

Social-Emotional World: Mapping a Continent*

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Abstract: This essay describes two basic aspects of the social-emotional world: degree of connectedness (solidarity/alienation) and a group of discrete emotions. This field needs to be clarified, mostly because of the use of vernacular words rather than clearly defined concepts. Two sets of definitions are proposed. The first involves conceptual and operational definitions of degree of connectedness. The second offers a preliminary taxonomy of six emotion concepts. The connectedness formulation establishes an alienation/solidarity axis with three points between complete solidarity and complete alienation. Studies of pluralistic ignorance and false consensus, drama theory, and other applications fall in these middle parts of the axis. The emotions taxonomy can be a first step toward better understanding their role in social life in relation to connectedness. The theory implied by these definitions can be viewed as a beginning map of the social-emotional world.

This article proposes that degree of connectedness and emotion are the main dimensions of the social-emotional¹ world (SEW). Although these domains are closely linked, they are separate entities. The first dimension is harder to envision than the emotions, because it is usually taken for granted between individuals, individuals and groups, and between groups. C.H. Cooley made the clearest and most general statement: "...we live in the minds of others, without knowing it." (Cooley 1922, p. 11, emphasis added), as will be discussed below.

The literal contents of ordinary speech and gesture are so ambiguous as to be confusing if not completely incomprehensible. A whole school of thought, deconstructionism, has been built up on this fact. However, this kind of analysis is misleading, since it leaves out a key ingredient in social transactions, role-taking. By five or six, most children have learned to try to understand speech not only from own point of view, but also from the point of view of the speaker. Comprehension depends on success in taking the role of the other. Little by little the child gets so good at guessing the other's viewpoint and at going back and forth between the two points of view as to forget what he/she is doing. In forgetting, the child becomes the kind of adult that modern societies imagine us all to be, a self-contained individual.

Connectedness

It is possible that this dimension, the degree of connectedness, is both cause and effect of most emotions. Human beings need to be connected with others as much as they need air to breathe, a social oxygen. Disconnected from others, one is alone in the universe. Deep connection, even if only momentary, can feel like union, not only with the other(s) but also with the universe. Varying degrees of disconnect at the level of individuals and of groups lead to a vast array of problems, large and small.

An example of disconnect at three levels is provided by Bush's comment to a reporter after an Iraqi threw his shoes at him in Bagdad: "I don't know what his beef is." This response suggests the failure of connection by one individual with another individual and with another group. It further implies the same lack by one group (the U.S government) toward another group (the people of Iraq).

*I am indebted to Bernard Phillips for the idea of a web of concepts, to Bengt Starrin for introducing me to the work of Bruhn and Wolf, to Keith Oatley for calling my attention to the work of Wilkinson and Pickett, and to Suzanne Retzinger for everything else.

¹ In the field of child development there is a large literature on social-emotional education. However, the term social-emotional is not clearly defined. It is used to mean the opposite of standard academic education.

Another glaring example of individual-group disconnect comes from my own experience. After many weeks with no difficulties in a small (20) class for freshmen, I was shocked by a moment of utter disconnect. I began this particular meeting by introducing a new idea, “genuine love.” No sooner having said it, the class went dead. I had experienced brief moments of disconnect before, usually in large classes. But the length and depth of silence in the small room was unique. It felt physical, like gasping for breath, drowning. After what seemed like forever, I finally choked out “What’s wrong? Talk to me.”

After another painfully long silence, one student said “We are all too young to know anything about that.” My term had profoundly embarrassed them, because it might reveal what they apparently thought of as a deficit in themselves. It took much reassurance to get the class started again.

This shattering episode suggested I had been taking connectedness for granted. Even in the earliest versions of the class, when the format was wrong in many ways, I had experienced connection with the majority of the students. I realized only in retrospect that there had been a few moments of disconnect, but brief enough so that I had ignored them. All of these years I had been floating on a sea of solidarity without knowing it, like a fish taking an endless ocean for granted.

It may be that the extent and accuracy with which we live in the minds of others is the key to many of the problems of our civilization, especially those concerning health, welfare, and happiness. Beginning in the 1970’s, a study that seems to support this idea was conducted by Bruhn and Wolf (1979; 1993). Wolf, a physician, had found out by chance that in the town of Roseto, in Pennsylvania, there was a group of poor Italian immigrants whose health and welfare were hugely better than their neighbors, who were comparable in most other ways.

