

Feeling without thinking



Psychology of Emotion
Lecture 21
April 27, 2011

The Celebrity Beef



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Robert Zajonc vs. Richard Lazarus

Big Question

How much *thinking* is required for
having an emotion?

The Controversy:

Can there be emotion (“affect”) without prior thought?

Lazarus: no

Zajonc: yes



*since feeling is first
who pays any attention
to the syntax of things
will never wholly kiss you.*

e.e. cummings, 1973



~~Lazarus Zamenberg~~ (and
thinking about cognition,
the right way. Also that's
not what his wife said.



Cognitivism vs. Non-Cognitivism

- To what extent is emotion a product of judgments, thoughts, or appraisals? Do emotions bypass conscious deliberation altogether?

Is the best theory of emotions a *cognitivist* theory?

- Are human emotions best described as the product of explicit knowledge and judgment?
- Or are they best described as not requiring real thought?

Cognitivist Approach to Emotion

- Emotions are the result of propositional beliefs
 - can't be angry with someone unless one believes that person guilty of some offense
 - can't be envious unless one believes that someone else has something good in her possession
- In order to have an emotion, this kind of belief is *necessary*.
- One way to think of this is that emotions are JUDGMENTS

Varieties of Cognitivism

- Appraisal theories of emotion in psychology
 - unconscious, fast, appraisals of environment give rise to emotion
- Existentialist theories of emotion
 - we have real *choice* over our emotions.

Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Model

Primary Appraisal:

Goal Relevance

Do I care about this?

