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The Effect of Mood on Implicit Learning

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THE EFFECT OF MOOD ON IMPLICIT LEARNING

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This study investigated the relationship between mood, personality, and implicit learning, or the gaining of knowledge without conscious awareness. Previous research has suggested that positive mood enhances heuristic judgments and a broad span of attention, while negative mood enhances analytic judgments and a narrow span of attention (e.g., Isen et al., 1985; Park & Banaji, 2003; Rowe, Hirsh, & Anderson, 2007). Thus, we predicted that a positive mood would enhance implicit learning, while a negative mood would depress it. Additionally, because intuition relies on non-conscious processing, we expected that participants with an intuitive personality would learn more implicitly than those with a non-intuitive personality. Using affective photographs, 94 participants were induced with a positive, neutral, or negative mood. Implicit learning was measured using the Artificial Grammar (AG) and Serial Reaction Time (SRT) tasks, while personality was measured using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Rational-Experiential Inventory (REI). Contrary to our hypotheses, findings suggest that mood has no significant effect on SRT performance, while negative mood increases AG performance. Additionally, analytical personality correlates positively with AG performance, but no significant correlations are found between personality and SRT performance. One possible explanation is that the AG task, but not the SRT task, induces analytical processing and encourages a hypothesis-testing approach which benefits learning.