Challenged by this situation, Wolf, in collaboration with the sociologist Bruhn, made an exhaustive study of the lives of every immigrant family in Roseto, and a comparable study in a near-by, non-immigrant town. They found that over a period of some twenty years, health and welfare were dependent on what they called cohesion. As the younger generation adopted American ways, their health and welfare levels decreased to the level of the neighbors.

Using vastly more data, at the level of nations and other large groups, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) have reported similar findings, not only with health, but also many other kinds of problems, such as education and crime. Their formulation is somewhat different: the greater the distance between the highest and lowest incomes in a nation, the less the overall health, and the more social problems. They explain this finding in terms of what they call the level of trust. For example, at one end of their charts, in Sweden and Norway, there is a high level of trust, and a low level of ill health and social problems, just the reverse of the US, Singapore, and Portugal at the other end.

There are a large number of terms in use that are related to, but are more general than what Bruhn and Wolf called cohesion, and Wilkinson and Pickett called trust: intersubjectivity, mutual awareness, and solidarity are some examples. None of these terms have been adequately defined. Schacht (1994) has noted that the term alienation is used in the literature with eight different meanings. Neither he nor anyone else that I know about has offered a usable definition. The purpose of this paper is to provide definitions of both connectedness and in a preliminary way, a group of emotions. One way to start is to note that not only Cooley, but also Marx and Goffman had ventured into this arena.

Marx, Cooley, and Goffman

In his early writing, Marx suggested that connection with other humans was the basic species need (Tucker 1978). He went on to discuss alienation from the means of production, others and self.

Later, Marx made clear what he meant by alienation from the means, but not alienation from self and others. Nor did he define connectedness or solidarity.

The second dimension of the SEW involves emotions. In his early work, Marx made casual but brilliant remarks about emotions. For example, he named the emotions that accompany alienation (disconnect): feelings of "impotence" (shame) and "indignation" (anger) (Tucker 1978, pp. 133-134). In a letter to Ruge in 1843 about German nationalism, he wrote: "...if a whole nation were to feel ashamed it would be like a lion recoiling in order to spring." This latter statement, particularly, turned out to be prophetic of the fate of France, then Germany in the period 1871-1945 (Scheff 1994) However, neither he nor most other researchers have been able to go much beyond the ambiguous and confusing emotion terminology of ordinary language.

Marx's early work implied that the human condition involves both rank and power, on the one hand, and solidarity/alienation (degree of connectedness) and emotions, on the other. The social sciences have focused largely on the first part, power and status, on money and votes, often dealing with numbers rather than people. We need to give equal time to the second part, the SEW.

Cooley and Erving Goffman were the Marx and Lenin of the SEW. Cooley included much of it, albeit abstractly, in two sentences:

1. "[The looking glass self] seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification [shame] (1922)."

An important but unstated implication is that almost all emotions arise out of relationship dynamics. This idea cannot be overemphasized: Not just pride and shame, but also most other emotions typically are generated by the moment by moment particulars of relationships². Most emotions may be understood to be signals of the state of a relationship.

As already mentioned, Cooley also stated that the whole process seems effortless and therefore invisible:

2. ...[In rejection, one realizes one] "was **living in the minds of others without knowing it**, just as we daily walk the solid ground without thinking how it bears us up"(p. 11, 1922)

Like Marx, Cooley didn't spell out the details, particularly what he meant by the two emotions he referred to, pride and shame

Oddly, these crucial formulations by Cooley were completely ignored for many years. Scholars treated Cooley's work as an inferior version of G.H. Mead's. Without crediting Cooley, Goffman took it up, and went further with both dimensions. The underlying theme of much of Goffman's writing is what he called "facework," in which embarrassment, shame and humiliation play a crucial part. It is to Goffman's credit that he sensed the ambiguities of the vernacular emotion lexicon, attempting both conceptual and operational definitions of embarrassment (Goffman 1967, pp. 97-98). Yet little further progress has occurred beyond Goffman's attempt.

This essay will propose definitions of the main terms of the SEW. In particular, it will outline preliminary definitions of connection and alienation, and of the six emotions that have received the most attention from researchers: love, pride, anger, shame, fear and grief.