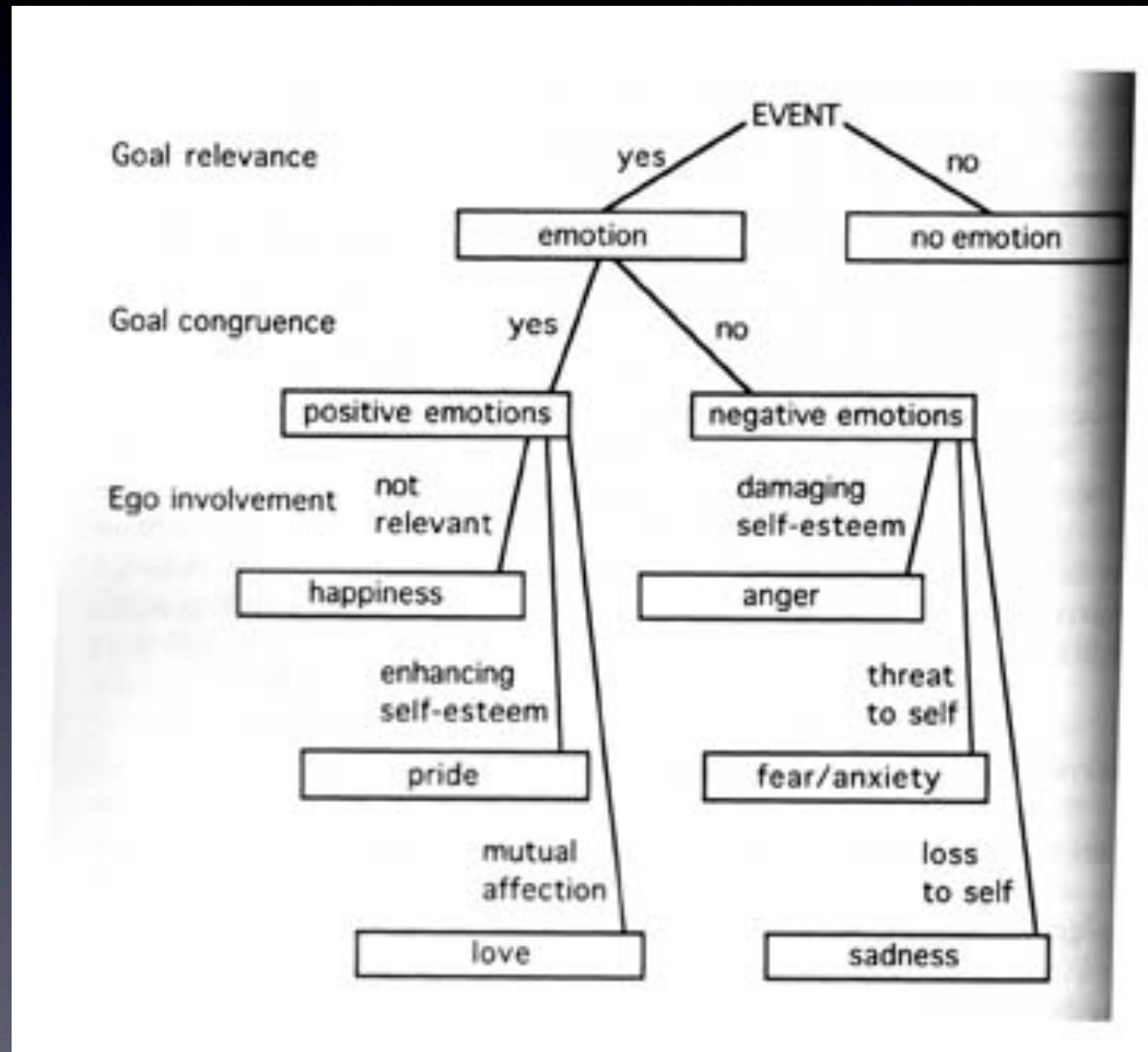
Goal Congruence

Is this good or bad for me?

Ego Involvement

What does this have to do with me?

Primary Appraisals



Action Tendencies & Coping

- Action Tendencies: biological, rigid, relatively automatic E.g. Escape, Attack
- Coping: psychological, deliberate, planful
- Problem Focused Coping
- Take actions in order to improve one's situation by planfully altering the environment and/or oneself
- Emotion Focused Coping
- Alters only whether (attention deployment – avoidance) and how (change meaning – denial) we think about something.

Examples

Anger

Goal at stake, other is responsible, has control, retaliation
e.g. waiting in line at a store because sales person makes
personal phone call

Anxiety

Goal at stake, nobody to be hold accountable, uncertainty,
no clear action that can be taken, avoidance, escape

Smith & Ellsworth's (1985) appraisal model

Appraisal Dimensions:

Pleasantness \longleftrightarrow Unpleasantness

Low Anticipated Effort \longleftrightarrow High Anticipated Effort

Certainty \longleftrightarrow Uncertainty

Low Attention \longleftrightarrow High Attention

Self Responsibility \longleftrightarrow Other Responsibility

Situational Responsibility \longleftrightarrow Individual Responsibility

Appraisals of:

Unpleasantness

High Anticipated Effort

High Certainty

Other Responsibility

Low Situational Control

lead to the emotion of:

ANGER

Problems with cognitivism/appraisal approach

- Smacks of the very rationalism we had to defeat...
- Do infants and animals not have emotions?
- What's the point of having to think about something if the emotion is supposed to make you better able to survive?

Affect according to Zajonc: “Preferences need no inferences”



- *Primary*: it precedes cognitive evaluation
- *Basic*: it is present in many other animals
- *Inescapable*: it is hard to “turn off”

The Mere Exposure Effect

Repeated exposure to a stimulus causes liking

Chinese ideograms:

汉 漢
字 字

The Mere Exposure Effect

Faces:



The Mere Exposure Effect

Music:

Subjects raised on Mozart preferred Mozart to Schoenberg.



How does the mere exposure effect work?



