

Emotional models comparison



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Affiliation This essay serves to firstly highlight what is the generally acceptable definition for emotion. Secondly a comparison and contrast are made of the James-Lange theory, Cannon's Emergency Theory and Schachters's Cognitive Physiological model of emotional response. Lastly the circumplex model of emotion is discussed.

Emotional Models Comparison

Emotion, even though it is a word in normal use, academics do not easily agree on a generally accepted definition for emotion. But there is a growing agreement that there is a distinct difference between feeling and emotion. It is stated by Robert Masters that feeling is an emotion that is physiologically based, but is sometimes also psychologically orientated; and emotion is psychosocially constructed, dramatized feeling. But there are a range of other definitions that defines emotion such as:

Any strong feeling.

In psychology and common use, emotion is the language of a person's mental state of being, normally based in or tied to the person's internal (physical) and external (social) sensory feeling. Love, hate, courage, fear, joy, sadness, pleasure and disgust can all be described in both psychological and physiological terms.

Incidents of coordinated changes in several areas, including what has been called the 'reaction triad' of physiological arousal, motor expression, and subjective feeling, in response to either an internal or an external event of significant importance to an individual.

To better understand the concept of emotion and the reason why it is difficult to define the term, it is necessary to compare the models developed

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by philosophers and academics such as William James, Carl Lange, Walter Cannon and Stanley Schachter. These are only some of the scholars who have made inroads in the field of emotions.

James-Lange Theory

This theory refers to the origin and nature of emotions theory developed independently by two scholars, William James and Carl Lange in the 19th century. The theory states that within human beings, as a response to experience in the world, the automatic nervous system creates physiological events such as muscular tension, a rise in heart rate, perspiration, and dryness of the mouth. But in modern times this theory have been reputed by scholars such as Bart and Cannon which argue that research has indicated that persons with some kinds of psychological challenges, often experience psycho-emotional trauma only after physiological responses arise in the body. They argue that these individuals were conditioned to associate psycho-emotional trauma such as panic attacks with certain emotional state, and that with therapy could be de-associated.

Cannon's Emergency Theory

The James-Lange Theory was disputed by Cannon's emergency theory, as it states that animal and human organisms respond to emergency situations by an increased sympathetic nervous system activity including an increased catecholamine production with associated increase in blood pressure, heart and repertory rates, and skeletal muscle blood flow. Cannon's theory in essence would then mean that humans are pre-programmed to enhance their survival in emergency conditions through one or other stimuli such as adrenalin and catecholamine production which would result in enhanced bodily function, which is activated by an emotion stress such as fear.

Schachter's Cognitive Physiological Model of Emotional Response

Of the many contributions Schachter made to the academic world, his model of emotional response is seen as an important breakthrough to treat persons with abnormal emotional conditions. His work on psychology implied that emotions are sometimes "constructed" cognitively rather than produced by a stimulus situation. His experiments proved that people who are aroused through the use of outside stimuli could be influenced to experience emotional stress such as anger or fear. This showed that humans could be taught what emotions to experience in certain conditions, and in conditions where persons are in a group certain emotions could be transferred between persons.

Circumplex Model of Emotional Response

There are many different emotions known today, some similar and others opposites. Some scholars have argued that emotions could be conceptualized by using a color wheel. Social psychologist William McDougall already noted the parallel between emotions and colors in 1921. Some academics stated that even though some emotions are total opposites, others are complimentary as when colors overlap in a color wheel. In the Circumplex Model of Human Response primary and secondary emotions can be illustrated through the primary or overlapping secondary color the closest representing the emotion.

Figure 1: Circumplex Model

From figure 1 it is clear which can be seen as the primary and secondary emotions. It is also easy to derive similar and opposite emotions creating a "circumplex" model which can be used as a useful analytical tool in understanding personality. Robert Plutchik have also extended the

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circumplex model to a third dimension, representing the intensity of emotions, so that the total structural model of emotions become shaped like a cone.

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