Silvan Tomkins was one of the most influential theorists on emotion and emotional expression. Over a period of 40-some years – until his death in 1991 – he developed a set of original, important ideas about the nature of affect and its relationship to cognition and personality. Tomkins dealt with fundamental questions in a fresh and provocative way, establishing affect as a separate, biological system and providing compelling data on discrete affect expressions.

Several years before his death, Professor Tomkins agreed to bring his papers (unpublished and published) together into a volume to be called *Exploring Affect*, for the series Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction. He worked with Paul Ekman and Klaus Scherer to develop a structure for the book that would synthesize his theory of emotion. Unfortunately, he died before he was able to complete the process. Virginia Demos, who knew Professor Tomkins well, took on the enormous task of compiling the papers and writing connective material for the book. Irving Alexander has provided the Foreword, and M. Brewster Smith has contributed an overall introduction to the volume. Irving Alexander, Rae Carlson, and Paul Ekman each introduce a section.

This volume of Tomkins's selected writings on affect brings together his works of four decades and makes them available at a more receptive time in the field. It is a treasure trove of provocative, insightful, and relevant ideas.

"Silvan Tomkins was a theorist in the grand style, a style that otherwise has become passé in psychology. He had the chutzpah, the grandiosity, to try to sketch a general theory of human beings and their place in the cosmos. This was surely unwise, but it led him like Freud into paths of great creative originality, seeing connections that others had missed. Much of his exposition reads like pronouncements of a seer: obiter dicta about psychological phenomena and relationships asserted without evidence. This is not the stuff of completed scientific work with its emphasis on verification. Taken in its entirety, however, Tomkins's work ranks very high in creativity, the aspect of scientific *discovery*." – from the Introduction, by M. Brewster Smith.

Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction

Paul Ekman
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General Editors

Exploring affect

Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction

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For a list of other books in the series, see page following the Index.

Exploring affect

The selected writings of Silvan S. Tomkins

Edited by

E. Virginia Demos
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Foreword

In the last year of his life, despite a continuing battle with pain, Silvan Tomkins sent to his publisher the final two volumes of his major work, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*. Almost 30 years had elapsed since his analysis of the role of affect in human experience and since his theory of the origin and development of the positive and negative affects had opened a new path in the study of the emotions. In the intervening years he struggled to understand the negative affects, fear and anger, and to delineate the major aspects of script theory, an attempt to account for the development of signature aspects of personality from an analysis of the progression of the affective life of an individual or of a culture. His death, on June 10, 1991, surely evokes the oft-reported lament concerning the passing of an era of "grand theorists." He was certainly that.

Born June 4, 1911, to parents who had emigrated from eastern Europe to Philadelphia, he and his only sibling, a younger sister, experienced childhood in a large, warm extended-family setting. This background was undoubtedly influential in establishing his life patterns. He was an unusually affiliative person, a characteristic clearly identified by all who knew him. His father, a dentist, settled his family each summer on the New Jersey shore. It was a scene to which Silvan was certain he became addicted because of the abundance of positive affect generated in that surround. Throughout his adult life he continued to make this summer retreat; and after his retirement from academic life in 1975, he took up permanent residence in Strathmere, New Jersey, where the window of his study faced the ever present sight and sound of the surf.

As an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania he studied drama with the intention of writing plays. Torn by a variety of competing career interests, he eventually chose to do graduate work in psychology with a primary interest in personality. However, Penn's emphasis on psychophysics did not appeal to him. Thus, after receiving an MA, he transferred to philosophy and studied logic and value theory. In 1934, armed with a doctorate in philosophy, he found himself jobless in the midst of the Great Depression. It was not until almost two

years later that he was able to begin postdoctoral study in philosophy at Harvard University.

