



**THE CAT FANCIERS'
ASSOCIATION**
— WE KNOW CATS —

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF JUDGING PEDIGREED CATS

With thanks to Peter Paul Moorman

Introduction

PURPOSE

- Identify some of the elements of the psychology of judging cats.
- Review some of the things that affect us in decision making.
- Provide an understanding of these influences so we can manipulate (or try to manipulate) the outcomes.
- Open a dialogue which allows us to discuss the subject further.

What is Psychology?

PSYCHOLOGY: PSY·CHOL·O·GY/SĪ'KÄLƏJĒ/

NOUN

1. The scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behavior in a given context.

synonyms: study of the mind, science of the mind

OXFORD DICTIONARIES

What Does It Have to do With Judging Cats?!

If we understand what influences our behavior (our work), as judges we can control and change our behavior as judges.

And, we may be able to control and avoid situations that lead to exhibitor behaviors such as . . .

FINALS



“I can’t believe she is using THAT cat . . .”

FINALS



“I can’t believe she isn’t using MY cat . . .”

FINALS



“I can’t believe he DUMPED OUR cat . . .”

FINALS



“What do you mean, he isn’t using MY cat . . .”

What is the “Work” of Judging?

JUDGING CATS IS A BEAUTY CONTEST GOVERNED BY WRITTEN STANDARDS .

- Harrison Weir – “Father of the Cat Fancy” – wrote the first standards - The Points of Excellence. Over 100 years ago!
- Today, our breed standards still describe the perfect show cat along a number of phenotypic dimensions – the Points of Excellence:
 - Head - Ears - Eyes - Eye color
 - Body - Feet - Tail - Leg length
 - Coat color - pattern - texture
 - Temperament
 - Penalizing and disqualifying faults
- There is a lot of information of which to keep track!
- And, there are ~~42~~ ~~44~~ ~~48~~ 46 breeds!

The Work of Judging Cats

JUDGING CATS IS SUBJECTIVE:

- Judging cats is an assessment procedure that relies on subjective human judgment.
 - Focuses on your opinion or interpretation (subjective judgement), yet choices are based on objective data – length of leg, shape of body, color of coat, etc.
- The human brain is highly ingenious, but it processes information in an idiosyncratic manner, and it is influenced by all sorts of psychological influences.
- So, not everyone’s “subjective opinion” is the same!
- Therefore, not everyone interprets things in the same way!
 - Exhibitors
 - Breeders
 - Show Officials
 - Judges vary at the same show

The Work of Judging Cats

PERCEPTIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

- Many assumptions are made about subjective human judgments (decisions), that occur at a cat show based on sometimes imagined perceptions:
 - The exhibitor is the judge's friend
 - The cat is from the judge's lines
 - The judge is dishonest
 - Politics, politics, politics
- As a result, some judge's decisions lead to disapproval by exhibitors and other judges.
- Many times, assumptions are WRONG because perceptions are FALSE!
- And, sometimes judges make MISTAKES!

Esthetic Appreciation Depends on Perception

- Dependent on what the judge observes or perceives.
- As a judge, one must have knowledge of the IMPLICIT NORM on what is good, very good, and excellent within several breeds.
- Implied Norms for each breed are affected by:
 - Uniqueness
 - Excellence of type, color, balance, grooming
 - Individual cat's charisma
 - Age of the cat
- Some judges become over critical or too lenient irrespective of their mood.
 - Affects esthetic appreciation
 - Hampers consensus among judges

What Affects Judges' Perceptions?

INFLUENCED BY:

- **Physical state.**
 - Illness, age, inebriation, and tiredness all affect perception, concentration, and speed of judging because information processing is slower.
- **Mental condition, emotional state, mood.**
 - Extreme Nervousness/Anxiety
 - Irritation, Anger, Hostility
 - Extreme Happiness or Euphoria

KEEPING IT STRAIGHT

- How much detail can a normal human keep track of?
 - Stock traders can keep track of up to seven dimensions
 - Radiologists - up to six dimensions
 - Attorneys - only up to three
- Well, what about “expert” judges?!
 - Figure skating judges
 - Pedigreed cat judges

How Much Can We Keep Track Of?

