



The social signal value of emotions: The impact of context and culture

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**WHY DOES CONTEXT ALWAYS
MATTER?**

Pattern matching



Pattern matching



Activation of
Zygomaticus
Major?
Check!



Pattern matching



Activation of
Zygomaticus
Major?
Check!



Activation of
Orbicularis
Occuli ?
Check!

Pattern matching



Activation of
Orbicularis
Occuli ?
Check!

Activation of
Zygomaticus
Major?
Check!



He is happy!

Perspective taking





Perspective taking

He just got
some very
good news



Perspective taking



He just got
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People who
get very good
news are
happy



Perspective taking



He just got some very good news

People who get very good news are happy



He is happy!

Perspective taking



He just got some very good news

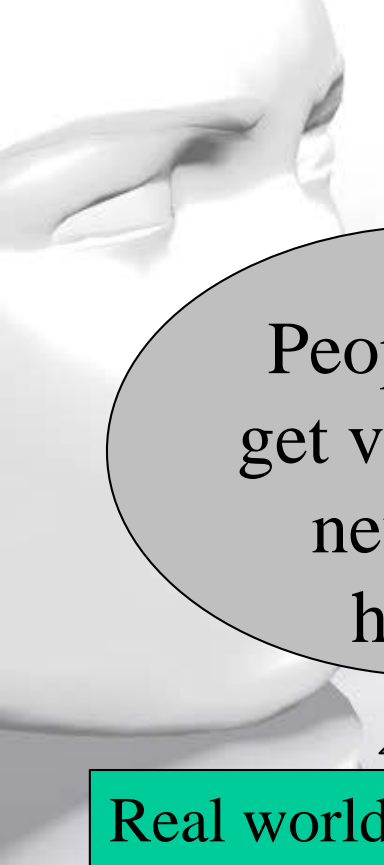
Context Information

He is happy!



People who get very good news are happy

Real world knowledge



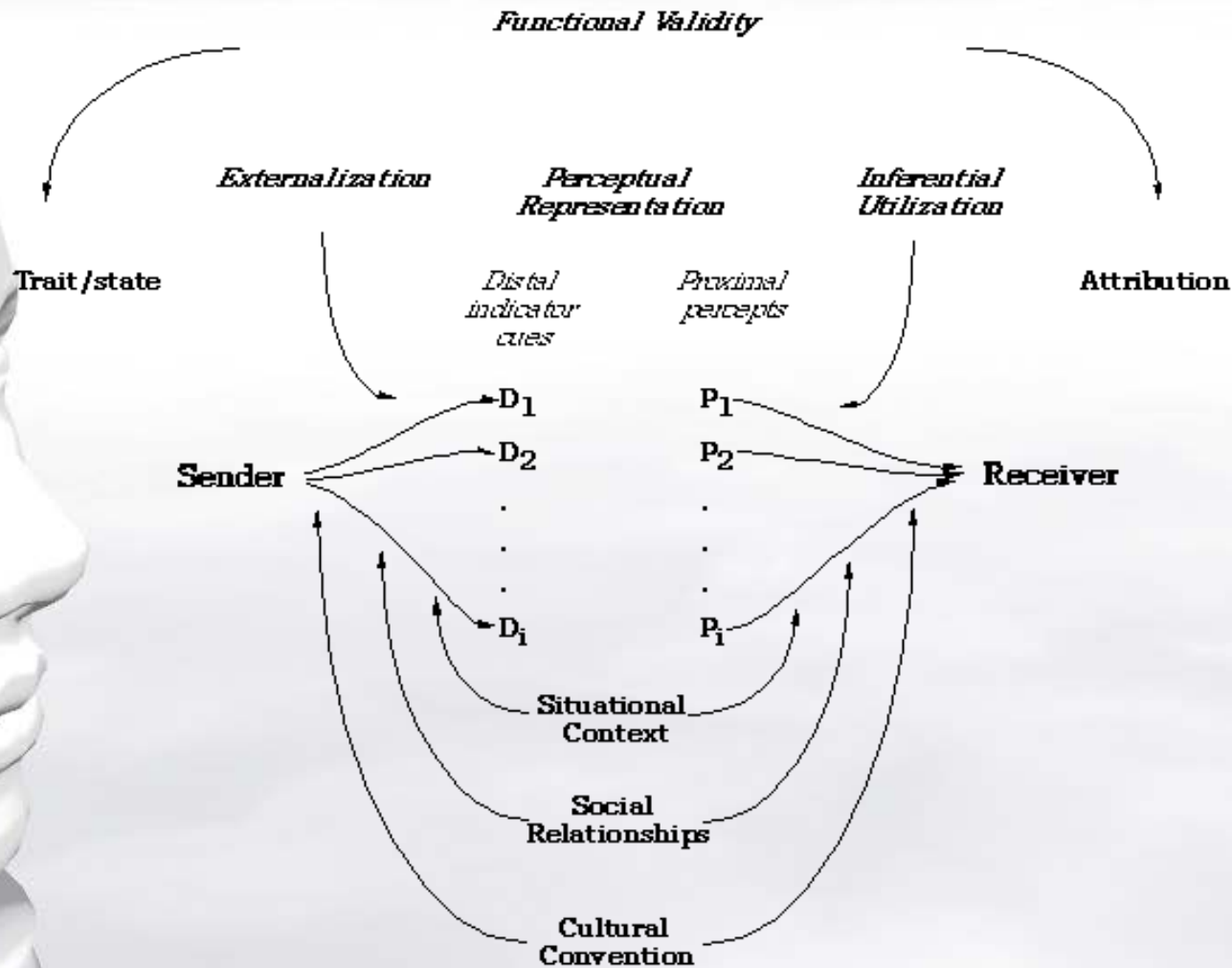






Serena Williams after beating her sister in the 2008 US open tennis finals

Scherer: Modified Brunswick model



What do emotional facial
expressions signal



What do emotional facial expressions signal

- Darwin: Emotional facial expressions signal an underlying state – the emotion



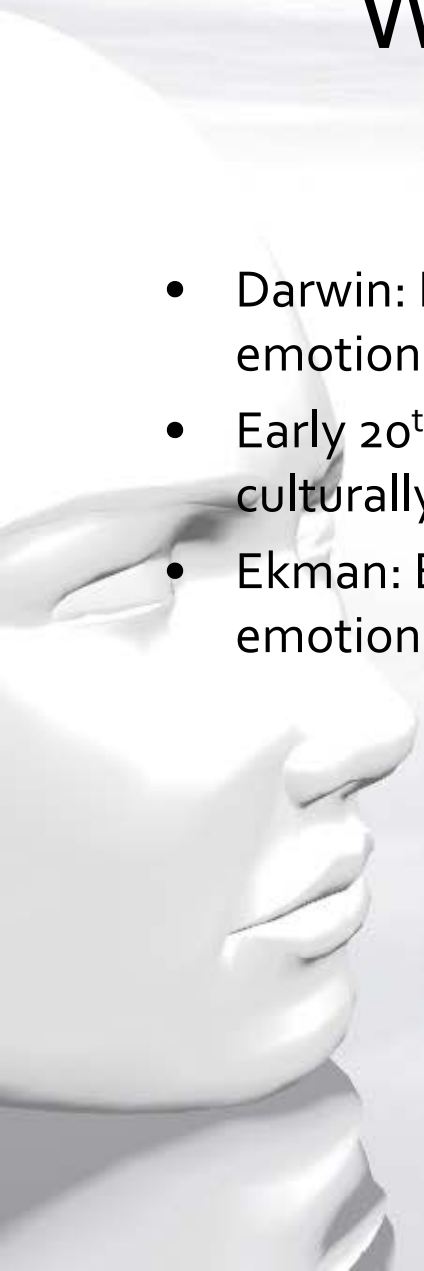
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- Darwin: Emotional facial expressions signal an underlying state – the emotion
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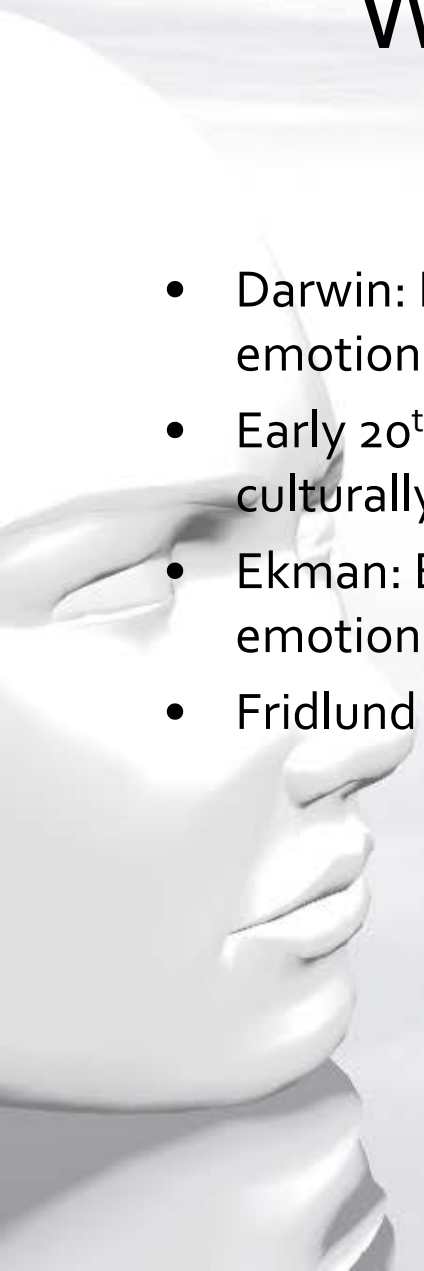
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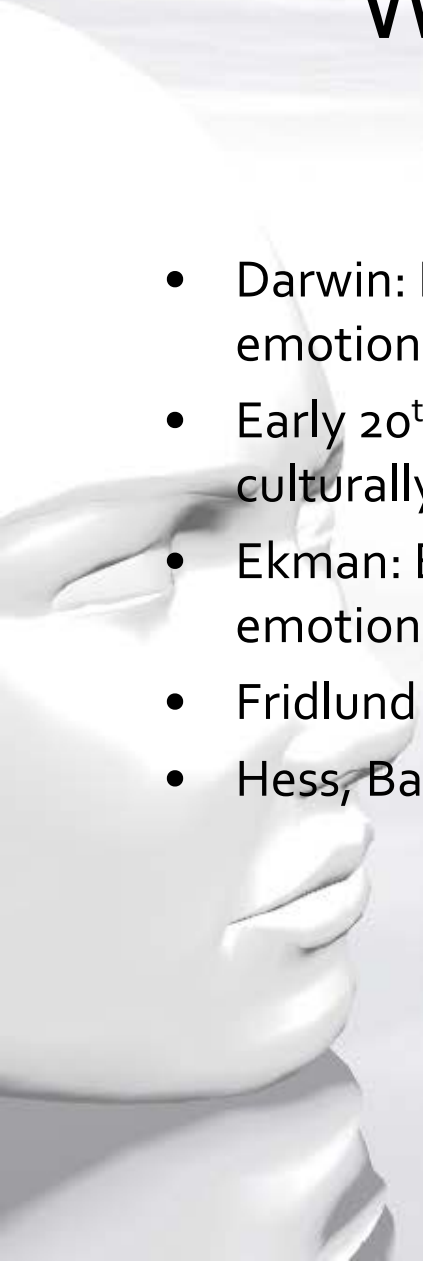
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- Hess & Hareli: The question is not what do they signal, but when do they signal this

Emotions solve problems

- Darwin
 - Emotion expressions are useful in the situation
 - Example A: surprise – widening of eyes increases visual field
 - Example B: anger – showing teeth signals readiness to bite – this may frighten aggressors away
- The motivate behavior to solve (evolutionary) problems

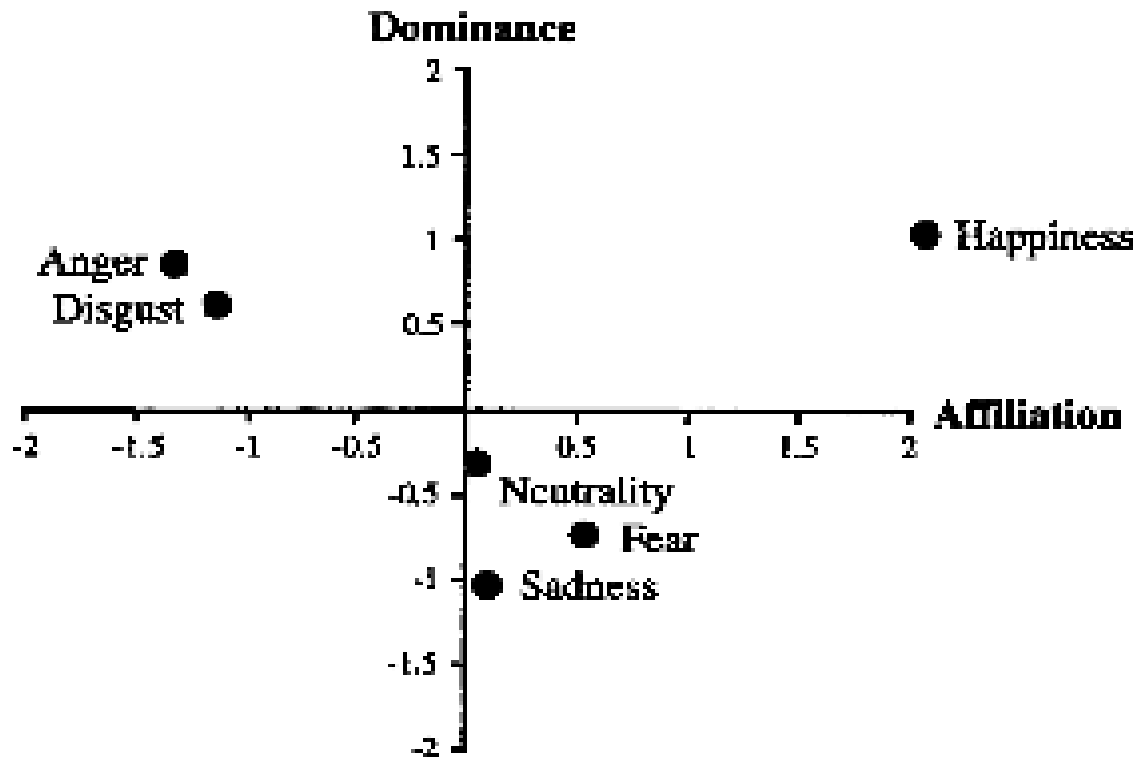
Nico Frijda





**WHAT ELSE DO EMOTION
EXPRESSIONS TELL US?**

Emotion expressions signal behavioral intentions

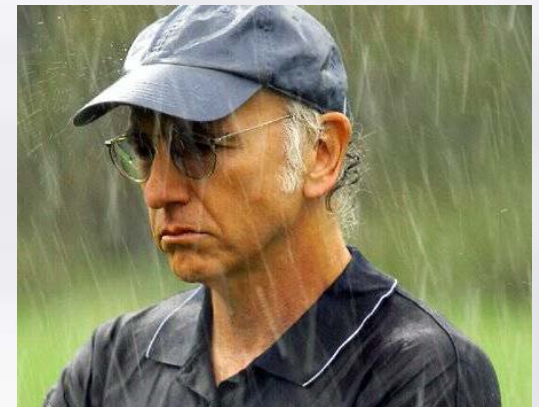


Source: Knutson, B. (1996). Facial expressions of emotion influence interpersonal trait inferences. *JONB*, 20, 165-182.

