

A Socio-Dynamic Perspective on the Construction of Emotion

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Emotions are powerful connections between our inner psyches and the outer world: Think of the last time you could not help brooding over a hurtful sentence, spent hours discussing your worries and joys with a friend, or tried to appease someone by expressing your regret. Most psychological theories of emotion account for this social dimension by proposing that emotions can be elicited by social events. For example, according to psychological constructionist accounts of emotion, social events give rise to the psychological dynamics of meaning-making that characterize emotion (e.g., Barrett, 2009a, 2009b; Gendron & Barrett, 2009; Gross & Barrett, 2011). In this chapter, we will turn the process of emotion construction inside-out: Without denying the importance of individual processes in emotion construction, we will explore a perspective of emotion construction that focuses on the role of social processes. Starting from the idea that emotion construction is a dynamically unfolding process, afforded and constrained by a complex social environment that is itself in motion, we will discuss how the social dynamics of daily life shape, constrain, and define individuals' emotions across contexts in a number of ways.

We will discuss the socio-dynamic construction of emotion for three social contexts that differ in scale and scope: Moment-to moment interactions, developing and ongoing relationships, and socio-cultural contexts (see also Boiger & Mesquita, 2012); for each context, we will show how social realities afford the emotions that people experience—for example, by constraining the range of likely emotional reactions or by highlighting certain emotional meanings. We will conclude the chapter by discussing how the psychological and socio-dynamic construction of emotion are two sides of the same coin: One does not occur without the other and the full picture emerges only when both are taken into account. In doing so, we will also show what can be gained from supplementing psychological construction with a socio-dynamic perspective.

The Socio-Dynamic Construction of Emotion in Interactions, Relationships, and Cultures

At the smallest time-scale, emotions in social settings emerge during *moment-to-moment interactions*: Which feelings surface and which behaviors are enacted depends on the ongoing interaction. Take, for instance, the emotions of Laura and Ann, two American women who are in a relationship. Ann calls home to say she will be home late tonight because there is an official function at work. Laura would have liked to spend some time with Ann, and after spending several days looking after Ann when the latter was home sick, she feels some entitlement. Laura responds to Ann's phone call by saying it is irresponsible to work overtime after having been sick and that Ann should take it easy. Ann feels trapped: She is behind on work, and she is convinced it would look bad to skip an official function just after having taken sick leave. To top it off, she feels ill understood by Laura. She is so frustrated that she snaps at Laura for being paternalizing, and hangs up quickly. Laura in turn, feels taken for granted, and underappreciated.

The example illustrates the dynamic nature of most of our emotions in daily life: Emotions are processes that expand over time, and are shaped by ongoing interactions. Our view that emotions derive their shape and meaning from interactions with others differs from existing psychological models of emotion. Both traditional cognitive (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985) and newer psychological constructivist approaches (e.g., Barrett, 2009a, 2009b; Gendron & Barrett, 2009; Gross & Barrett, 2011) propose that emotions are the results of individual meaning-making, but largely remain agnostic about the sources of meaning-making (but see, e.g., Wilson-Mendenhall, Barrett, Simmons, & Barsalou, 2011). We propose that much of the meaning-making occurs "in the moment" and is social and iterative in nature. Over the course of an interaction, one person's emotions are not only reactions to a previous event, but also serve as strategic bids and stimuli for the further

development of the interaction (Solomon, 2003). Individual meaning-making is never a one-time process and does not occur in a social vacuum; rather, it is a social process through which people continuously integrate environmental information and, in doing so, update their emotional interpretations. The development of Laura's anger depends not only on her initial interpretation of Ann's action (the phone call) but also on her perception of Ann's ensuing emotional reactions – for example, on whether Ann responds to Laura's disappointment with anger, surprise, or indifference. Laura may experience her anger differently if Ann reacts aggressively then if she reacts astonished or breaks down in tears—the former may turn the developing conflict into a threat for Laura, while a more cooperative stance on Ann's part may render the conflict into a challenge (cf. Blascovich & Mendes, 2000). Figure 1 represents this dynamic interactive process of momentary emotion constructions between Ann and Laura from time 1 to time 2.

