

Support

Conceptual

Try to imagine an emotion with no feelings (physical sensations).

1. Without the pounding of the heart and the panicked “gut wrenching” feeling, fear is just a thought.

A combination of feelings makes up the emotion.

An emotion is a feeling, but a feeling is not an emotion.

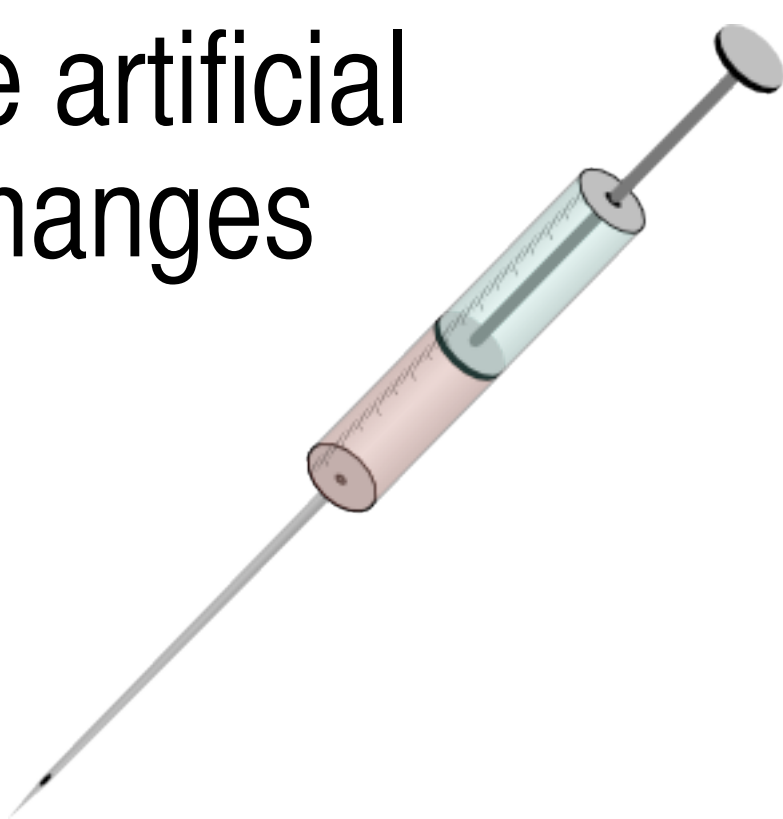
1. Hunger and Pain are concentrated sensations, therefore not emotions.
2. Anger however has several sensations and collectively they create an emotion.

In order to change an emotion, one must change the physical manifestation of it.

“Count ten before venting your anger, and its occasion seems ridiculous... On the other hand, sit all day in a moping posture, sigh, and reply to everything with a dismal voice and your melancholy lingers” (James, 197).

Empirical

Cannon’s experiment: The artificial induction of the visceral changes typical of strong emotions



Experiment:

He injected people with adrenaline and then measured their emotional levels through personal reports and observation.

Results:

1. People reported that they “feel as if” they had an emotion (afraid, anxious, joyful)
2. Actual emotions were produced if the emotion was encouraged before the adrenaline (talk about a recent death of a close family member before the injection)

Cannon interprets this to mean that emotions cannot be merely physical.

This is actually support for James’ theory.

1. People don’t feel an actual emotion because an emotion requires a collection of feelings not just a spike in adrenaline.
 - a. The subjects felt “as if” they had an emotion because not all of the sensations required were present.
 - b. The variation of emotions reported are the result of the body registering a change but lacking the ability to pinpoint which emotion it is.
2. If the emotion is already present the adrenaline only intensifies the physical response.
 - a. The fact that the emotion intensified with the addition of the adrenaline only proves that the emotion is derived from the bodily changes associated with it.

William James’ Theory of Emotion

Amelia Richards

Introduction

William James believes emotions to be the perception of a bodily change.

