Affect & Emotion

Newsletter of the NCCR Affective Sciences

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RESEARCH FOCUS

Grid project Klaus Scherer, Johnny Fontaine & Cristina Soriano The GRID – a truly connected project

Interview with Professor Johnny Fontaine



A lthough it looks like an acronym, the name of the GRID project is a descriptive term, referring to the grid-like tool it uses for data collection. However, the word could also be a metaphor for the connective nature of this project, which is both multidisciplinary and cross-cultural, linking different institutions and theoretical approaches.

Indeed it was Professor Fontaine's search to reconcile proposals from different cross-cultural theories on the expression of guilt and shame that led him to become involved in the GRID project. "I decided to take Klaus Scherer's component process approach to emotion," he explains. "Which proposes that emotion is not a state but a process with different components. In this way different cultural definitions of emotional terms can be explained by their emphasis on different components of the emotional process such as appraisal, motivation or expression." To illustrate this, he provides the example of the Raramuri tribe in Mexico, who have no linguistic term for guilt. "In cross-cultural psychology a constructivist approach would say that guilt is not part of their psychological reality," he explains. "Whereas a lexical sedimentation approach would suggest guilt is a universal experience but the tribe has no linguistic label for it. A componential approach can encompass both by proposing that the Raràmuri may have the motivational component of guilt in terms of their drive for reparation, but they lack the means to express it by a single word."

In 2003 Fontaine met with Professor Scherer at the conference of cross-cultural psychology in Budapest and it was there the seeds for the GRID project were planted. "I was interested in how to study the meaning of emotion words across cultural groups in a way that is open to finding differences but that also looks for similarities. Klaus and I started talking and the outcome was I spent four months at the NCCR in Geneva from September 2005." Fontaine found his experience at the NCCR very stimulating, and particularly useful for the development of the GRID project. "It is quite exceptional for a research centre to be composed of people from such different perspectives," he says. "And this is very important for the GRID, where we integrate linguistic and psychological approaches."

Using a componential approach the GRID project allows researchers to explore the semantic space of emotion and the cultural meanings of emotion words. The instrument itself consists of 24 emotion terms commonly used in research and daily language such as anger, happiness, and despair.

Alongside this it has 144 features of emotion to represent all components of emotion. "We operationalized the components using several different theories," says Fontaine. "That is why we have so many features!" Participants rate the likelihood that the features are part of the meaning of the words. So far, the project has collected 34 samples that cover 23 languages and 27 countries. Its collaborators are institutes and universities around the world and it has involved over 50 people including translators, academics and data collectors.

A first analysis of GRID data from four languages has indicated that the language of emotion can be represented by a four-dimensional space. The dimensions are valence or pleasantness, power-control, activation-arousal and novelty or unpredictability. "The analysis showed that most translation equivalent terms are like clouds in the four dimensional structure," explains Fontaine. "For example anger is negative, strong, and rather aroused, but neutral on novelty." Previously only three dimensions had been identified and current research literature tends to apply just two: valence and arousal. "We were surprised by the 'surprise' dimension and why it had not been identified before. Our analysis shows it is less important than the other dimensions, so perhaps previous research could not reliably identify this smaller one." The study also indicated that the dimension of power was more important than previously thought and cannot be conflated with valence. "This could have implications for applied research," says Fontaine. "Since many stress and psycho-physiological studies use the two-dimensional valence-arousal models."

The next step for the GRID is the publication of a book that will include a description of the project and a cross-cultural analysis. It will also include several case studies to illustrate the project's work, such as a study on the differences in the meaning of pride in North and South Italy, despair in Basque, English and Spanish, or guilt and shame across cultures. Already in development is a short version of the GRID with 17 features that can be used in a range of contexts. Indeed Professor Fontaine will be returning to the NCCR at the end of this year to finalize papers on current findings, and also to develop the GRID as a practical instrument for assessment and training in emotional competence. "We have definitely answered a few questions," he says. "But we have also posed a lot more and opened the door to more opportunities!"



INTERVIEW



Work and Emotion

Prof. Franziska Tschan





Whether it is a source of stress or satisfaction, it's widely recognized that work plays an important role in our emotional life. However, little is known about the details of the psychological processes that are, for want of a better word, "at work" in our daily occupations.

