

Module:
Psychological Foundations of Mental Health

Week 4:
Beyond basic cognition and emotion



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Topic 2:
Evaluation: Interpretation and appraisal
Part 1 of 3

Topic list



This week, we will be looking at the following topics:

- Topic 1: Attitudes
- **Topic 2: Evaluation: Interpretation and appraisal**
- Topic 3: Delving deeper into social cognition
- Topic in Action: Metacognition

Click **Next** to continue

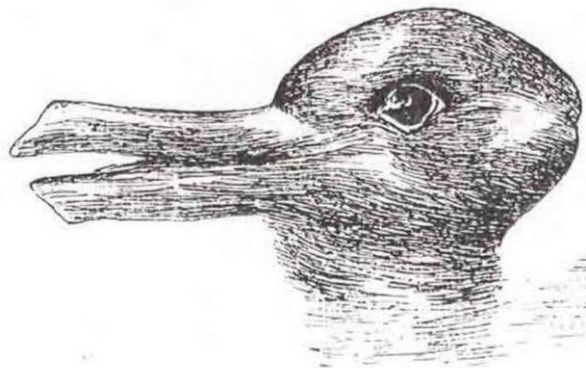
Evaluation: interpretation and appraisal

In this topic we will cover:

- The nature of interpretation and cognitive appraisal
- Appraisal and emotion
- Appraisals, stress and coping
- Interpretation and appraisal in mental health

What do you see? (1)

Rabbit or duck?



We can interpret the same thing in different ways.

What do you see? (2)



Appraisal

A particular set of psychological interpretations of the current situation

Is one chasing the other?

Is one leading the other?

Is it playful?

Are they fighting?

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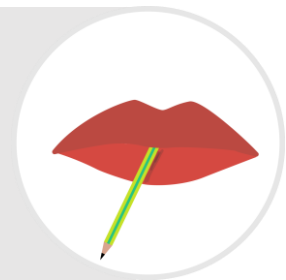
The facial feedback hypothesis (Strack et al., 1988)

- Our bodily expressions directly change the way we feel
- Standing tall results in a feeling of self confidence



Pen study

They asked participants to hold a pen in their mouth while reading comics



Hold the pen with their teeth

- Expression similar to a smile
- Found that the comics were funnier

Hold the pen with their lips

- Expression that mimics sadness
- Found the comic less funny

We experience joy because we express a smile

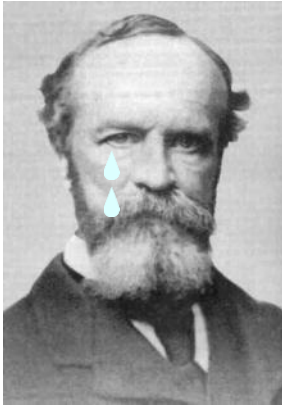
Strack, Martin & Stepper (1988)

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James-Lange: Theory of emotions (1)



Do we feel sad, and then we cry?



Do we cry, and then know that we are sad?

"Common sense says we lose our fortune, are sorry, and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run. The hypothesis here to be defended says that this order is incorrect. The more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, and afraid because we tremble."

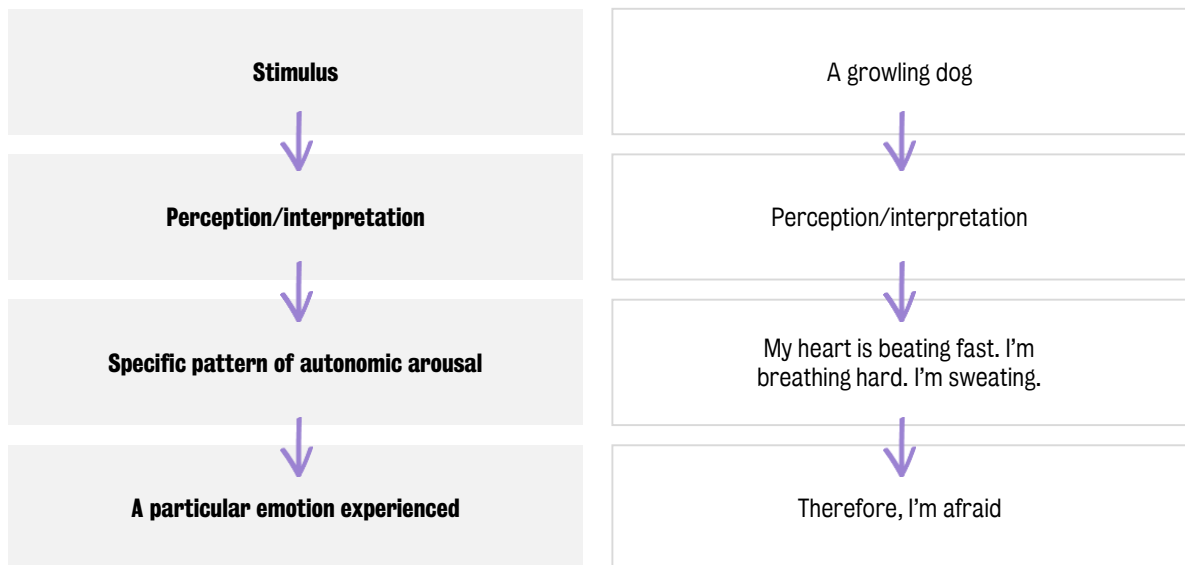
James (1890)

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James-Lange: Theory of emotions (2)



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James-Lange: Theory of emotions (3)

Cannon & Bard (1927; 1931) criticised the James-Lange theory

Emotions do not necessarily change when the viscera are disconnected from the central nervous system.

