

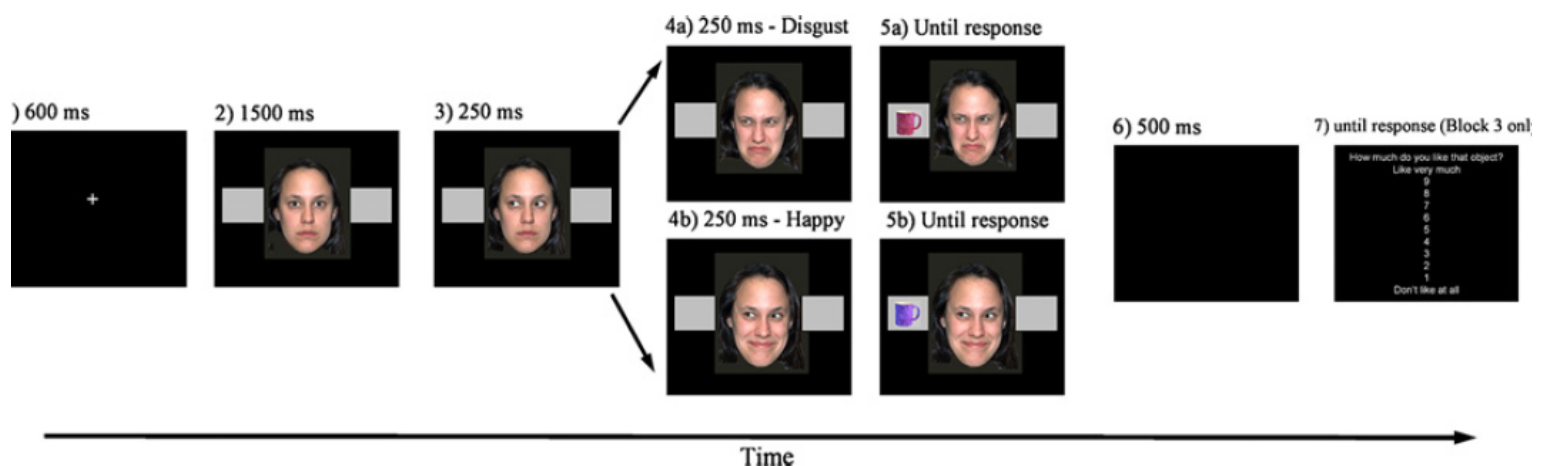
31. Bayliss et. Al

Affective evaluations of objects are influenced by observed gaze direction and emotional expression

Summary:

The paper aims to research the combined result of gaze and emotion. Gaze direction (staren/kijken) is defined as another person's focus of interest. Emotion is described as that person's emotional expression, being either happy, neutral or disgusted.

Observing another person's gaze direction is known to stimulate arousal. When looking at the other person's gaze at object, response rates about that object are higher. This process is called joint attention. Besides gaze direction, emotion (expression of the observed person's face) is also known to have an impact on the evaluation of the object. The researchers wanted to investigate both their independent and combined effect on affection (liking/not liking an object). Namely, whether observing a person's gaze direction alone (neutral expression of that person's face) is enough to influence affection about the cued (looked at) object. And whether observing a person's emotional expression alone (without that person looking at the object) is enough to influence affection about the non-cued (not looked at) object. More importantly the combined result of both gaze direction and emotional



expression were investigated.

The findings in this papers showed that there is an intimate and highly specific relationship between gaze direction and the emotion expressed by the face. Thus, when a face is seen to be looking at an object, the emotion expressed by the face determines how much the object is liked. Objects are liked more when the face looking at them is smiling than when expressing disgust.

There is no such effect of happy or disgust emotions on objects that are not directly looked at. That is, only ratings of the object of joint attention are subject to modulation via emotional expression.

Thus, when evaluating an object that is gazed at by another person, their emotional expression helps to appraise the significance of that object. On the other hand, the emotional expression of the person conveys little information about an object that is not looked at. Interestingly, when asked during casual debriefing, none of the participants indicated that either the face's gaze direction or emotional expression had influenced their ratings, the effect could therefore be an implicit one.

This underscores the importance of the gaze-cue as a social signal, rather than just as an attentional cue, when it is used in conjunction with the emotion of the face to influence liking.