--- Figure 1 about here ---

Emotion construction at any one point in time is constrained by the *ongoing or developing relationship* in which it takes place. The same interaction will give rise to different emotions depending on whether the relationship is, e.g., strained or satisfying. Both the current relationship quality and future expectations for the relationship will affect what emotions ensue. Anger in the context of a deteriorating relationship may be elicited more readily, feel different (e.g., come with hurt feelings, Leary & Leder, 2009), and have more far-reaching repercussions than anger in the context of a flourishing relationship. In the hypothetical scenario described earlier, Ann may have more readily responded with anger if her relationship with Laura had already been strained. This readiness to experience anger in a strained relationship may occur because emotional interactions between partners have become rigid (e.g., anger always being reciprocated with anger in a strained relationship), or because existing relationship expectations (e.g., Laura always does as she pleases, she never respects

my feelings) may constrict the range of possible interpretations of the other person's action. In comparison, in a flourishing relationship both partners may have responded with warmth and understanding during a conflict of interests. Given different relationship frames, the interaction between Ann and Laura may have been one of escalated anger, hurt, and even fear of abandonment, or alternatively one in which disappointment was met by reassurance, loving understanding, and gratitude. Figure 1 displays the relationship as a dotted frame that affords and constrains emotional interactions at any particular point in time. In turn, the combined ongoing emotions between Laura and Ann also define the quality of their relationship over time.

Finally, the construction of emotion depends on the larger *socio-cultural context*. Socio-cultural contexts differ with respect to their normative and habitual interactions and relationships; what emotions are likely to be constructed differs accordingly. By highlighting certain constructions of the world as desirable, normative or real, a person's cultural background can be said to limit the range of likely emotion interpretations. For example, anger-like emotions are more common in cultures that emphasize the autonomy of individuals than in cultures that emphasize harmony and interdependence (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Cultural differences in the construction of emotions may originate in the shared cultural concerns and ideas (such as the concern for autonomy), as well as in the common practices or reinforcement structures found in a given socio-cultural environment (such as highlighting a first-person perspective when reminiscing about emotional events, Wang, 2001) (see also Boiger, Mesquita, Uchida, & Barrett, 2013). For instance, in cultures valuing autonomy and self-promotion, the expression of anger may be welcome because this emotion allows individuals to express their desires and to make necessary adjustments to their relationships (Averill, 1982). In comparison, in cultural contexts that value relational interdependence and self-effacement, the expression of anger may be discouraged and

perceived as immature and childish (Azuma, 1984; White & LeVine, 1986). Accordingly, people will tend to ignore expressions of anger (Briggs, 1970), and anger will be less likely to escalate. In our example of Ann and Laura, American cultural values emphasizing the importance of autonomy may increase the likelihood of experiencing anger as compared to, e.g., Japanese cultural values emphasizing the maintenance of harmony and adjustment to others. Figure 1 depicts the cultural context as the pervasive background against which the social dynamics of emotion construction unfold.

In sum, we take the construction of emotion to be an iterative and ongoing process that emerges from interactions within relationships, which derive their shape and meaning from the prevailing ideas and practices of the larger socio-cultural context. At different times, and in different contexts, the resulting emotions will be different. The nature of anger, for instance, will depend on the relationships one has with the target of anger; on the target being responsive or defensive, embarrassed, or full of contempt; and on the culture being self-promoting or self-effacing. While emotions are constrained by previous experience, socio-cultural understandings, and practices, the construction of emotion is thought to be a continuous process that takes place during each emotional episode again and anew.

Caveats

Before we start discussing the empirical evidence for the socio-dynamic construction of emotion, a few words of caution are in order. First, common (English-language) discourse on emotion—in everyday life and in emotion theory alike—favors a perspective of bounded, individual construction. For example, one “has” an emotion, one “feels” anger, or something “makes” a person happy. Emotions are “elicited”, “experienced”, and “expressed”. All of these terms foreground individual experience and describe emotions as unitary, bounded events. It is much less common to speak of emotions as unfolding in interactions with others or of emotional meanings being negotiated or situated in the world. It is hard to properly

conceptualize the socio-dynamic construction of emotion because these ideas are a departure from common discourse; however, the literatures on situated cognition, systems theory, as well as social constructionism have provided valuable guidance.

Second, we propose that emotions are “afforded” by social contexts; our use of term “affordance” needs some explanation. Much like the original proposition by Gibson (1979), we see affordances as *opportunities for action*. Just as a street affords walking on (and not drinking from) and a cup affords drinking from (and not walking on), we argue that certain social contexts afford some emotions (and not others). For example, a slap on the head during a heated debate between drunk friends may afford anger; a slap on the head by a stranger on a crowded New York street may rather afford fear; the same slap may afford shame in a woman smoking in a public Korean context, where norm-inconsistent may be pointed out this way (Specht, 2010). This is *not* to mean that social contexts mechanically elicit emotions; rather, social contexts constitute constraints to the range of likely (and functional) emotional responses. Which emotion surfaces is neither determined solely by the context nor by an individual’s psychological tendencies, but by the organismic interplay of the two. In this view, contextual affordances and psychological processes are intertwined and co-constructed (see also Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997).

