

on the individual generation of *contempt*, the collective behaviors that the authors cite, as such being solely the economic calculus of benefits (“fitness benefits”; sects. 4.3, 5.2, and 6.1), all the way to “ambivalence” or “indifference” (sect. 4.3), and the overall social effect of the influence of a dominant individual on an other (the “image infection” or “stigma-by-association” paradigm; sects. 5.2 and 6.1), are nonetheless relevant to – and can in turn be illuminated by – the kind of group/community behavior enacted in *charivari*. Likewise, regarding the norms and predictions that are addressed in sect. 6.1, or regarding the “social-relational affordance” (sect. 4.3), G&F’s body of theory will be of essential use in pondering the roles assigned by tradition and “the adaptive grammar of emotions” (sect. 4.3, para. 5) to the hieratic versus carnivalesque cortèges, accompanying, ultimately, every closed-group popular ceremonial (cf. sect. 1.2). Interactive behavior within groups is minutely presented within G&F’s Table 1 featuring the eight attributes of “contempt,” and elsewhere throughout the article. The novel explanation of the ASE model of sentiments (sect. 2.6), with its critical formulation (the eight features cohere across populations, why is that?), helps us answer the critical trans-disciplinary question: whether we can, or cannot, attach rituality to carnivalesque behavior (cf. Benga & Benga 2006).

Ultimately, the extant questions are: Can contempt be collective? Could we share in the same contempt? Could the mockery and derision assembled in culturally transmitted patterns reach some sort of rituality? Could societies, better than individuals, exchange the permanent loss of respect and status diminution, on such temporary losses, within a cyclic perspective over the ceremonial year within customary societies, aiming at releasing pent-up social conflict tensions (Bakhtin 1965/1984)? Is contempt necessary, less so as leading to anger and hatred, from which it in effect it differs (sects. 1.1, 5.1–5.3, and 6.1), and more so as the *sine qua non* fabric of salient tradition-bound narratives: such as the Christian gospel, where the god himself is being compulsorily mocked and punished? Anthropologists suggest *charivari*, the marital-comment format of Western Europe, had a most concrete reason to appear: the strict rules around marriage alliance, forbidding *by all means* the loss of a young bride to an old bridegroom, and the like (Karnouh 1981, pp. 33–43). That we, as a species, could mock with a reason – contempt as a “biologically cultural species” (last line of the target article, sect. 7, para. 2) – is an encouraging thought after all. If we speak about contempt as an evolutionary unit within our cultural phylogeny, we need to remember the grand scale migration routes and historical links within the large landmass of Eurasia, as well as the thousands of years of clustering within the European cultural pool, whose features we may still decipher and delineate with our, relatively late in history, field researches of today.

Sentiments and the motivational psychology of parental care

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Abstract: Beyond its implications for contempt, it remains to be determined whether the sentiment concept might be applied usefully to other domains of social affect. This commentary considers its applicability to the domain of parental caregiving. Characteristic features of sentiments are considered in conjunction with empirical research on the motivational psychology of parental care.

Sentiments are hard to define conceptually, although Gervais & Fessler (G&F) make valiant and reasonable attempts to do so.

And given that a sentiment is variously described as a “syndrome” or a “network” or a “deep structure,” sentiments may be difficult to define operationally too. (It is not yet clear that sentiments are a readily measurable psychological construct.) In order for the sentiment concept to catch on again, I suspect that it will have to be defined more precisely and tethered more rigorously to a computational approach to motivational systems (Cosmides & Tooby 2013; Tooby et al. 2008). Still, G&F’s analysis of contempt is provocative; and it suggests that sentiments – whatever they are exactly – may offer a useful lens through which to examine human affect and human motivation.

Of course, if the sentiment concept is to be influential, it must be relevant to more than just the psychology of contempt. It must be applicable to a wider range of social relationships and motivational systems pertaining to those relationships. So let us consider carefully whether the sentiment concept might apply to something that is very different from contempt. Let us talk about love.

