

Introduction

- A climate emergency caused by human activities is resulting in melting sea ice, species extinction, ongoing and potential loss of habitats for a host of species.
- Hall (2019) called for *truthful persuasion* that weaves knowledge and factual information into people’s cherished values in order to shift away from *knowing* to *doing*.
- Humans are not driven by knowledge or logical truth. Rather, we are driven by deep-held, individual-owned beliefs and values, which are essentially “an emotionally mediated form of experience” (Locke, 2012, p. 455).

**Guiding Question:**  
What are the current implications of neuroscience research into emotion and embodied cognition, if any, for how to design emotional experiences?

The Genesis of Emotion: LeDoux’s approach

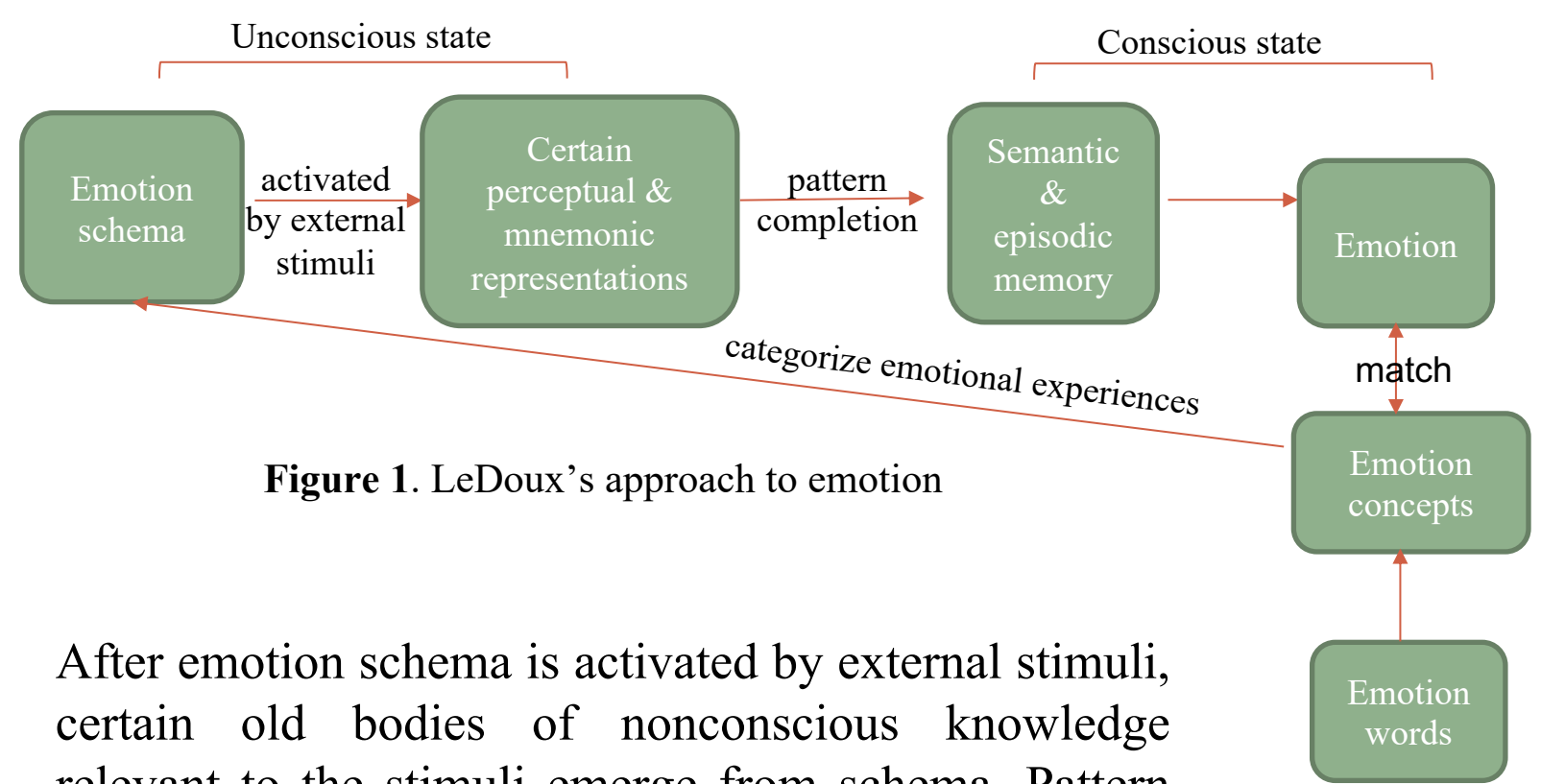


Figure 1. LeDoux’s approach to emotion

After emotion schema is activated by external stimuli, certain old bodies of nonconscious knowledge relevant to the stimuli emerge from schema. Pattern completion drives nonconscious states into conscious states where emotion words are conceptualized to understand emotional experiences.

Impressionist Art

- Impressionist art’s unique features**
- Artists’ usage of discrete patches
  - Complementary color use offering *immediacy* and animation
  - A **spontaneous, sensual effect** emanating from the painted surface



Figure 2. Woman with a Parasol-Madame Monet and Her Son by Claude Monet

Cognitive processes in the service of human interaction with the world are mediated by sensorimotor systems and emotions (Glenberg, 2010). In front of the painting, an immediately perceived air of casualness capture you. You enter the scene and start wandering in the grass under the sun. The breeze over the woman’s face reminds you of the breezy day you were with your lover. It was cozy and refreshing. If you are an old-aged mother, this might evoke your memory about your son when you two spent weekends outside together.

Impressionist art approach its spectators essentially through human sensations. When the viewer sees the women holding the parasol, the breeze over her face, it involves a sensorimotor simulation. In other words, the spectator views the woman’s or the little boy’s body as his or her own body.

