

## Abstract

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This thesis addresses a fundamental question in both emotion psychology and decision research: What affective states do people prefer? Drawing on the pleasure-arousal hypothesis (Russell & Mehrabian, 1978) preferences for affective reactions were hypothesized to be related to the two primary affect dimensions of valence (happy-sad) and activation or arousal (activated-deactivated). Furthermore, current mood was expected to influence both anticipated emotional reactions and preference for the same emotional reactions. In Study I preference for current mood was studied. In Experiment 1 100 undergraduates rated valence and activation of their naturally occurring current mood as well as preference for this mood. In Experiment 2 another 90 undergraduates performed the same ratings for different induced moods. The results showed as expected that preference for current mood was related to both valence and activation. Whereas the relation to valence was direct, the relation to activation was inverted U-shaped with a maximum that increased with valence, as predicted by the pleasure-arousal hypothesis. In Study II preferences for mood, experienced emotion, and anticipated emotions were studied. In Experiment 1 40 undergraduates rated their current mood and preference for their current mood, on one occasion either before or immediately after they listened to an aircraft noise, and on a later occasion either before or while anticipating their emotional reaction to the same aircraft noise. In Experiment 2 another 40 undergraduates performed ratings of their current mood followed by ratings of their emotional reaction and preference for their emotional reaction anticipated in affect-eliciting situations. The results showed again that preference was related to both valence and activation that describe current mood, anticipated emotional reaction, or experienced emotional reaction. Preference for anticipated and experienced emotional reaction was also influenced by the valence of current mood. In Study III the possibility was tested that additional dimensions of human experience and evaluation, emotion appraisals, are related to preference. Four target emotions were chosen (regret, disappointment, surprise, and elation) that have been commonly studied in decision making contexts. One hundred and seventy-six participants were randomly assigned to recall one of the emotion episodes regret, disappointment, elation, or surprise, to rate the recalled emotions on the affect dimensions of valence and activation, to rate their preference for the recalled emotions, and to assess the recalled emotions on several appraisal dimensions. The results showed that except for disappointment and regret, the affect dimensions differentiated between the recalled emotions, that the recalled emotions had unique appraisal patterns, and that preference for the recalled emotions was related to valence and activation. However, in contrast to Studies I and II, valence accounted for the bulk of the variance. Inclusion of the appraisal measures in regression analysis did not increase the explanatory power. In Study IV the main hypothesis was that conceptually related or integral mood may have different effects both on anticipated affective reactions and preference for emotion than do unrelated or incidental moods. Experiments 1 and 2 yielded no effects of induced moods on judgments of anticipated emotional reactions and preference for emotions, even though both self-reports and mood-sensitive tasks suggested that different moods were induced. However, in Experiment 3, where a mood induction aimed at producing mood related to the subsequent judgment (integral mood) was pitted against a mood induction that was unrelated to the subsequent judgment task (incidental mood), consistent mood-congruent effects were obtained for the integral mood induction. Taken together, the results from all studies provide strong support for the hypothesis that preference for affective reactions are related to both the affect dimensions valence and activation dimensions. Furthermore, current mood systematically influenced both anticipated reactions and preference.

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