as more positive characters, so the act that hurt them seemed worse, and the perpetrator deserved a longer sentence. Thus emotions of perpetrator and victim indirectly affect the seriousness of the offense, by changing the situated identities of perpetrator and victim. This fits earlier work (Smith-Lovin and Heise, 1982) demonstrating that impression formation is a dynamic feedback process, with actor and object impressions influencing the impression of the behavior, even as the behavior shapes impressions of the actor and object.

Another study by Tsoudis and Smith-Lovin (2001) verified that perpetrator and victim emotions influence construals of a crime--how vicious it was, how justified, how pre-meditated, etc.--and these construals in turn influence sentencing. In terms of affect control theory, the affective meanings of the interactants determines the affective meaning of the criminal behavior, then the behavior's affective meaning supports inferences to fill in information about the crime, in the same way that affective meanings of identities permit inferences about the stereotypical traits of individuals with those identities (MacKinnon and Bowlby, 2000).

Another potential courtroom application of affect control theory emerges from Goodwin's (1994) discussion of how five Los Angeles police officers won an acquittal in their trial for excessive violence, despite a video showing them bludgeoning a black man named Rodney King 47 times as he lay on the ground. The acquittal was accomplished through testimony from an expert on violence, who actually turned the video into evidence for the defense by arguing that police were responding to King's aggressive moves. The problem for the prosecutor was that no equivalent expert was available to legitimize laypeople's perceptions, including King's on the night he was beaten.

No expert witnesses are available to interpret these events and animate the images on the tape from King's perspective. ... [W]ithin the discourse of the courtroom, no one can speak for the suspect. His perception is not lodged within a profession and thus publicly available to others as a set of official discursive procedures. (Goodwin, 1994, p. 625)

Yet affect control theory analyses of the events do simulate laypeople's perceptions. Defining Rodney King as a villain (since he was apprehended after a dangerous chase), moderate deflection is produced the first time a police officer clubs him, indicating that a single use of a steel baton seems a little unusual but not remarkable: at worst, the officer seems *hotheaded* or *reckless* (affect control theory predictions are italicized). However, deflection grows with each additional clubbing, reaching high levels by the tenth blow, and the high deflection corresponds to a sense that something extraordinary is happening. The lay observer, in a state of shocked incredulity, seeks a redefinition of the situation so it makes sense. Those are not officers of the law but *brutes*, *bullies*, perhaps *vigilantes*, even *outlaws*! Thus, affect control theory analyses legitimate the interpretations of laypeople, and provide scientific evidence that the officers' behavior was outside cultural norms.

*Commerce*. On the basis of an empirical analysis of occupations, MacKinnon and Langford (1994) argued that the study of occupations requires a redirection of attention away from occupational prestige to EPA measurements of work identities.

it is the affective associations of social identities--their social sentiments--that generate role behavior and those situationally specific and ephemeral affective experiences we recognize as emotions; and it is these affective dynamics at the micro-interactional level that give rise to social structure.

Because prestige scores are inadequate measures of the social sentiments of occupational identities, they are of limited utility in studying the micro-interactional basis of social stratification. (MacKinnon and Langford, 1994, p.234)

Work activity cannot be predicted from measurements of occupations on traditional dimensions like occupational prestige, or average education and income. However, EPA measurements of an occupational identity and of the identities in that occupation's role set do support analyses of the interactional aspects of work. Other analytic possibilities also emerge from measurements of work roles on EPA dimensions, such as the following.

According to Scher and Heise (1993), justice-related emotions (those believed to have inequity as their initiating condition) are gateways to deliberations about whether economic or political exchanges are fair or not, and eliminating justice-related emotions often precludes deliberations about injustice. They employed affect control theory simulations to reveal how the justice-related emotion of anger can arise in the workplace, and how this ordinarily is prevented.

[The employee's] action of working for the employer can take on a variety of affective meanings, depending on the nature of the work. ... By changing the affective meaning of work (i.e. by experimenting with different EPA profiles), we found that anger will arise if the work is even a little unpleasant ... and if it is at least slightly active.... The potency of the work, which might be interpreted as its importance, is not crucial--people can get fed up with important work as well as unimportant work.... Affect control theory predicts that an employee repetitively engaging in such work comes to see the self as ... substantially less good, more potent, and more lively than should be the case. Such a disconfirmation of identity rouses the emotion of anger.