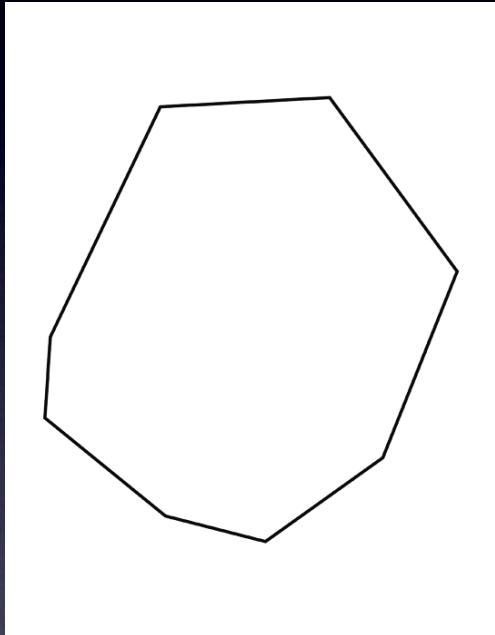
E.B. Titchener: recognition leads to a glow of warmth, a sense of ownership, a feeling of intimacy.

How does the mere exposure effect work?

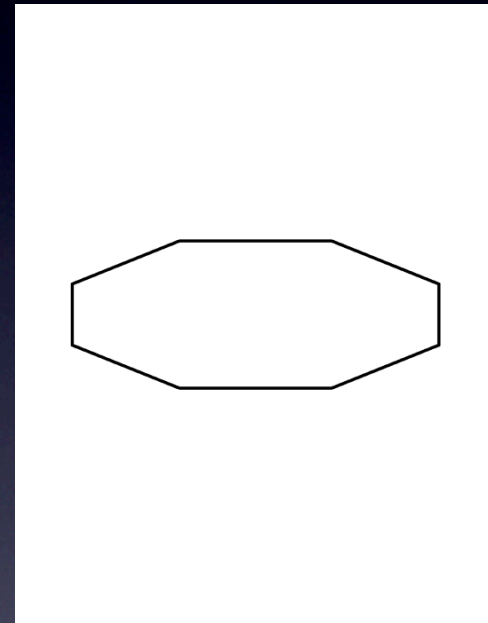
Zajonc: Nah man, you got it all wrong. Recognition doesn't lead to the warm glow—it's affect. Recognition didn't even get invited to this party.



Set A



Set B



Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc, 1980

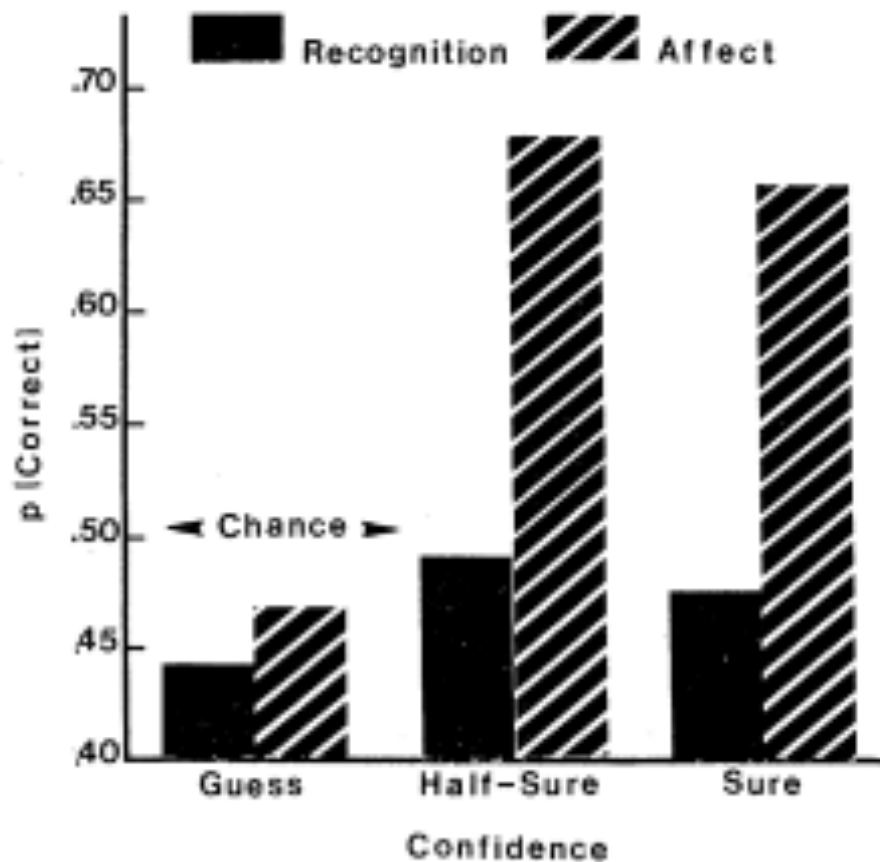


Fig. 1. Proportion of correct recognition and affective discriminations for first judgments in each category.