Third, while a socio-dynamic approach to emotion construction suggests that the optimal level of analysis would be interpersonal interactions over time (see, e.g., Butler, 2011), very few studies have taken these interactions as their focus. The result is that the extant literature only provides partial evidence for the processes of interest. Some studies show, for example, that others are important sources of information when making sense of emotional situations; however, they focus on short, one-time transactions. Those studies that did investigate emotional dynamics between people over longer time-frames often fall short of a more detailed account of the emotions involved. We will point to these inconsistencies

where possible and show how, taken together, the evidence of several studies across multiple social contexts is nonetheless consistent with the view of emotions as socio-dynamic constructions.

Emotions Derive Their Shape From Moment-to-Moment Interactions

At the smallest time-scale of moment-to-moment interactions, others' (emotional) behavior may shape our emotions. Emotional affordances during interactions refer to the range of likely emotions during a *particular interaction*; emotional affordances may take a direct route, e.g., through emotion contagion between interaction partners, or a more indirect route, e.g., through the activation of conceptual meanings. The available research has mainly focused on short interactions (usually a single transaction) between people and has found that emotions may develop quite differently depending on the input of others. Given that the socio-dynamic construction of emotion is evident even within a single transaction, we expect that over longer interactions the course of emotions will be considerably shaped by others' (emotional) behavior.

In one study, undergraduates who were selected to be either high or low on social anxiety participated in a "getting to know you" task (Heerey & Kring, 2007). Participants were assigned to either non-anxious dyads, in which both interaction partners were low on social anxiety, or mixed dyads, in which one of the interaction partners was low and the other high on social anxiety. During the interaction, anxious participants displayed more socially disengaging behaviors such as talking about themselves or reciprocating genuine smiles with polite smiles. Not surprisingly, non-anxious participants interacting with anxious partners were the only participants who did not report an increase in positive affect as a result of the interaction. Instead, the social anxiety of their interaction partners appears to have shaped their own emotional behaviors: The non-anxious participants in mixed dyads displayed,

amongst others, an increase in fidgeting. Fidgeting, a behavioral sign of anxiety, tended to be initiated by the socially anxious partner, and was transmitted to the non-anxious partner.

While it is unclear from this study if the interaction with anxious participants afforded particular meanings (“there has to be something anxiety-provoking about this interaction if the other person is acting that nervously”), or if it shaped the non-anxious participants’ via a more direct route (e.g., by emotion contagion, Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994), this study illustrates how, over the course of an interaction, the emotions of one partner are shaped by the emotions of another person. Moreover, the anxiety that one person experiences concurrently with another person’s anxiety, may escalate (e.g., via positive feedback loops, Butler, 2011) and may have different psychological and social ramifications than anxiety with a different etiology—ramifications that remain undetected if emotions are studied solely at the level of isolated individual events.

That others’ emotions do afford particular meanings and indeed guide people when making sense of a situation has been convincingly shown in a recent study by Parkinson and Simons (2009). In this study, participants reported their emotions when making important decisions during a two week-period. Each time they were about to make an important decision, they indicated their level of anxiety, excitement, and their appraisal of the situation. They also indicated the level of anxiety and excitement that they perceived in others while making the decision. Whenever possible, that other person present also indicated to what extent they felt anxious and excited. The results showed that participants felt more anxious or excited when the other person also felt anxious or excited. Moreover, the other person’s emotion served as information for the participant’s appraisal of the situation: Participants referenced other people’s emotions when evaluating the situation, and consequently experienced similar emotions; this was even the case when participants themselves were not consciously aware of the other person’s feelings. Even though the original emotion-eliciting event (namely, the

need to make a decision) remained the same, the emotional reactions (and appraisals) of the individuals were updated based on how others responded emotionally. Over the course of a longer interaction, the emotions of interacting partners may then mutually influence and constrain each other: For example, when one partner's anxiety is repeatedly met by another person's anxiety, the resulting emotions in both partners will look different from a scenario in which one person's anxiety does not get reciprocated. In the former case, both partners will increasingly reinforce appraisals of risk and helplessness, thereby justifying intense feelings of anxiety; in the latter case, anxiety may persist but not cycle out of control.

Over and above the actions and emotions of any one partner, objective features of an interaction may also function as sources for meaning-making. For example, synchronic interactions with others are more likely to elicit feelings of compassion. In a recent study (Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2011), participants were instructed to tap beats that they heard through headphones. They were accompanied by a confederate who tapped along either synchronously or asynchronously. The confederates were then sent to fulfill an unpleasant task and the participants were asked if they wanted to help the confederates or not. Participants who had previously participated in the synchronous tapping interactions were more likely to feel compassion towards the confederate and they offered their assistance for longer periods of time. This effect of synchrony on compassion was not due to the participants' increased liking of the confederate, but by the participants' appraisal of the confederate as being more similar to them. Engaging in something as simple as a synchronous tapping task must have shaped participants' appraisal of the event towards a more compassionate stance.