There he became acquainted with the pioneering work in personality occurring at the Harvard Psychological Clinic. Within a brief period of time he returned to the study of psychology under the able tutelage of Henry A. Murray and Robert W. White. The ensuing decade in Cambridge, as teacher and researcher, included some of the happiest years of his life. Although his basic quest, the search for what human beings really want, remained central, his major work of that period was concerned with instruments of personality assessment. The Tomkins–Horn Picture Arrangement Test (PAT) was devised in the early 1940s, ostensibly to deal with the problem of worker absenteeism during the critical war years. Its more general value for personality assessment emerged from the early analysis of test data. In fact, those data alerted him to the importance of affect as a motivating force. By 1947, when he began an 18-year sojourn as a member of Princeton University's Psychology Department, he had already selected from the literature a group of classic papers, which he edited and published as *Contemporary Psychopathology* (1943), a book that was widely read in its time. His classic book on the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) appeared in 1946 and brought him into prominence in the newly developing field of clinical psychology. He was aided in the writing of that book by his wife, Elizabeth (Begee), who had been his student at Radcliffe College. They had recently been married.

The early years at Princeton were taken up largely with work on the PAT, which culminated in a volume bearing that name (Tomkins & Miner, 1956). Concurrently, whetted by Norbert Wiener's writings in cybernetics, his attention returned to concern with a general theory of human functioning. The first expression of where he was headed appeared in a paper entitled "Consciousness and the Unconscious in a Model of the Human Being," delivered at the 14th International Congress of Psychology in 1954. He had already declared the death of drive theory at a colloquium given at Yale University a few years before. Now, with an interdependent systems approach and a budding awareness of the neglected importance of the affects, he was primed for a journey into theory. He claimed that it was serendipitous that in the following year while on sabbatical leave his only child, a son, was born. Like Preyer, the Sterns, and Piaget before him, who had studied their own infants, he set out to observe and study the development of the

affects in this fascinating subject. The ultimate result was the postulation of a series of innate primary affects and of their identifying features, their development, and their critical role in the life of the individual. The work appeared in the first two volumes of *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness (A.I.C.)* in 1962 and 1963. Complex, densely written, highly original, and clearly at variance with accepted views, the ideas set forth in *A.I.C.* were picked up and extended by a limited number of people (notably Paul Ekman and C. E. Izard) whom he personally tutored. The subsequent explosion of interest in the affects in the psychological literature was stimulated by Tomkins's germinal work.

The later years at Princeton were difficult for him. He had developed a viable program in personality, a field that the department decided to deemphasize. By 1958, isolated as the only remaining member of his area, he withdrew into his own work. In the next seven years, he produced significant theoretical papers on ideology and on commitment, and he began his study of the addictions. This spate of productivity brought him a Career Scientist Award from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), which ironically led to his departure from Princeton. University policy did not allow the release from teaching responsibilities that the award made possible, and thus in 1965 he accepted an appointment to help establish the Center for Cognition and Affect at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

The years in New York saddled him with major administrative responsibilities. Although he gathered excellent staff and established a viable program, the management effort and the hardships of commuting from Princeton, where he continued to live, proved to be too formidable. His major scholarly efforts were directed toward exploring the limits of affect theory and resulted in the articles explaining smoking behavior. In 1968 he moved to Livingston College, Rutgers University, where he remained until retirement.

Livingston offered much that was positive. He was surrounded by warm, supportive colleagues who were interested in his ideas, eager to learn from him, and willing to collaborate in scholarly projects. He extended his interest in psychobiographical and psychohistorical study and, in addition to several published studies, produced a fascinating book-length analysis of the life and work of Karl Marx, which never reached publication due to a tragic loss of all the reference material. He also returned to his early concern with life narrative, from which emerged the outlines of a theory elaborating the interdependence of

affect and cognition in the construction of the relative psychological invariants, the scripts in any human life. This work was published in the years following his retirement in the *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* (1979) and later in J. Aronoff, A. I. Rabin, and R. A. Zucker's *The Emergence of Personality* (1987). The final version of his theory of the interdependent operation of the affect system appeared in Volumes 3 and 4 of *A.I.C.*, published in 1991 and 1992. Several other volumes in various states of completion were found within his literary legacy.

During his career Silvan Tomkins received considerable recognition: a Career Scientist Award from NIMH, the Bruno Klopfer Distinguished Contribution Award of the Society for Personality Assessment, the Distinguished Contribution Award of Division 12 of the American Psychological Association (APA), and the Henry A. Murray Award of APA's Division 8. He spent a year as a fellow at the Ford Center at Palo Alto, where he was the intellectual linchpin in a group of specially selected social scientists. It was a role he was accustomed to playing. With his extremely broad interests and knowledge he could generate as much excitement in considering the ideas of another as in explaining his own. After retirement he was in considerable demand as a speaker both in the United States and abroad. His work on the affects and on script theory became known to historians, political scientists, and psychiatrists particularly; and many of them sought his counsel in his home by the sea.