Affect is a more reliable indicator of recognition than asking people about recognition!

Mere exposure summary

- Stimulus can be consciously perceived or subliminal
- Not dependent on explicit recognition
- Works for many different kinds of stimuli
- Also shown by non-human animals
- Diffuse effects on mood

How does it work?

- Doesn't rely on conscious feeling of recognition or familiarity.
- Effect in animals suggests an evolutionarily “old” adaptive function.
- Possibly familiar stimuli are liked because they are associated with a safe, predictable environment

More evidence: Subliminal face priming



Graduate students evaluated their own research more negatively when first primed with their advisor's frowning face.

Neutral stimuli were evaluated more negatively when preceded by a subliminal flash of a frowning face, and more positively when preceded by a smiling face.

More evidence: Automatic Evaluation

Faster responses to:

Disease...slimy

Sunshine...honest

than to:

Disease...honest

Sunshine...slimy

Stimuli (nouns) are *automatically evaluated* and this speeds classification of words that are matched in valence.

Lazarus' Response

- Zajonc “seems to erroneously equate cognition with rationality.”
- Cognitive appraisals do not have to be deliberate or conscious
- They can occur quickly, automatically, and without conscious awareness

Zajonc hits back

Lazarus' argument is circular: He says that by definition, emotion results from appraisals, but:

“Solving problems by definition is not an incentive for further study. It is a useful maneuver that allows us to proceed with our work for awhile, pretending that one aspect of our problem had already been solved. But we can pretend just so long.”

So who's right?

Two ways to end the debate:

One is to accept that emotional experiences come in roughly two flavors--those that require minimal cognitive input, and those that rely on higher level cognitive processes.

LeDoux and the “Low” and “High” roads to Fear

- Two routes to fear response
- “Low” road goes directly from thalamus to amygdala.
 - Nearly instant, very rough, unconscious (no complex information)
- “High” road receives input from neocortex
 - Slower (nearly twice as slow) and conscious
 - But more detailed info

So who's right?

Two ways to end the debate:

One is to accept that emotional experiences come in roughly two flavors--those that require minimal cognitive input, and those that rely on higher level cognitive processes.

Second is to accept that “cognition” is such a broad category that it makes little sense to debate whether or not cognition has occurred and instead focus on what *kind* of cognitive processing is taking place.

But...

Zajonc's limited definition of cognition is inconsistent with how the term is used by social psychology today.

A lot of “thinking” happens quickly, automatically, and without awareness.

How would you explain cultural differences in emotional reactions?

Even basic perception--a process that is generally defined as not requiring thought--can be influenced by what we want to see.

