

Introduction: The Hedgefox

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IN A PERHAPS overused metaphor, academics are sometimes classified as “hedgehogs” and “foxes.” Playing on a famous, albeit somewhat mysterious, statement by the seventh century BC philosopher Archilochus that “the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing,” the prototypical hedgehog is a system addict on a quest for a unified theory of everything. Foxes, in contrast, have an appreciation of the complexities of reality which prevents them from even entertaining the possibility of any grand unifying scheme.

Belying their physical image, hedgehogs are the life of the party. They take outrageous positions and push their arguments to the limit, generating heated debate. Foxes, despite their slyness, are party duds; they stand on the sidelines shaking their heads and rolling their eyes at the naivety of the hedgehogs' wild speculations. One more strike against foxes.

As the party extends into the waning hours, however, the frantic repatee of the hedgehogs can wear thin, even to the hedgehogs themselves. At this time, the host begins to long for the arrival of a third species of party animal: the “hedgefox.” Hedgefoxes combine the best properties of their two mammalian relatives. Like the hedgehog, the hedgefox is a synthesizer; but like the fox, the hedgefox cares about, and advances theories that take account of, and make sense of, the complexities of reality.

If research on emotions is a party (and the explosive growth of the topic over the past few decades has lent the topic something of a party

atmosphere), the time is ripe for the entry of the hedgefox. Research on emotions has made enormous strides, stimulated by debates between researchers who have taken extreme stands on a variety of central issues. There are hedgehog emotion researchers who argue for the primacy of emotions over cognition, and others who argue, instead, that all emotions are derivative of cognition. (There is also a third group which denies the validity of the distinction; see Oum and Lieberman, chapter 6, this volume.) There are advocates of the idea that moral judgments are the product of emotion, perhaps justified *ex post* by reasons, as well as those who argue that morality is a matter of logic. And, most central to the basic theme of this book, there are hedgehogs whose research focuses almost exclusively on the destructive effects of emotions, and there are others who focus as selectively as the first group on the vitally beneficial functions that emotions serve.

Of course the foxes are right; each of these polar positions is simplistic in its extremity. But that observation doesn't take us far. In the waning hours of the emotion research party, we have arrived at the point where debates between extreme and obviously untenable positions are not as productive as they once were. In short, we need answers to the *When* question. *When* do emotions or cognitions predominate? *When* are moral judgments driven by reflexive emotional reactions and *when* by logical thought? And, when are emotions helpful or harmful? This book provides nuanced synthetic answers to these types of questions.

Decision making is the other half of our topic. It too has seen explosive growth in research interest in recent years. As with emotion, its few early hedgehogs (for example, groupthink, rational choice, framing) have had to withstand a stampede of foxes. Some decision making researchers are starting to think that their field's destiny is merely to develop lists of departures from rationality, without much prospect of integrative theory. Yet others are confident that new grand theories will emerge. The time is ripening for hedgefoxes to impose limited order on decision theory also.

If a party is an imperfect metaphor for describing emotion and decision research, its aptness cannot be debated as a metaphor for the events that led to the creation of this book. The genesis of the book was a five-week summer institute on emotion and decision making for twenty young researchers, codirected by two not-so-young researchers, Roy F. Baumeister and George Loewenstein. The institute was hosted by the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University and funded by the Ford and Andrew W. Mellon Foundations. A highlight of the summer institute was a series of visits and presentations, supported by a separate grant from the Russell Sage Foundation, by eminent researchers interested in emotion and/or decision issues.

These visitors included John Gabrielli, Robert Zajonc, Jonathan Cohen, Gerald Clore, Dacher Keltner, Laura Carstensen, Brian Knutson, Antonio Rangel, Jennifer Lerner, and Paul Slovic. Their presentations became the organizational and, to some extent, the intellectual focus of the summer institute.

The group met every morning for two to three hours. On days when there was a guest speaker, the protocol was for everyone to prepare by reading one or two articles by the visiting speaker and then to meet briefly before the speaker arrived, so as to begin discussion of the assigned readings. Speakers were warned that we wanted to conduct their presentation as a seminar rather than as a colloquium, meaning that there should be ample discussion during the talk. Most speakers prepared a forty-five-minute to one-hour talk, and yet the presentations invariably filled the two hours and many of them could have gone on longer.

Over the course of the five weeks, the group became increasingly cohesive and the atmosphere increasingly festive, with discussions of emotion (as well as a range of less highbrow topics) spilling out of the confines of the Center for Advanced Study to dinner tables, restaurant tables, and the bars of local “watering holes.” At the same time, the group began to expand as friends of the scholars, many represented among the coauthors of these chapters, began to show up at social events.

