

Case study of film: love actually



In 2003 a romantic comedy 'Love Actually', was released which was written and directed by Richard Curtis. The film is set in London and delves into many dissimilar aspects of emotions like love, anger, and happiness.

Throughout the film, there are ten separate stories, which are all about very different people, many of whom shown are with connections in several ways.

Love actually begins five weeks before Christmas and every day is a countdown until the holiday, lastly followed by the end chapter of the story.

Love actually has many different emotions that any one person can interact with throughout their life. There are many different social psychological theories about emotion but the theorist that best describes the emotions in this film is the cognitive view by Schachter and Singer. Broadly explaining Schachter and Singer developed the two-factor theory of emotion. They suggested that emotion comes from an amalgamation of state of excitement and knowledge, which makes up the situation that, that certain person is in. For example, the theory suggests that when people are in a situation and they become aroused they look for clues in themselves or around them, to why they feel they are feeling now. Drawing on scenes from Love actually the social psychological theory on emotion will be examined to weather there are explanations about emotions' a person has.

Schachter and Singer developed a theory that humans have two components: physiological arousal and cognition. Schachter and Singer performed some research to prove their theory. They gave 184 college students one of two types of injections; adrenaline or saline injection.

Everybody taking part was informed that the injection was to test his or her eyesight. The saline injection had no effect, but on the other hand, the

adrenaline had effects of faster heart rate, rapid breathing and increased blood flow. Some of the students were told about the possible side effects but some were not. After the injection was given to the students, they were told to go and sit in a waiting room with another student who was actually a confederate of the experimenter. The participants were then put in one of four experimental conditions. Adrenalin Ignorant, Adrenalin Informed, Adrenalin Misinformed and a Control Group - Placebo. The students were then allocated a certain situation/condition. This was either the euphoria condition or the anger condition. The college students were then given a questionnaire containing personal questions. A student that was not given the adrenaline reacted angry towards the questionnaire and the other students who had been given the adrenaline got even angrier. The finding of this experiment was the students who received the injection of adrenaline showed more sympathetic arousal, in comparison to the placebo-injected students. In conclusion, to the research, Schachter and Singer argued that their findings support their two-factor theory of emotion because all arousal is the same and we label our arousal according to the cognitions we have available.

There are many other theories that differ from the approach of Schachter and Singer's work. Another theory that is focused on within emotion is Tomkins. This theory suggests that human emotions are genetically pre-programmed into the brain and are only caused by changes in encouragement. According to Tomkins, emotions make our motivation and behaviour to strengthen. He also suggested that when we feel a certain emotion, our brains are automatically programmed and learnt to pull a certain expression within our body language. However Schachter and Singer's theory is by large

very different to Tomkins, as Tomkins expresses that emotions are not at all based on a person's biological background of arousal they are genetically based. Tomkins makes the following statement about Schachter and Singer's work: " For over a decade, addressing a couple hundred or so professional audiences, I was confronted with the rhetorical question, " but didn't Schachter & Singer demonstrate that there are no discrete emotions?" When I first answered this question with the question " Have you read this paper?" I was somewhat surprised that, with one exception, none of these psychologists had in fact read the paper" (Tomkins, 1991: 44). In contrast to both of Schachter and Singer's factor theory and Tomkins theory of affect, Tomkins starts with the biological side of the argument very differently to Schachter and Singer's. Alternatively, Tomkins used his understanding of the biology side of emotion that we are born with a number of different affects, each of which involves a quite distinct set of biological processes within the brain, which are all pre-programmed.

Another theory of emotion is the social constructionist approach, which from the 1980's have always been the main approach in psychology. Briefly, the main people that contribute to the social constructionist approach are James Averill, Theodore Sarbin, Arlie Russell Hochschild, and Rom Harré. The main key elements of the social constructionist approach are that people's emotions are responses of the whole person and not just the secluded self and people cannot be abstracted from their social context. In addition, this approach is about the emotions that people have in certain social functions and not just biological functions as well as people's emotions as they are experienced and expressed in context.

Secondly, a range of cultural narratives about emotion has influenced the naturalistic theories of emotion. It is clear that these accounts of emotion are far from neutral and objective, since they are wrapped up in a cultural discourse according to which reason must rule and dominate the emotions.

