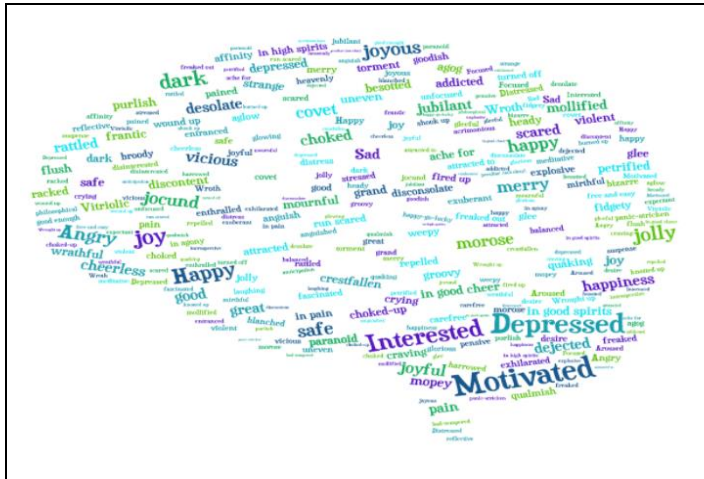


The Human Affectome Project

Project Announcement – February 2016

2016 should prove to be a very exciting year for researchers who are focused on feelings and emotions. The Human Affectome Project has just been launched and this will be a large-scale, cross-disciplinary academic collaborative involving researchers from around the globe. The initiative will make use of teams of scientists to develop a comprehensive, integrated and holistic model of affect (i.e., one that can coherently map the complete landscape of feelings and emotions to individual needs, motivation, attention, arousal, and behavior).



The project will make use of linguistics to develop a unique starting point for the project, one that will involve several thousands of feelings that are articulated in language. A rough taxonomy has already been produced using the largest known compilation of “feeling” words in the world (nearly 4000 descriptors) and the initial organizing of these terms resulted in a surprisingly coherent framework of more than 100 discrete sets of feelings that describe the state of various dimensions of well-being across five basic domains (i.e., physiological, self, social, planning, and acting). Moreover, the state of each of these aspects of well-being can be directly related to four universally-evoked emotions (i.e., fear, happiness, sadness, and anger). Needs arise when the status of any of these dimensions is outside an individual’s comfort zone, which in turn serves to focus attention and motivate behaviours (in a process that encompasses several additional, unique categories of feelings).

Indeed, this initial framework offers considerable explanatory power for the field of affective research, but this preliminary taxonomy was developed only as an acid test to determine whether or not the basic approach had merit. Computational linguistics tools and techniques will now be used to further expand and refine the framework, and then it will be fully reconciled with our current understanding of the various constructs that are circumscribed by the effort (i.e., via psychology, sociology, neuroscience, etc.). In other words, the Human Affectome Project will tie the constructs that we use in language to the underlying neurobiology that supports the experiences that we report. In the end, it is our hope that an expanded and highly refined model of affect will resolve some of the most contentious issues in the field, and have broad utility and relevance for years to come.

Project Launch - August 2016

The project is a 2-3 year initiative that should be completed in 2018. It will involve an initial workshop that will take place in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada this summer (4th-5th August of 2016) where participants will present on various topics and explore and refine the initial framework. Following the workshop 12 teams will then engage in the production of a series of review articles that will be prepared for a top-tier peer-reviewed neuroscience journal. The task force will additionally produce a fully integrated, all-author capstone/synthesis article that will pull these pieces together, with the goal of producing a landmark publication in a high-impact neuroscience journal.

Although this is a highly ambitious project, the taskforce model is very powerful and the broad distribution of work will ensure that the project can sit easily alongside existing research that is being undertaken in most labs. Team leaders and other senior researchers who are selected to join the taskforce will also be encouraged to engage junior researchers, post-doctoral researchers, and PhD students. The nature of the reviews that will be undertaken will present great learning opportunities for junior researchers and contributing authorships will be earned by all who participate.



Halifax is a scenic city located on the East Coast of Canada. In the summer, the historic port attracts many cruise ships as the city is well known for its park and gardens, and it boasts a downtown that is both beautiful and historic. Visitors can enjoy the rich culture and vibrant atmosphere found in the many shops, restaurants, and pubs that are clustered around the boardwalk and the waterfront. While the more adventurous can choose from a wide range of activities such as bus tours, harbor cruises, golf and many eco-tourism and outdoor activities (e.g., sea kayaking, fishing etc.), since all of these possibilities are easily within reach of the city.

Expressions of Interest

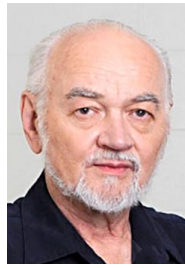
Researchers who are interested in knowing more about The Human Affectome project should visit the project website at www.neuroqualia.org

Questions about the project can be directed to info@neuroqualia.org

The Human Affectome Project Advisory Board



Adam Anderson, PhD
Cornell University



Jaak Panksepp, PhD
Washington State Univ.



Elizabeth Kensinger, PhD
Boston College



Ross Buck, PhD
Univ. of Connecticut



Charles S. Carver, PhD
University of Miami



Edward C. Chang, PhD
University of Michigan



Yulia Chentsova Dutton, PhD
Georgetown University



Hugo Critchley, DPhil
FRCPsych, Brighton & Sussex
Medical School



Jennifer Crocker, PhD
Ohio State University



Eve De Rosa, PhD
Cornell University



Heath A. Demaree, PhD
Case Western Reserve Univ.



Bruce H. Friedman, PhD
Virginia Tech



Justin Storbeck, PhD
Queens University



Edelyn Verona, PhD
Univ. of South Florida



Andrew Kemp, PhD
University of Sydney



William D. Killgore, PhD
University of Arizona



Mark R. Leary, PhD
Duke University



Daniela Schiller, PhD
Icahn School of Medicine at
Mount Sinai

“Neuroqualia” is an all-volunteer, public-interest, non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) that is focused on the advancement of affective neuroscience for the good of humankind.