There is also some anecdotal evidence that the acting of emotions is more authentic when actors let themselves be guided by the ongoing interaction. In one school of acting, actors practice responding to each other during rapid cycles of spontaneous interactions

(Meisner & Longwell, 1987). During these exercises, they are instructed to observe any (emotional) changes in their interaction partners and to respond to them spontaneously. With increasing proficiency, actors learn to quickly respond to each other, while remaining in the moment of the interaction. In many ways, these effortful exercises seem to mirror the playful emotional interactions of infants and caregivers, allowing actors to gain some awareness of (and, possibly, control over) the intricate social dynamics of emotional exchange. In contrast to traditional approaches such as method acting (Chekhov, 1953), in which actors are trained to reenact emotions based on their autobiographical memories, the result is described as a performance of actors who live “truthfully under imaginary circumstances” (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 15). It appears that even on the stage, emotions that emerge from the spontaneous integration of available social information may be perceived as more authentic than those that are first conceived in an actors’ heads and then put into action.

Finally, there is a range of studies showing that emotions serve as intentional and strategic bids in ongoing interactions. Which emotions ensue does not only depend on past events, but also on future projections of what may be achieved in the interaction (Solomon, 2003). For example, anger is more likely if there is a prospect of getting what one wants; in situations where goals cannot be effectively reinstated, sadness is the more likely experience (Stein, Trabasso, & Liwag, 1993). Along similar lines, people tend to express more embarrassment when they assume that doing so may help reinstate their social standing. In one experiment, participants felt less embarrassment after singing an embarrassing song when they thought that the experimenter already knew how they felt (Leary, Landel, & Patton, 1996). According to the authors, embarrassment served as a signal through which participants attempted to repair their social image; in situations where the experimenter was already aware of their feelings, the emotion lost its strategic function and was thus not experienced. Neither finding can be explained solely by the eliciting event, but becomes clear when the

participant's social intentions and the extent to which they can be fulfilled in the social situation are taken into account.

In summary, there is support for the idea that emotions derive their shape from moment-to-moment interactions. New acquaintances quickly pick up the emotional behavior of their interaction partners; people rely on other people's emotional reactions when evaluating ambiguous situations; synchronous interactions cause people to experience more compassion towards each other; and actors practice to respond spontaneously to interactions on the stage in order to perform authentic emotions. Finally, emotions are not only shaped by previous events in the interaction but also by the (desirable) course that the interaction takes.

Emotions Are Grounded in Ongoing Relationships

Emotional experience and expression at one particular moment in the social interaction is always contextualized by ongoing relationships with others. Ties with close others may constrain the range of likely emotions (or in other words, afford particular emotions), and influence how and when these emotions are experienced. Emotional affordances in relationships refer to the range of emotions that are likely to occur within a *particular relationship*—the accumulated relational history of shared interactions constrains what is likely during any one interaction. Moreover, as people share emotions with each other, their relational patterns may change accordingly. Evidence for the relational grounding of emotions is fairly extensive, especially in the domain of marital relationships.

One of the most compelling examples of the ways in which emotions are grounded in relationships is the case of emotional convergence over time. In a series of studies, Anderson and colleagues (Anderson, Keltner, & John, 2003) have shown that that the emotions of same-sex roommates and heterosexual couples converge over time. In these studies, emotions were measured both by self-reports and facial coding, and they were elicited in a number of

different ways (conversations about pleasant or unpleasant topics, emotion-eliciting tasks, watching emotion-eliciting movies). Participants' average levels of positive and negative emotions were more similar after 6 or 9 months than at the beginning. Moreover, emotional convergence did not depend on emotional contagion: Roommates who had not known each other previous to living together responded to emotion-eliciting movies with similar emotions, even when they were watching the movies in separate rooms. Living in the same space appears to have led to similarity in emotional reactivity in a relatively short time. One possible explanation may be that people in a relationship come to share certain, rather stable expectations towards their world, causing them to respond to events in emotionally similar ways (there is some evidence that friends appraise certain situations in more similar ways than strangers; Bruder, Dosmukhambetova, Nerb, & Manstead, 2012). Whatever the exact mechanism at play, the case of emotional convergence constitutes a strong point for the idea that sharing a relationship with someone has an impact on the kinds of emotions that people are likely to experience.

Romantic partners also develop synchronized emotional time-dynamics, with each partner's emotions co-varying with the other (for a review, see Butler, 2011). Whereas the convergence literature focuses on mean levels of positive and negative emotions at one moment in time, research on emotional time dynamics focus of co-variation over time. For example, Butner, Diamond and Hicks (2007) asked married or cohabitating heterosexual couples to complete measures of positive and negative affect for 21 days. The positive and negative affect of partners co-varied on a daily basis beyond how positive or negative partners had rated interactions with each other. Because this emotional synchrony was found even when controlling for each partner's interpretation of their interactions with each other, it appears that people within couples develop mutual dependencies in their emotional lives that go beyond what can be explained through momentary constructions. The crucial point here is

that being in a relationship restricted the range of emotions that partners were likely to experience on any one day: If one partner felt miserable, so did the other.