² Rime` (2009) has proposed that emotion elicits the social sharing of emotions, but he doesn't define what he means by social sharing, as I do in the last section of this paper.

Solidarity/Alienation (Degree of Connectedness)³

*It is to Goffman's further credit that he also provided a first step toward a concept for the other part of the SEW, connectedness. During his career he used various terms, including intersubjectivity, mystic union, joint focus of attention, and mutual awareness. His last attempt was co-presence.

When in each other's presence individuals are admirably placed to share a joint focus of attention (1), perceive that they do so (2), and perceive this perceiving (3) [Goffman 1983, p. 3. *Numbers added*].

This definition reminded me of a pop song from the 30's: "I know that you know that I know...et cetera... that we're in love." It has been proposed that this kind of folding back on itself, recursion, is uniquely human and a central component of human cognition (Corballis 2007; see also Butte 2004). Perhaps it is this recursion that gives rise to the momentary feelings of unity in close relationships.

Goffman's definition is brilliant in many different ways. For one thing, it displays his ability to make a complex idea easily understandable rather than obscure. However, it also has limitations. One is that it hides ramifications. In particular, it deals only with the easy part, complete connection, but not with the various degrees of disconnection. Nor did Goffman accompany the definition above with clear and detailed examples of actual instances of connectedness and disconnectedness. The rest of this section attempts to remedy these two omissions.

Solidarity and Alienation Defined as Concepts

By working out the permutations of accuracy/inaccuracy of role-taking at two levels of mutuality, degrees of connectedness can be visualized. (Noah Friedkin helped me with this task).

Degrees of Mutual Awareness between Two Parties

1. First level co-orientation: shared agreement or disagreement
2. Second level: shared agreement or disagreement that is itself shared.

Accuracy of the other's agreement/disagreement.

No errors	One error	Two errors	Three errors	Four errors
Solidarity	Asymmetric solidarity	Uneven alien. or solid./alien.	Asymmetric alienation	Complete alienation

Summarizing the five points in the table: 1. Agreement or disagreement with no errors: attunement/solidarity. 2. One error by one party, partial attunement. 3. Two errors: both by one party, or one by each party: uneven alienation or connected/disconnected 4. Three errors: Two errors by one party; one error by the other. 5. Two errors by both (complete alienation, whether they are in agreement or not).

This definition is relevant to two sizable empirical literatures, one on pluralistic ignorance (Miller, et al 2000), the other on false consensus (Mark and Miller 1987). These two fields are focused on exactly the same phenomena, but most studies don't make the connection. Both involve only 1st

³ This section is based in part on Scheff 2008

level sharing, and neither consider the dichotomies implied: pluralistic understanding/knowledge, and false and true consensus. If these studies were to include two levels of sharing, as indicated above, there would be four degrees of pluralistic ignorance and false consensus ranging from a single error of understanding, asymmetric alienation, to four, complete alienation. Perhaps including two levels would increase the predictive value of the concepts.

Another problem with the existing studies is they tend to treat the zero level as a type of connect or disconnect. Yet marriage studies (Carrere et al 2000) have suggested that unattuned agreement can be as disruptive as attuned disagreement.

Most of the studies do not attempt to use degree of attunement as predictive of behavior. An exception is a study of the spread of sexually transmitted diseases by Drumright et al (2004) that used first level recursive awareness. They asked gay partners independently if their partner had other partners. This study showed that awareness levels relate to reality: those who knew that their partner had other partners were less likely to be infected with STDs.

So that this note will not be just one more example of abstract theory, it requires examples. Consider the degree of connectedness between a teacher T, and his teaching assistant A. Perhaps A doesn't understand the lectures, but doesn't know that he doesn't understand. T might understand that A doesn't understand, and that A doesn't know that he doesn't understand. A would be alienated from T even though T wasn't alienated from him.

A might be more respectful of T if he knew that he didn't understand and knew that T knew (no errors, solidarity, #1). A might be less puzzled and repulsed by T's rudeness if A understood that he didn't understand (only one error, #2). T would be more rude if he didn't understand that A didn't understand (3 errors, # 5). Finally, if both T and A didn't understand that A didn't understand, (4 errors, # 5) they might develop total enmity.