If the employer understands the work in the same way as the employee, then the employer is just as stressed by the situation as the employee. And the employer is able to do something about it within the rules of a transaction. Paying the employee helps bring the employee's self impression back to where it is supposed to be and greatly dissipates the propensity to anger. Making the payment more positive by paying well can wipe out the negative impression of the employee and the negative emotion. On the other hand, failing to pay or paying poorly while continuing to demand arduous work leaves anger and primes the employee to begin deliberating over the fairness of the transaction.... (Scher and Heise, 1993, pp. )

Another kind of organizational dysfunction can occur when workers in international corporations ignore local cultural differences (Schneider and Heise, 1995). Smith (1995) indicated that American executives might conflict with Japanese civil servants by giving Japanese civil servants less respect than is appropriate for their high status in Japan. Schneider (1999) pointed out that behavior prescriptions developed in a foreign central office might prevent employees from confirming the affective meanings of their professional identities within their own cultures, putting them at risk of stress and deviant labeling.

Affect control theory predicts organizational activity under the assumption that executives produce such activity in order to maintain sentiments about organizations and organizational actions. Lerner (1983) had a panel of international decision makers measure sentiments associated with actions used by political leaders in the conduct of international relations (e.g., breaking diplomatic relations, extending economic aid). The EPA measurements were used to convert over 300 qualitative events among Middle Eastern states into a quantitative network of inter-state relations. Fundamental identities of the states then were estimated by seeking the EPA profile for each state that would best predict the EPA relations of that state with others, under the assumption that affect control theory accounts for the relations. Lerner demonstrated that nation identities could be inferred like this, and he showed that simulations based on the inferred identities and the EPA measurements of political actions predicted a significant proportion of the actual events that took place between Middle Eastern states. His work supports the idea that national leaders use political actions to maintain fundamental sentiments about their own nation and other nations.

Equivalent studies of interactions between business firms are yet to be done, but the basic idea seems equally relevant. That is, officers of business firms interact with officers of other firms, using the legal, financial, sales, and other departments of their organizations to implement macroactions (Heise and Durig, 1997) that maintain affective meanings in the business world. For example, the computer wars at the turn of the century among Microsoft, Sun, IBM, etc. seemed to be such affectively based processes.

*Re-socialization.* Thomas and Heise (1995, Figure 1) showed the impact of a sub-culture on sentiments about behaviors. In anonymous reports, university students evaluated "smoking marijuana, hash" and "sniffing cocaine," and also reported their experience with recreational drugs. Individuals having no experience with recreational drugs viewed both kinds of drug use as wicked. Those who had tried marijuana but nothing else felt that smoking marijuana was evaluatively neutral, and they viewed sniffing cocaine somewhat less negatively than non-users. Those who had tried both marijuana and cocaine felt that using these drugs was a positive act. Those far enough into the drug subculture to have tried LSD as well as the other two drugs felt that using marijuana actually was virtuous!

In general, deviants who form subcultures acquire positive sentiments about the subculture's special identities and actions, whereupon those identities elicit the behaviors, not because the identities and behaviors are negative, but because they are positive. Smith-Lovin and Douglass (1992) documented this in a study of two Christian congregations in South Carolina during the 1970s. Members of a Unitarian church rated homosexuals as negative in evaluation and potency and positive in activity. Members of a nearby gay church congregation saw the goodness and potency of homosexuals as literally the opposite of what it was among the non-gays. Affect control theory analyses suggested that homosexuals would behave negatively and produce little in the way of pleasant emotions for each other if they accepted the negative views of the Unitarians. However, sentiments held in the gay church congregation would permit them to be positive interaction partners, feeling emotions of affection and joy with each other. A second survey of the two church congregations revealed that the Unitarians actually did have the expectations deduced from their sentiments by affect control theory, while the gay Christians saw their interactions in the positive manner deduced from their positive sentiments.