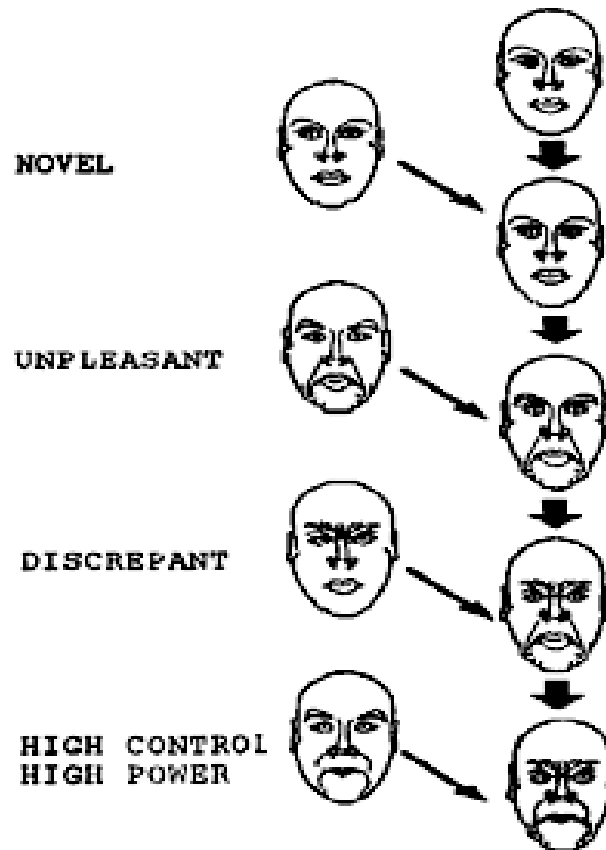
Appraisal theories of emotion



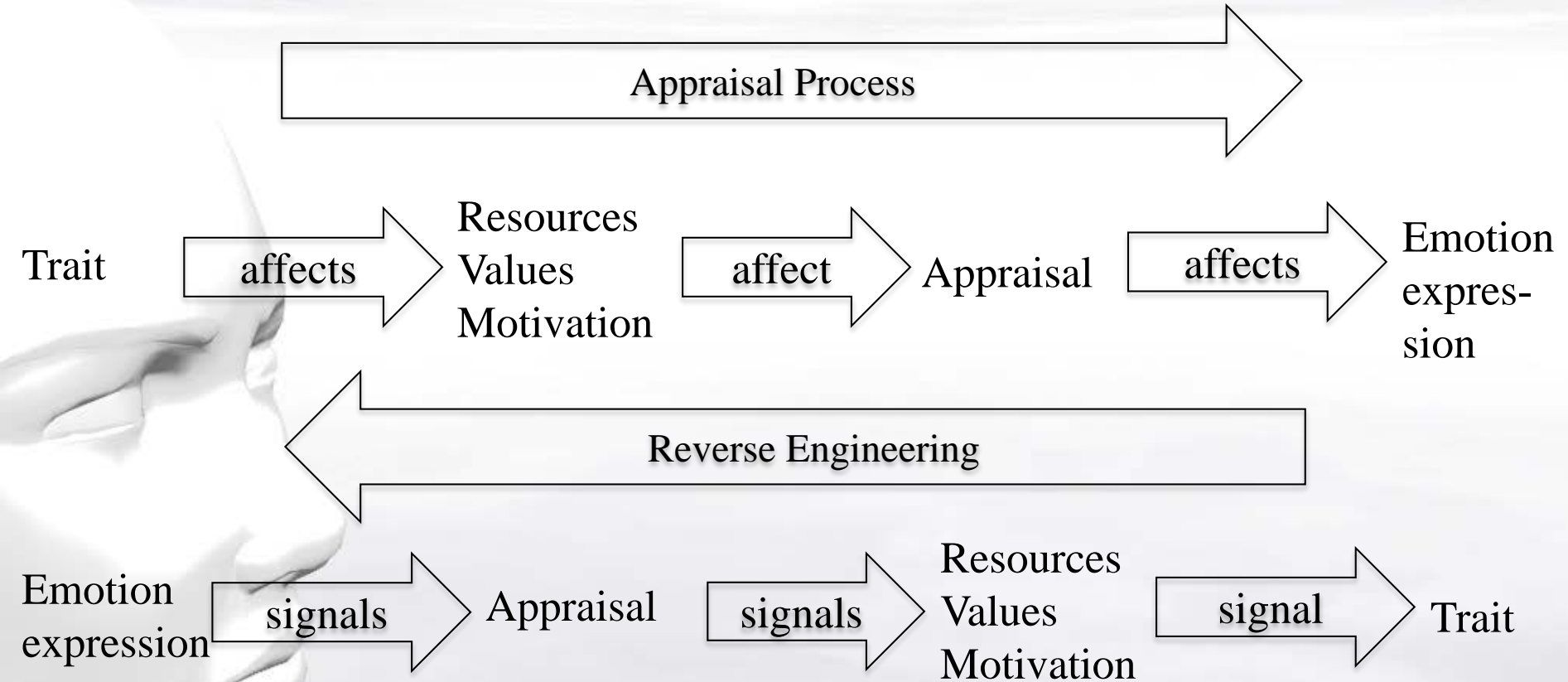
Novelty/Relevance
Pleasantness
Goal Significance
Coping Potential
Legitimacy



Scherer: Facial actions are the output of appraisals



Reverse engineering



Hareli, S. & Hess, U. (2010). What emotional reactions can tell us about the nature of others: An appraisal perspective on person perception. *Cognition and Emotion*, 24, 128-140.



Emotion expressions allow inferences regarding

- The expresser – who is that person?
- The situation – what happened?

A model of the meaning of emotion expressions

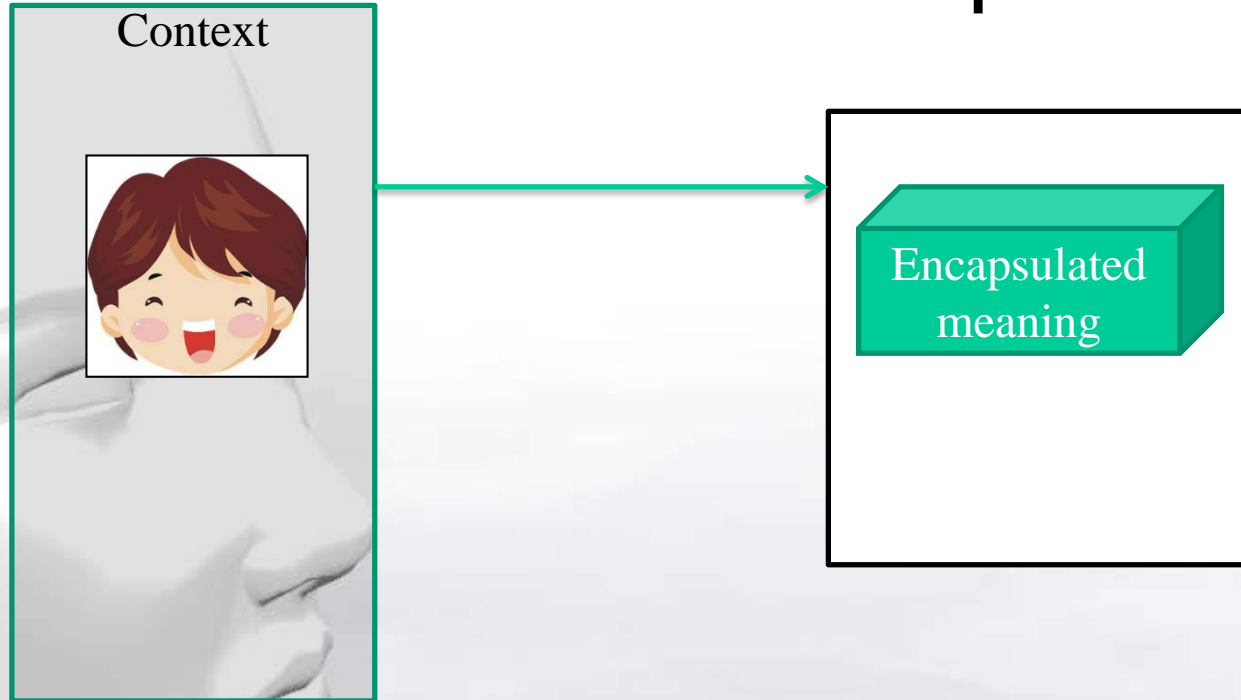


A model of the meaning of emotion expressions

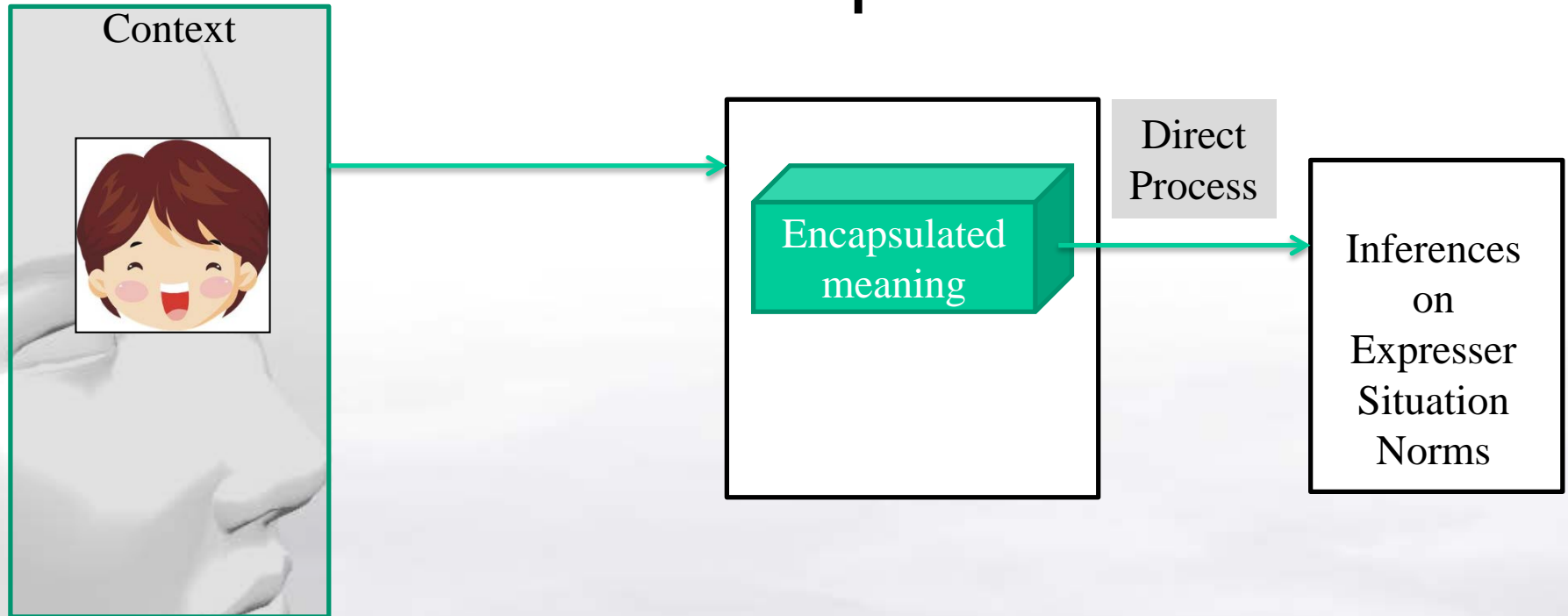
Context



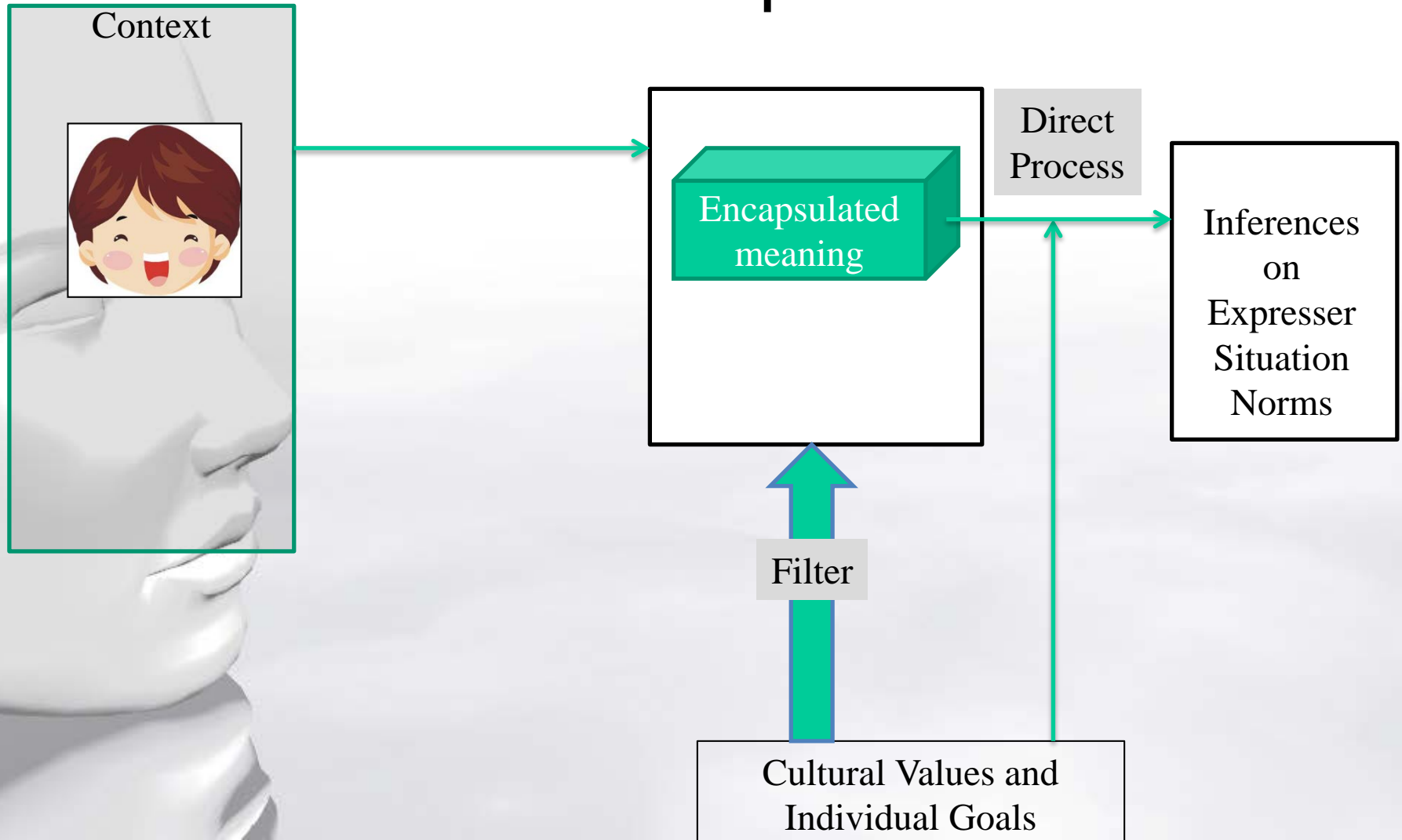
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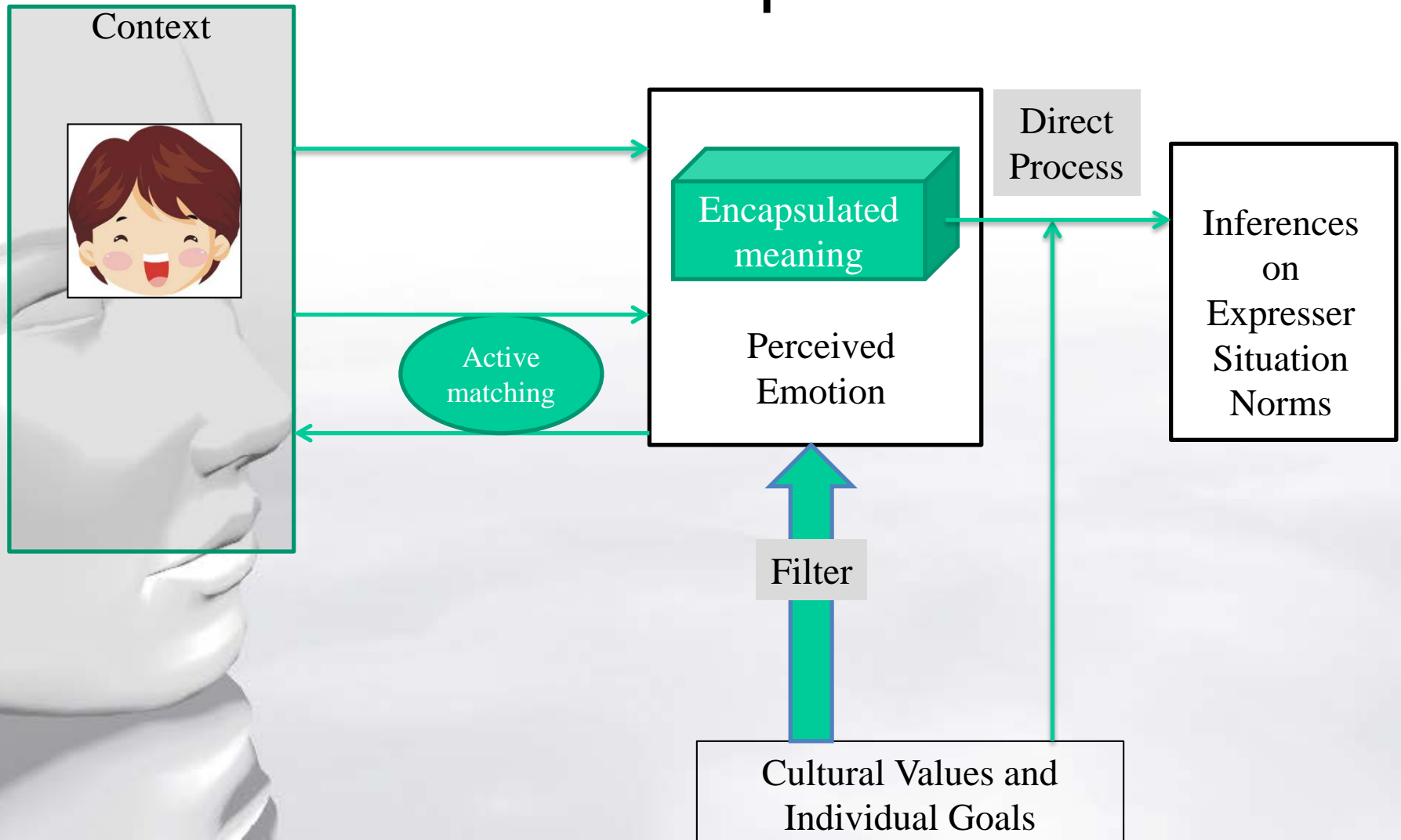
A model of the meaning of emotion expressions