Exemplary Studies

Using episodes in fiction (novels and films), Butte (2004) provides much more detailed renderings of intersubjectivity in particular moments than Goffman or anyone else. His calling to our attention these moments in familiar stories shows how we take recursion for granted in our understanding, since the plot often hinges on recursive attunement or lack of attunement. Once again, as Cooley suggested, we live in the minds of others without knowing it, and we understand fictional others when they are depicted as doing it.

Theories of distancing in drama depend upon specific types of recursive connect and disconnect without referring to them as such. Virtually all comedy depends upon this device (Scheff 1979). A scene in Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor provides an instance. One scene begins when Ford returns to his house the second time, certain he will catch Falstaff with his wife.

The first time, Falstaff escaped in a basket of laundry. This time, however, he has disguised himself as a woman. At the moment when Ford comes to the door, his wife sends her servants out the door with the laundry basket. The audience knows that Falstaff is not in the basket. The audience also knows, however, that Ford will think that Falstaff is in the basket, a recursive disconnect between Ford and the servant and her mistress. Since Ford doesn't know he doesn't know, and the mistress knows he doesn't know, he is alienated from them (2 errors: asymmetric alienation). The audience, however, must be solidary with the mistress, knowing what she knows, and knowing that Ford doesn't know that he doesn't know.

Ford asks the servants what is in the basket. They reply that it is laundry. In one performance I saw, when Ford shouts for them to put down the basket, the audience roared

with laughter. They continued to laugh as Ford threw item after item out of the basket. Laughter occurs because of the recursive disconnect that is written into the plot.

The psychiatrist Daniel Stern (1984; 1995) seems to be referring to some of these structures in his analysis of what he calls “mismatches” in the communication of mothers and infants. Collective denial (Zerubavel, 2006) implies two types of alienated awareness structure: both parties agree, but don’t know they agree, and/or know that each doesn’t know they agree. That is, they all might have the sense of having mutual awareness, but in the silence, cannot be sure. In families where incest has been committed, for example, the victim may come to reject her/his own memories. The victim is then not only alienated from other family members, but also from self.

Detailed examples of complete solidarity are particularly important for filling out the theory presented here. Since modern societies focus on individuals, the idea of two or more persons in a state of full or partial unity, however temporary, is a hard sell. Durkheim’s idea of the *conscience collective*, when translated as Group Mind, is almost universally scorned. Yet we need shared awareness to correctly understand even fairly simple dialogue, let alone humor, metaphor, and other flights of fancy. It might be illuminating to explore the varying degrees of connectedness between students and their instructors in the classroom, or doctors and their patients (as Glaser and Strauss 1968) did in a preliminary way. .

A Web of Emotion Concepts

As indicated, emotions form the second main dimension of the SEW. What is needed preliminary to systematic research on emotions is a taxonomy of emotions. There have been more than a dozen taxonomies proposed in the literature, but no agreement at all between them (Ortony 1988; Plutchik 2003). In the meantime, we are faced with multiple ambiguities in the vernacular words⁴.

Among the many who have written about this problem, for brevity, only one will be reviewed, since it is fairly typical. Bruner (2003) has an extensive discussion of the ambiguities of vernacular emotion words:

Scientists continue to use old, familiar words for emotions...as if the communities that invented these ...terms eons ago possessed a special insight into the basic elements of human nature (p. 323).

Bruner goes on to describe many of the confusions of the ordinary emotion words. However, he ends his discussion by offering his own definitions of 18 emotions. Most of his definitions, it seems to me, offer little advance toward a taxonomy that would be clearer than the vernacular. However, he does offer one bit of crucial advice for emotions researchers: define what YOU mean by each emotion word that you use. Great advice, even though it would mean virtually starting over.

This essay will propose a web of just six concepts: definitions of love, pride, anger, shame, fear and grief, because they have attracted most attention from researchers. It will be assumed that these emotions are genetically inherited, pancultural universals. One should keep in mind, however, that these emotions are usually caused by problems with connectedness. This is least true of fear, which can have physical, rather than social roots. On the other hand, it is most relevant to shame. Indeed I will be treating shame as a signal of threat to the social bond, that is, lack of connectedness. As will

⁴ Wierzbicka (1999) has called attention to this problem for many years, but the direction she takes towards solving it is different than mine.

be discussed below in connection with fear and shame, if one is to understand emotions, one needs to define the boundaries of each, if only to keep from confusing one with another. To the extent that this attempt is successful, perhaps more emotions can be added to this web at a later time.