Evidence for emotional synchrony between partners has been found not only for self-reported emotions but also for physiological parameters known to be associated with emotions. In their research on marital interactions, Levenson and Gottman (1983) observed that physiological patterns of partners become linked during emotionally intense interactions. In this study, several physiological parameters, such as heart rate and skin conductance, were measured while couples discussed two topics—one neutral and one highly conflictual. During the conflict discussion, partners' patterns of physiological responses were more interrelated than during the neutral discussion; moreover, physiological linkage was higher for couples with lower marital satisfaction. Recently, Saxbe and Repetti (2010) replicated this finding with real-life experience sampling. Repeated measurement of salivary cortisol levels throughout the day co-varied between marital partners; again, couples with low marital satisfaction experienced more physiological linkage. In instable and strained relationships, negative affect and the associated physiological changes appear to be transmitted easily (while positive affect remains unaffected, e.g., Levenson & Gottman, 1983; see also Larson & Almeida, 1999), possibly reinforcing established patterns and leading to a further destabilization of the relationship. It is conceivable that partners pick up each others' physiological states unconsciously, for instance, through mimicry (e.g., Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994), social chemosignals (e.g., McClintock, 2002 as cited in Saxbe & Repetti, 2010), or touch (Coan, Schaefer, & Davidson, 2006).

As relationships expand over longer periods of time, close others may become an important basis for regulating biological rhythms—even though these functions may only become evident once the relationship is disrupted. For example, some theories of bereavement (Hofer, 1984; Sbarra & Hazan, 2008) argue that the profound emotional impact of losing a

partner can, at least partially, be understood from the partners' role in keeping physiological and psychological functions in homeostasis. According to Hofer (1984), interactions between partners may serve as a form of social entrainment for each partner's biological rhythms. Upon the death of a partner, these co-regulatory processes are disrupted. Consequently, the surviving partner's biological rhythms become desynchronized, which would account for some of the psychological manifestations of grief. In support of this claim, Hofer reviews evidence that jet lag – which, he proposes, resembles grief in terms of a decrease in appetite, vigilance, and overall well-being – is exacerbated for individuals who cannot engage in social interactions after moving to a new time-zone (Klein & Wegman, 1974, as cited in Hofer, 1984). Grief and the associated physiological changes appear to depend on social processes that transcend individual minds and that are not entirely captured without taking the (disruption of) relationships with close others into account. Approaching bereavement as a disruption of socially regulated homeostasis has practical implications: For example, interventions for prolonged grief may be more successful if they not only target individual cognitive schemata but also ascertain regular social interactions with close others who may fulfill, at least partially, the regulatory function of the lost partner.

Understanding emotions as grounded in relationships implies that emotions are not only shaped by relational bonds but, over time, also shape the relationships in which they occur. The accumulated experience and expression of negative emotions such as contempt, for example, may lead to a faster parting of the ways. In their longitudinal study of marital interaction and satisfaction, Gottman and Levenson (2000) predicted with 93% accuracy the development of heterosexual couples' relationships based on short emotional interactions. Couples who displayed more negative emotions (such as contempt) during a 15 minute discussion of conflictual topics were substantially more likely to be divorced 14 years later. The prevalence of positive emotionality in the relationship, however, appeared to have a safe-

guarding function, preventing against the escalation of negative exchanges during disagreements.

One positive emotion that appears to play an important role for relationship building and maintenance is gratitude (see also Fredrickson, 2001). Feeling gratitude helps establish new relationships (Algoe, Haidt, & Gable, 2008) and advances the short-term development of established romantic relationships (Algoe, Gable, & Maisel, 2010). But also in the long term, gratitude has maintenance effects on relationships: Four years into their marriage, marital partners who experienced more gratitude towards their partners (measured repeatedly since the beginning of their marriage) were found to be more motivated to engage in relationship maintenance behaviors; these maintenance behaviors were positively perceived by their partners, who in turn were more likely to also experience gratitude (Kubacka, Finkenauer, Rusbult, & Keijsers, 2011). Similarly, expressing gratitude at one point in time, led partners to feel more mutual responsibility and generosity at a later time (Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham, 2010).

In sum, emotions are grounded in people's relationships with others: On the one hand, people who share a relationship—from marital relationships to roommates in college—become emotionally attuned to each other. Emotional attunement seems to occur both in terms of direct, proximal effects that partners have on each other (e.g., emotional covariation, physiological linkage) as well in terms of overall tendencies to respond emotionally to certain situations (e.g., emotional convergence). Moreover, the extent to which people in a relationship become emotionally attuned depends on the quality of the relationship and is reflected not only in emotional self-report and observed behavior but also in physiological patterns. On the other hand, both negative emotions (e.g., contempt) and positive emotions (e.g., gratitude) are closely linked to the development of relationships, such that the former

lead to deterioration of the relationship whereas the latter help form and maintain relationships.