A model of the meaning of emotion expressions




A model of the meaning of emotion expressions



Types of context information

- Classic context: What do I know about the emotion eliciting situation? And the person?
- Display-rules: Cultural norms regarding emotion expressions
- Socio-cultural expectations: What group does the person belong too? How do people from that group behave?



**SITUATIONAL CONTEXT AND
INFERENCES ABOUT THE
EMOTION AND THE EXPRESSER**

a



b



c



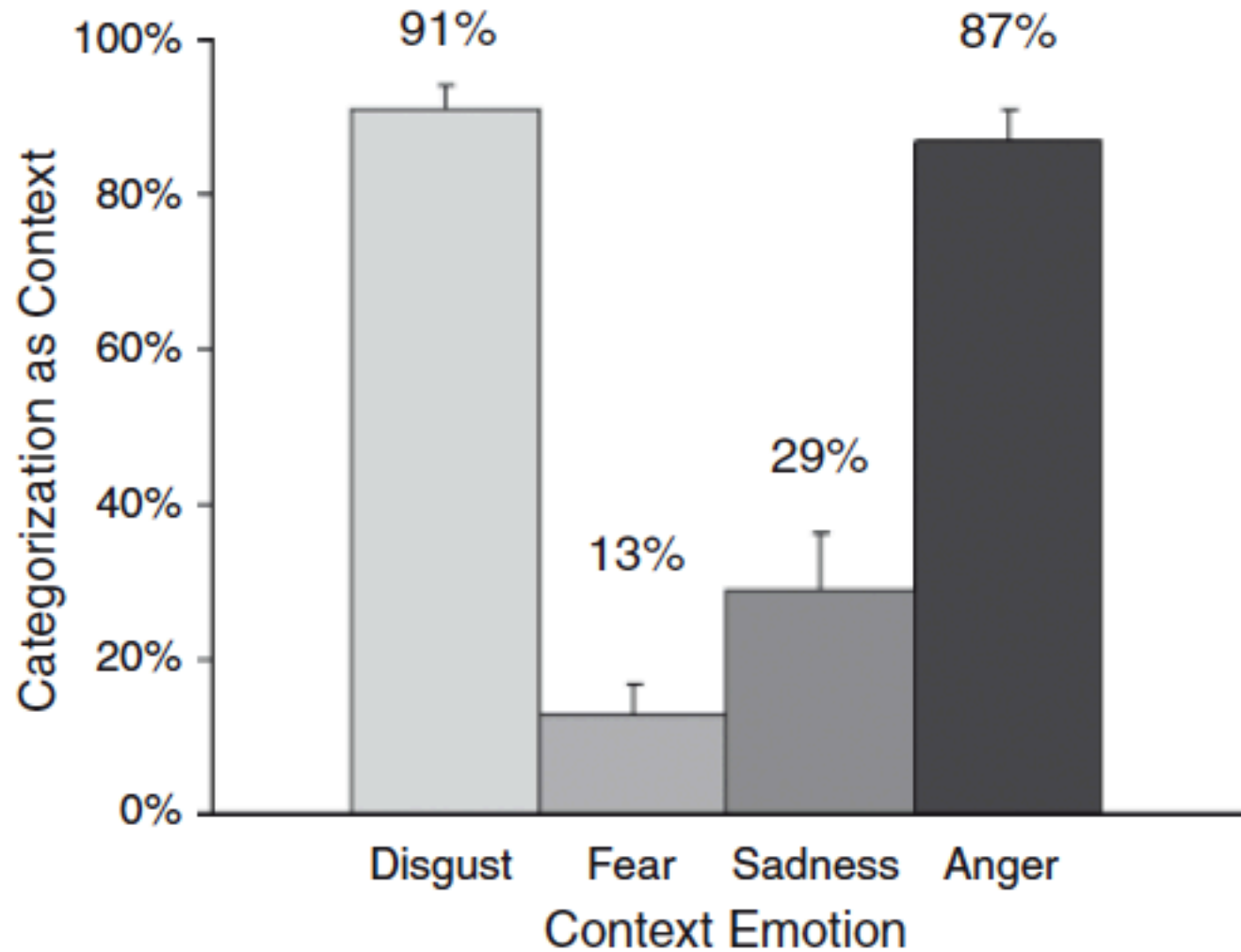
d



Aviezer, H., Hassin, R., Ryan, J., Grady, C., Susskind, J., Anderson, A., . . . Bentin, S. (2008). Angry, Disgusted, or Afraid? Studies on the Malleability of Emotion Perception. *Psychological Science*, 19, 724-732