No description of the life of Silvan Tomkins can be complete without stressing his powerful impact on the people with whom he interacted, who all ultimately considered themselves his students. He exuded the values of originality and independence, which led to the interesting outcome that almost all who did their graduate work under his direction wrote dissertations that were not identifiable derivatives of his work. Those whose work was closest to his were either tutored or trained by him as colleagues and/or research collaborators.

The breadth and sheer brilliance of his work may have been partially muted because his interests and values seemed always to flow counter to the tide in psychology. He focused on the centrality of the affects, whereas the field had riveted its attention successively on learning, motivation, and cognition. He was a personologist whose ultimate goal was to produce a theory that would make understanding an individual life as possible as understanding the life of a society. Such aims are not often shared in a field that heavily values empirical studies and minitheories about specific aspects of psychological functioning. His

was a mind all too rarely encountered even in a population in which ideas are the coin of the realm. Those who knew Silvan Tomkins the man as well as the theorist will feel his absence deeply.

Irving Alexander
Duke University

Editor's preface

This volume is part of a series edited by Paul Ekman and Klaus Scherer designed to present important works on emotion. Silvan Tomkins's contributions to our understanding of the role of affect in human experience constitute just such a body of work. Going well beyond Darwin's earlier insights, Tomkins constructed a comprehensive theory of the biological basis of affects, their distinctive function within the human being, their interactions with other important human mechanisms such as cognition, perception, memory, and motor functions, their importance in human motivation, their contribution to unique personality configurations, which he called scripts, and their involvement in cultural meanings and values, such as ideologies. His work has provided the conceptual and methodological underpinnings for the recent resurgence of research on emotion, as manifested, for example, by the widespread use of facial affect coding systems developed by Paul Ekman and Carroll Izard, both deeply influenced by Tomkins's ideas. Yet many young researchers do not seem to be aware of Tomkins's seminal contributions.

This current obscurity is somewhat perplexing since he received considerable recognition during his career (see Foreword). He taught at Harvard, was a professor at Princeton for nearly two decades, and spent his final years before retirement at Rutgers. He published over 50 articles, authored 7 books, edited 5 others, and, at the time of his death, left several unfinished manuscripts. But in spite of this distinguished career, his ideas have not been widely read or accepted by psychologists.

There are perhaps several reasons for this. First of all, his ideas went against the major trends in American psychology. While most psychologists were concerned with behaviorism or cognition, Tomkins was focused on affect. As psychology was becoming increasingly specialized and segregated, he was reading extensively and widely, searching for unities in the biopsychosocial characteristics of human beings. And while many psychologists embraced empiricism and advances in statistical techniques, eschewing theory, Tomkins set out to construct a

grand theory, arguing that science can only advance through theory-guided exploration and not through simply applying available measures. Second, and probably related to the first, some of his most important papers were published in out-of-the-way journals. For example, his groundbreaking research paper on facial expressions was published in the journal *Perceptual and Motor Skills*. Also, the first two volumes of *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness (A.I.C.)*, published in 1962 and 1963 and representing the first comprehensive presentation of his theory, did not contain bibliographies. A bibliography was to appear at the end of Volume 3. Nearly 30 years later, Volume 3 had become two volumes, and the bibliography finally appeared at the end of Volume 4. This unusual presentation and delay perhaps made it all too easy for psychologists to essentially ignore a major theoretical work. And finally, his ideas are complex, sometimes counterintuitive, and demand that one never lose sight of the ever-changing multiplicity of factors operating within the human being. There is no quick, easy way to grasp Tomkins's ideas and no single set of experiments that could verify the main tenets of his thinking. He is perhaps the only psychologist who truly accepted the complexity, uncertainty, and challenge that come with thinking in terms of systems, in which the important phenomena involve the interaction of multiple variables that cannot be studied by isolating a few variables in the usual experimental paradigm. Such a model is not eagerly embraced by a profession enamored with the experimental method and often seduced by simpler solutions.