Emotions Depend on Cultural Values and Practices

In each cultural context, certain values and practices of how to act as a person and how to relate to others are emphasized or prescribed. These cultural values constitute the rather persistent and pervasive meaning system against which people appraise what is happening around them. For example, when the dominant cultural values emphasize the importance of living up to social expectations, failure to do so in one's relationships will likely elicit shame; shame in those cultural contexts may be a common emotional experience. Beyond making certain values or meanings salient, cultural contexts also differ in the practices in which people commonly engage; these practices afford certain emotions by structuring the ecology of daily situations and relationships that people encounter. For example, elaborate politeness rituals will decrease the likelihood of experiencing anger-eliciting situations; class-room routines that allow for the collective monitoring of norm-inconsistent behavior (e.g., communal self-criticism or 'hansei' in Japanese classrooms, Lewis, 1995) will render the experience of shame-eliciting situations more common. Affordances in cultural contexts refer to the range of emotions that are likely when engaging in a *particular cultural context*; these affordances are kept in place through socialization and social reward contingencies.

Cultural contexts highlight different ways of how to make sense of the world, which, consequently, afford different emotional experiences. For example, while European Americans tend to believe that the world is a controllable place (Mesquita & Ellsworth, 2001; Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto, 2002; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984), Indians and Tahitians do not show this tendency (Miller, Bersoff, & Harwood, 1990; Savani, Morris, Naidu, Kumar, & Berlia, 2011). Appraising something as within one's control is an important

aspect of anger and frustration (Frijda, Kuipers, & Ter Schure, 1989; Kuppens, Van Mechelen, Smits, & De Boeck, 2003; Stein et al., 1993): Experiencing anger implies that one's goals are blocked, but that this situation is controllable and can be changed. If people interpret the world through the lens of their cultural values, one would consequently expect differences in the frequency and intensity of anger and frustration between European Americans, on the one hand, and Indians and Tahitians, on the other hand. Indeed, Roseman, Dhawan, Rettak and Naidu (1995) found that American, as compared to Indian students reported higher overall intensities of anger when remembering autobiographical events, and anger intensity was fully mediated by an appraisal of the event as being inconsistent with one's goals. A similar observation was made by anthropologist Robert Levy who argued that the Tahitian's "common sense that individuals have very limited control over nature and over the behavior of others" (Levy, 1978, p. 228) is related to the near absence of anger in Tahitian culture. According to Levy (1978), a world that is seen as unpredictable and uncontrollable might be "cognitively less frustrating than [...] realities in which almost anything is possible to individuals" (p. 226).

Cultural contexts also differ in the practices in which people commonly engage and which may afford different emotional experiences. For example, people tend to seek out activities that elicit culturally "ideal" affect (Tsai, 2007). Whereas North Americans prefer active individual activities (e.g., running or rollerblading), up-beat music, and stimulants (e.g., amphetamines, cocaine), East Asians are more drawn to passive and collective activities (e.g., sightseeing, picnicking), calmer music, and sedatives (e.g., opiates) (Tsai, 2007). North American activities foreground high activation positive emotions (e.g., excitement); East Asian activities facilitate low arousal positive states (e.g., calm, relaxed). In our own research (Boiger et al., 2013) we found that people also encounter more interpersonal interactions in their culture that are associated with culturally desirable emotions (i.e., anger in the U.S.,

shame in Japan). While interactions that afforded strong feelings of anger appear to be promoted in the U.S., these interactions were avoided in Japan. The opposite picture emerged for shame: Interactions that were associated with stronger feelings of shame were promoted in Japan and avoided in the U.S. These findings may explain why previous research has found that socially disengaging emotions (e.g., anger) are more salient in Americans' daily lives, whereas socially engaging emotions (e.g., shame) prevail in Japan (Kitayama and Markus, 2000; Kitayama et al., 2006): People's environments appear to be structured in ways that give people more opportunities to experience the respective emotions.

Compared to the momentary constructions in social interactions and the patterns created within relationships, we assume that cultural values and practices are rather stable affordances in the construction of emotion. However, even at the level of culture, the construction of emotion is dynamic and not a simple one-time business. A particular case in point is emotional acculturation, that is, the tendency of migrants to adjust their emotional patterns to those of their culture of settlement. In one study, De Leersnyder, Mesquita, and Kim (2011) compared the emotional patterns of Turkish immigrants in Belgium and those of Korean immigrants in the USA with the average emotional patterns of their respective cultures of settlement. Participants reported for emotional events from their own lives to what extent they had felt each of 20 different emotions. The authors calculated the degree of emotional acculturation for each immigrant by comparing their individual profiles with the average profile of the respective host culture. The more time immigrants had spent in the new culture, the more similar their emotional pattern became to the average mainstream pattern. Moreover, those immigrants who had frequent interactions with members of the new cultural context were emotionally more similar than immigrants who did not. As immigrants engage in relationships with members from their new culture, they seem to renegotiate their emotional interpretations and adjust their emotional patterns.

