Chapter XLIV
Self–Report Measures of Discrete Emotions

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BACKGROUND

According to appraisal theories of emotion, negative emotions arise from the perception that the environment is in an incongruent relationship with the individual’s goals (Dillard, 1997; Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). In contrast, when an individual judges that the current environment is likely to facilitate his or her goals, positive emotions follow (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). However, both within and across these broad categories, individual emotions can be discriminated along several lines (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Oatley, 1992; Roseman, Weist, & Swartz, 1994; Scherer, 1984).

First, emotions vary in terms of their signal value (Table 1, column 2). That is, emotions are a source of information regarding the state of the person-environment relationship. For example, surprise follows from the perception of novelty in the environment, and registers that perception in conscious awareness (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Oatley, 1992; Roseman et al., 1994; Scherer, 1984). Emotions also signal the mobilization of psychological and physiological resources corresponding to that person-environment relationship. The subjective experience of an emotion also relays this information to consciousness. In this sense, an emotion may be viewed as a summary readout of the changes taking place in the body (Buck, 1997).

Emotions can be understood further in terms of their function (see Table 1, column 3). At the most general level, emotions operate as rudimentary information processing systems designed to deal with a certain, limited set of person-environment relationships. Given a particular understanding of the person-environment relationship, an emotion shifts the organism into a state of being designed to address that relationship (Lazarus, 1991; Oatley, 1992). For example, fear instigates efforts at self-protection, whereas anger provides the motivational basis for subduing the offending stimulus.
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