One of the purposes of this volume, then, is to reintroduce Tomkins's ideas to the psychological community and to allow him to take his rightful place among the important contributors to our understanding of human functioning. Another purpose is to bring together, in one volume, a variety of writings which have been scattered in hard-to-find places, in order to make them more available to the reader. And finally, this volume provides an opportunity to present some writings which had never been published or were to be part of his next book on script theory. It is a comprehensive view of his creative efforts.

In the original plan for this volume, formalized in 1982, Silvan Tomkins was to be his own editor, selecting the papers to be included, rewriting and condensing them to eliminate redundancy, and writing introductions to each of the main sections. At the time, however, he was deeply involved in completing Volumes 3 and 4 of *A.I.C.* By 1985, Paul Ekman, with Tomkins's agreement, asked me to become editor and to get things moving. I had begun to use Tomkins's ideas extensively in my own work on infant affect and had come to know both the

man and his work well. Silvan Tomkins and I had many discussions about this volume over the next several years, but no amount of prodding on my part could shift his priorities. However, in my last long visit with him, in the spring of 1990, after he had delivered Volumes 3 and 4 to his publisher and could focus on this book, he expressed excitement about bringing his papers together in this volume and writing current updates for each of the sections. Unfortunately, within a few months of our visit, he was diagnosed with a voracious cancer. After various treatments, many ups and downs, and much pain, he died on June 10, 1991, a few days after his 80th birthday.

By and large, the plan of the volume reflects Tomkins's own choices. I have added a fifth section, and the introductory pieces have been written by myself, Irving Alexander, Rae Carlson, and Paul Ekman, each of whom has worked closely with Tomkins. The book begins with an introduction by Brewster Smith, a personality psychologist who knew Silvan Tomkins throughout his long career and thus has been able to contribute both a personal and a professional assessment of the man and his work.

Part I presents Tomkins's theory of affect. It begins with my introduction, which discusses the novelty and uniqueness of his theory, its current usefulness, particularly for infant researchers and clinicians, and areas for future research. It then proceeds with Tomkins's history of his work on affect which appeared in 1981 with the title "The Quest for Primary Motives: Biography and Autobiography of an Idea"; some thoughts on the evolution of human affects; a description of each of the primary affects drawn from several published sources; and a final selection on modifications and clarifications of the theory.

Part II presents Tomkins's ideas about ideology. Irving Alexander introduces this part, setting the stage with a combination of personal and professional comments about the man and his work, particularly during Tomkins's Princeton years, when he developed his ideas about ideology. It then proceeds with Tomkins's original theory of ideology, a description of his polarity scale, designed to measure ideology, and several studies relating ideology to affective preferences, drawn from several published sources. This is followed by a previously unpublished description of different patterns of the socialization of affect which produce ideo-affective postures that resonate to the ideological polarity. Part II ends with a paper that applies ideology theory to the realm of psychological research, titled "The Ideology of Research Strategies."

Part III presents Tomkins's work on facial affect. It begins with an introduction by Paul Ekman, a leading researcher in this field, who

describes how Tomkins's work on facial affect changed the field and shaped his own research agenda for many years. This is followed by Tomkins and McCarter's classic research paper presenting their evidence for the primary affects. The next paper describes several studies on facial expression and presents important conceptual distinctions and clarifications. The third paper is a brief response to the research of others on facial affect. And the final paper is an unpublished discussion of the relation of facial affect to scripts, taken from Tomkins's last public lecture, presented at the meeting of the International Society for Research on Emotions, at Rutgers University in July 1990.

Part IV presents Tomkins's script theory. Rae Carlson, one of the first psychologists to apply Tomkins's ideas to the study of personality, introduces this section. She describes how Tomkins's theory meets several important criteria for a comprehensive theory of personality; she then illustrates its usefulness and briefly introduces his ideas about scripts. This is followed by Tomkins's paper entitled "The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of the Study of Personality," which argues for the need for a new theory. A long presentation of Tomkins's writings on script theory, taken from two published sources, appears next. This is followed by his final revisions on script theory presented publicly in his last lecture. Part IV ends with an application of script theory to shame, describing a variety of possible shame scripts.