Balcetis & Dunning, 2006



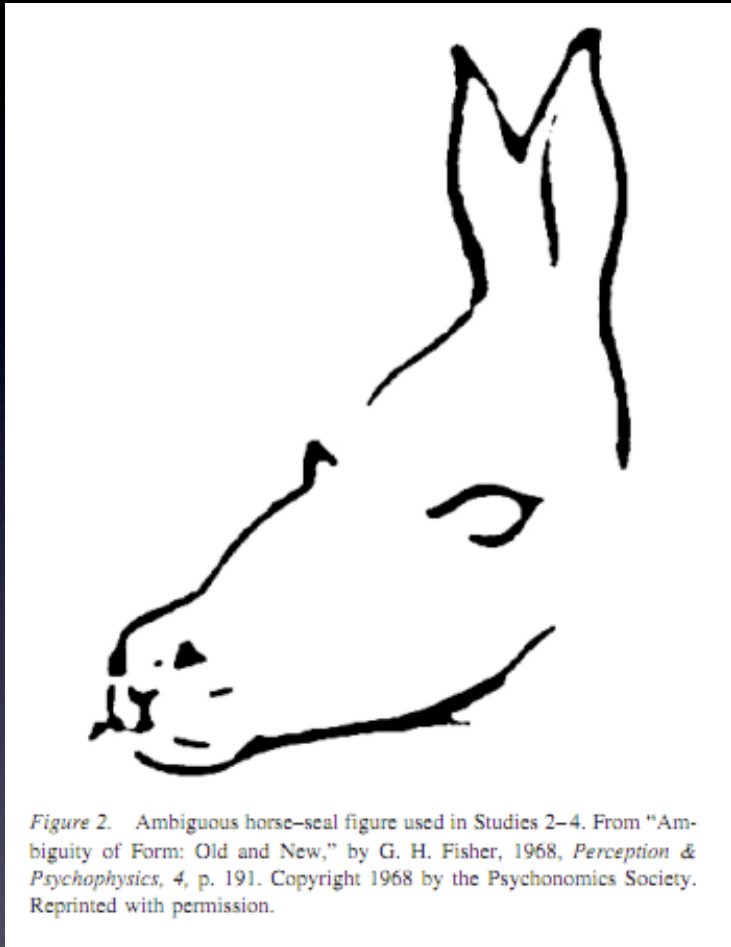


Figure 1. Ambiguous B-13 figure used in Study 1.





Figure 2. Ambiguous horse–seal figure used in Studies 2–4. From "Ambiguity of Form: Old and New," by G. H. Fisher, 1968, *Perception & Psychophysics*, 4, p. 191. Copyright 1968 by the Psychonomics Society. Reprinted with permission.



Farm
animal

Sea
creature



Caruso, Mead, & Balcetis, 2009



Lightened



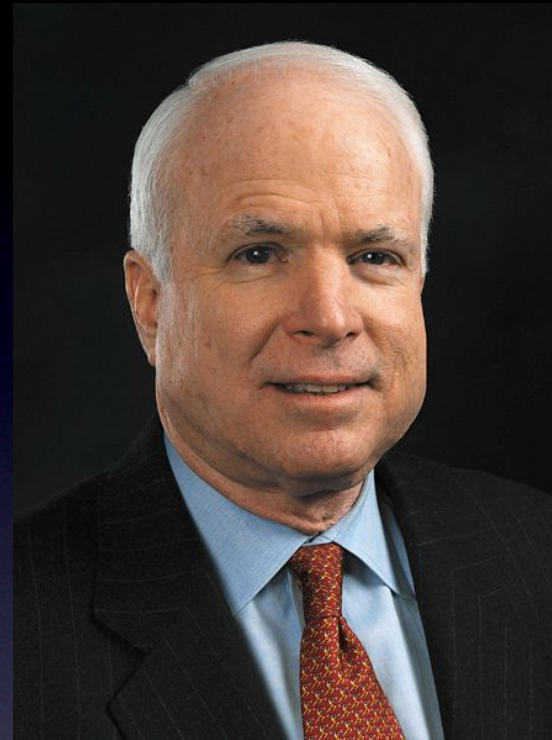
Unaltered



Darkened



Fig. 1. Sample photographs of a novel political candidate (Study 1) and Barack Obama (Studies 2 and 3).