Alcoholics Anonymous converts mainstream sentiments to sub-cultural sentiments for therapeutic reasons. For instance, AA transforms the meaning of drunkard from a rude, disgusting slob to a sensitive individual of great potential, as long as alcohol is avoided. Thomas (1996) obtained longitudinal data over a six month period from individuals mandated to attend AA meetings by a treatment facility, counseling agency, or court order. She found that 85 percent of the sentiments she measured converged toward AA positions in the case of alcoholism-related stimuli, compared to 33 percent convergence on general stimuli. Surprisingly, mere attendance at AA meetings was enough to achieve the convergence toward sub-cultural norms; variations in commitment and participation did little to explain whose sentiments changed more.

Francis (1997a, 1997b) studied social support groups dealing with loss of spouse through death or divorce and was able to identify a general strategy used by such groups to metamorphose a support-seeker's negative self sentiments to positive self sentiments. First these groups get the support-seeker to villainize the departed spouse and interpret the spouse's departure as an abandonment. This tactic changes the support-seekers negative feelings about self from a fundamental sentiment that continues to be maintained into a transitory victimization that can be repaired and forgotten. Additionally these groups provide an esteemed and powerful interaction partner--God or a healer--who the support-seeker can turn to in order to build a new sense of self esteem and self significance.

Britt and Heise (2000), examining the gay-rights and black-rights social movements, educed some social processes involved in metamorphosing a shameful identity into one that engenders pride. Historically, many gays and blacks accepted their stigmatization and withdrew from conventional society in shame. Social movement organizations turned the shame to fear through propaganda emphasizing the violence of oppressors, and then turned the fear to anger through further propaganda emphasizing the militancy of the social movement organizations. Finally, public demonstrations turned the activated and empowered selves into individuals who proudly valued their identities.

## **Theory Growth**

Affect control theory's development illustrates several different strategies of theory growth. The strategies are listed at the end of the following résumé of the research program.<sup>(2)</sup>

Affect control theory focused initially on norms and roles, addressing the question of how individuals can acquire massive knowledge of their society during just a few years of socialization. The theoretical answer was that individuals learn the value, impact, and spontaneity (EPA) of entities, and this information generates

complex social behavior as individuals construct events to maintain their sentiments. The viability of this theory was demonstrated first via computer simulations, and later by empirical studies.

An expansion of the theory quickly became obvious. The original quantitative model had individuals maintaining affective meanings by choosing an ideal behavior for a given actor and object. However, an alternative mathematical solution was to have individuals select an ideal actor for an observed action. Simulations confirmed the viability of this approach to reidentification, or labeling. The overall theory then was expanded by linking the two modes of meaning control in the context of meta-theoretical ideas from general systems theory: when behavioral control of meanings fails, individuals resort to higher order control through reidentification of interactants.

Linguistic case-grammar theory inspired the representation of events as actor-behavior-object combinations, and the linguistic theory suggested that representation of events could be improved by including social settings in the specifications of events. EPA data on settings were collected and the quantitative model was elaborated, whereupon simulations confirmed that controlling sentiments about settings modifies behavior predictions in sensible ways. Interestingly, implausible results from additional simulations indicated that settings probably do not get reidentified to fit actions that occur in them, which curtailed a conceivable expansion of the theory to explain how people reframe settings for different kinds of activity.

Linguistic theory also emphasizes the importance of state-of-being modifiers in representing actors and objects. Accordingly, EPA data on modifiers were collected and a quantitative model of modification was developed, whereupon simulations showed that behavior predictions responded sensibly to modifier specifications of individuals' personality traits, moods, or status characteristics.

Examining the quantitative model of modification suggested another expansion of the theory. Instead of forming an impression from an individual's identity and particular state of being, the individual's state of being might be inferred from the impression the individual has created and from knowledge of the individual's identity. Such an inference can be accomplished in two different ways mathematically, which led to affect control theory's models of attribution and emotion. Simulations and empirical tests demonstrated that these models function in sensible ways.