Six Emotions Defined: Grief, Love, Pride, Anger, Fear, and Shame

Grief: In this case, ambiguity might seem at first to amount only to the choice of words. Many authors use the term grief to refer to the emotion of loss of an attachment. However, there is a very large literature on attachment in which the authors use the term distress instead. Since distress is much broader than grief, and implies consciousness, the choice of the word distress can have serious consequences.

For reasons that he doesn't make clear, Silvan Tomkins (1962), a founder of the psychology of emotions, seems to have started the use of the word distress. In the first three volumes of Affect/Imagery/Consciousness (1962; 1963; 1965; 1992) the word distress is used frequently, with the word grief occurring only on page 6 of the first volume. However, in volume 4, there is a sharp change, distress disappears, its place apparently taken by grief on many pages.

In the first three volumes it is clear what he means, because he connects distress to loss and crying. In IV, he makes this connection using only the word grief. What happened? As far as I know, there has been no published response to this dramatic change in nomenclature.

The original studies of facial expression of emotion followed Tompkins first usage: neither Ekman and his colleagues nor Izard refer to grief. However, later works, such as Harre' and Parrott, refer only to grief, never to distress. Plutchik (2003) also refers only to grief. Others use the word sadness, rather than distress or grief.

I have found only one explicit discussion of the relationship between distress and grief, in Izard (1977). What he proposed, that grief is an affect of which distress is only one ingredient, seems to me the exact opposite of the majority understanding: grief is a primary emotion.

Sill another direction is followed by V. Volkan, in his otherwise excellent book on collective conflict, Blind Trust (2004). He elides around both grief and distress, by referring only to failure to mourn, behaviorizing grief. Hiding emotions behind behavior or cognition turns out to be a frequent occurrence with respect to other emotions as well. It would seem that anarchy rules in the naming of the emotions.

Pride: In this case, ambiguity is more focused and more flagrant. This word has two distinct and directly contradictory meanings in current usage in English, one positive, the other negative. The dominant one is negative, as in the Biblical "Pride goeth before the fall." This usage confounds the positive meaning, authentic or justified pride, with arrogance, egotism or self-centeredness. Negative "pride" may even be the opposite of genuine pride, since it can be a defense against shame. This basic contradiction creates problems of many kinds. One will be discussed below: the meaning of self-esteem.

Fear/anxiety. Before Freud, fear meant the emotional signal of physical danger to life or limb, and anxiety was just a more diffuse kind of fear. However, after Freud, the meaning of these words began to expand. Anxiety became broader, enough to include many kinds of diffuse emotion, but not as broad as "emotional arousal." Current vernacular usage is so enlarged that fear can be used to mask other emotions, especially shame and humiliation. "I fear rejection" has nothing to do with threat of bodily harm, nor does "social fear" or "social anxiety." These terms refer rather to the

anticipation of shame or humiliation. (When I explain this nicety to my students, their eyes glaze over.) Anxiety may be moving toward becoming an abstract, pliable word like emotion or arousal.

Anger: the confusion over the meaning of this word is different and more lethal than is the case with the other emotions. It involves confounding the feeling of anger with acting out anger. We don't confuse the feeling of fear with running away, the feeling of shame with hiding one's face, or the feeling of grief with crying. However, anger is thought to be destructive, even though it is only a feeling.

The feeling of anger is only an internal signal, like any other emotion. It is one of the many signals that alert us to the state of the world inside and around us. In itself, if not acted out, it is instructive, not destructive. The condemnation of emotions as negative in Western societies is another aspect of the chaos of emotion words. Normal emotions, at least, are not negative, since they are brief and instructive feelings. It would appear that any specific emotion can lead to many different types of behavior.

When anger is expressed as a verbal explanation, rather than acted out as screaming or aggression, it is constructive. It explains to self and other where one is, how one is frustrated, and why. Both self and other need to know this information. The confounding of anger expression with acting out can be seen as a way of justifying acting out, rather than expressing anger, and the prevalence of acting out, as in spousal abuse, road rage and the vast empire of revenge. "I couldn't help myself."

