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Introduction to the Special Issue on Computational Modelling of Emotion

Celso de Melo, Dean Petters, Joel Parthemore, David Moffatt, and Christian Becker-Asano

EMOTIONS play a pervasive role in personal, social, and professional life. As artificially intelligent systems become pervasive in our lives, it is important that these systems are able to understand emotion in humans and simulate the function of emotion to be effective in their interactions with people. Computational models of emotion contribute towards this goal by, on the one hand, serving as a means to test emotion theories and help understand the function of emotion and, on the other, as the end in itself by simulating appropriate emotion and its downstream consequences – such as expressions of emotion – in computational agents. This special issue presents a critical overview of this cross-disciplinary field, with contributions from some of the leading scholars in cognitive psychology and affective computing, focusing both on theory and practice.

In the first article, Klaus Scherer summarizes the requirements for a computational model of emotion drawing on prevalent emotion theories, in particular, appraisal theories. Scherer emphasizes the necessity of modeling all components of emotion – cognitive appraisal, physiological responses, action tendencies, and expressive behavior – and the dynamic properties of emotion as it unfolds in time. Ruth Aylett and colleagues, in the second article, build on their comprehensive computational model – FATiMA – that implements many of these requirements. In their article, they look at emotion expressions as social signals, emphasizing that expressive behavior is not a mere reflection of internal state but often is modified based on social context – e.g. suppressing emotion when an unwelcome birthday present is received. They advocate for and integrate a theory-of-mind component into their computational model.

Historically, affective computing has tended to focus on theory-driven models, such as FATiMA, to model emotion; however, recent times have seen increasing success of data-driven deep learning models in other fields of artificial intelligence (a point Scherer also makes). Desmond Ong and colleagues, in the third article, propose a practical solution for integrating theory- and data-driven models: probabilistic programming. They begin by reviewing recent work using Bayesian modeling that capture intuitive theories relating situations, mental states (e.g., appraisals), and emotion. They note some of the limitations with the Bayesian approach (e.g., representing dynamic aspects of emotion), and propose probabilistic programming languages as a solution for these specific limitations and, more broadly, for modular

computational models of emotion. Finally, they summarize a useful collection of tools and existent technology that support probabilistic programming and integration with modern machine learning frameworks.

To build the kind of general-purpose artificial intelligence that succeeds in dynamic domains, it is insufficient to have a computational model of emotion; integration with broader models of the agent’s sense-think-act cycle is needed. To accomplish this, we can draw inspiration from research in cognitive psychology that seeks to build general models of the human mind. In this tradition, in the fourth article, Christopher Dancy builds on Panksepp’s empathy model to propose a cognitive model integrating affect with lower-level physiology (e.g., hunger and thirst) and higher-level cognition (e.g., the effects of stress on memory). In complementary fashion, in the fifth article, Amir Moye and Marieke van Vugt propose a cognitive model for focused attention and meditation that can serve as the basis for a more general model of emotion regulation. Methodologically, both articles build on extensions of the ACT-R unified cognitive framework – ACT-R/ Φ and Prims, respectively – which is well-established in cognitive psychology but may be less familiar to affective computing researchers.

The last two articles focus on one important and representative domain: human-robot interaction. The last decade has seen growing interest in robots that are able to navigate complex social environments – e.g., elderly care – which require a certain level of emotional sophistication. Lola Cañamero, in the sixth article, surveys research on models of emotion in robots, organizing this literature according to the underlying theoretical framework and the focus on general emotion principles. Finally, in the seventh article, Joost Broekens and Mohamed Chetouani address the important challenge of increasing transparency in robots. Researchers tend to agree that successful adoption of artificially intelligent systems require users to be able to understand and trust the actions performed by the system. Broekens and Chetouani propose using appropriate emotion expression to increase the transparency of a reinforcement learning robot by virtue of exposing the internal state of the algorithms through the expressions (e.g., surprise when an unexpected transition occurs).

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appreciation to the IEEE Transactions of Affective Computing editorial board for the opportunity to put together this special issue.

CELSO DE MELO, *Guest Editor*
US Army Research Laboratory
Playa Vista, CA 90094 USA

DEAN PETTERS, *Guest Editor*
University of Wolverhampton
Wolverhampton, UK

JOEL PARTHMORE, *Guest Editor*
University of Skövde
Skövde, Sweden

DAVID MOFFATT, *Guest Editor*
Glasgow Caledonian University
Glasgow, UK

CHRISTIAN BECKER-ASANO, *Guest Editor*
Robert Bosch GmbH
Gerlingen, Germany



Celso de Melo is a computer scientist in the Sensors and Electron Devices Directorate at the US Army Research Laboratory. His research interests focus on artificial intelligence, human-machine interaction, and affective computing. He completed a post-doc at the USC Marshall School of Business and earned his Ph.D. in Computer Science at the University of Southern California. His cross-disciplinary research focuses on human activity recognition using deep learning and socially intelligent machines. He has published in computer science (e.g., *Journal of Autonomous Agents and Multi-Agent Systems*), psychology (e.g., *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*), and general broad-audience journals (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences U.S.A.*).



Dean Petters Dean D Petters Is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Wolverhampton. His major research interest is using autonomous agent and multi-agent simulations to conduct research in Attachment Theory. In particular, using simulations to model the development of patterns of attachment during the first year of life. He also conducts empirical research on close adult relationships. Other major research foci include the study visual object recognition; 4e cognition; and the computational foundations of cognitive science.



Joel Parthemore Joel Parthemore is a philosopher of mind in the department of cognitive neuroscience and philosophy at the University of Skövde in Sweden. His research interests include the complex interrelationship between evolutionarily ancient emotions and relatively recently developed conceptual abilities, which inevitably shape the way researchers and laypersons alike view those emotions. He is likewise interested in certain emotional experiences, often lumped in with empathy, which can nevertheless be distinguished from empathy by giving the appearance of two agents sharing one single experience: that is to say, one experience shared among multiple agents.



David Moffatt David Moffatt is a cognitive scientist who teaches affective computing, artificial intelligence and serious game design, at Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland, UK. From a background in mathematics, computing and psychology, his research interests are centered on the computational modeling of affective phenomena like emotion, and their interactions with wider cognition. Other recent publications relate to creativity in education, games, and artificial agents.



Christian Becker-Asano Christian Becker-Asano is Product Owner for mobile robotics at the grow platform GmbH, a subsidiary of Robert Bosch GmbH. His current interest lies in the domain of multirobot planning and coordination for Industry 4.0 applications, where humans and robots seamlessly work together in highly dynamic environments. His previous research focused on Affective Computing applied to social robots and androids. He is the inventor and maintainer of the open-source WASABI emotion simulation architecture that has been integrated into cognitive architectures of several social agents and robots.