Affect control theory ordinarily is used to predict events from EPA ratings of identities and behaviors. However, some researchers interested in substantive problems instead pursued the implications of interpreting recorded events in terms of affect control. This was the approach taken in developing the ideas that international relations are grounded in the affective processes of political leaders; that support groups generally try to instill a particular sentiment structure in members' minds; and that social movement organizations involved in identity politics proceed through standard phases as they transmute shameful identities into identities engendering pride.

Affect control theory's ongoing cross-cultural elaborations begin empirically. First a dictionary of EPA profiles is acquired to identify how a new culture's sentiments differ from the sentiments of previously-studied cultures. Then, the quantitative model of impression formation is re-estimated with data from indigenes in the new culture, in order to compare their thought processes with the thinking of indigenes in previously-studied cultures. Third, the new materials are incorporated into the computer program, *Interact*, in order to support simulations of indigenous social interactions. The dictionaries, quantitative models of impression-formation, and simulations of social encounters enable rich interpretations of culturally-specific processes and offer many explicit points of reference for comparative analyses.

This review of the affect control theory research program evidences the following strategies of theory growth.

1. Adopt ideas from other fields--like general systems theory, or linguistics--in order to expand or integrate sociological formulations.
2. Reformulate a quantitative model mathematically, so as to solve additional sociological problems.
3. Interpret recorded events within the framework of an existing sociological theory in order to infer structures and processes that must exist in the domain of the events.

4. Measure a sociological theory's structural and processual parameters somewhere new in order to identify the theoretic model's permissible variations and the consequences of those variations.
5. Pursue, or discard, an idea depending on how hypotheses derived from the idea test out in computer simulations or in experiments. Computer simulations can be used this way when analysts (e.g., indigenes from the culture being studied) can assess the validity of simulation results.

Directions of future growth in affect control theory depend on interests of new researchers, which cannot be predicted. However, the five strategies above are such robust ways of gaining sociological knowledge that these strategies undoubtedly will be applied over and over as future sociologists augment affect control theory to address new issues.

## Coda

Affect control theory expands Goffman's (1967, p. 9) view that social interactants maintain an expressive order.

By entering a situation in which he is given a face to maintain, a person takes on the responsibility of standing guard over the flow of events as they pass before him. He must ensure that a particular expressive order is sustained--an order that regulates the flow of events, large or small, so that anything that appears to be expressed by them will be consistent with his face.

Affect control theory broadens the notion of expressive order to relate to more than the face, or situational identity, of a focal person. In affect control theory, an individual behaves not just to maintain the meaning of self, but to maintain understandings generally--humans are meaning-maintainers.

Affect control theory helps us see how microsociological processes underpin other sociological phenomena, and how cultural diversity in sentiments and interpretive processes leads to different rationalities and emotional responses in different societies.

## Endnotes

1. A glossary of terms used in affect control theory is provided in the appendix.
2. Retrospections with alternative emphases are available. MacKinnon and Heise (1993) focus on the build-up of intellectual resources in the research program; Heise (2000) emphasizes the contributions of mathematical analysis.

## References

- Averett, C. P., and D. R. Heise. 1987. "Modified social identities: Amalgamations, attributions, and emotions." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 13: 103-132.
- Britt, Lory, and D. R. Heise. 1992. "Impressions of self-directed action." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 55: 335-350.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and D. R. Heise. 2000. "From shame to pride in identity politics." Pp. 252-268 in *Self, Identity, and Social Movements*, edited by Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens, and Robert W. White. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Francis, Linda. 1997a. "Ideology and interpersonal emotion management: Redefining identity in two support groups." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 60:153-171.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1997b. "Emotion, coping, and therapeutic ideologies." *Social Perspectives on Emotion* 4: 71-101.