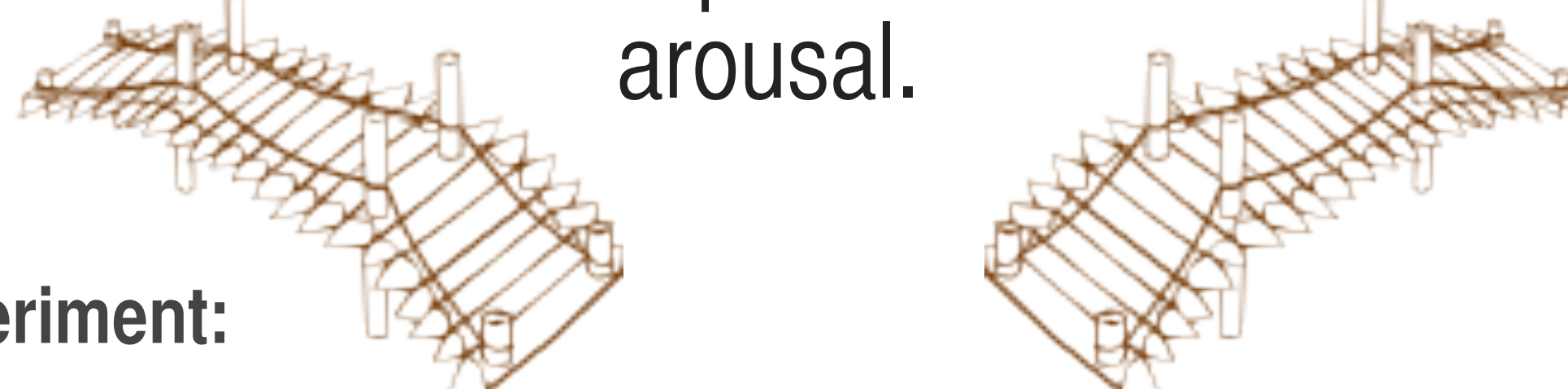
Perception -> Bodily Change -> **Perception of Bodily Change** (This is the emotion)

A mix of both Conceptual and Empirical evidence is provided

This theory applies only to the “standard emotions”- emotions that have distinct bodily expression. (such as anger, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, and surprise)



Dutton and Aron’s experiment of misattributed arousal.