Echoing others (e.g., Shand 1920), G&F identify love as a prototypic sentiment. This assertion seems superficially appealing, but it is probably not quite right. Love is perhaps too diffuse a construct to fit sensibly within an evolutionary analysis of the sort offered by G&F. Love comes in a variety of different flavors (e.g., romantic love, filial love, parental love) that are specific to functionally different kinds of relationships and that dispose individuals toward different kinds of behavioral responses (Shaver et al. 1996). But even if the vague folk concept of love does not qualify as a sentiment, each relationship-specific form of love might make the cut. With that in mind, I focus on one specific form of love: parental love. How do the characteristic features of sentiments fit with what we know about the motivational psychology of parental care?

Sentiments are characterized as functionally specialized networks of attitudes and emotions that evolved in response to selection pressures arising within specific kinds of relationships. Does this apply to parental care? Yes. Parental caregiving responses are products of genetically coded neural mechanisms and neurochemical processes that are, to some extent, distinct from those associated with other motivational systems (Feldman 2016; Mileva-Seitz et al. 2016; Rilling 2013). This underlying physiology appears to have evolved in response to the unique fitness implications associated with the provision of parental care to offspring (Kenrick et al. 2010; Preston 2013).

Sentiments are characterized as enduring, emotionally textured responses. Does this apply to parental care? Yes. There are stable individual differences in individuals’ affective responses to children (Buckels et al. 2015). Attitudes constitute part of this constellation of affective responses, but there is more to it than mere liking or disliking. The parental disposition is characterized also by a capacity to experience very particular, functionally specific emotional responses – such as tenderness, which is empirically distinct from other compassionate responses (Buckels et al. 2015; Kalawski 2010; Lishner et al. 2011).

Sentiments are characterized as being emotionally pluripotent, manifesting in different emotional expressions under different contextual circumstances. Does this apply to parental care? Yes. The perception of young children elicits a tenderness response, which is subjectively experienced as a rewarding emotional state (Buckels et al. 2015; Kalawski 2010), and may facilitate nurturing behaviors. But parental care is characterized not only by nurturing behaviors but by protective behaviors, too, which may manifest in risk-aversion and antagonistic responses to potentially threatening things (Eibach & Mock 2011; Fessler et al. 2014; Gilead & Lieberman 2014; Hahn-Holbrook et al. 2011). These protective responses are typically associated with entirely different kinds of emotions, such as fear and disgust and anger.

Sentiments are characterized as being responsive to functionally relevant relational cues. Does this apply to parental care? Yes; and here things get a bit more complicated. Parental responses – including tender responses to children and aversive responses to the broader environment – are triggered not just by

the perception of cues indicating the presence of one's own offspring, but by the perception of human infants more generally, and even by things that merely mimic prototypic features of human infants, such as baby nonhuman animals or adults with baby-faced features (Buckels et al. 2015; Glocker et al. 2009; Sherman et al. 2009). These responses are exhibited not just by parents, but by non-parents too.

In sum, there is an evolved “deep structure” of parental love that seems to fit with G&F's conceptualization of sentiments; but this parental sentiment is directed toward an unusually large and fuzzy category of relational objects. Indeed, one need not have had any prior interaction with—or even any meaningful knowledge of—an object in order for it to elicit a parental affective response. This contrasts with other alleged sentiments, such as contempt and hate and romantic love, which are typically directed toward specific individuals with whom one has had some prior interaction or at least some prior knowledge. So is parental love a sentiment? I am not sure. Might there be different kinds of sentiments—some that require input from prior experience with particular relational objects, and others that do not? Again, I am not sure. What I am sure of is this: Before the sentiment concept can be applied productively to a broad range of motivational systems and affective experiences, some rigorous conceptual work needs to be undertaken. G&F have taken some necessary and stimulating first steps, and I commend them for it. The hard work remains to be done.

Constructing contempt

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Abstract: Gervais & Fessler argue that contempt is a natural kind and that its experience cannot be explained by a constructionist account of emotion. We dispute these claims and offer a positive constructionist model of contempt that accounts for the existing evidence and unifies conflicting findings in the literature on contempt.

Gervais & Fessler (G&F) characterize contempt as a “sentiment” to account for inconsistent findings on contempt as a basic emotion. They claim that constructionism, an alternative to basic emotions approaches, cannot account for contempt findings. We suggest that “sentiments” sound a lot like basic emotions as natural kinds, a theoretical approach that has been heavily criticized. Moreover, G&F misunderstand constructionism, which parsimoniously accounts for the messy literature on contempt.