Are hedgefoxes born or made? The events of the summer institute suggested the latter. Most participants arrived at the institute with extreme, hedgehogian, positions on affect, decision making, and their interaction, and clashed with one another over basic issues. Interactions then entered a foxy period in which everyone began to feel somewhat overwhelmed by the seemingly contradictory perspectives and research findings that emerged, and hopeless about the prospects of any kind of reconciliation. However the unusual length of the institute paid off. By the end of the period we began to see the emergence of a hedgefox period with a common language, a shared understanding of a number of issues, and, most characteristically of hedgefoxism, a nuanced theoretical perspective that made sense of, and in fact eliminated, what had previously appeared to be disagreements and contradictions. The benefits of the five weeks can be seen in each of the chapters represented in this volume.

Consider the answer, in chapter 1, by Roy F. Baumeister, C. Nathan DeWall, and Liqing Zhang, to the question of whether emotions improve or hinder the decision process. The answer is, of course, “it depends.” It depends on several factors, according to these authors. In particular, the distinction between current emotional state and antici-

pated emotional outcomes is influential. Current emotional states often lead to hasty or incomplete consideration of information, resulting in poor decisions and sometimes even self-destructive actions. In contrast, anticipated emotional outcomes are often vitally helpful in setting priorities and helping people make sensible decisions. This distinction helps inform a broader understanding of emotional phenomena as a feedback system which processes information and informs decision making. Full-blown conscious emotions guide reflection and evaluation, whereas brief twinges of automatic affect can bring these remembered lessons back in rapid manner to influence current behavioral choices.

Eduardo B. Andrade and Joel B. Cohen, in chapter 2, discuss the role of affect in risk taking, helping behavior, and eating. The authors note that research in each of these areas has produced seemingly contradictory findings: some studies find that positive emotions tend to increase risk taking, helping behavior, and eating, and other studies find the opposite. Andrade and Cohen propose a simple explanation for these contradictory findings—based on the distinction between “affective evaluation” and “affect regulation”—which can explain and predict when positive and negative emotions will tend to have each effect. In a nutshell, current emotions tend to cause people to perceive the world in specific ways (that is, affective evaluation), which produce specific patterns of behavior. However people also have intuitions about how behaving in different ways will affect their future emotions (that is, affect regulation), and these expected effects of behavior on affect often propel behavior in different directions than the more direct influences of affect. Whether emotions promote or reduce a particular behavior, then, depends on the relative strength of these two mechanisms.

Piotr Winkielman and Jennifer L. Trujillo, in chapter 3, add further nuance to Baumeister, DeWall, and Zhang’s perspective, arguing that these different phenomena can be understood as different stopping points in a sequence of events. According to these authors, “emotional stimuli are initially differentiated on importance, with the reaction being a non-specific orienting response. Next, the processing focuses on general valence of the cue, with the reaction being a positive or negative response.” Baumeister, DeWall, and Zhang would refer to this point of the process as a conscious emotion. Winkielman and Trujillo see it slightly differently, and they suggest that even relatively complex emotions can be unconscious, and yet can still exert their influence on behavior.

Karen Gasper and Linda M. Isbell, in chapter 4, take an instrumental perspective on the question of when people seek out or avoid information. They underscore the importance of emotion and mood (as separate concepts) in directing not only how much information people search for, but also what types they seek and favor. The perspective put forth by

Gasper and Isbell allows for more fine-grained predictions of people's choices when they are faced with new information to potentially peruse. Major decisions can thus be powerfully, albeit indirectly, shaped by emotions. If emotions guide information seeking, then the information one has available for subsequent decision making is biased.

Even within psychology, scholars with diverse theoretical perspectives and specific research interests were represented. For example, John M. Zelenski, a personality researcher, argues in chapter 5 that personality serves as a kind of context that moderates the impact of emotion on judgment and choice, and that whether a particular emotion is helpful or destructive in a particular situation depends crucially on the personality of the individual experiencing the emotion. Robert Oum and Debra Lieberman (chapter 6), coming from the perspective of evolutionary psychology, suggest the intuitive distinctions often made between emotion and cognition disappear when one considers an information processing view of the mind. They argue that emotion programs are a subset of cognitive processes evolved to guide decision making and behavior, along with other psychological and physiological processes, in a manner that would have led on average to an increase in survival and reproduction in ancestral environments. Whether emotions help or hurt decision making depends on the metric one employs: effects of decision making on inclusive fitness, well-being, or happiness.

Some authors dealt with the question of how emotion helps or hinders decision making by analyzing potential mechanisms that may shift the balance from one side to the other. Catherine D. Rawn, Nicole L. Mead, Peter Kerkhof, and Kathleen D. Vohs (chapter 7) take an individual differences approach and posit that self-feelings (that is, self-esteem) may be a key component in predicting when and under what circumstances emotions direct decision making.