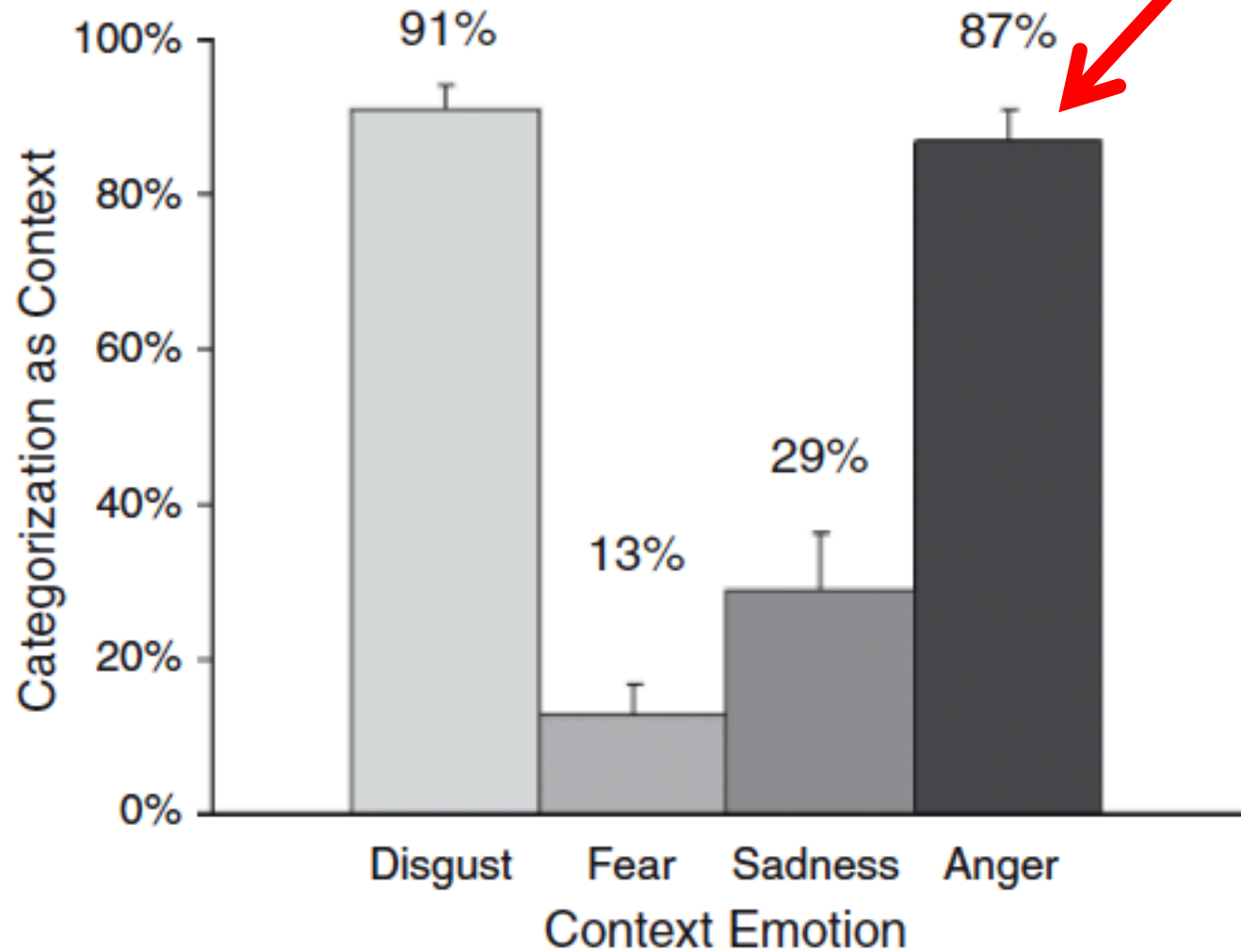
Miscategorizations

b



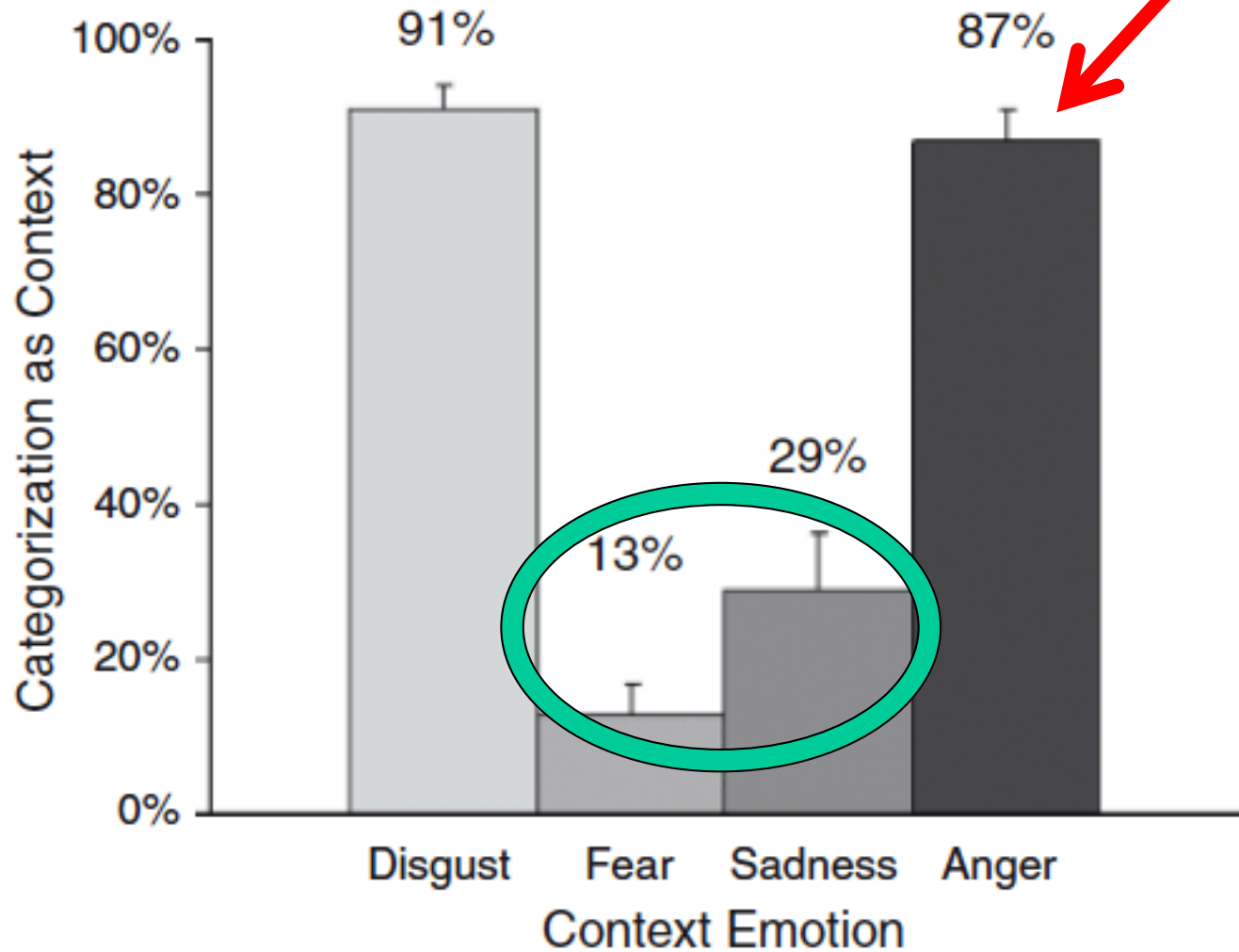
Miscategorizations

b



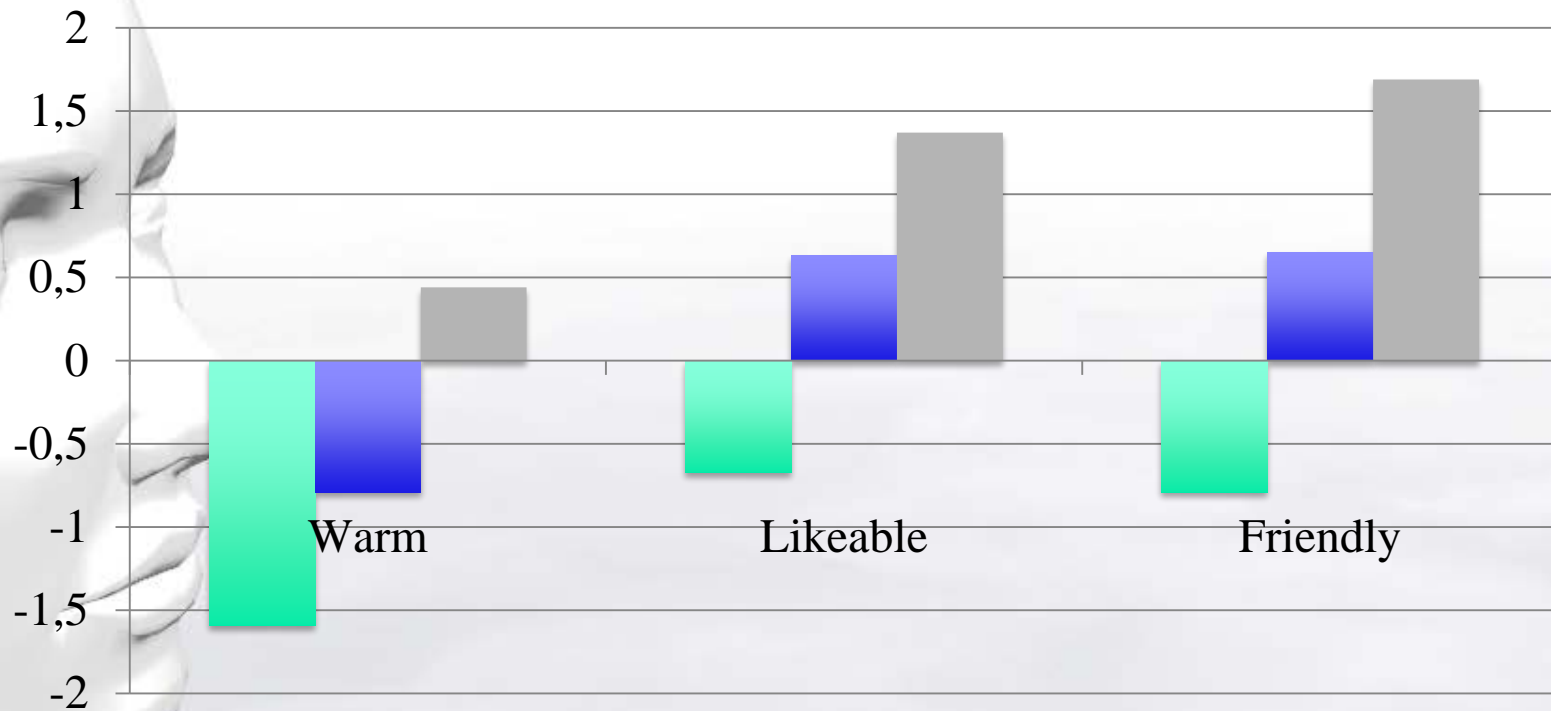
Miscategorizations

b





■ Anger ■ Sadness ■ Happiness

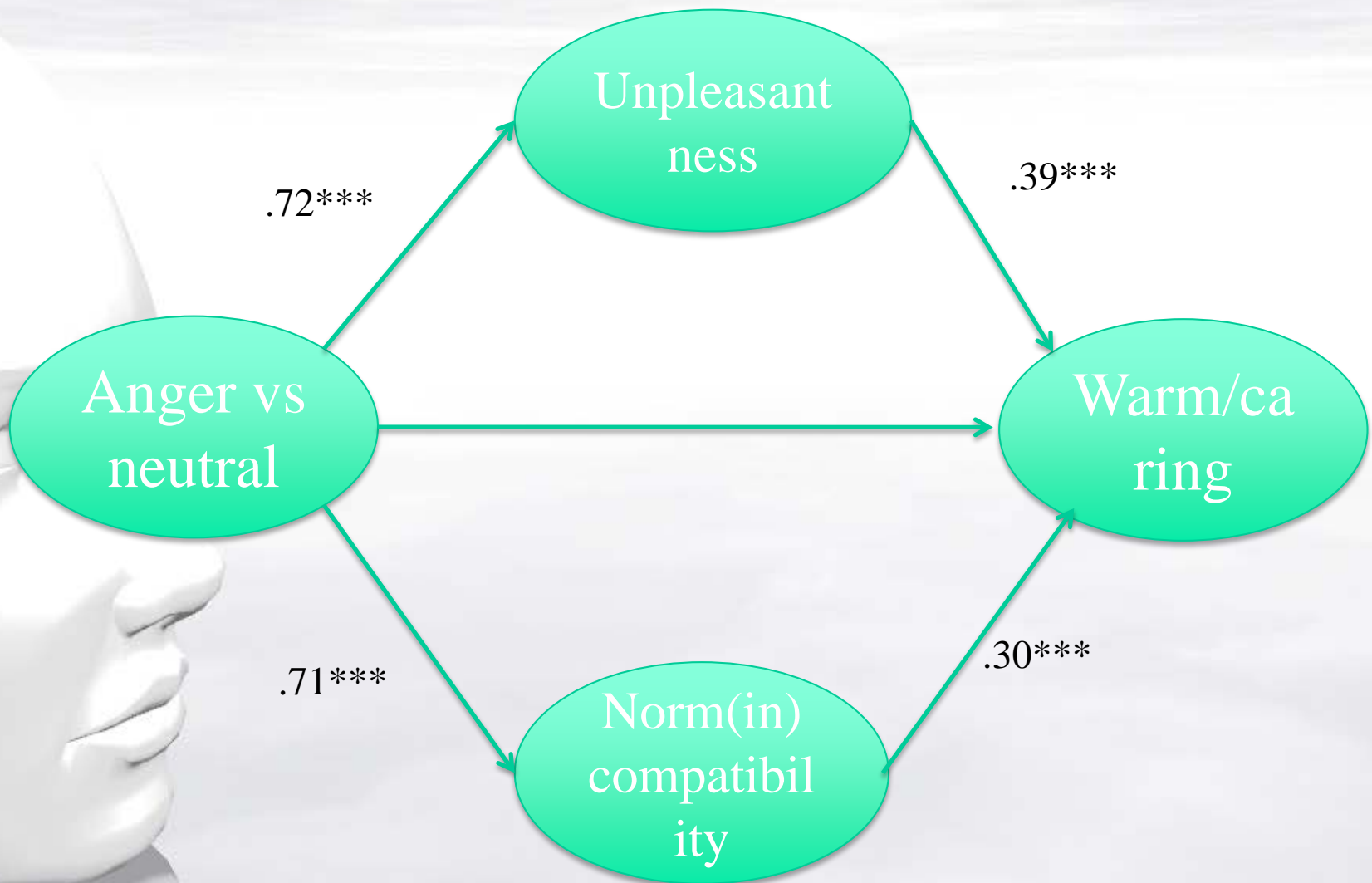


Depending on the situation



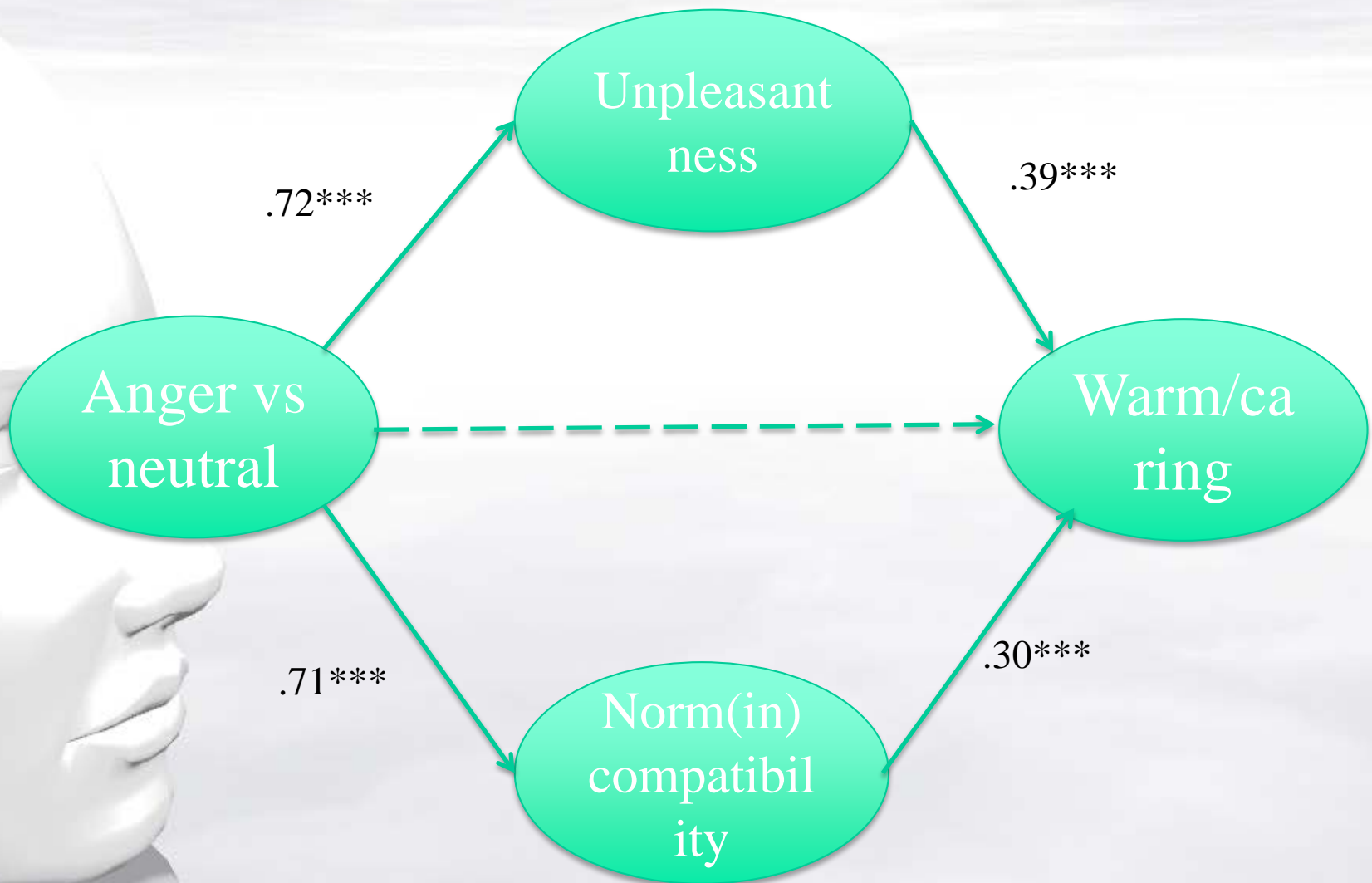
Source: Hareli, S. & Hess, U. (2010). *What emotional reactions can tell us about the nature of others: An appraisal perspective on person perception*. *Cognition and Emotion*, 24, 128-140

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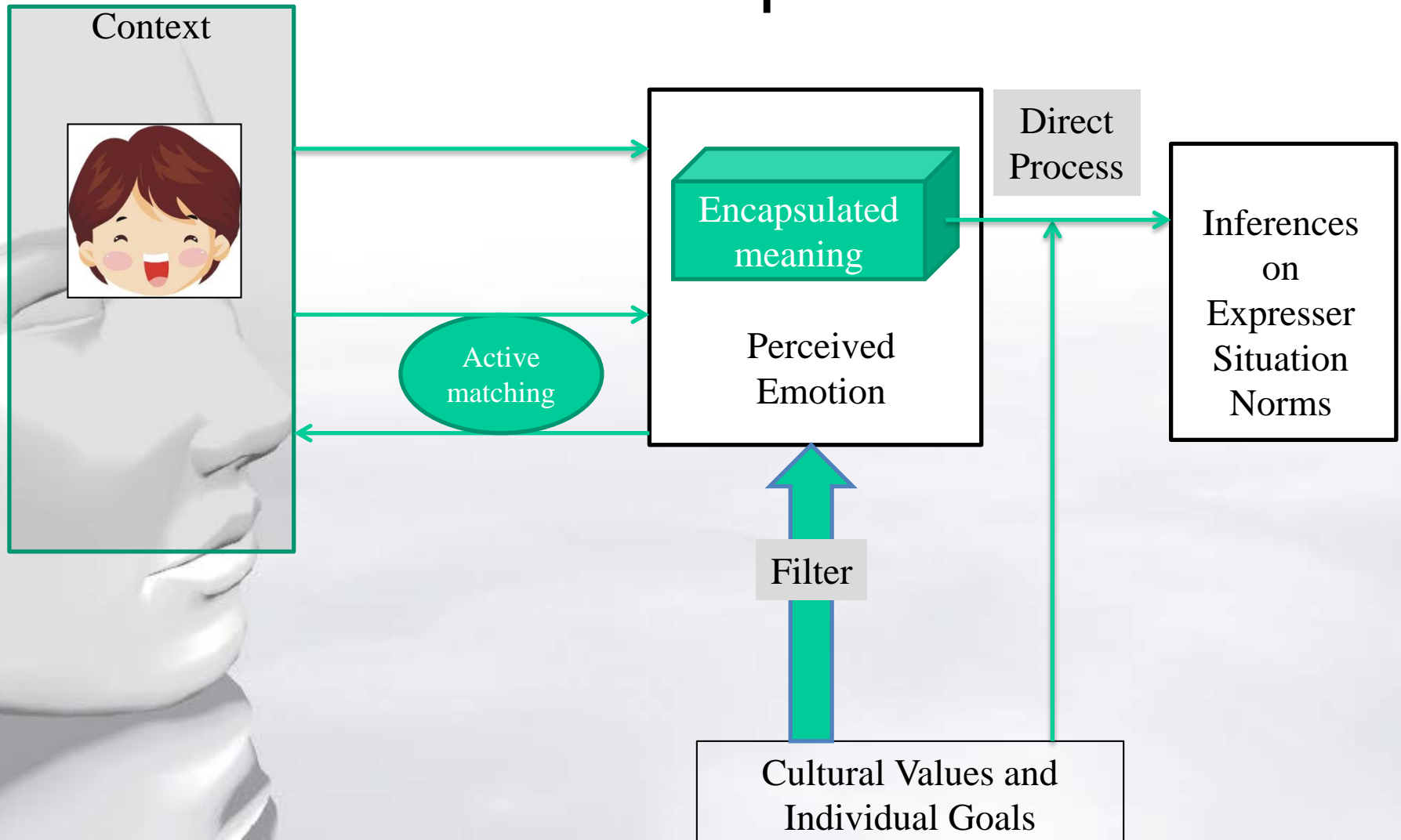


