



4TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP MAY 21-23

PRESENCE 2001

PHILADELPHIA, PA USA AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Media Psychology 'is not yet there'

Introducing Theories
on the Reception of Entertaining Media
to the Presence Debate

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“The virtual reality or presence
you are all talking about is
something constructed behind
the sensory systems in mental
or cognitive spaces, and those
states can be created by
reading a book!”

John E. Newhagen, October 25, 2000

Theories on Media Reception

- 📁 Modes-of-Reception-Theory
 - 📁 Affective Disposition Theory
 - 📁 Simulation Theory
 - 📁 Psychological Theory of Playful Action
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Two-Modes-of- Reception-Theory

- ☞ *Involvement* is the degree to which a media user is ‚captured‘ by the media use
- ☞ Involvement varies during exposure
- ☞ Involvement varies between different individuals and situations

Two-Modes-of- Reception-Theory

- 📁 Vorderer (1992) suggests two prototypical modes of reception:

Analytical Mode

Reflection

Evaluation

Understanding the
media offer as part of
the environment



Engaged Mode

Involvement

Emotional Participation

Understanding the
media offer as the
environment

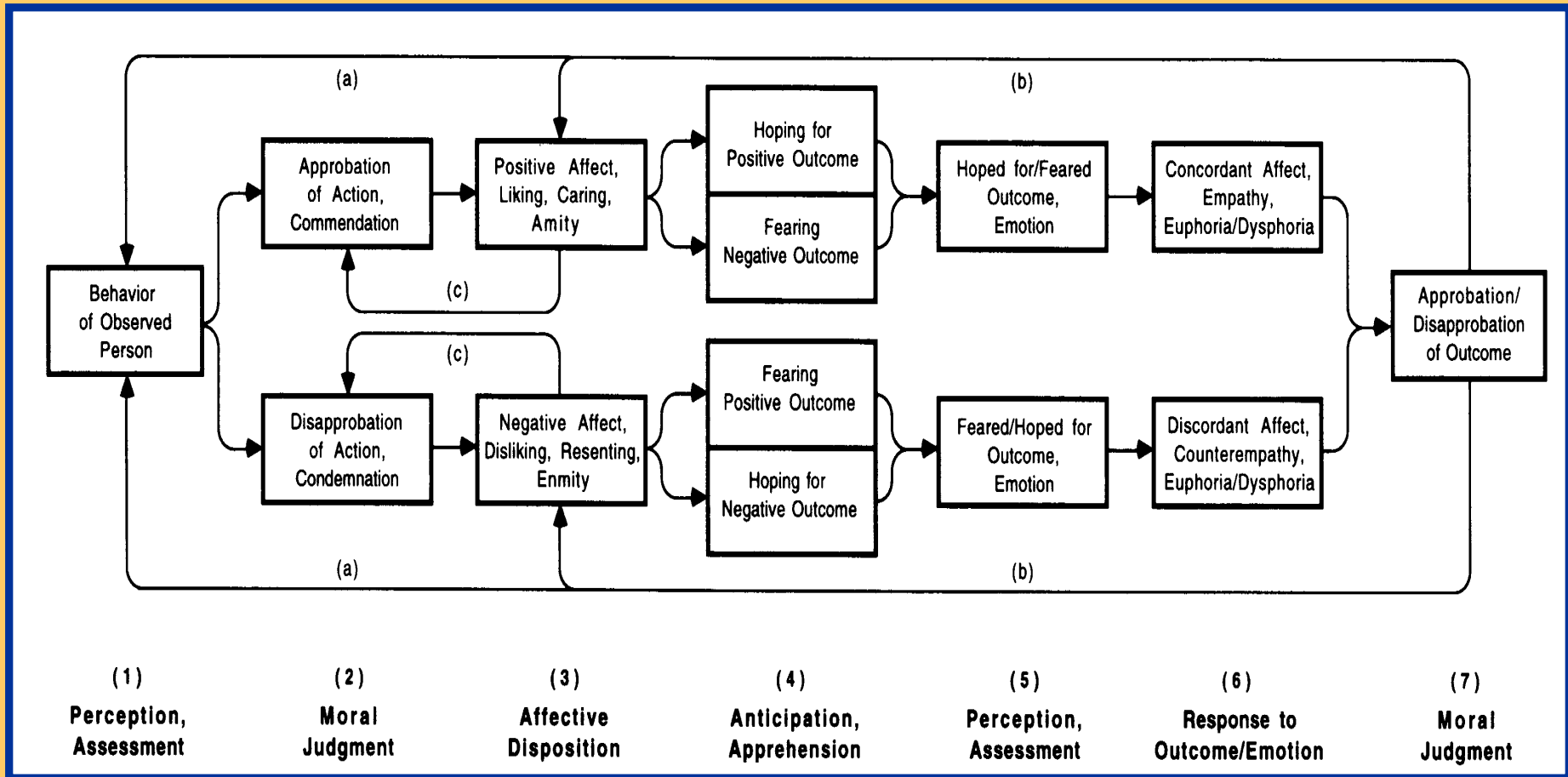
Two-Modes-of- Reception-Theory

- ☞ Theory points to the problem of the *motivation* to become involved
- ☞ Factors influencing the mode of reception
 - ☞ Cultural background of the user
 - ☞ Implicit signals of the media offer about how to ‚read‘ it, e.g., Popcorn Movie versus Fine Art
- ☞ The *process* of involvement is not explained

Affective Disposition Theory

- ☐ Zillmann (1994; 1996) proposes a process model of the reception of drama
- ☐ Emotional involvement depends on characters of the media offer
- ☐ Liking the good guys and disliking the villains as sources of emotional experiences

Affective Disposition Theory



Affective Disposition Theory

- ☐ Theory explains the process of emotional involvement and motivation to become involved
- ☐ Theory does not consider individual characteristics of users (memories, opinions, aesthetic preferences, ...)
- ☐ Theory does not consider interactive multi-media environments: users are passive **witnesses**, not active **participants**

Simulation Theory

- ❏ Originally designed by Oatley (1994; 1999) to explain the fascination of reading fictional narrative
- ❏ Understanding the imagination of story events as ‚Simulation‘
- ❏ Simulation enables readers to occupy the protagonist’s perspective
- ❏ Simulation can activate memories and trigger past emotions

Simulation Theory

- ☐ Theory can easily be applied to the exposure to other media
- ☐ Involvement as loading the mental systems with imaginations: e.g., characters, locations, events, feelings
- ☐ Emotions caused by re-experiencing past feelings and sympathy for characters
- ☐ Theory does not consider the option of interactively participating in the „Simulation“

Psychological Theory of Playful Action

- ☐ Action-Orientation: players are agents, not passive witnesses (Vorderer, 2001)
- ☐ Reasons for involvement with play
 - ☐ Curiosity and exploration
 - ☐ Competition and success
 - ☐ Experiencing ‚reality light‘: „no danger, only challenge“ (Poole, 2000, p. 77)
 - ☐ Playing as simulation of interesting new realities and successful action in new domains

Consequences for Theorizing about Presence

- 📁 Media Psychology offers theories on the *motivation* to become involved
- 📁 User-Orientation instead of tech-orientation
- 📁 Media Psychology can explain specific processes of fascination during exposure
- 📁 Play Theory can explain the immersive power of interactivity



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Media Psychology **should** ,be there‘

Thank you very much.

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