- Goffman, Erving. 1967. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Goodwin, Charles. 1994. "Professional vision." *American Anthropologist* 96: 606-633.
- Heise, D. R. 1979 *Understanding Events: Affect and the Construction of Social Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985. "Affect control theory: Respecification, estimation, and tests of the formal model." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 11: 191-222.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1987. "Affect control theory: Concepts and model." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 13: 1-33.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1989. "Effects of emotion displays on social identification." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 52: 10-21.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1999. "Controlling affective experience interpersonally." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 62: 4-16.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. "Thinking sociologically with mathematics." *Sociological Theory*, 18: 498-504.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Neil MacKinnon. 1987. "Affective bases of likelihood perception." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 13: 133-151.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Lisa Thomas. 1989. "Predicting impressions created by combinations of emotion and social identity." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 52: 141-148.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Cassandra Calhan. 1995. "Emotion norms in interpersonal events." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58: 223-240.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Alex Durig. 1997. "A frame for organizational actions and macroactions." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 22: 95-123.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Brian Weir. 1999. "A test of symbolic interactionist predictions about emotions in imagined situations." *Symbolic Interaction* 22: 129-161.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1983. *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kemper, T. D. 1978. *A Social Interactional Theory of Emotion*. New York: Wiley.
- Lerner, Steven Jay. 1983. "Affective Dynamics of International Relations." PhD. Dissertation. University Of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.
- MacKinnon, Neil J. 1985/1988/1998. Final Reports to Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada on Projects 410-81-0089, 410-86-0794, and 410-94-0087. Guelph, Ontario: Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Guelph.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and D. R. Heise. 1993. "Affect Control Theory: Delineation and Development." In Joseph Berger and Morris Zelditch, Jr. (Eds.), *Theoretical Research Programs: Studies in the Growth of Theory*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994. *Symbolic Interactionism as Affect Control*. Albany NY: SUNY Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Tom Langford. 1994. "The meaning of occupational prestige scores: A social psychological analysis and interpretation." *Sociological Quarterly* 35: 215-245.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Jeffrey W. Bowlby. 2000. "The affective dynamics of stereotyping and intergroup relations." *Advances in Group Processes* 17: 37-76.

Osgood, Charles H., W. H. May, and M. S. Miron. 1975. *Cross-Cultural Universals of Affective Meaning*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Romney, A. Kimball, Susan C. Weller, and William H. Batchelder. 1986. "Culture as consensus: A theory of culture and informant accuracy." *American Anthropologist* 88: 313-338.

Robinson, Dawn T., and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 1992. "Selective interaction as a strategy for identity maintenance: An affect control model." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 55: 12-28.

\_\_\_\_\_, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Olga Tsoudis. 1994. "Heinous crime or unfortunate accident? The effects of remorse on responses to mock criminal confessions." *Social Forces* 73: 175-190.

Scher, Steven J., and D. R. Heise. 1993. "Affect and the perception of injustice." *Advances in Group Process* 10: 223-252.

Schneider, Andreas. 1999. "Professional identities and behavior prescriptions in multi-cultural corporations." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Chicago.

\_\_\_\_\_, and D. R. Heise. 1995. "Simulating symbolic interaction." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 20: 271-287.

Smith, Herman W. 1995. Predicting stress in American-Japanese business relations. *Journal of Asian Business* 12: 79-89.

\_\_\_\_\_, Takanori Matsuno, and Michio Umino. 1994. "How similar are impression-formation processes among Japanese and Americans?" *Social Psychology Quarterly* 57: 124-139.

\_\_\_\_\_, Takanori Matsuno, and Shuuichirou Ike. Forthcoming. "The affective basis of attributional processes among Japanese and Americans." *Social Psychology Quarterly*.

Smith-Lovin, Lynn. 1987. "Impressions from events." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 13: 35-70.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1990. "Emotion as the confirmation and disconfirmation of identity: An affect control model." Pp. 238-270 in *Research Agendas in the Sociology of Emotions*, edited by T. D. Kemper. Albany: State University of New York Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1991. "An affect control view of cognition and emotion." Pp. 143-169 in *The Self-Society Dynamic: Cognition, Emotion, and Action*, edited by Judith A. Howard and Peter L. Callero. New York: Cambridge University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1994. "The sociology of affect and emotion." Pp. 118-148 in *Sociological Perspectives on Social Psychology*, edited by K. Cook, G. Fine, and J. House. New York: Allyn and Bacon.