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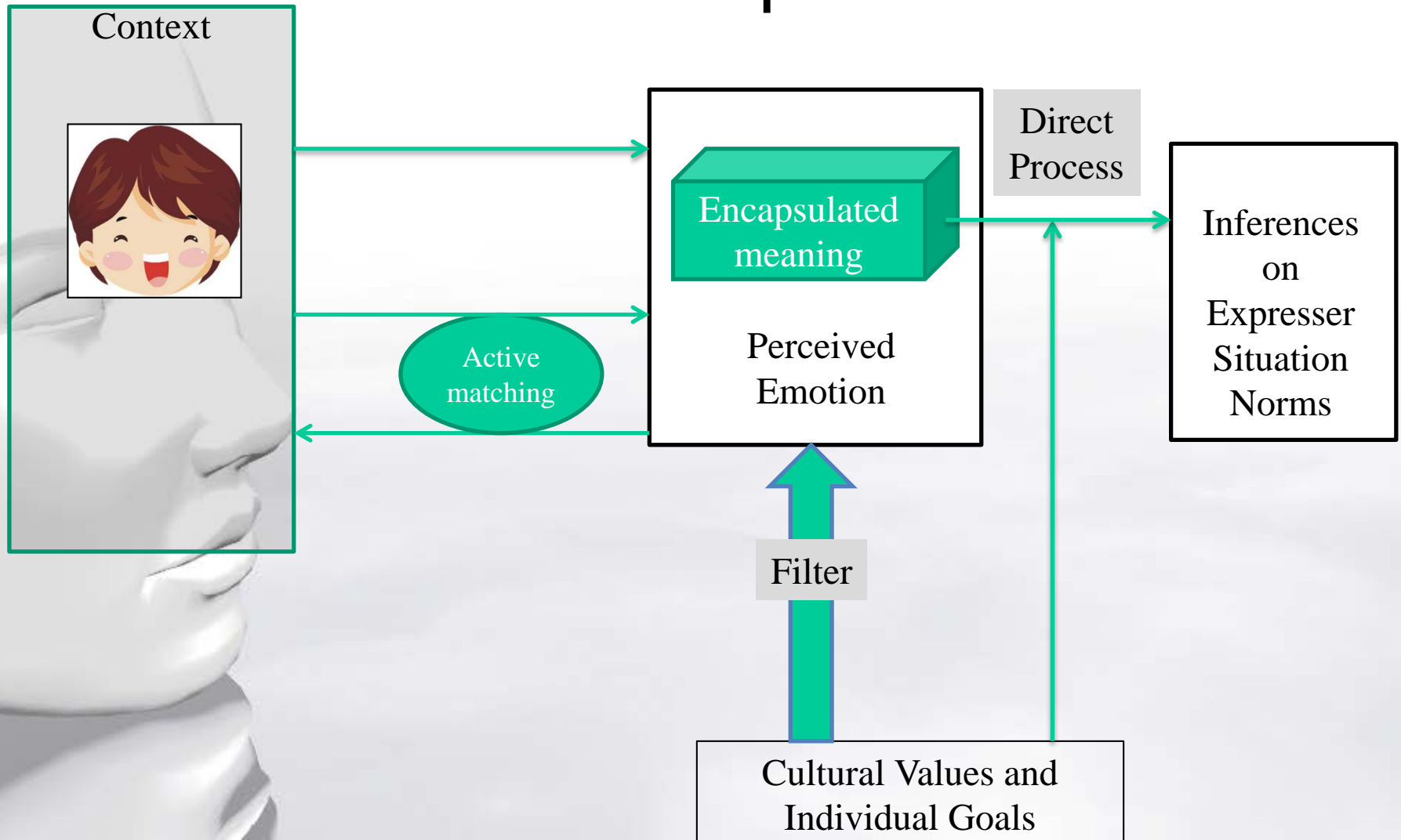


ANYTHING GOES?

A model of the meaning of emotion expressions



A model of the meaning of emotion expressions



A new game



Global view of the field where distance markers are up to 15 meters



The blue player is about to throw the last ball in this match; fans appear in the background



The third ball is also about to cross the 15-meter line



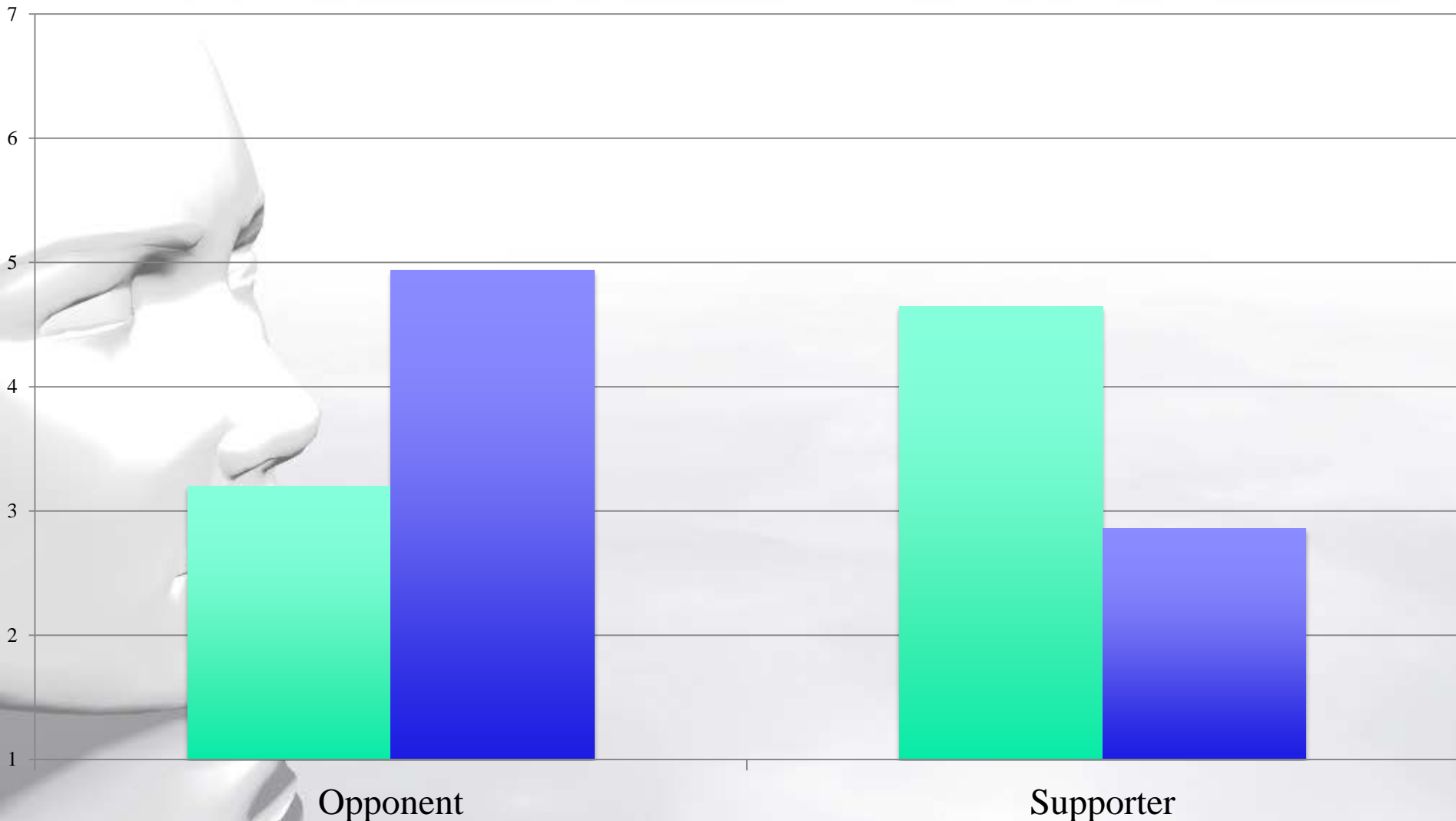
Close up: The final result of the three balls thrown by the blue player

The reaction to the play

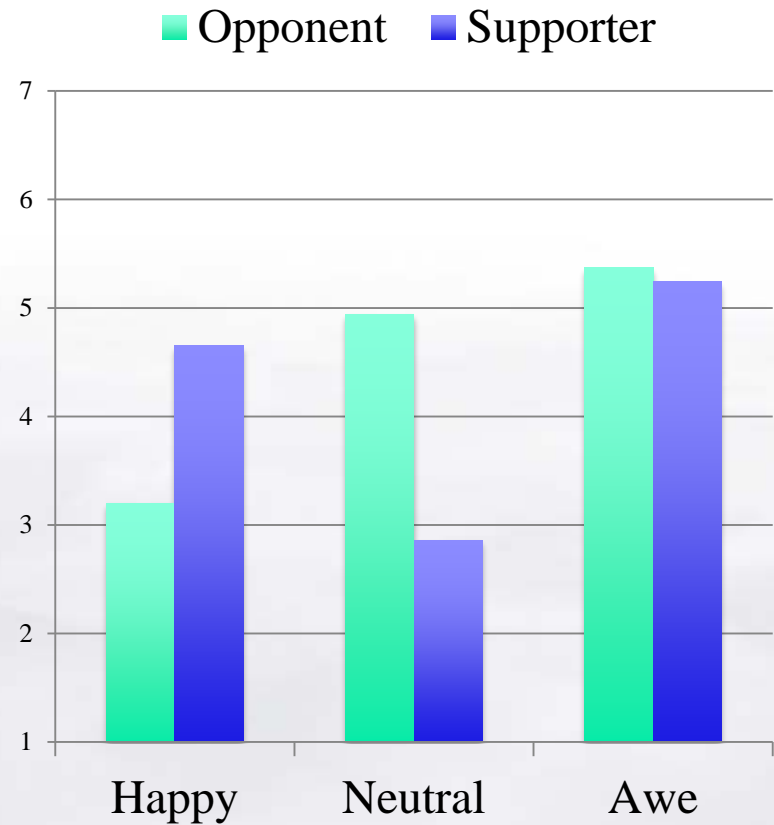


Perceived performance of the player

■ Happy ■ Neutral

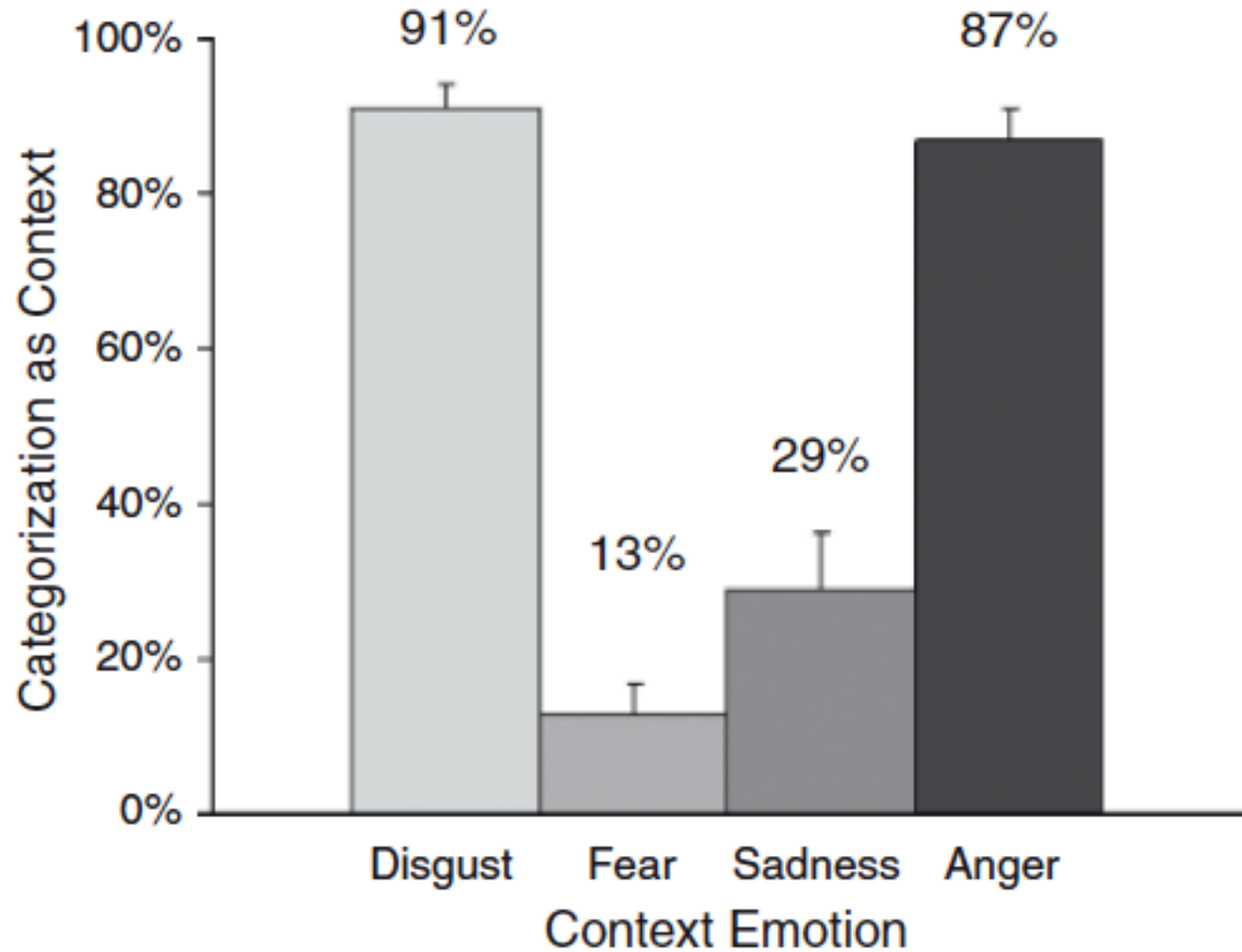


What about awe?