In chapter 8, Christopher J. Anderson proposes an even more complex sequential perspective on emotion and the role it serves in decision making, with emotion first shaping decisions, then aiding in their implementation, and finally providing feedback about the desirability of the consequences that result from the decision. Of course, these outcomes cease to be a surprise to the seasoned decision maker, and the person may begin to make decisions based on these emotional consequences. This again points up the theme of anticipated emotion proving an important factor in decision processes.

Thus, a basic distinction that is emphasized in many of these chapters is between currently felt emotion, and future, possible, or anticipated emotion. Anderson's emphasis on how decision makers come to use anticipated emotional consequences to guide their decisions is a conclusion that others have reached by different routes. For example,

Baumeister, DeWall, and Zhang suggest that anticipated emotion generally benefits the decision process, whereas current emotions impair it. Andrade and Cohen likewise feature the distinctive benefits of affect regulation, which is based on wanting a future emotional outcome. Moral evaluation can be swayed by the anticipation of possibly feeling guilty over a particular action (see Monin, Pizarro, and Beer, chapter 10). Yet the line is not sharp, because some of the effects of current emotion are sometimes based on trying to feel better. The intensely upset consumer who overspends or overeats, for example, may be seeking to bring about an improved emotional state.

The sometimes harmful effects of seeking to regulate oneself out of a bad emotional state is one theme of chapter 9. Matthew T. Gailliot and Dianne M. Tice argue that much self-destructive behavior that might be perceived as “out of control” can in fact be interpreted as attempts by people to regulate negative affective states. In other words, “people succumb to their impulses in order to feel better.”

The final section of the book deals with specific applications in order to shed light on particular sets of problems. Benoit Monin, David A. Pizarro, and Jennifer S. Beer (chapter 10) tackle the knotty question of the relative role of reason and emotion in moral judgment. Several researchers have taken strong stands on the issue, with Jonathan Haidt arguing that moral reasoning is almost artifactual; he described it as the “tail that wags the emotional dog.” At the opposite extreme, many philosophers, and the psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg have argued instead that morality is purely a matter of reasoning. In a classic hedgefoxian statement, Monin, Pizarro, and Beer propose that “the different models of morality that have appeared in the literature over the years may be a direct consequence of the different moral situations considered by the various researchers who have proposed them. Observe humans as they try to solve complex moral dilemmas, and you are likely to propose a model of morality that relies heavily on high-level reasoning; ask them how they feel about disgusting immoral acts, and you are likely to conclude that morality is all about gut reactions that require little rational deliberation.”

Quinn Kennedy and Mara Mather are both cognitive psychologists with an interest in aging. In chapter 11, they review the changes in affect that occur in connection with aging, and they examine the consequences of these changes for decision making. Their model highlights the benefits of aging for emotional regulation in that older adults have a better aptitude for improving their emotions as compared to younger adults. This ability is the result of strategic decision making, which has been seen in the recollection and information-processing styles of older adults

in contexts such as recalling past decisions, public events, and personal experiences.

Beyond the intensity and length of the summer institute, the diverse backgrounds of the participants made it productive for all involved. Most of the scholars were drawn from the fields of psychology, but economics, marketing, and other business-school disciplines were also well represented, and we were fortunate to have one sociologically-oriented demographer.

The two economists in the group, Lorenz Goette and David Huffman, provided two chapters to this volume, each examining the implication of insights about affect to basic problems in economics. In chapter 12, they examine the role of affect in labor supply decisions, arguing that affect plays a critical role in income targeting, a phenomenon that is otherwise difficult to account for. In chapter 13, they argue that affect actually improves labor-market outcomes, because it addresses limitations inherent in purely self-interested economic behavior. For example, employers cannot track all of their employees' actions, so purely self-interested employees would shirk whenever it was undetectable. This would ultimately lead to lower productivity and wages. Positive affect between the employer and employee can reduce this problem, rescuing employers from the problem of shirking and rescuing employees from the low wages that would result. Harry S. Truman once said he wanted to get advice from a one-handed economist, because his economic advisors would typically give him economic advice of the form, "On the one hand . . . and on the other . . ." Goette and Huffman are two hedgefox economists whom Truman would not have liked to receive advice from (but should have!).

In chapter 14, Jonathan Levav addresses the question of why life events often have an impact on physical and mental health, but do not affect subjective (self-reported) happiness or well-being in the long run. Levav argues that the problem lies with the scales that measure subjective well-being, which fail to pick up the effects that such life events have on subconscious mental structures or "assumptive world schemas."

So what *is* the answer to the question of whether affect helps or hurts decision making? The hedgehog would argue that it either helps or hurts decision making. The fox would argue that both are true, or that the question doesn't make sense. The hedgefoxes who make up the authors of the chapters in this book will tell you, however, that the correct answer is "it depends." If you want to know what it depends on, read on.