\_\_\_\_\_, and D. R. Heise. 1982. "A structural equation model of impression formation." Pp. 195-222 in *Multivariate Applications in the Social Sciences*, edited by N. Hirschberg and L.G. Humphreys. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

\_\_\_\_\_, and D. R. Heise. 1988. *Analyzing Social Interaction: Advances in Affect Control Theory*. New York: Gordon and Breach. (Reprint of a special issue of the *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, Vol. 13, 1987.)

\_\_\_\_\_, and William Douglass. 1992. "An affect-control analysis of two religious groups." Pp. 217-247 in *Social Perspectives on Emotion*, Vol. 1, edited by V. Gecas and D. Franks. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press.

Staske, Shirley A. 1996. "Talking feelings: The collaborative construction of emotion in talk between close relational partners." *Symbolic Interaction* 19: 111-35.

Thomas, Lisa. 1996. "An alcoholic is good and sober: Participation, sentiments, and behavior." PhD. Dissertation. Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

\_\_\_\_\_ and D. R. Heise. 1995. "Mining error variance and hitting pay-dirt: Discovering systematic variation in social sentiments." *The Sociological Quarterly* 36: 425-439.

Tsoudis, Olga, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 1998. "How bad was it? The effects of victim and perpetrator emotion on responses to criminal court vignettes." *Social Forces* 77: 695-722.

\_\_\_\_\_, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2001. "Criminal identity: The key to situational construals in mock criminal court cases." *Sociological Spectrum*, 21: in press.

Wiggins, Beverly, and D. Heise. 1987. "Expectations, intentions, and behavior: Some tests of affect control theory." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 13: 153-169.

## Appendix

### Glossary of Terms Used in Affect Control Theory (ACT).

- Activity
- A dimension of affect relating to arousal versus languor, initiative versus passivity, commotion versus quiescence.
- affect
- Human processes that are mindful but not primarily cognitive and that have a somatic component but are not primarily behavioral. Examples are emotions, sentiments, impressions, motivations.
- affective meaning
- Assessment of an object in terms of how good or bad the object is, how powerful or powerless, how active or inactive, along with the substantial social knowledge that can be generated from these judgments.
- amalgamation
- Production of a new meaning by pairing a modifier with a noun, as in "rich professor" or "angry admiral."
- attribution



The process of accounting for an individual's involvements in events by means of a descriptive modifier. Personality traits, moods, status characteristics, or moral dispositions may be attributed.

behavior

A process focused by an actor on an object, thereby creating an event and generating transient affective meanings, among other products.

cognitive constraints

Categorizations and logical entailments of categories that underlie understanding of events. For example, a "son" is male, a "daughter" is female, and usage of either term presupposes a parent.

inconsistency

A case of colliding meanings. In ACT inconsistencies arise when an event makes an entity seem both good and bad, or powerful and powerless, or active and inactive.

control

In general systems theory, any process in which an agent acts in order to resist changes from the environment or to attain a particular goal state. In ACT, the focus is on control processes in which an individual resists changes in affective meanings or attempts to actualize affective meanings.

copular

An assertion linking an entity to a state, either with a state-of-being verb like "seems" or by grammatical positioning, as in "happy camper."

culture

Shared meanings regarding people, processes, and non-human objects. ACT focuses on the part of culture involving affective meanings regarding different kinds of people, interpersonal actions, and social settings.

deflection

Deviation of an emergent affective meaning from a fundamental affective meaning. ACT proposes that individuals try to confirm fundamental affective meanings with emergent affective meanings, or, in other words, individuals seek experiences that minimize deflections.

denotative meaning

The classification rules for applying a concept to some entity. These rules may include logical linkages that define relationships with other entities.

dictionary

A database of words and their meanings. ACT dictionaries consist of words for identities, behaviors, modifiers, or settings. Each word is defined by average EPA profiles from males and females and by classification in social institutions (e.g., religion, academia).

distance

The difference between two EPA profiles, measured quantitatively.

emergent meaning

Synonymous with transient affective meaning in ACT.

emotion

A transient affective state involving a particular physical countenance and a transient affective meaning for the self.