Part V presents what Tomkins has called human being theory, by which he meant a general psychological theory about human functioning that could provide a foundation for the study of personality. I introduce this section by once again emphasizing the uniqueness of Tomkins's ideas about cognition, namely, his comprehensiveness, his vision of complexity and multiplicity, and the integrative power of his concepts. This is followed by chapter 1 of Volume 4 of *A.I.C.*, which was written nearly thirty years after his original presentation of these ideas. It updates his theoretical framework and introduces the final volume on cognition. I have also included the first part of chapter 2 of Volume 4, which presents Tomkins's definition of cognition. Next is a paper on computer simulation of personality, which briefly summarizes Tomkins's ideas about "the interrelations between affect, memory, thinking, perception, and action." Part V closes with an article on personality theory and social science in which Tomkins explores the relationship between the individual and society and asks if humans can tolerate the kind of society they create and if society can tolerate the kind of humans it creates.

This volume ends with an annotated bibliography of Tomkins's writ-

ings to guide the reader who wishes to explore his ideas further. A reference list for the citations within the volume follows. Throughout, citations within the selections have been changed, where necessary, to coincide with the citations in the annotated bibliography and reference list at the end of the volume.

As with any attempt to select from a large corpus of work, difficult choices were made, and some real gems had to be left out, for example, his writings on addiction, projective testing, and memory and various biographical sketches. Many of these writings can be found in the pages of his four-volume work *A.I.C.*, and I urge the interested reader to find them there. Others can be located by referring to the annotated bibliography, while still others, such as his work on addiction, are incorporated into his later work on script theory and appear in this volume in that form. I apologize to those who do not see their favorite pieces here. My goal was to provide an introduction to all of the major areas of Tomkins's thinking and to provide within each area enough depth to allow readers to become sufficiently familiar with his ideas to decide whether they want to explore them in greater depth, in his more extensive writings.

Serving as editor for this volume has been a great privilege, an intellectual adventure, and a labor of love. It has provided me with the extraordinary opportunity to immerse myself in the full range of Tomkins's work, some of which I had never read before. Since I first came upon Volumes 1 and 2 of *A.I.C.* as a graduate student at Harvard in the late sixties, I have known that Silvan's work on affect was highly original and groundbreaking. But to have been given the privilege to gather all of his work together and to understand more fully the scope and daring of his reach has greatly enhanced my appreciation of his genius and his humanity and has deepened my sense of both personal and professional loss by his death. Since my graduate training, I have been engaged in exploring the world that Silvan's ideas opened up for me, and I was extremely fortunate to have had him as a personal guide and mentor for nearly two decades. I knew from the beginning that this was no ordinary mind at work, and came to know that this was no ordinary human being. This volume, then, is my tribute to Silvan Tomkins as a major theorist and as a beloved friend and mentor.

E. Virginia Demos
Cambridge, Massachusetts
September 1994

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Chronology

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1927–1930	University of Pennsylvania, BA, majored in playwriting.
1930–1931	University of Pennsylvania, MA in psychology.
1931–1934	University of Pennsylvania, PhD in philosophy.
1934–1935	Worked for a racing syndicate handicapping horse races.
1935–1937	Harvard University, postdoctoral fellow in philosophy.
1937–1940	Harvard University, postdoctoral fellow in psychology.
1940–1943	Harvard University, research assistant in psychology, Harvard Psychological Clinic.
1943–1946	Harvard University, instructor in social relations.
1946–1947	Harvard University, lecturer in social relations.
1947–1955	Princeton University, associate professor of psychology, director of Clinical Training Program.
1955–1965	Princeton University, professor of psychology, director of Clinical Training Program.
1960–1961	Stanford University, fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences.
1965	National Institute of Mental Health Career Scientist Award.
1965–1968	City University of New York, research professor at the Graduate Center, director of Center for Research in Cognition and Affect.
1968–1975	Rutgers University, research professor, Livingston College.
1975	Rutgers University, professor emeritus.
1980–1991	University of Pennsylvania, adjunct professor, Social Science Program, Busch Center.
1991	Died on June 10.