Shame: In contrast to the pliability of the word love, as discussed below, current usage of shame in English usually involves only one meaning, and an extremely narrow one at that: a crisis feeling of intense disgrace. (The usage What a Shame! doesn't count, since it is just a variant of the word Pity.) In normal usage, a clear distinction is made between embarrassment and shame. Embarrassment can happen to anyone, but shame is conceived as horrible. Embarrassment is speakable, shame is unspeakable. This usage avoids everyday shame such as embarrassment and modesty, and thus sweeps most shame episodes under the rug.

Other languages, even those of modern societies, treat embarrassment as a milder version of shame. In Spanish, for example, the same word (*verguenza*) can be used to mean either. Most languages also have an everyday shame that is considered to belong to the shame/embarrassment family. For example, the French *pudeur*, which can be translated as modesty, or better yet, a sense of shame, is differentiated from *honte*, disgrace shame. If you ask an English speaker is shame distinct from embarrassment, they will answer with an impassioned yes. A French speaker might ask "Which kind of shame?"

One European language seems to be moving toward the English language model of denying everyday shame. In contemporary German, since the word for disgrace shame (*schande*) is seen as old fashioned, the word for everyday shame (*scham*) is being used in its place. This usage is probably making shame less speakable, as in the English language model. A similar phenomenon may be happening with *pride*. The negative version (*hochmut*) is now seen as old fashioned, so that the positive version (*stolz*) is confounding a positive feeling with a negative one.

Love: in current English usage, love is so broad as to include almost any kind of positive feeling, including extremely dysfunctional ones. Most unabridged dictionaries list some two dozen meanings. The subjects of the best selling Women Who Love Too Much illustrates this usage. Women who are so pathologically passive and dependent as to allow their husbands to abuse them and/or their children explain that they don't leave because they love their husbands too much. Love,

a positive word, is used to deny a highly dysfunctional relationship. The word love is much narrower in all other languages.

Current usage also confounds genuine love, which surely means loving someone that we know, warts and all, with infatuation, which deletes blemishes in favor of an idealized fantasy. Infatuation is often based on appearance alone. In this way, the word love may be used to hide a failure to connect. In another place (Scheff 2010) I proposed a conceptual definition of romantic love in terms of three A's: attachment, attraction, and attunement. Non-erotic love would involve only two A's: attachment and attunement. A conceptual definition of attunement (connectedness) is developed in the last section of this essay.

The Emotional/Relational Status Quo

All of these confusions and limitations help maintain the status quo in the ER/W: individualism, the subordination of feeling to thought, and denial and suppression of emotion. The broad use of the word love, and the narrow meaning of the word shame may be central to this end.

Referring to all kinds of slightly positive or even negative relationships with the positive word love helps disguise the miasma of alienation and disconnection in modern societies. Similarly, defining shame narrowly, as only disgrace shame, helps mask everyday disconnections.

Suppose that just as fear signals danger of bodily harm, and grief signals loss, shame signals disconnection. In modern societies, since connecting with others is uncertain, we can hide that fact. Instead of saying that we were embarrassed, we say "It was an awkward moment for me." It was the moment that was awkward (projection), not me that was embarrassed (denial). In English especially, there is a vast supply of words that can be used as alternatives to the s-word (Retzinger 1995): more than a hundred vernacular codewords that may stand for shame, under six headings:

Alienated: rejected, dumped, deserted, etc.

Confused: blank, empty, hollow, etc.

Ridiculous: foolish, silly, funny, etc.

Inadequate: powerless, weak, insecure, etc.

Uncomfortable: restless, tense, anxious, etc.

Hurt: offended, upset, wounded, etc.

The broadening use of fear and anxiety seems to be another way of disguising shame. To say that one fears rejection, or to use a term like social anxiety, is to mask the common occurrence of shame and embarrassment.

We can also disguise the shameful pain of rejection by masking it with anger or withdrawal and silence. Similarly, the negative version of pride can be used to mask a defense against shame as too much pride. Studies of stigma and of indignities, even though these words signify shame, seldom take note of the underlying emotion, concentrating instead on thoughts and behavior.

Apologies suggest another instance of the masking of shame. The ritual formula for an apology in the English language is to say that you are sorry. However, the word sorry (grief) serves to mask the more crucial emotion of shame. "I'm ashamed of what I did" is a more potent apology than the conventional "I'm sorry." (Miller 1996).