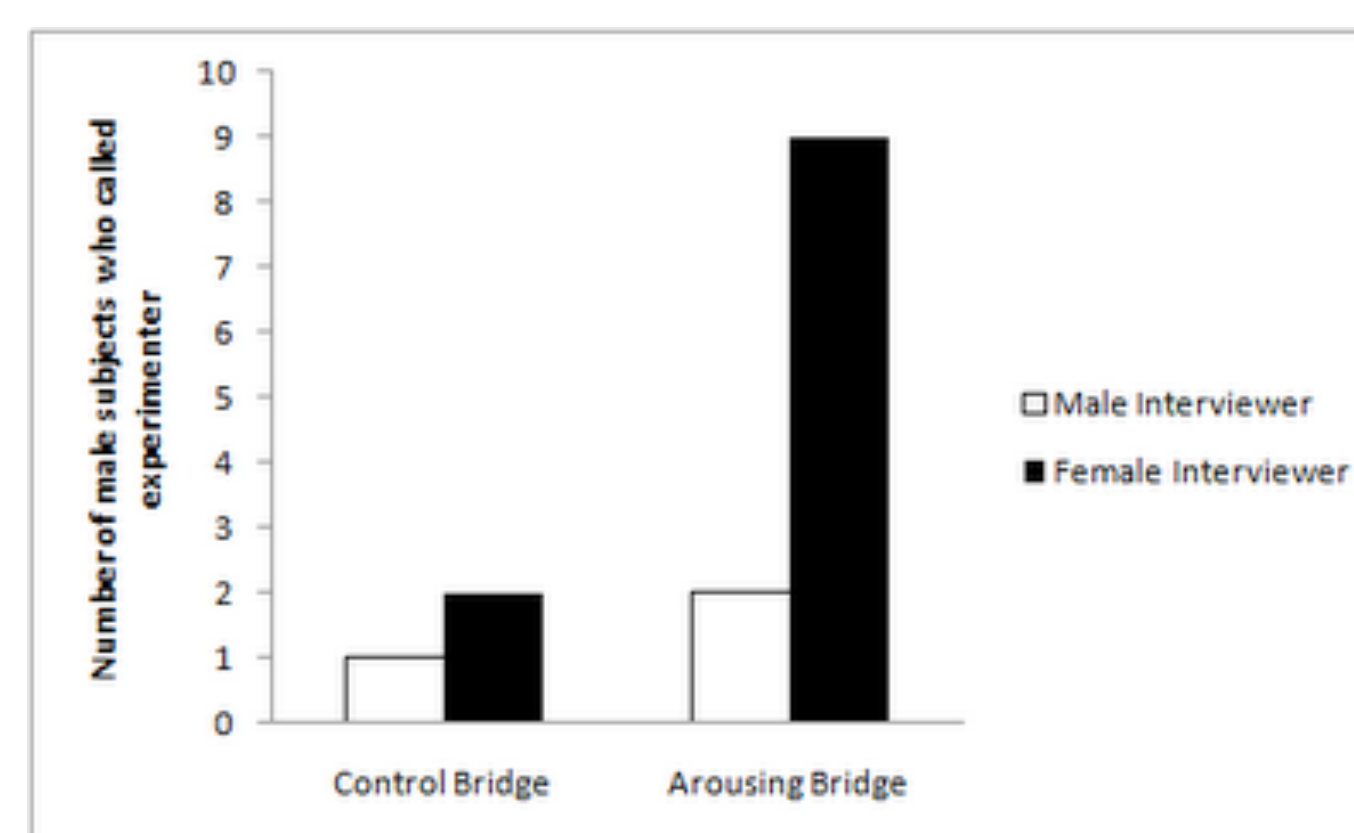


Experiment:

1. Two bridges, a sturdy low one and a high swinging one.
2. Two groups for each bridge, Male interviewers and female interviewers
3. Then the number of subjects who called their interviewer back (acted on their attraction) was measured.

Results:

As seen in the graph below the attraction was much higher on the scary bridge.



This is evidence for James’ view because the emotion of arousal was heightened when more physical symptoms were present.

1. Because their heart was beating faster the attraction was stronger showing that emotions are heavily based on physical changes.
2. The emotion is one’s perception of the bodily changes. In this case, people perceived their increased pulse to mean attraction.
3. This also proves that sometimes emotions are difficult to identify (fear could be misinterpreted as attraction).

Counter Arguments – Conceptual

Same visceral changes occur in different emotional states and in nonemotional states.

1. What makes each emotion different is the fact that it is a combination of several sensations.
 - a. For example, one’s pulse rises when one is both afraid or angry, *but* the blood drains from one’s face when one is fearful and one’s face flushes when one is angry.
2. Some emotions are difficult to identify.
 - a. People often misinterpret their bodily changes because of the crossover of visceral changes.

The viscera are largely unresponsive and react relatively slowly

1. Walter Cannon measured the reaction time of various visceral changes and concluded that they were slower than the emotional reaction time.
 - a. What he has are only sensations, the collection of those sensations is the emotion.
 - b. An emotion is not an instantaneous reaction.

Counter Argument – Empirical



Cutting nerves from the viscera has no effect on emotions in rats.

Hohmann’s experiment: Tested the importance of the visceral body to emotions

Experiment:

Interview people with high and low spinal cord injuries and determine their emotional states

Results:

1. Reduction in emotions were reported throughout the group
 - a. High spinal cord injury quote: “Sometimes I act angry... But it doesn’t have the heat to it that it used to. It’s a mental kind of anger.”
2. Reductions became more acute with injuries higher in the spinal cord (more loss of bodily sensation)

Hohmann’s conclusion:

Significant decreases in experienced feelings of anger, sexual excitement, fear, and an over-all estimate of change were found when the nerves were damaged (therefore not

References

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