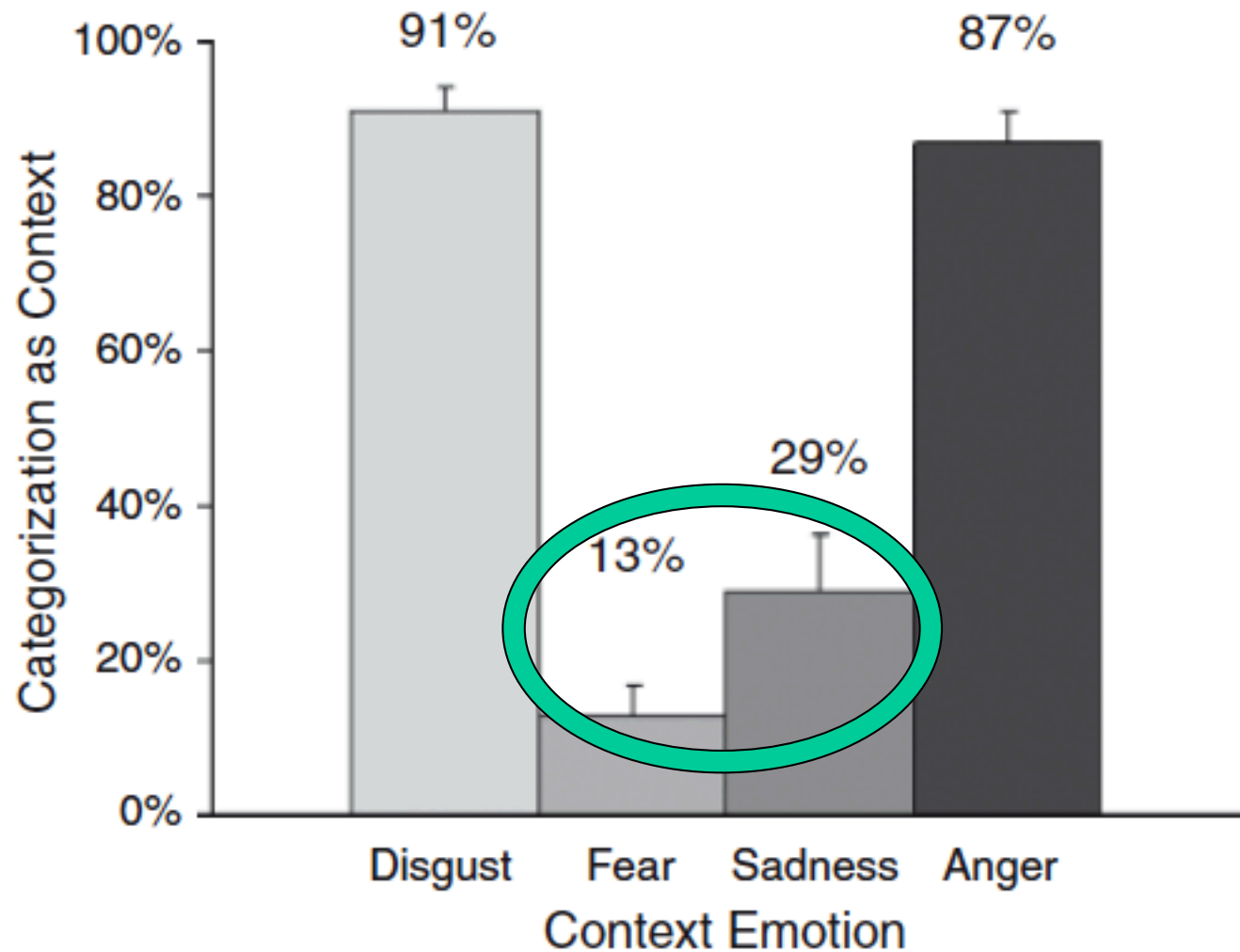
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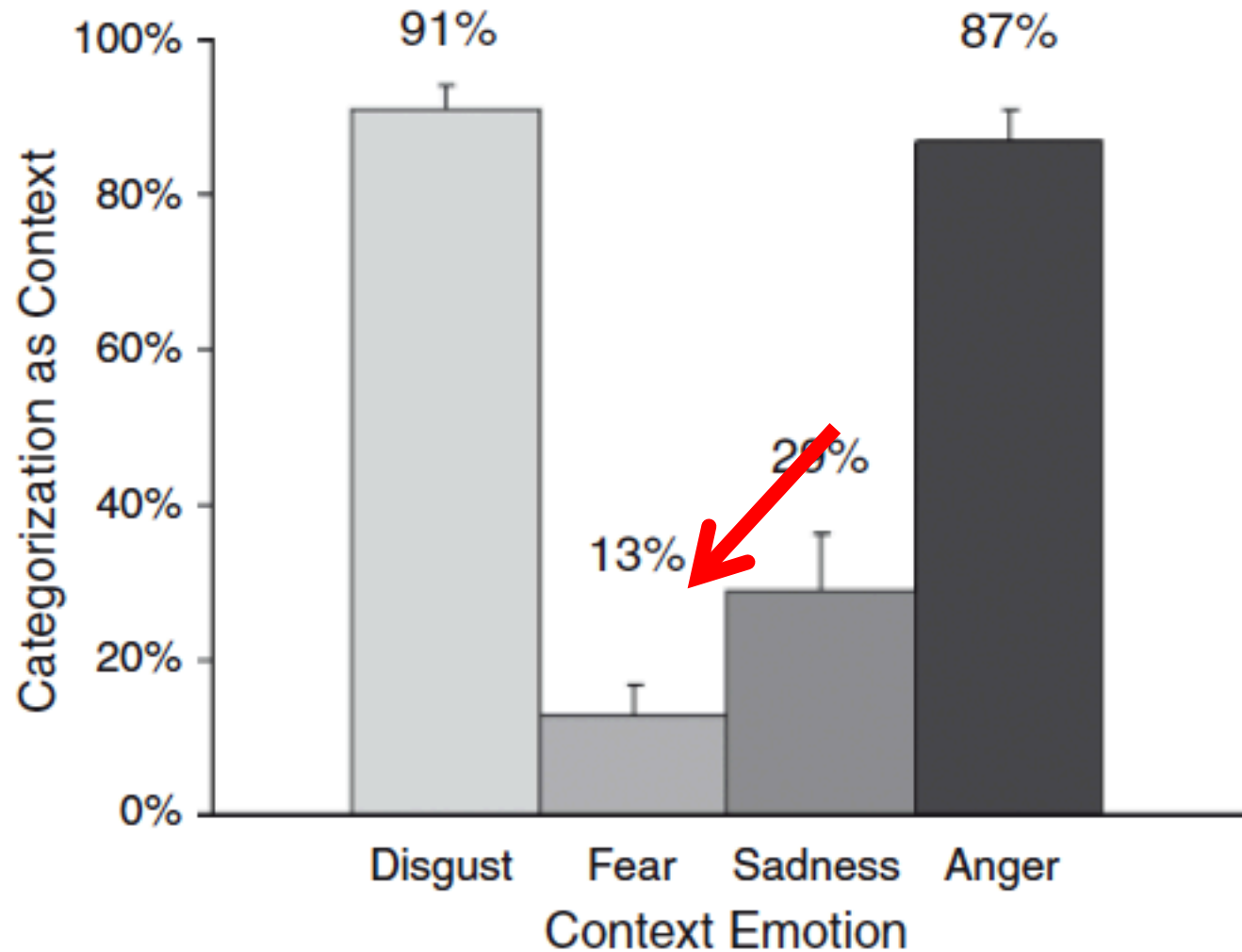
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b



Miscategorizations

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THE IMPACT OF CULTURE



Cultural influences on emotion expression decoding

- Context is interpreted differently in different cultures
- Emotional Dialects
 - Different cultures express emotions in *subtly* different ways, this increases decoding errors for expressions from unfamiliar cultures [Ex](#)
- Holistic versus analytical perception [Ex](#)
- Cultural display rules
 - Pre- and proscribe certain emotions
 - Display rules are matched by decoding rules

The impact of context and culture

Participants

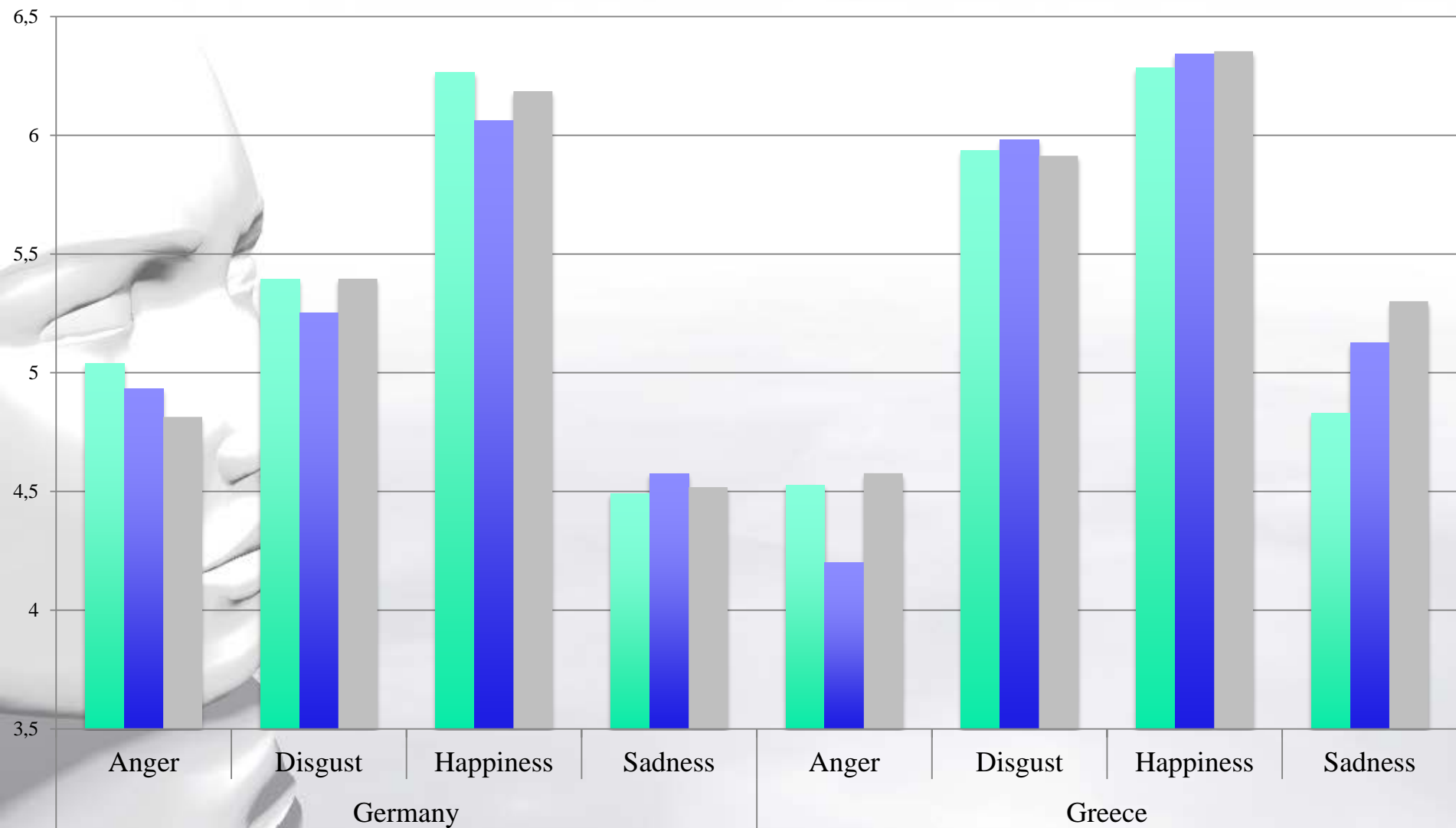
- 87 German
- 90 Greek

Emotion decoding task



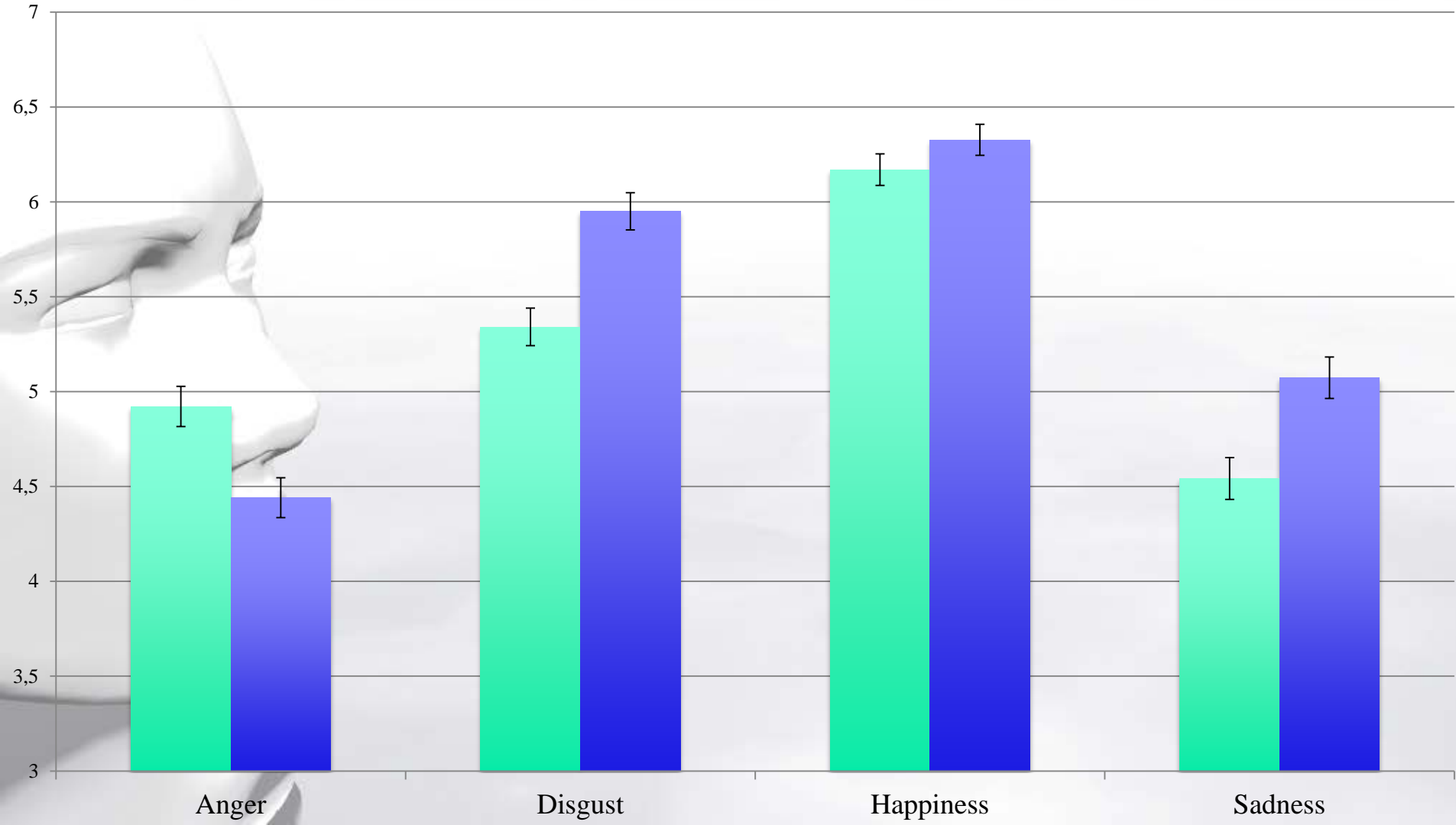
Emotion x Social context x Country

■ Congruent ■ Incongruent ■ Individual



Country by Emotion

Germany Greece





AND WHY DO WE CARE?

The situation





Anger is a positive emotion

- Of sorts ...

