

Public Abstract

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Title:Positive Affect, Intuitive Processing, and Visual Encoding

The effects of positive affect (PA) on the ways people think have been studied extensively in psychology. Uncannily, these effects map on squarely to the two systems of cognition, the experiential (or intuitive) and cognitive (or rational) systems, and the described by the Cognitive-Experiential Self Theory (CEST) framework (Epstein, 1991; 1994) with positive moods being consistently associated with processing strategies used by the experiential system. One component of CEST that has yet to be studied in the emotion literature is the theoretically-proposed tendency of the experiential system to encode information in visual images. The current study explored how PA and intuition affect a person's use of mental imagery using a perceptual priming paradigm. For participants who experienced a mood manipulation, PA and intuition interacted to predict facilitated response latencies to words that were primed by words representing objects sharing the same prototypical color controlling for reaction times to semantically primed targets and unprimed targets. These findings suggest that reliance on the intuitive system, enhanced by PA, may indeed process information in images. This study lays the groundwork for future research on mental imagery and individual differences in intuitive processing.