In their project on "Work and Emotions" at the NCCR, Professor Semmer and Professor Tschan are using innovative methods to investigate this fascinating area. Their research has a number of streams and one of the core studies is exploring stress using a theoretical approach called "Stress-as-Offence-to-Self". This assumes that all experiences that are close to the self, whether positive or negative, are especially important. "Now that may sound obvious," explains Professor Semmer. "But using this theoretical basis we have developed a number of specific aspects to investigate. For example we have a project on appreciation and another on the experiences of failure and success, as well as a project on feedback and the very subtle ways it can be administered to threaten or bolster our sense of self." Within this theoretical framework the research has also developed the concept of "illegitimate tasks", which are tasks perceived as unreasonable or unnecessary, for example when a nurse is asked to perform duties that are suitable for a maid. "This is a completely new concept," says Semmer. "And one that we are trying to establish in the literature."

Another stream of the project is investigating the regulation of emotions, which is exemplified by those working in the service industry or retail who often hide emotions when customers become disagreeable. Previously it has often been assumed that it would be healthier to express rather than suppress emotions, but Professor Tschan's research is providing an interesting insight into this phenomenon. Rather than just asking about regulating emotions, she has used the Geneva Emotion Wheel to measure the emotions people feel and the emotions they express at work, a distinction that is typically not made in that research. "What we noticed is that most of the negative effect comes from feeling the emotion," she says. "And that hiding the emotion may actually be a positive experience. Quite often this may be because expressing emotions is considered unprofessional and, if you vent an emotion, you not only feel bad from feeling the emotion, but also about the lack of self control." Tschan is also investigating the strategic use of emotion regulation to achieve goals. She has been studying whether the over-expression of a positive emotion, such as satisfaction, can help obtain a goal and it seems this

can be the case when expressed to your superior, but not to your co-workers. "Bosses often are easily flattered," says Tschan. "But you can't fool your colleagues!"

Finally the project is undertaking a number of more applied studies in collaboration with medical teams. There has been a growing interest in this type of research and Professor Semmer believes this is because, as researchers, they show equal interest in practical issues and theory development. "Interestingly, stress used to be just one of many topics partners wanted to investigate," says Semmer. "But now they're keen to do studies specifically on this subject." The research with medical teams is investigating stress, communication, performance and leadership in simulated emergency situations. So far it has revealed an interesting journey of emotions moving from irritation to worry and anxiety with pride emerging at the end. On the basis of this, Semmer and Tschan have started to develop some interventions in terms of instructions for task-focused self-talk. The results have been promising but they believe the intervention must be more intense for a truly noticeable impact. The research team are also observing work in the operating theatre during long surgical procedures and will soon start a study collecting daily diaries from surgeons on their fatigue and satisfaction levels, alongside physiological measures.

Despite having an acute awareness of the emotional and motivational processes in the workplace, this insight does not lessen Semmer's and Tschan's passion for their own work. "I've always been intrigued with the very normal problems of normal people in their normal working life," says Semmer. "It's fascinating to see how people identify with their work and it can be very moving to hear them talk about it, especially as they do not often have an opportunity to do so at length." Professor Tschan shares this opinion and extends it to her observational work in the medical field. "It can be very inspirational to see people do their job on an everyday basis and fight to save a person's life."

Both are also aware of the challenges of their jobs, especially as they work at the nexus of applied and theoretical research. "The longer we work with our partners," says Semmer, "the more ideas come from both sides to expand and deepen the research. Finding a balance between applied and theoretical work is challenging, but also rewarding."

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Academic meetings

International Symposium on the notion of Period-Room and aesthetics of immersion (October 2011), with the participation of Musée du Louvre, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris and IHAM, Neuchâtel. Pascal Griener (Project "Affective Dynamics and Aesthetic Emotions") was the co-organizer of this meeting held at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

Colloquium "Ressentir et émouvoir: philosophes et écrivains face aux émotions" (November 18, 2011). Patrizia Lombardo (project "Affective Dynamics and Aesthetic Emotions") directed the International Colloquium "Ressentir et émouvoir" at the University of Geneva.

Neuroscience of emotions in art and movies (November 23-24, 2011). Workshop organized by Patrik Vuilleumier (Project « Cerebral bases of individual differences in affect perception and regulation ») with Profs. L. Nummenmaa & M. Sams from Aalto University, Helsinki.

Alpine Brain Imaging Meeting (ABIM) (January 8-12, 2012). International Colloquium organized in Champéry by Patrik Vuilleumier and Sophie Schwartz with world-renowned invited speakers in affective and brain imaging. One session was led by NCCR Affective Sciences researchers on «Face and expression perception».

Brunswikian analysis of emotional expression (January 23-24, 2012). Hands-on workshop organized by Klaus Scherer (Project "Appraisal-driven patterning of emotional expression and experience") on statistical methods to be used for Brunswikian path analysis with Prof. W. Wittmann, Mannheim, and Dr. F. Nussbeck, Zurich, for members of the project and CISA collaborators.