- Psychological studies with experts in judging show that humans:
 - Can combine 9 to 11 dimensions in the laboratory situation.
 - But usually not more than 3 in the natural situation without specialized training and experience.
- Cat shows happen in natural situations
 - It seems that the average judge cannot handle more than three dimensions simultaneously.
 - Humans tend to “clump” things together and it appears that the three most important dimension groups or “clumps” cat judges focus on are type, color and coat.
- Is it hard? You betcha!
- Practice makes ~~perfect~~ . . . Better!

OMG!!! What Do We DO?!?!?!?

If there are 100 points for each breed aligned along 3-6 dimensions
(head, body, coat, etc.)

So, if we can only keep track of 3 dimensions at a time and,

There are 450 cats in a show . . .

HOW DO WE COMPENSATE?!

How Do We Compensate?

We develop or align to a style!

- Individual to each judge.
- Can be changed and, it does change (sometimes without realizing).
- May look very different as the individual matures from novice to seasoned judge.

Judging Styles

ACCORDING TO PETER PAUL MOORMAN:

- The analytic style
- The holistic style

ANALYTIC STYLE

- An additive, highly rational model, that uses the left hemisphere of the brain.
- Assumes that the Whole is the Sum of it's Parts.
- Look at the cat, add up the points, voila Best of Breed!
- Doesn't always work – because the whole CAN be MORE than the sum of its parts!
- Style used by many Apprentice Judges.

Judging Styles

THE HOLISTIC STYLE

- Uses the right side of the brain.
- Assumes that judges start with a global impression of what a specific breed of cat should look like.
 - Frameworks or templates – the mental image. The “epiphany cat”.
- The closer the cat fits the ideal mental image of the judge, the higher the appreciation of the judge will be.
- However a holistic judge may experience some problems too – they can miss the fine details of an exhibit.
- Style used by more experienced judges.

Judging Styles

WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

- BOTH styles can be involved in judging – and you will learn to use both.
 - Hemispheric Specialization with Communication Right Brain/Left Brain
- BEWARE of relying on one over the other.

What Contributes to Judging Styles? Or, how do we see things and process them?

PERCEPTION IS INFLUENCED BY:

- Judging Experience - Leads to a differentiation in perception and better discrimination, which facilitates decision-making.
 - New Breeds – What then?!
 - The experienced all-breed judge has a framework of cat types in mind, a theory on how lines can be combined into forms that define different cat types.
- Personality Traits
 - Rigidity – I can't change, I'm too old.
 - Early Adoption – What's NEW?!

Memory Tasks – How Do We Remember?

DEPENDENT ON:

- Short-term Memory Capacity
- Long-term Memory Storage
- Long-term Memory Recall and Recognition

MANY THINGS CAN GO AWRY W/MEMORY:

- Short-term memory issues
- Interference/Interruptions – be aware! The well-meaning hospitality hostess who interrupts your train of thought for your lunch order may cause you to forget to note the cat you want to final as Best in Show!

OMG! WHAT DO WE DO?!

- Be AWARE of what can happen! You CAN work to influence the impact of your own human behavior.
 - Don't allow distractions to interfere with your work.
 - Interruptions
 - Announcements
 - People
 - Stay focused on the task of judging each cat.
 - Staying focused allows you to naturally ignore peripheral activity, sounds and people.

OMG! HOW DO WE DO THAT?!

Develop Techniques that Support Your Work!

- Use your clerk to intercept people who interrupt.
- Don't look up until you have finished writing in your judge's book.
- Take your time when things get difficult. Rushing only makes your short-term memory work more poorly.

OMG! HOW DO WE KEEP IT ALL STRAIGHT?!

Judging is work It's a process and you can improve any process!

Drill your choices down to gain better mastery of large classes.

- Start by treating each encounter as a contest between only two cats.
- Don't move on to the next contest until you decide the winner of the first.

USE THE SYSTEM!

- We have a great judging system! Use it to your advantage.
- Relax! We were all there in the beginning!

Conclusion

- Practice, practice, practice . . .
- Patience, patience, patience . . .
- Keep in mind, you're only human and humans come with some built-in issues but,
 - You can make changes
 - You can control the elements of judging

YOU CAN MASTER THE TASK