Anger

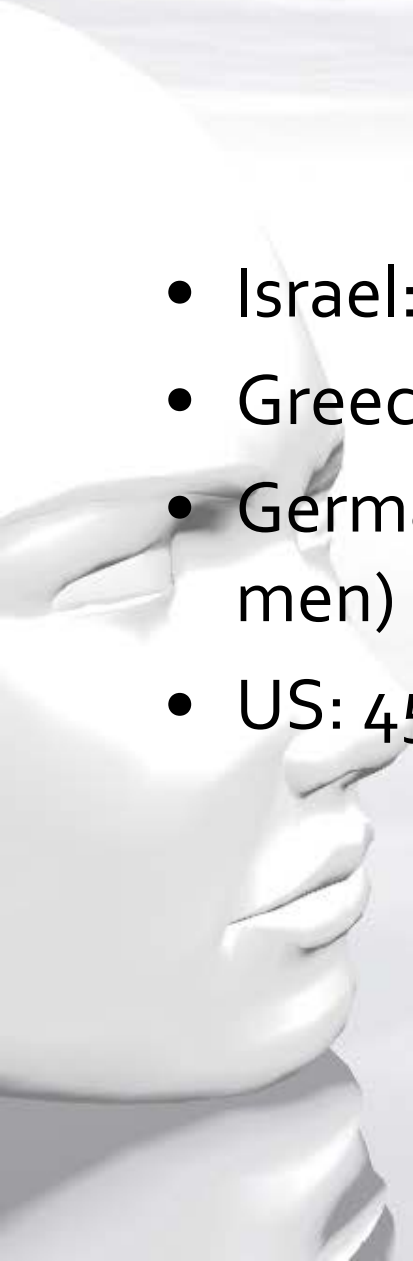
- Frees resources
- Increases optimism about success
- Helps us to redress injustice
- Helps us learn about the rules of society

The study

- Israel: 149 (84 men)
- Greece: 273 (120 men)
- Germany: 261 (84 men)
- US: 452 (247 men)

Tasks

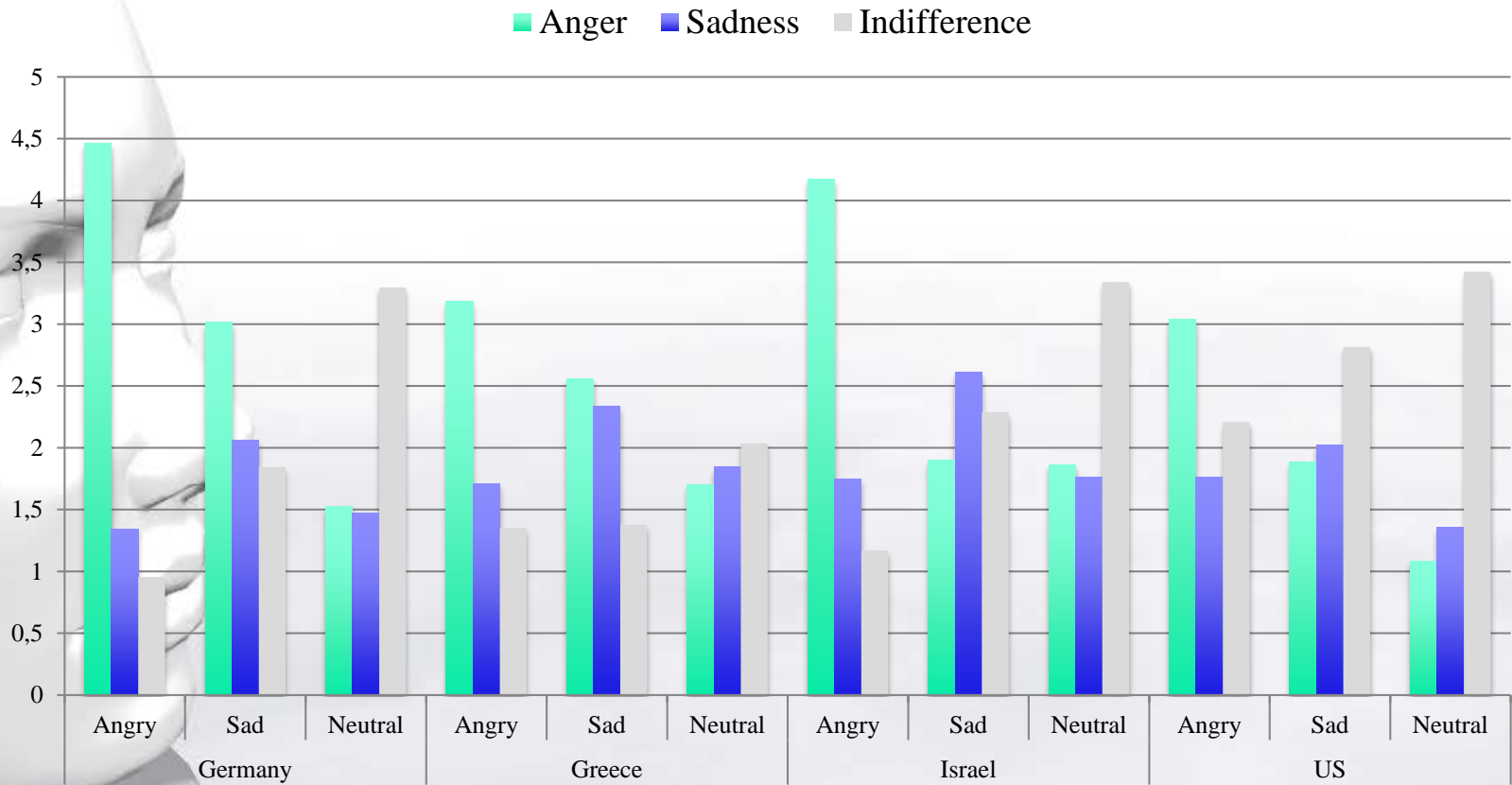
- Describe Norm
 - If you are next
 - If someone else is next
- Rate Anger, Sadness, Indifference
- Rate whether a norm was violated



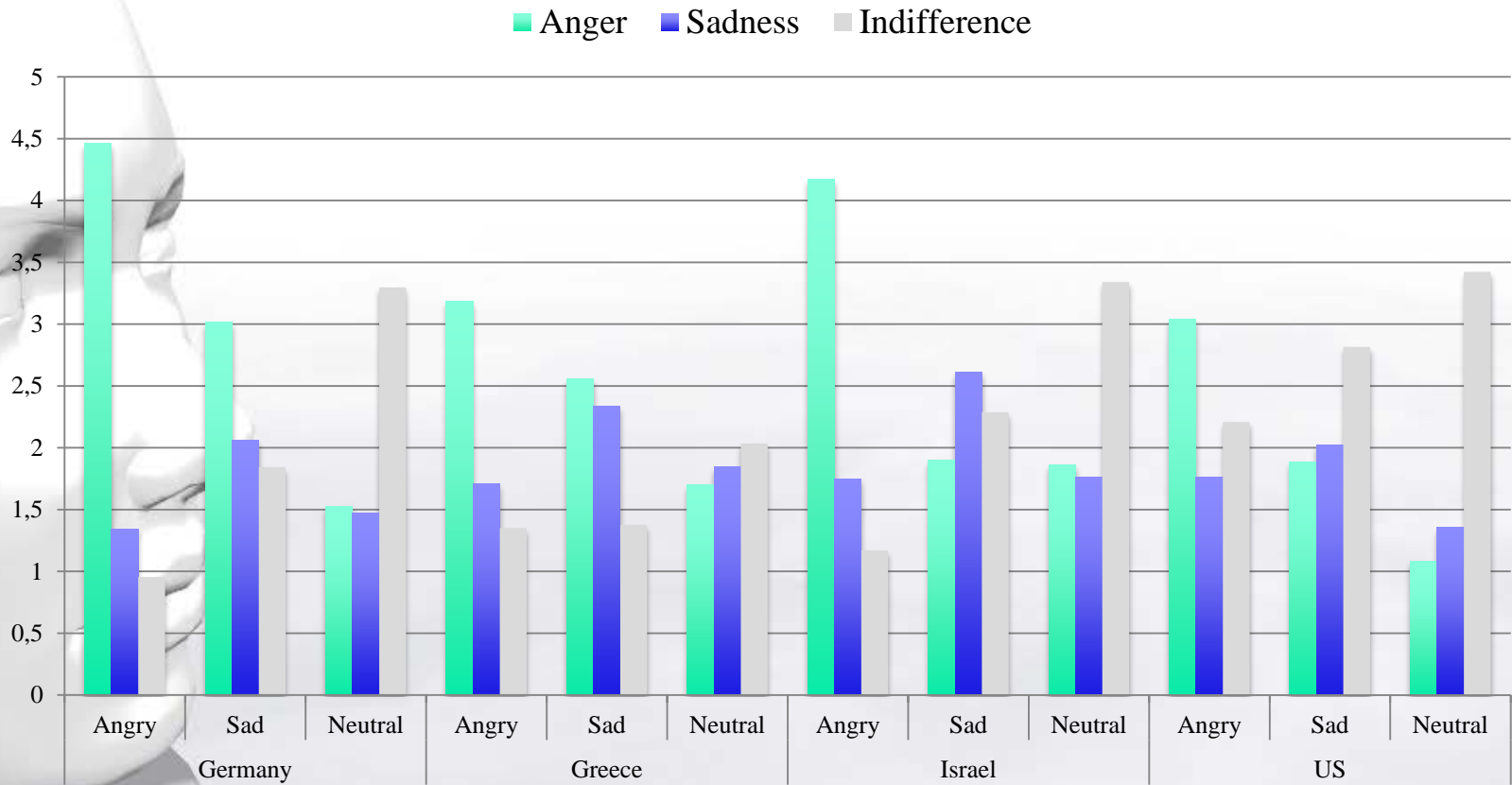
Emotion Rating



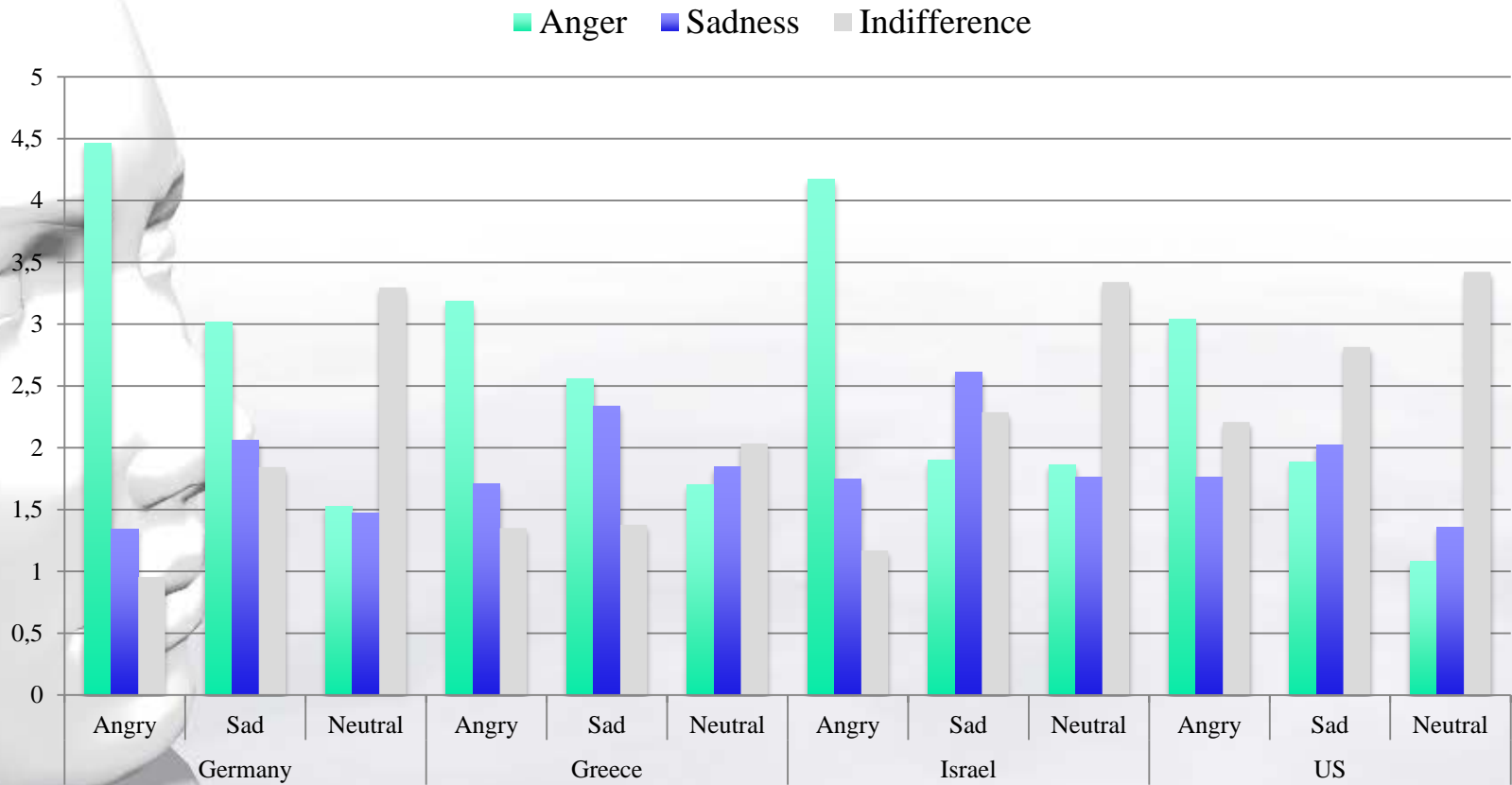
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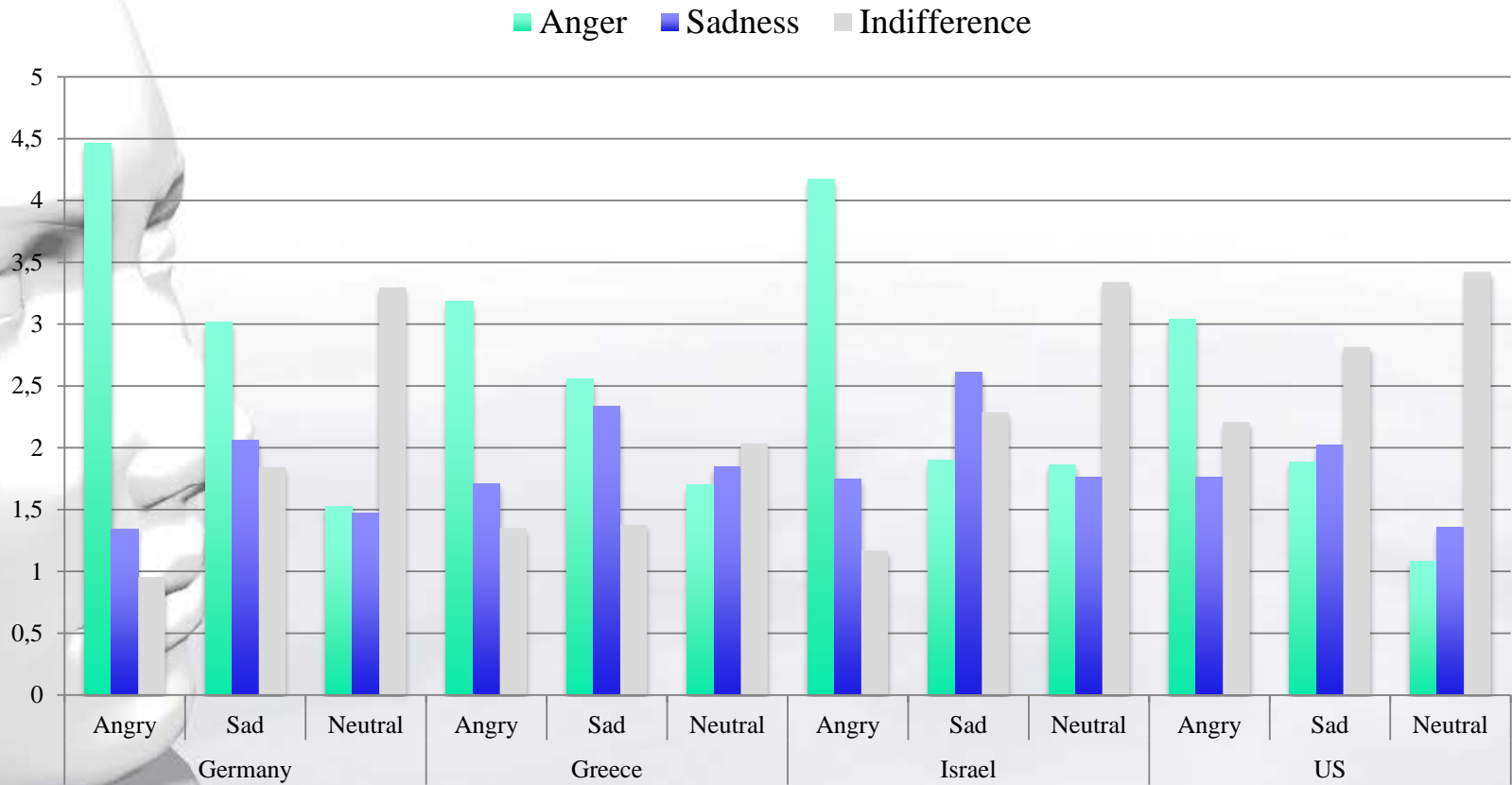
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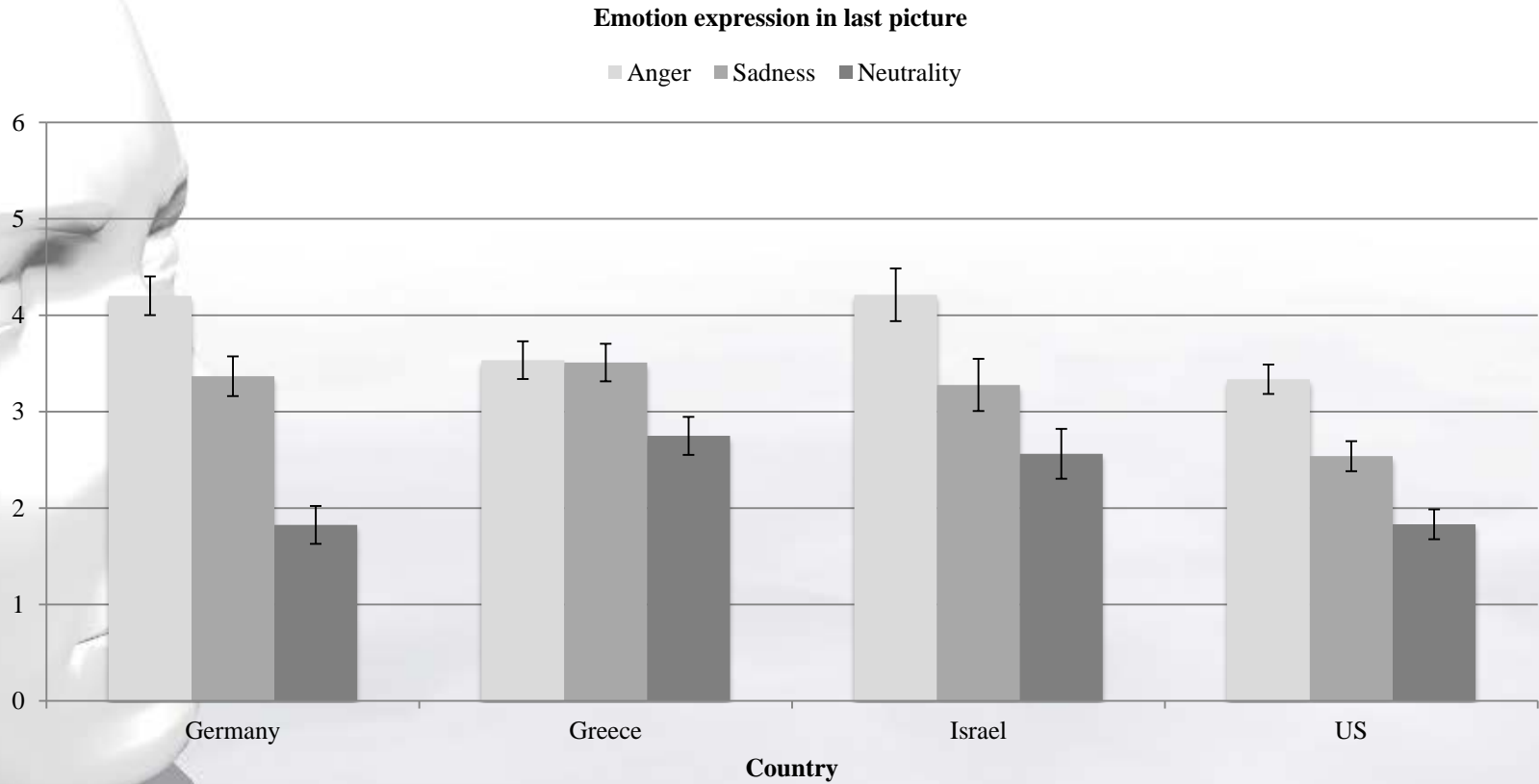
Emotion Rating