Throughout the film, the Schachter and Singer's theory has been proven repeatedly. Within the first 2 minutes of the film, where family and friends are meeting in the airport after not seeing each other for some time, you can see the excitement through people's facial expressions and body language. This scene highlights and supports Schachter and Singer's experiment with the adrenaline, as people are getting hyped up, their heart is racing faster and excitement is bubbling because they know their friend or family member will be walking through the door any minute. There is also negative emotion shown in the film where there is a fake sex scene. You can see from facial expressions from this scene that there is not any emotion, as both actors know that it is a job and not for real. Their expressions are very simple and they are just randomly looking around the room, as they are bored. Throughout the film it becomes very evident that smiling and laughing is a sign of being nervous. When the new prime minister meets his new staff, one of them introduces themselves the wrong way and is very nervous. You can see this by her body language and her facial expressions are very tense and serious. Linking this back to the Schachter and Singer's two factor theory, you can see the physiological arousal and cognition are very much working as, the emotions that are being shown are worse as there is adrenaline running through the body and the environment is influencing the emotions too. Towards the end of the film emotion is also expressed by

psychical factors such as crying, which can mean that there is a happy emotion or there is a sad emotion. Feelings were also expressed by writing words down on paper and getting the other person to read it. Lastly, throughout the film there are various emotions being shown from, happiness, being scared, nervous, sad, and angry. All of these are expressed through facial expressions and make our body have a form of adrenaline rushing through our body, weather it from being very happy and excited or being very angry.

Emotion can affect a person's social function every day and in ways that are not meant. For example if someone get very nervous when going to a job interview, that certain person may have adrenaline pumping through them for fear that they are going to say the wrong things, which would them made them angry or upset. On the other hand, the emotion of that is being expressed in the interview can have two meanings as you would feel the same fear if you were being attacked or burgled. This could be proved a disadvantage of emotions as sometimes our emotions can come across as the wrong thing. A person may express a feeling towards someone, which to them is good but that person may get the wrong signal/ wrong end of the stick and perceive the emotion as different. Every day of peoples life's there are social functions and sometimes emotions can get in the way. One emotion can mean two things. For example tense, sweating and a gun being pointed into a person face equals scared but tense, sweating and a attractive girl looking at a person can also has the same emotion of being scared. In both of these examples, the state of arousal stays the same but the environment changes.

Schachter and Singer argued that all of their findings support their two-factor theory of emotion. The two-factor theory of emotion states that the arousals that are present in different emotions are the same in every emotion and we label our arousal according to the cognitions we have available. There are many pros and cons of the research that Schachter and Singer done, for example the main strength of the method used in their experiment was the amount of control they had over the procedure. However, there are many weakness of the method used by Schachter and Singer, such as the experiment lacked ecological validity. As a person, we do not usually experience emotions in the way Schachter and Singer introduced them. People are often aware of the event going to be happening so we know what emotion we are going to be feeling before the arousal is presents and the environment is present. Schachter and Singer two-factor theory can't be applied to an everyday scenario as some people react in different way and sometimes we already know how we are going to feel and what emotion is going to expressed. Finally, people wanted to believe the two-factor theory but because of the complexity of the experiment, no attempt of replication was made until 1979 when Marshall and Zimbardo failed to obtain the same results as the original study.

To conclude and back up Schachter and Singer's two-factor theory, Dutton and Aron (1974) formed more research and an experiment to prove the two-factor theory worked. Dutton and Aron had an attractive woman ask for interviews of young men. Some were interviewed on a swaying rope bridge, 200 ft above a river. Others were interviewed on level ground. A part way through the interview, she gives them her phone number. Over 60 % from

the rope bridge called her. Only 30% interviewed on ground called her. Two-factor theory says that the emotion that we feel that we are experiencing when we are aroused is determined by factors present in our environment. The environmental factors determine the emotion that we believe we are experiencing. Therefore Dutton and Aron came out with the same results that there has to be an arousal and an environment to have an outcome of emotion.

The two-factor theory of emotion by Schachter and Singer has been influential to many other theories of emotion but subsequent work has shown that the relationships are more complex than the two-factor theory predicts. For example, other psychologists argue and critique the two factor theory, that people are now more understanding of what arousal is and don't just look around them in the surrounding environment to find the answer. When we search to find an answer to explain a state of arousal, we do not purely use others' behavior but use many other sources of information as well, particularly our own past history. This is linking to Tomkins theory that our emotions are pre programmed into our brains.