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Motivational Priming Predicts How Noxious Unconditioned Stimuli Influence Affective Reactions to Emotional Pictures

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Author(s)

Amy E. Williams, Jamie L. Rhudy

ABSTRACT

Motivational priming theory (MPT) and preparedness theory generate competing hypotheses about the impact of an aversive US on responses to an affective foreground. MPT predicts the aversive US will facilitate negative emotional reactions to unpleasant pictures and inhibit positive emotional reactions to pleasant pictures. Preparedness theory predicts an aversive US will increase negative emotional reactions to unpleasant pictures, but will not impact responses to pleasant pictures. The present study (N = 125) compared these competing hypotheses by assessing how noxious shocks and non-noxious noises influence responses to emotional pictures. Following each picture, participants rated how the picture made them feel using the Self Assessment Manikin. Results supported MPT - noxious USs, but not non-noxious USs, facilitated negative emotional reactions to unpleasant pictures and inhibited positive emotional reactions to pleasant pictures.

KEYWORDS

Affect; Noxious Stimulation; Emotional Picture Ratings; Motivational Priming Theory; Preparedness Theory

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