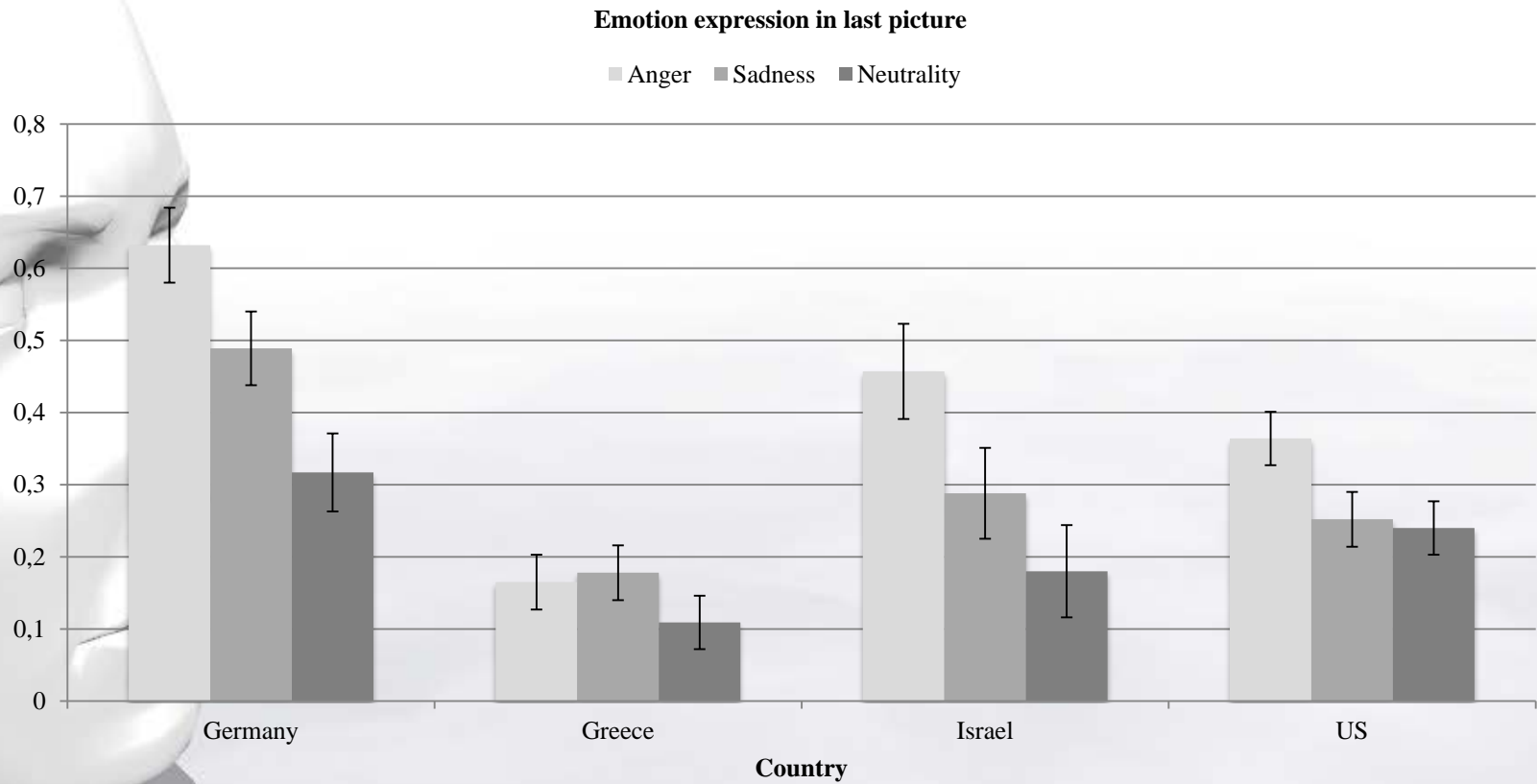
Emotion Rating



Norm violation appraisal



Norm learning



Prediction of norm learning and appraisal from emotion ratings

	F	p	r ²	β		
				Anger	Sadness	Neutrality
				Overall		
Norm learning accuracy	53.27	< .001	.13	.34***	-.04 (ns)	-.06*
Appraisal of norm violation	376.84	< .001	.50	.56***	.17***	-.15***



Summary

Emotion perception

Universal: Anger expressions are rated as most angry, Sad expressions as most sad, Neutral as most indifferent

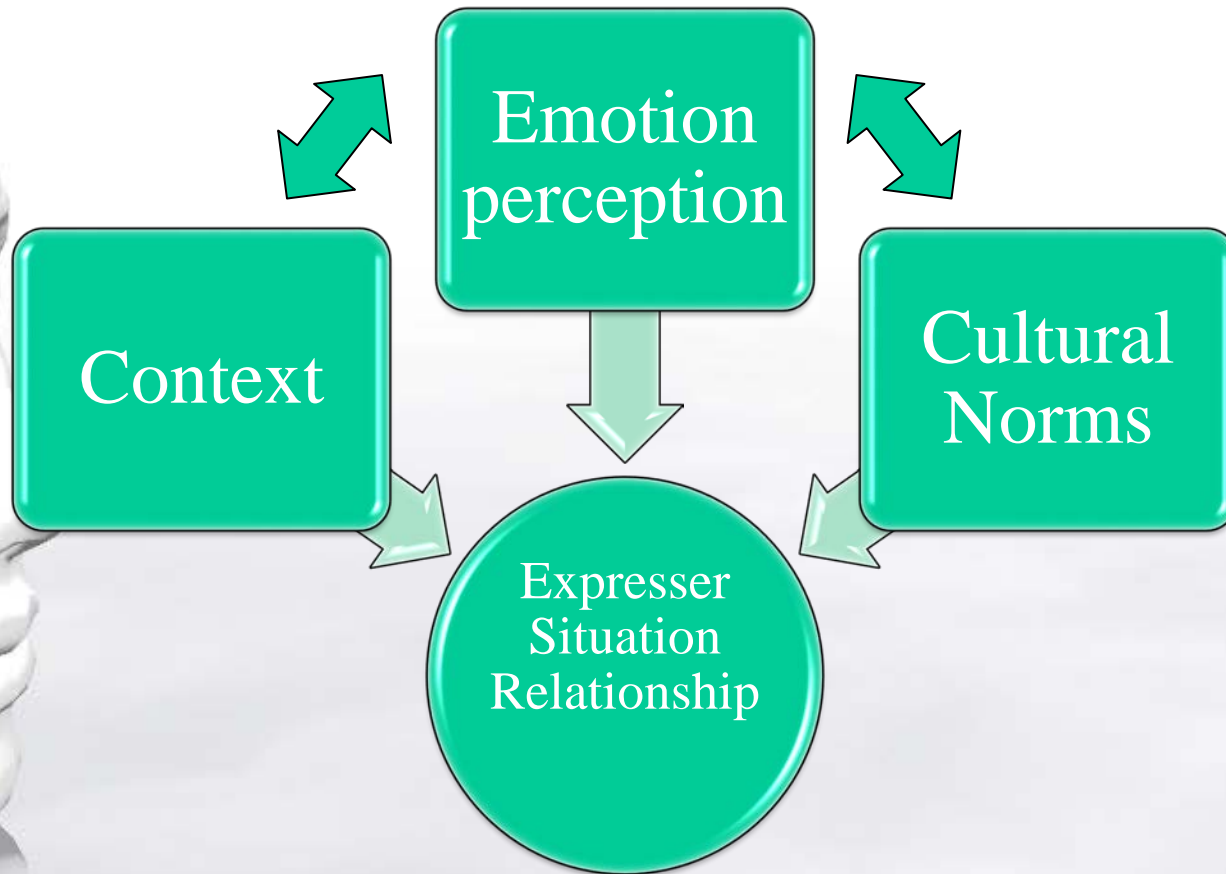
Culture specific: Relative intensity of emotion ratings

Norm learning (and appraisal)

Culture specific: how well are norms learned

Universal: Prediction of learning from emotion ratings

A model of emotion perception and inferences in context





My Collaborators

- Reginald B. Adams, Jr.
- Shlomo Hareli
- Konstantinos Kafetsios
- Robert E. Kleck

Emotional dialects

Quebec



12/08/2015

Gabon



Ursula Hess

48

Quebec

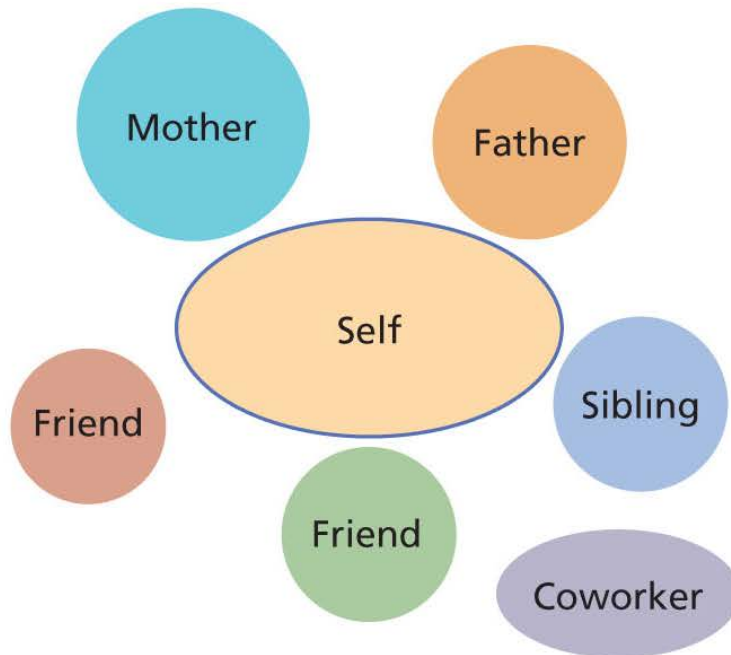


Gabon

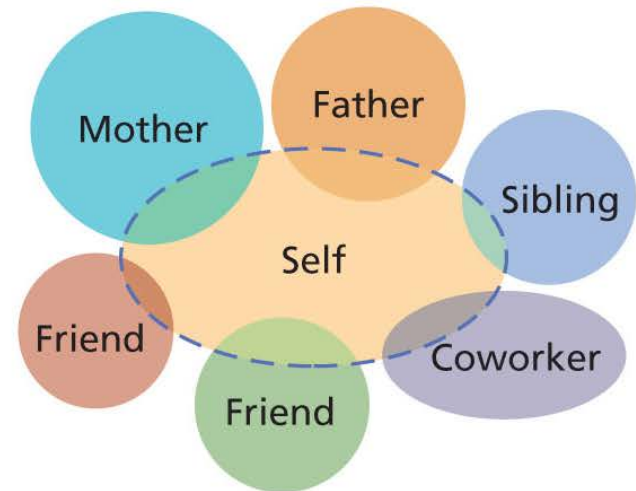


Interdependence

Markus & Kitayama (1991)



Independent view of self



Interdependent view of self