The role of emotion in globalized risk (March 29, 2012). Co-organization of a debate in the WEF-Unige series, with Profs. B. Knutson, R. Gibson, and K. Scherer as keynote speakers.

Emotion and metaphor, ancient and modern: Interdisciplinary perspectives (March, 14 2012). The Research Focus "Language and Culture" organized an workshop on the role of metaphors in the study of emotion in classics and cognitive linguistics, with the participation of Damien Nelis, Yannick Zanetti, Anna Ogarkova and Cristina Soriano.

Action meets emotion (April 16, 2012) Klaus Scherer coorganized with Prof. W. Prinz, MPI Leipzig, a preparatory meeting on a new collaborative initiative between action and emotion researchers in Cologne.

Guillaume Chanel (project "Affective computing and emotion awareness in computer-mediated interaction") gave a seminar on "Brain and peripheral signals for emotion and experience assessment in games" (December 2, 2012) at the series of seminars on "Emotion recognition" at the University of Fribourg.

The evolutionary origin of music (May 11, 2011) Bernardino Fantini and Klaus Scherer (Focus "Music and Emotions") co-organized a workshop in collaboration with the Istituto Veneti delle Scienze, Arte ed Lettere with Profs. M. Baroni, T. Fitch, W. Menninghaus, P. Ricci-Blitti

International Symposium on neuroscience and Ethics: "Changing The Brain, Changing The Society: Clinical And Ethical Implications of Neuromodulation Techniques In Neurology And Psychiatry" (June 13-14, 2012, Fondation Brocher). Workshop organized by Patrik Vuilleumier, David Sander and Bernard Baertschi ethical challenges and approaches to measure influnew brain functions, including emotions. ence http://www.brocher.ch/pages/sympvenir.asp

Grants received

Didier Grandjean (Project « Neural mechanisms of emotional response patterning and system synchronization ») obtained an SNF grant to work on the functional specialization and integration of the basal ganglia in human emotional prosody decoding. The budget amounts to CHF 441′628 CHF for a duration of 3 years and will finance a post-doc and a PhD candidate related to the NCCR Affective Sciences ■

Major Achievements

Ernst Fehr (Project "The impact of emotional cues on pro-social behavior and norm compliance ») was awarded the Österreichisches Ehrenzeichen für Wissenschaft und Kunst (Austrian Cross of Honor for Science and Arts).

The University of Bologna has decided to bestow an Honorary Degree on Klaus Scherer (Project "Appraisal-driven patterning of emotional expression and experience") in recognition of his lifetime achievements ■





Knowledge transfer activities

Parcours sommeil-cerveau. From March 2012, Sophie Schwartz (Project "How the brain changes its mind: Roles of emotional relevance and sleep in learning and decision making ») organized in collaboration with colleagues from the hospital's sleep lab and physicians and nurses involved in health school visits an educational program for children and adolescents (6-16 years old) about sleep and the cognitive and emotional consequences of sleep restriction.

Sophie Schwartz also participated in Expanding Your Horizons (EYH), an international program created to allow 11 to 14 year old girls attending public or private schools to discover the numerous careers available in the areas of science and technology. (http://www.expandingyourhorizons.org/conferences/Geneva/)

Les amis imaginaires – De la perception à l'interprétation (November 25-26, 2011). Colloquium organized by the Swiss Center for the Affective Sciences and the Geneva Neuroscience Center at the end of Jeremy Gindre's 9 month stay at the centers as artist in residence. It was an occasion for him to present the novels and series of drawings he made during this period inspired by the work done in the two institutions.

All members of Patrik Vuilleumier's lab (project "Cerebral bases of individual differences in affect perception and regulation") were involved in the Brain Awareness week (March

12-17, 2012), for which they organized a series of public events: invited talks, school visits, etc. This year's Brain Awareness week was devoted to brain plasticity.

A symposium on rhythms in the brain and mind (March 22, 2012 was organized by Patrik Vuilleumier at the annual meeting of the Brain-Mind Group in Sion.

Philippe Borgeaud and Doralice Fabiano (project "Myths and Rites as Cultural Expression of Emotion") organized the continuing education activity "Dionysos en tous ces états" (April 23-24, 2012) for secondary school teachers, at the Collège de Saussure (Petit-Lancy).

Salon du livre et de la presse de Genève (April 25-29, 2012). Organization of workshops for a large public on "emotion and olfaction" and on "recognition of emotions through the voice and the facial expression".

Didier Grandjean gave a public lecture on « Musique, voix et émotions : de Rousseau aux neurosciences affectives » (June 6, 2012).