Recent research has shown just how quickly people adjust their meaning system when being exposed to (culturally) novel situations. In one experiment, Savani and colleagues (2011, Study 5) asked Indian and European American students to indicate the extent to which they would adjust to or influence interpersonal situations that were sampled from both India and the US. In line with the American tendency to influence (e.g., Boiger, Mesquita, Tsai, & Markus, 2012; Morling et al., 2002; Weisz et al., 1984) and the Indian tendency to adjust (e.g., Roseman et al., 1995), the US participants initially reported more influence and the Indian participants more adjustment across the range of situations from both cultures. However, this pattern changed after the participants had been exposed to a sufficiently large number of situations from the other culture; after 100 trials the degree of adjustment reported by European American and Indian participants converged. While this study did not investigate emotions, it does make a strong case for the idea that meaning making is afforded by the situations that people commonly experience; it is conceivable that similar situational affordances affect appraisal processes and consequent emotions (cf. Roseman et al., 1995).

A major short-coming of previous cross-cultural research on emotion, at least in terms of our socio-dynamic perspective, is that most studies focused exclusively on culture-level differences of otherwise non-contextualized individual responses; very few studies explored how cultural values and practices define people's emotional responses during their interactions with relevant others. Research on the socialization of emotion in children is one such exception. For example, Trommsdorff and Kornadt (2003) report very different ways in which conflict situations unfold in German and Japanese mother-child dyads. While the former tend to engage in escalating interactions of reciprocal resistance during which mothers and children enforce their perspective, the latter tend to make mutual concessions in order to maintain harmony and a feeling of oneness ('*ittaikan*'). The different interaction patterns between German and Japanese mothers and children had long-term effects on children's

emotional patterns: Escalation of interactions in early childhood predicted the level of empathy-based altruism and aggression nine years later (Kornadt & Tachibana, 1999, as cited in Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003). These socialization practices can be understood from the different cultural ideals in Germany and Japan: The German children learn to assert themselves and have their needs met, while the Japanese children learn to accommodate other people's desires irrespective of their individual goals.

In sum, the prevalent cultural values and practices afford different emotions and emotional patterns across cultures; some of these differences seem to occur because cultural contexts constrain the range of likely appraisals in situ, while others operate by promoting certain (culturally desirable) social interactions over others. Moreover, as people move between cultures, they adjust to the emotional patterns afforded by their new cultural contexts. Finally, even though most cross-cultural studies explored mean differences in individuals' emotions, a few studies convincingly showed how cultural values and practices "trickle down" through the culturally preferred relational arrangements to afford culturally functional emotional constructions in the moment.

Two Sides of the Same Coin: Psychological and Socio-Dynamic Construction

Emotions emerge dynamically from interactions with others, they are grounded in relational patterns and meanings, and they are defined by the values and practices of the larger cultural context. Although we have emphasized how emotional experience, expression, and perception, are situated in the social world, this does not mean socio-dynamic construction replaces psychological construction; rather, socio-dynamic and psychological construction are two sides of the same coin. Emotions occur in social contexts, and as we have shown, it is hard to imagine an emotional episode that is not in one way or another played out in the context of ongoing interactions, relationships, or one's culture. At the same time, emotions are

also individual experiences that rely on individual minds. The point is not to emphasize socio-dynamic construction at the expense of psychological construction, but rather to underline that the mind always operates in context.

In our socio-dynamic view on emotion construction, an individual's emotions are strategic moves, *given* the ongoing interaction with the social environment (Frijda, 2007; Solomon, 2003). Emotions are online responses that can be understood when taking into consideration the combined emotions of all people involved in the dynamically evolving interaction or relationship, which themselves are afforded and constrained by cultural values and practices. Given this contextualized view of emotions, it may be more appropriate to speak of people *doing emotions* (with others) than of having emotions (alone). What unites our socio-dynamic and a psychological constructionist perspective (Barrett, 2009a, 2009b; Gendron & Barrett, 2009; Gross & Barrett, 2011; Russell, 2003) is that both emphasize the role of meaning-making in emotional episodes.