Gunaydin, Zayas, Selcuk, & Hazan, 2012



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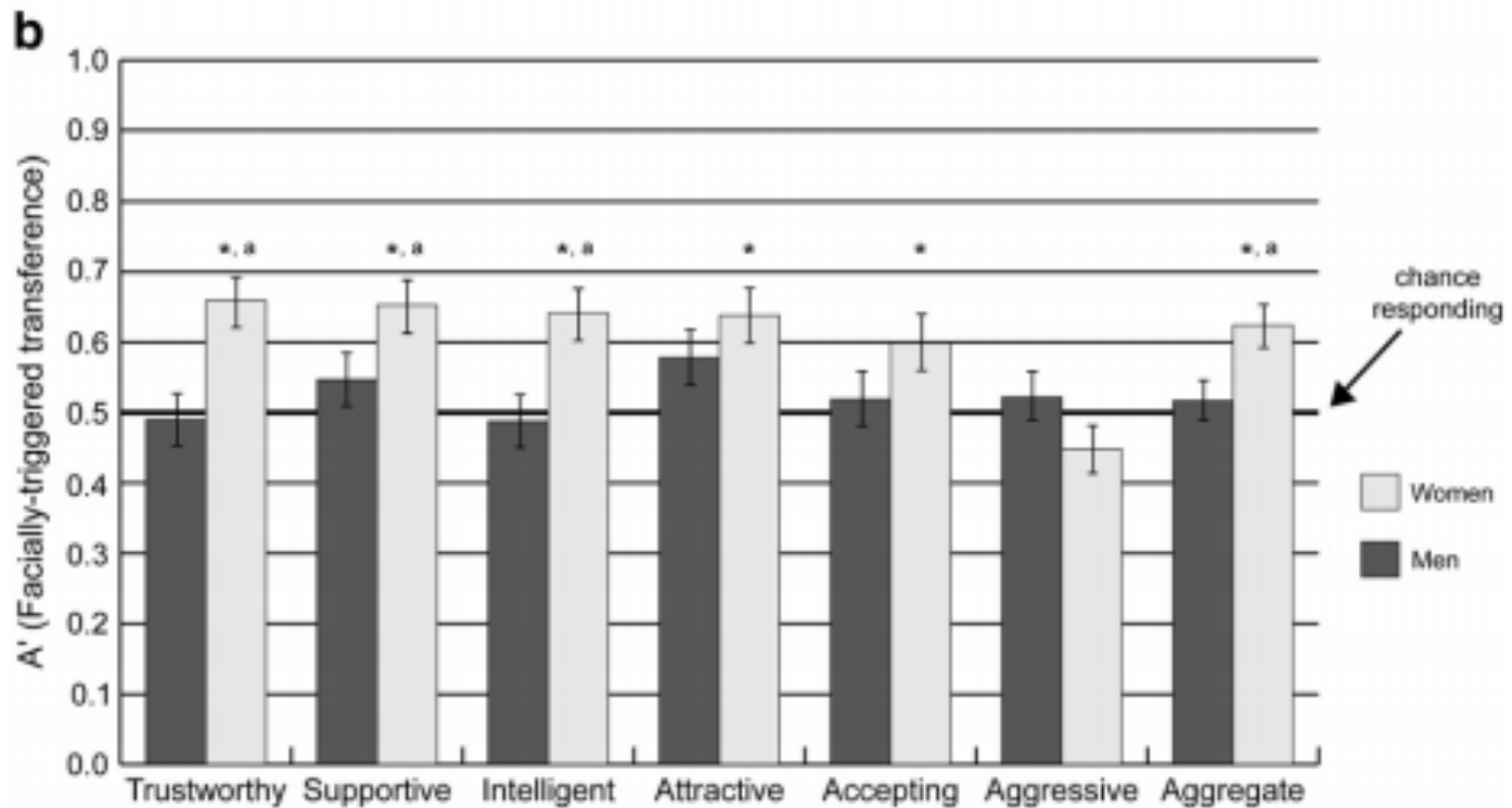


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You like this guy,
but you don't know why

Gunaydin, Zayas, Selcuk, & Hazan, 2012



Avoid future debate

- What “affect” are you studying?
 - Less need for thought for things like evaluation, mood, and “preferences” than for discrete/basic or social emotions
- What do you mean by “thought”?
 - Explicit rational thought?
 - Unconscious evaluation?

Please judge me

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SID=SV_6JCIKF9jwuFI6Sw](https://cornell.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6JCIKF9jwuFI6Sw)

