The Relational Contexts, Forms, and Functions of Affect in Yasawa, Fiji

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Introduction

- Affect is integral to the adaptive regulation of social relationships (Arnell & Schaffner 1992; Damasio 1994; Fiske 2002; Haidt 2002; White & Keltner 1995).
- Yet, there is no consensus about the structure of affect (Barrett 2006; Scherer 2006), or how to compare the functions of affect across cultures (Shaver & Morris 2004).
- An understanding of the local affective lexicon is key to studying the structure and functions of affect in established social relationships (Lutz 1988).

AIMS

- 13 weeks in Tikina & Dalouni villages, Yasawa, Fiji
- Structural interviews and observations
- Card Sorts: Structured interviews and observations
- Open-ended interviews

Methods

- 13 weeks in Tikina & Dalouni villages, Yasawa, Fiji
- Card Sorts: Structured interviews and observations
- Open-ended interviews

Results

Attitudes moderate emotions in scenarios

- Multidimensional scaling produced two dimensions with clustering corresponding to the hierarchical cluster analysis:
  - X-axis: valence
  - Y-axis: ?

Summary

- Suggestive evidence of distinct forms and pragmatics for feeling terms applied to people (attitudes) and feeling terms applied to reactions to scenarios (emotions).
- Attitudes and emotions cluster together according to the functional affordances of others and appropriate responses to those affordances — with greater specificity than simple valence and arousal.
- Distinct attitudes intelligibly frame social scenarios, and significantly moderate emotional responses to those scenarios.
- These findings are tentative, and stand to be complemented by convergent, ethnological, and experimental economic data.
- This research lays the groundwork for an in-depth study of the functions of affect in existing social relationships in a small-scale society.

References


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