In fact, we believe that a socio-dynamic and a psychological perspective on emotion construction are complementary—and a promising direction for future research would combine the predictions that both perspectives make. Combining both perspectives is possible because the “under-the-hood” predictions that psychological construction makes can be complemented with our predictions about the dynamic role of social contexts. For example, the conceptual act theory (Barrett, 2006; Lindquist & Barrett, 2008) states that people continuously apply conceptual knowledge to their perception of the world and that emotions emerge when emotional knowledge is applied to internal and external sensory information. A socio-dynamic perspective would emphasize that activation of the relevant conceptual knowledge is contingent on the current context; that is, meaning-making is continuously afforded by interactional, relational or cultural affordances. To give an example, conceptual knowledge of anger (e.g., someone has just blocked my goals, I feel hot and under pressure to

retaliate) is more likely to be activated during an escalating interaction in a strained relationship between two individuals who have been socialized and currently engage in an autonomy-promoting cultural context. Investigating the interplay of socio-dynamic and psychological construction means to see emotions for what they are: Powerful connections between inner psyches and outer worlds.

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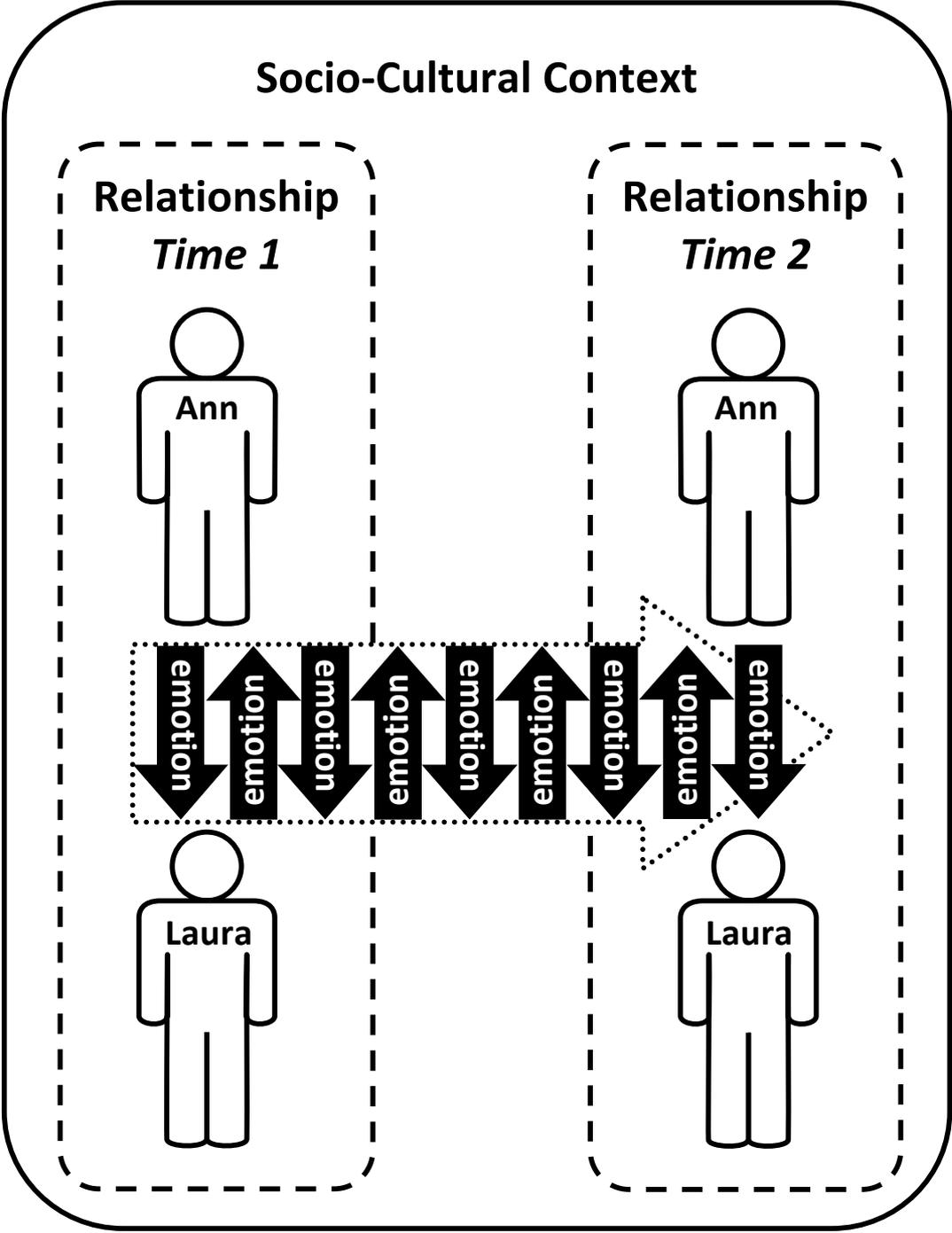


Figure 1. Emotion as a dynamic ongoing process that is constructed in the context of interactions, relationships, and culture (adapted from Boiger & Mesquita, 2012)