The process of industrialization and urbanization has been influencing spoken English longer than any other language, since it began first in England. Modernization has led to the downplaying of emotions and relationships in English to a greater degree than in any other language, in favor of emphasis on thought and individualism. As this process continues, the emotional/relational world seems to be vanishing from awareness in English speaking countries, and to a lesser degree, in other urban/industrial societies.

The banishment of emotions from discourse and thought both reflects and generates alienation. One way of countering this trend would be to acknowledge and define emotions, rather than denying them. Rediscovery of the lost world of emotions and relationships might be a path toward further understanding of the enigmas of human conduct and experience.

For this reason it is difficult in English to even imagine relational dimensions, because most of the attributes we might use are themselves extremely ambiguous. For example, what does a "loving" relationship mean, when the word love in English is wildly ambiguous? In English, the word love is a blank check. The notion of self-esteem faces similar problems.

The Idea of Self-esteem⁵

Reviews of the vast corpus of studies based on self-esteem scales suggest that these measures are not valid. At this point, there are probably some twenty thousand such studies, using one or another of the two hundred standardized scales that are available. These scales have been shown to be reliable; that is, they repeatedly get similar results. But it is not clear what these scales measure: their validity is in question.

According to reviews of the field, the results of this vast labor have been trivially small. The average effect size for predicting behavior over the last forty years has been under 3% of the variance, and is not increasing. With 97 per cent of the variance unaccounted for, the field is treading water. If the instruments are not valid, then reliability means merely repeating errors.

What is the problem? One possibility is that the scales confound cognitive and emotional, and dispositional and relational elements as well. With respect to cognition and emotion, they repeat an ambiguity in the meaning of the English word self-esteem, casting doubt on the validity of the scales.

As indicated earlier, the word pride in English is ambiguous. Unless one precedes the word with "justified, authentic or genuine," there is an inflection of arrogance or hubris, "the pride that goeth before the fall." This feeling would better be called false pride, since it implies hiding shame behind boldness. A new conceptual definition of self-esteem as an emotion construct, rather than one that mixes cognitive and emotional elements might help to resolve this embarrassing problem.

The Rasch (1980) probabilistic model sets very stringent conditions for establishing standardized scales. The condition that is particularly relevant is the requirement of uni-dimensionality. He offers a number of approaches to test for the existence of two or more dimensions in scale materials. Since 1980, when Rasch published his extended volume on this problem, a small literature has developed.

⁵ This section is based in part on one part of Scheff and Fearon 2004

As of this writing, there is one book length treatment of the model (Bond and Fox 2007), and many references with Rasch in their title.

However, out of the 6, 336 references with self-esteem in their title, only two titles include the word Rasch. One (Beres 1981) was a dissertation on self-esteem; there was no subsequent publication. The other (McRae 1991) appears to be an application of the Rasch technique in the use of a single self-esteem scale. This application made a significant difference in the outcome of the study.

There are over two thousand references on with alienation in their titles, but none of them have Rasch in their title. It would appear that attempting uni-dimensionality in scales is an area that needs much more development.

The Seeman (1975) analysis of alienation studies suggests the need for Rasch models of the six dimensions he found. Allowing for emotional/cognitive and dispositional /relational components for four or five of these dimensions could give rise to a large number of uni-dimensional scales.

Similarly, for self-esteem, the Leary and Baumeister study (2000) suggests the need for Rasch models of the relational and the dispositional dimensions. The Brown and Marshall analysis (2001) and the study by Scheff and Fearon (2004) propose Rasch models of the emotional and the cognitive dimensions.

These latter studies might provide a way out of the dilemma reported by Baumeister and his colleagues (1996; 1998). Presumably only the cognitive scale, in which high self-evaluation amounts to egotism, would be correlated with aggression. The pride/shame scale would not or it might be negatively correlated. The development of a scale that measures the emotional dimension might require, at least at first, a qualitative approach, similar to the one used in the Fearon study (2004).

The confounding of independent variables suggests an answer to the riddle of the low correlation between self-esteem measures and external variables. High values on a cognitive dimension, self-evaluation, would hide low values on the emotional dimension. Since egotism is often a cover for low self-feeling, it would seem fair to guess that the mixing of these two elements would lead to low correlations with real world behavior.

Conclusion

Perhaps this model of solidarity/alienation and emotion will encourage discussion of the problem of conceptual and operational definitions for basic ideas about human conduct. It might also help to establish a particular model for the exploration of the relatively unknown continent of the social-emotional world.

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