An Impressionist Approach to Emotion

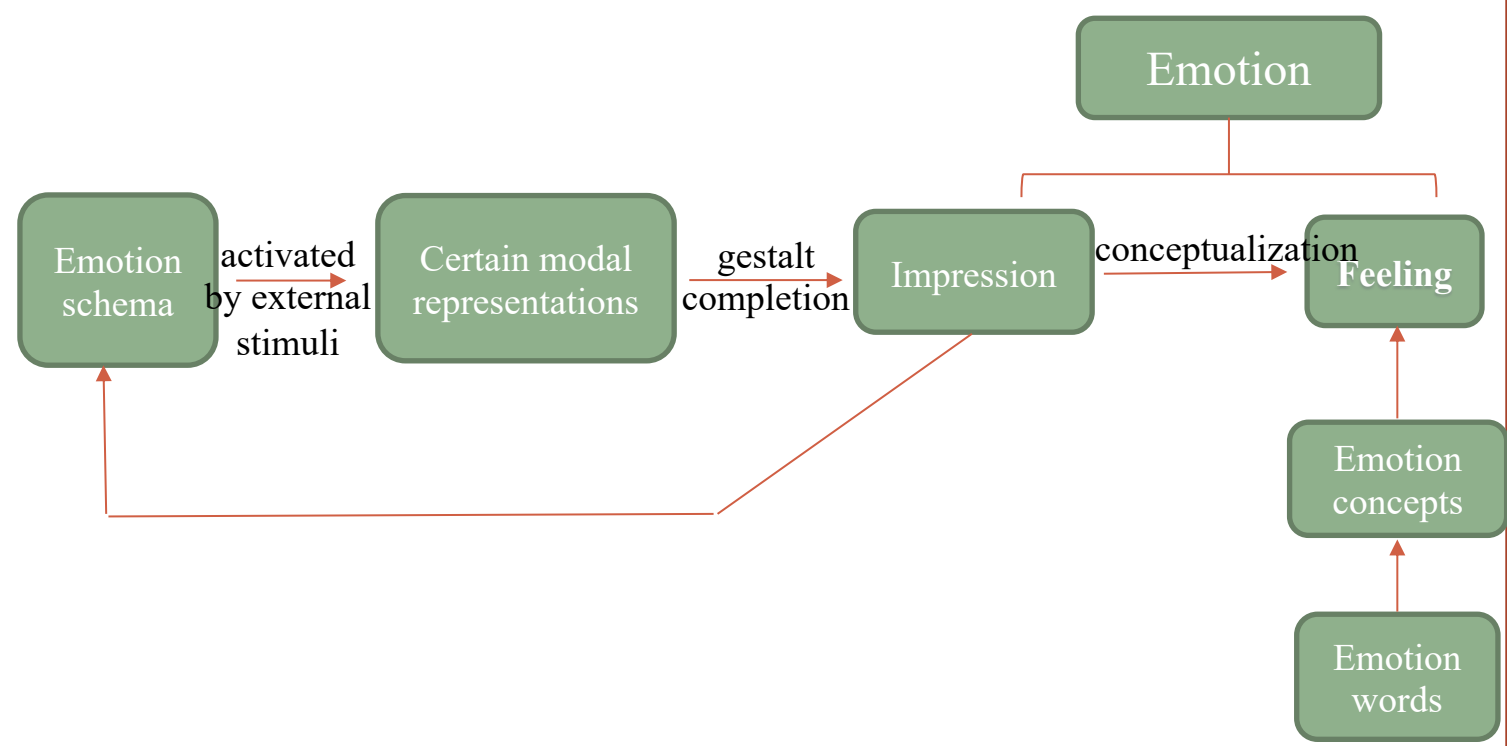


Figure 3. An impressionist approach to emotion

An Impressionist artwork’s unique technique of discreet patches (*tache*) enables *immediacy* that forms a summed-up impression for observers. The impression in the moment sends the observer into an *embodied space* where she can initiate the bodily interaction with the projections in the painting and develops meaning relevant to her through her subjective experience, emotions. Embodied space becomes a locale for immediate subjectivity where observers gain embodied knowledge.

Three essential qualities of **IMPRESSION**

- **Primitiveness:** Impression as a *Gestalt* is the closest to what a person feels in the moment.
- **Spatiality:** The encounter between self and the objective world generates a felt space where *impression* emerges.
- **Elasticity:** As people grow, the new emotional experience will be stored or sometimes modify the original emotion schema.

*Design to Impression*

- In front of an Impressionist artwork, spectators can instantly grasp its *gestalt* from a reasonable distance without being distracted by details. They also perceive affordances for action.
- Those affordances arise from an interaction between the objects and events depicted and our bodily capabilities. As affordances are derived, they also invoke or retrieve associated emotional states. The subjective “embodied space” is the set of affordances and emotional states (impression).
- Inspired by the principles of Impressionist artwork, I propose that emotion schema possesses *gestalt* qualities that assist the organization of the affordances and emotional states into a coherent, goal-oriented subjective experience, which I call *impression*.

***Design to Impression* seeks *gestalt*, which enjoys the priority attributed to the general impression with respect to the discrete elements. In order to realize the *gestalt* qualities, two components can be attended to: emotional stimuli and emotion schema.**

Implications

The theory aims to call for concerted effort in different fields of human society to consider the nature of human beings and emotion as we create meaning and design experience. My vision is that attending to the notion of impression in design would be instructive to elicit emotional experience. The theory is a novel attempt building on the implications of affective neuroscience and impressionist aesthetics, aspiring to see humans develop greater conscientiousness to better the world.

Defining Key Terms

**Emotion schema** – “nonconscious bodies of knowledge of emotions that helps us conceptualize situations” (LeDoux, 2019)

**Emotion** – “conscious experiences that are cognitively assembled” (LeDoux, 2019), encompassing two parts: impression and feeling

**Impression** – conscious emotional states beyond the grasp of language that are preconceptual and pre-analytic

**Feeling** – cognitive interpretation of emotional states (impression) heavily relying on human language