"L'expression des emotions chez Shakespeare et ses musiciens" (June 15-16, 2012). Workshop organized in collaboration with the Grand Theatre (Opera) of Geneva. Discussion between scientists and musicians and singers of the Macbeth production

Staff changes

Kristoffer Aberg joined Sophie Schwartz's group as a postdoc working on how individual differences in reward-related functions relate to creativity and learning.

Hamdi Eryilmaz will leave in June 2012 for a postdoc at Harvard University with Prof. R. Bruckner.

Kinga Igloi, funded by an AXA postdoc grant, joined Sophie Schwartz's group working on the effects of sleep on the consolidation of rewarded experiences.

Sebastian Korb has received a two-year SNSF postdoc fellow-ship for the University of Wisconsin, USA.

Jennifer Malsert joined in December 2011 Didier Grandjean's group for a postdoc position in collaboration with P. Niedenthal and P. Vuilleumier working on Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation and emotional processing.

Gaëlle Molinari, associate professor at Unidistance, joined the project "Affective computing and emotion awareness in computer-mediated interaction" in September 2011 directed by M. Betrancourt and T. Pun.

Lampros Perogamvros joined Sophie Schwartz's project as a senior researcher funded by a grant from the Boninchi foundation. He is involved in studies looking at the effects of dopamine activity on emotion regulation, sleep and dreaming in patients with sleep disorders.

Isabelle Pitteloud joined Patrizia Lombardo and Pascal Griener's group as a postdoc in February 2012 to work on

imagination & simulation (distinction between empathy & sympathy in art creation and reception).

Tomas Ros arrived at Patrik Vuilleumier's lab as a postdoc in January 2012. He is interested in neurofeedback with EEG, attention, and emotion regulation.

Sophie Schwartz was promoted to associate professor in neuroscience at the Medical Faculty of the University of Geneva. Mohammad Soleymani, from Imperial College, London, joined the project "Affective computing and emotion awareness in computer-mediated interaction" as an external associate. Delphine Warrot joined Sophie Schwartz's group for a PhD project looking at how emotions and departing signals.

Delphine Warrot joined Sophie Schwartz's group for a PhD project looking at how emotions and dopaminergic signals influence decision making in patients with mood or attention disorder.

PhDs

On April 23, 2012, Hamdi Eryilmaz successfully defended his PhD thesis "Aftermath of emotions: a functional MRI investigation of affective influences on brain states", under the direction of Patrik Vuilleumier and co-direction of Dimitri Van De Ville and Sophie Schwartz.

Mohammad Soleymani successfully defended his PhD thesis "Implicit and Automated Emotional Tagging of Video" in November 2011 under the direction of Thierry Pun ■

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Upcoming events

Montreux Jazz Festival (July 4,5,12 and 13, 2012). The NCCR Affective Sciences will organize four workshops on Music and Emotions (http://www.montreuxjazzfestival.com/2012/fr/festival/foundation2).

La Nuit de la Science (July 7 and 8, 2012). For the fourth time our NCCR will participate in this popular-science event (http://www.ville-ge.ch/culture/nuit/).

International Summer School in Affective Sciences (ISSAS'2012) (22-29 August, 2012). The 4th ISSAS will take place at the Château de Bossey around the topic "Art, Aesthetics & the Emotions" (http://www.affective-sciences.org/issas).

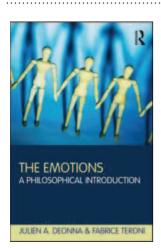
What does human intracerebral recording tell us about emotions? (September 19-21, 2012). International colloquium organized by Didier Grandjean, Patrik Vuilleumier, Julie Peron and Arnaud Saj on how intracranial electro-encephalography (iEEG) can help cognitive neuroscientists, psychologists,

and neurologists to understand the neural basis of emotional processing in humans. (http://www.affective-sciences.org/node/3077)

Festival Musique et Sciences (November 15-20, 2012). A new type of festival planned in cooperation with the Geneva Opera, the conservatories of Geneva and Lausanne, the Concours de Genève, Unige, Unil and EPFL, bringing together scientists, composers, musicians, and an informed public.

Affective Computing and Intelligent Interaction (ACII) (September 2013). ACII is the first international conference about affective human-computer interaction and computational modeling of emotions. This fourth edition will be organized by the project "Affective computing and emotion awareness in computer-mediated interaction" and will emphasize the humanistic side of ACII by including researchers from social and human sciences

New books

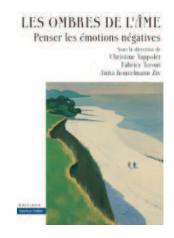


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