EPA dimensions

*Evaluation* measured on a scale from infinitely good to infinitely bad; *Potency* measured on a scale from infinitely powerful to infinitely powerless; and *Activity* measured on a scale from infinitely active to infinitely passive. These are the three universal aspects of affective meaning.

EPA profile

A set of three numbers quantitatively defining an entity's affective meaning. The first number is an Evaluation measurement, the second is Potency, the third Activity.

Evaluation

A dimension of affect indexing acceptance or rejection with regard to morality, beauty, usefulness, pleasure, etc.

event

The combination of an actor, a behavior, an object of action within a setting. Events influence the affective meanings of their components, and according to ACT, individuals create events so as to produce transient affective meanings that will confirm fundamental affective meanings.

feeling

Synonymous with transient affective meaning in ACT.

fundamental affective meaning

The persistent, culturally-grounded affective meaning of an entity that serves as a reference for individual experience.

identity

A culturally-defined category of person. An individual takes on an identity in each situation, actualizing the identity's fundamental affective meaning and thereby defining the individual's appropriate levels of status, power, and agency in the situation.

impression formation

The process by which an event combines affective meanings of actor, behavior, object, and setting and forms new emergent meanings for each element. ACT uses empirically-derived impression formation equations to predict the outcomes of this process.

impression

Synonymous with transient affective meaning in ACT.

institution

Associated social settings, identities, and behaviors. These associations set cognitive constraints in ACT analyses of social interaction .

*Interact*

A computer program for analyzing sequences of social interaction, starting with interactants' definitions of the situation in verbal terms. The program incorporates dictionaries to represent cultures, impression-formation equations to describe emergence of new meanings, and mathematically-derived equations to identify events that optimally confirm sentiments.

interactant

A participant in a social interaction.

label

An identity that accounts for an individual's involvement in an event. ACT specifies labels in terms of affective meaning, and this criterion has to be combined with cognitive constraints in order to get labels that are both affectively and logically appropriate.

likelihood

A subjective assessment of frequency in the circumstances. High deflection events that disconfirm sentiments seem unlikely, whereas low-deflection events seem likely unless they violate cognitive constraints.

logical meaning

Knowledge of Y obtained from X with the premise that Ys invariably are Xs, or require an X. The supposition in ACT is that interpersonal behavior arises largely by maintaining both affective and logical meanings.

mood

A non-permanent fundamental affective meaning of the self obtained by amalgamating an emotion with one's situational identity.

optimal solution

Completion of a partially-specified event with the behavior or identity that will generate impressions of event elements as close as possible to the elements' fundamental affective meanings.

Potency

A dimension of affect registering an entity's impact in terms of being big versus little, powerful versus powerless, consequential versus immaterial.

reidentification

Changing an individual's fundamental affective meaning to better fit the individual's manner of participating in a situation. Reidentifications can be accomplished through labeling or attribution.

role

A complex of behaviors expected of an individual with a particular identity in a particular institutional setting. ACT predicts role as the behaviors optimally maintaining the identity's fundamental affective meaning.

self-directed action

A behavior focused on the self rather than on an external object.

sentiment

Synonymous with fundamental affective meaning in ACT.

setting

A culturally-defined category of place or time in which certain kinds of interpersonal encounters occur. Events have to be constructed so as to confirm the fundamental affective meaning of the setting if the setting is salient in a situation.

simulations

Analyses of social interaction obtained with *Interact*.

situation

The web of meanings, especially about interactants' identities, that controls interactants' behaviors in a social encounter and that allows the interactants to understand what is going on. Defining the situation is a prerequisite for meaningful social interaction.

sub-culture

Distinctive meanings maintained by a subgroup of a population for a realm of people, processes, and non-human objects that are of special significance within the subgroup. For example, drug users maintain a sub-culture in which drug users, drug experiences, and drug paraphernalia are more positively evaluated than in the general culture.

trait

A culturally-defined personality type that may be attributed to an individual and thereafter is available for adjusting the fundamental affective meaning of the individual in any situation.

transient affective meaning

An entity's momentary affective meaning resulting from events. Transient affective meanings change to new transient affective meanings after the next event, as predicted by impression-formation equations.