A physiological change artificially induced in the viscera does not always lead to spontaneous emotions.

Physiological changes are often quite slow and happen after people experience the emotion.

The same physiological changes are associated with different emotional experiences (e.g., fear and exercise both have a similar physiological response).

Cannon (1927), Cannon (1931)

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Schachter & Singer (1964) (1)

Schachter & Singer thought that the James-Lange theory of emotions was incomplete rather than entirely incorrect.

They proposed emphasis on both physiology as well as cognitive appraisals (the interpretation of the situation).

Determined jointly by people's perceptions of their physiological state and by people's appraisal of the situations.

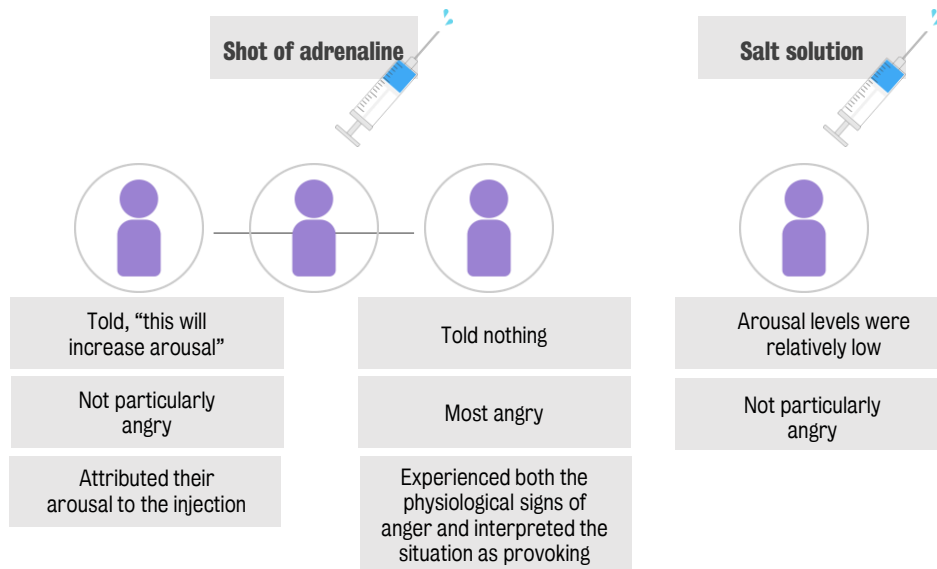
Schachter (1964)

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Schachter & Singer (1964) (2)



Schachter & Singer (1964) (3)

Perception of physiological state
(autonomic arousal)

Cognitive assessment
(appraisal of the situation)

Schachter & Singer (1964) (4)

Schachter and Singer provide three important ancillary propositions.

The most important two being:

1

In the event that an individual has no causal explanation for an arousal state he or she will label arousal in terms of available cognitions.

2

In the event that an individual has an appropriate explanation for arousal then alternative cognitive labelling will be unlikely.

Misattribution or falsely blaming particular circumstances as the reason for an emotion.

Dutton & Aron (1974)

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Dutton & Aron (1974)

“Scary bridge experiment”

Men walk across a “scary bridge”

On the other side they were asked questions by an attractive female

She offered the men her contact details

More likely to contact the female

**Misattribution of their arousal.
Falsely attributed their arousal
to the experimenter.**

Men walk across a “non-scary bridge”

On the other side they were asked questions by an attractive female

She gave the men her contact details

Less likely to contact the female

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Smith & Ellsworth (1985)

Peoples appraisals of the situation can determine what emotions they think we experience

Appraisals influence emotions...
...Emotions influence appraisals

Sadness = Negative interpretation of an event

Happiness = positive interpretation of an event

Fear and **Anger**
(Both have high levels of physiological arousal)

ATTITUDES AND SOCIAL COGNITION

Patterns of Cognitive Appraisal in Emotion

Craig A. Smith and Phoebe C. Ellsworth
Stanford University

Smith & Ellsworth (1985)

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Lerner and Keltner (2001)



Anger

- Appraised certainty
- A greater sense of certainty about their environment
- Are less adverse to risk, and are more optimistic about a positive outcome



Fear

- Interpret their environment as insecure, or risky
- Far less likely to choose the risky option

Lerner & Keltner (2001)

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