Despite claiming that contempt is not a basic emotion, G&F use basic emotion theory terms (e.g., Ekman & Cordaro 2011; Izard 2011; Panksepp 2011) to define sentiments: “As with emotions, each sentiment likely has a distinct evolutionary history and taxonomic distribution [...], as well as partially dissociable neural bases” (sect. 4.3, para. 1). Similarly, when they suggest “a provisional set of sentiments—social attitude dimensions, corresponding to distinct social-relational affordances—whose states potentiate unique constellations of emotions” (sect. 4.3, para. 3).

As in basic emotion approaches, G&F define contempt as a natural kind. A natural kind is a non-arbitrary collection of natural phenomena or properties existing independent of

human observation (e.g., chemical elements; Mill 1884). However, growing evidence suggests that emotions are not natural kinds. Emotion categories have neither consistent nor specific outcomes making them biologically distinct from one another (Barrett 2006a; Kreibitz 2010; Lindquist et al. 2012; Mauss & Robinson 2009; Vytal & Hamann 2010; Wager et al. 2015). Contempt is no exception.

Contempt lacks consistency and specificity. People fail to consistently identify facial expressions as contempt; the label “contempt” is used to categorize posed facial portrayals of contempt at or below chance (Izard & Haynes 1988; Wagner 2000). Instead, facial muscle movements are not specific to contempt—people categorize them as disgust (Haidt & Keltner 1999; Russell 1991d; Russell et al. 1993) or annoyance (Alvarado & Jameson 1996) depending on context. Although some studies find that people associate a unilateral lip-curl with contempt (Matsumoto & Ekman 2004), this occurs only in forced choice designs involving direct comparisons between prescribed categories. In fact, prototypically contemptuous facial expressions are not universally perceived as contemptuous (Heuer et al. 2010; Russell 1991d). Additionally, predicted correspondences between specific antecedent events (e.g., violations of community norms) and contempt are not upheld (Rozin et al. 1999). The evidence for the existence of contempt as a natural kind is so in question that even proponents of natural kind views of emotions admit contempt is less likely to qualify as such (Haidt & Graham 2016; Rosenberg & Ekman 1995).

If contempt is not a natural kind, then what is it? We suggest it is a constructed experience, like all emotions and mental states (Barrett 2009; Clore & Ortony 2013; Cunningham et al. 2013; Lindquist 2013; Russell 2003). Rather than arising from discrete mechanisms with domain-specific functions, constructionism suggests that distinct mental states are the emergent product of domain-general ingredients, including core affect and conceptual knowledge (Barrett 2013; Cameron et al. 2015; Lindquist 2013; Russell 2003). These ingredients combine in different ways to produce different mental products. For example, just as the same combination of ingredients can create a sugary cake or a savory biscuit, different combinations of core affect and conceptual knowledge can construct different emotions.

G&F dismiss constructionism as a theoretical framework for understanding contempt, but their argument is based on a misunderstanding of constructionism. The authors wrongly claim that a constructionist view predicts that “a word such as ‘contempt’ is necessary to anchor ... features categorized as a specific emotion” (sect. 3.3, para. 2), pointing to evidence in which people experience contempt without linguistic prompts (Fridhandler & Averill 1982; Matsumoto & Ekman 2004; Rozin et al. 1999). However, this is a misunderstanding; constructionism hypothesizes that *most* instances of emotion are experienced in the absence of an explicit linguistic prompt—little of daily life involves explicitly labeling experiences. Instead, a constructionist view predicts that language plays a covert role in emotion insofar as it implicitly helps people acquire, organize, and use emotion concept knowledge during online categorization (Lindquist & Gendron 2013; Lindquist et al. 2015a; 2015b).

Constructionism predicts that people experience a specific emotion concept (e.g., contempt) when they draw on their rich cache of conceptual knowledge about that category. Conceptual knowledge of “contempt” consists of past internal feelings in situations categorized as contempt, as well as past motor representations of behaviors, sensory representations of situations, and cultural knowledge about what it means to experience contempt. These diverse sensorimotor representations are partly united by the word *contempt* because contempt is *not* a natural kind with strong perceptual regularities uniting members of the category (Lindquist et al. 2015a; 2015b). Unbeknownst to human observers, words cohere this category information and facilitate its accessibility during online perception (Lindquist et al. 2015a; 2015b; Lupyan 2012; Vigliocco et al. 2009). People can still experience