

UNEDITED FINAL DRAFT

PUBLISHED AS:

Schubert, T. W., Seibt, B., Zickfeld, J. H., Blomster, J. K., & Fiske, A. P. (2017). Being moved is a positive emotion, and emotions should not be equated with their vernacular labels. Commentary in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 40, e374. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X17001820>

Authors of the target article

Winfried Menninghaus, Valentin Wagner, Julian Hanich, Eugen Wassiliwizky, Thomas Jacobsen, Stefan Koelsch

Commentary title

Being moved is a positive emotion, and emotions should not be equated with their vernacular labels

Full names

Thomas W. Schubert

Beate Seibt

Janis H. Zickfeld

Johanna K. Blomster

Alan P. Fiske

Institution

Schubert, Seibt, Zickfeld, Blomster: Department of Psychology, University of Oslo, Norway

Fiske: Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles

Full institutional mailing addresses

Schubert, Seibt, Zickfeld, Blomster:

Department of Psychology, Postboks 1094, Blindern, 0317 Oslo, Norway

Fiske:

375 Portola Plaza, 341 Haines Hall, University of California, Los Angeles, Box
951553, Los Angeles, CA 90095

Institutional telephone number

Schubert: +47-228 45187

One email address each

thomas.wolfgang.schubert@gmail.com

beate.seibt@psykologi.uio.no

jhzickfeld@gmail.com

johanna.katarina.blomster@gmail.com

afiske@ucla.edu

One home page url each (where available)

Schubert: <http://www.igroup.org/schubert>

Seibt: <http://www.sv.uio.no/psi/personer/vit/beatesei>

Fiske: <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/>

60 word abstract

As evidence for the second process of the embrace factor, the target article characterizes being moved as a mixed emotion linked to sadness through metonymy. We question these characterizations and argue that emotions should not be equated with their vernacular labels.

1000 word main text (with paragraphs separated by full blank lines, not tab indents)

The authors describe two emotions that they characterize as “mixed”, being moved and suspense, as points in case for their second component of embracing. We have studied being moved ourselves, and focus our comments on it. We feel that the evidence collected by ourselves and others does not fit with the characteristics of being moved that the authors propose, which challenges the second pillar of the embrace factor of the model. So, what are those characteristics?

We found three relevant empirical claims in the model. The first is that being moved is a mixed emotion, supposedly meaning that it is defined as having concurrently both positive and negative affective components (cf. Deonna, 2011). The second is that its relation to a corresponding negative emotion, sadness, is one of metonymy. The third is that sadness and being moved cluster in emotion space. We present evidence against all three claims.

The claim that being moved is a mixed emotion appears to be based on evidence gathered in studies that ask about emotional experiences retrospectively, often much later. Such data are useful for many purposes, but cannot clarify whether positive and negative affect was experienced concurrently or in succession. In a recent study, we concurrently and continuously assessed reports of being moved or touched, happiness, and sadness (among other variables, Schubert, Zickfeld, Seibt, & Fiske, 2016). Across each of six different video clips, the time series of feeling moved or touched cross-correlated consistently and strongly with that of happiness. However, the cross-correlation of feeling moved or touched with sadness varied highly between clips and was very small overall. To the extent that happiness and sadness can be used as proxies for affect, these data are not in line with the idea that positive and negative affect consistently co-occur in being moved. (For a visualization of the data, see <http://www.kamamutalab.org/visual/visual.html>).

The second claim assumes a relation of metonymy between sadness and being moved. As we understand it, this means that sadness is referred to as being moved and thereby acquires some of the positivity inherent in the mixed emotion being moved. However, the precise implication of the linguistic concept metonymy remains unclear from the theory presented. People do not always label their emotional experiences while experiencing them, and any assumption based on labeling would only be valid for a subset of experiences. Of course, there are transfer effects from one emotion to the next, as

well as contrast effects. These are described in the first component of the embracing factor, the dynamic unfolding of the story. In the case of being moved, well-orchestrated videos evoking being moved usually evoke some negative emotion first, often sadness, but sometimes anxiety or fear, which set the viewer up for then being moved. Here, being moved "profits from" sadness, and not the other way around, because being moved follows sadness rather than preceding it (see also Schubert et al., 2016). This profit is not due to metonymy, but rather the law of comparative feeling (Frijda, 1988).

The third assumption is that being moved and sadness (related to social bonding and attachment) are highly associated and cluster closely together. According to our reading, cluster analyses on German vernacular emotion terms suggest that sadness does not cluster with being moved, but instead with other negative emotions. Being moved instead clusters closest with compassion, but also with nostalgia, admiration, tenderness, gratitude, and other positive emotion terms (Kinatader, 2011; Menninghaus et al., 2015; Schmidt-Atzert & Ströhm, 1983). The close relationship of being moved and compassion is corroborated by a robust correlation between the trait of empathic concern and feeling moved by a large variety of stimuli (Zickfeld, Schubert, Seibt, & Fiske, 2017).

Taken together, this implies that being moved is not a mixed emotion, but rather a positive one that enhances the enjoyment of art that elicits it. It does so by contrasting with negative emotions, especially sadness over the loss or suspension of social bonds, and thus the process described in the first component of the embrace factor.

The question remains why people feel moved, and why being moved contrasts with sadness. According to our kama muta theory (Seibt, Schubert, Zickfeld, & Fiske, 2017), the relation of being moved and social sadness is one of polar opposites: whereas being moved is elicited by the sudden intensification of communal sharing relations, social sadness is about their attenuation or loss. Communal sharing is a basic building block of human social relations (Fiske, 1992). This hypothesis can account for the data presented in the target article. To get back to one of Menninghaus et al.'s examples: At funerals, people often oscillate between contemplating their loss versus their feelings of connection, and thus between grief and being moved. It is fully possible to feel both at once, or in quick succession.

One reason for our divergent perspective may be our belief that scientific conceptualizations of emotions should be distinguished from vernacular emotion terms and folk concepts. The use of the vernacular terms *being moved*, *being touched*, and their counterparts in other languages does not perfectly correspond to the emotional state caused by the intensification of communal sharing. Sometimes these terms are used for other states, and states that fit this appraisal are not labeled with them. Furthermore, neither does *sadness* match perfectly the state caused by the loss of a communal relation. We believe one cannot build theories on specific emotions by equating vernacular emotion labels with emotions themselves. Likewise, linguistic concepts such as metonymy may be applied to emotion labels, but not to emotions *pars pro toto*.

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