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ABSTRACT

The most general explanation of the impact of positive and negative affect on prosocial behavior has been based on the notion that prosocial responses are self-reinforcing. Accordingly, people who are feeling good are inclined to help others in order to maintain their pleasant affect, whereas those who are feeling badly are likely to help in order to alleviate their negative moods. An alternative formulation, the Dual Process model of mood, suggests that positive mood produces an expansive orientation, increasing interest in social and other activities while negative mood produced an egocentric orientation, increasing personal instrumental concerns. This experiment tested the Dual Process model to explore the effects of induced positive, negative, and neutral moods on helping, under conditions of high or low social inducement, with a helping task having positive or negative interest valence. A 3 (Mood Manipulation) x 2 (Task Valence) x 2 (Social Inducement) experimental design was used to test effects of mood on helping. Subjects (N=120) were college students in a General Psychology course at a large southeastern university. Positive mood was found to increase helping primarily under conditions of high social inducement, which had minimal impact on negative and neutral mood subjects. Negative mood, by contrast, increased helping when the task had a positive interest valence, which had little effect for positive and neutral subjects. (Author/ABL)

Dual Processes in the effects of mood on helping behavior.

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Abstract: The Dual Process model suggested that positive mood produced an expansive orientation, increasing interest in social and other activities while negative mood produced an egocentric orientation, increasing personal instrumental concerns. Dual Process in the effects of mood on helping were investigated in a 3 (Mood Manipulation) X 2 (Task Valence) X 2 (Social Inducement) experimental design. Positive mood was found to increase helping primarily under conditions of high social inducement, which had minimal impact on negative and neutral mood subjects. Negative mood, by contrast, increased helping when the task had a positive interest valence, which had little effect for positive and neutral subjects.

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Dual Processes in the effects of mood on helping behavior

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The most general explanation of the impact of positive and negative affect on prosocial behavior has been based on the notion that prosocial responses are self-reinforcing. Accordingly, people who are feeling good are inclined to help others in order to maintain their pleasant affect, whereas those who are feeling badly are likely to help in order to alleviate their negative moods.

A recent review of the literature on the relationship between mood and helping (Shaffer, in press), however, indicated that such a formulation failed to account for all of the findings. As expected, negative mood increased helping only when the task appeared to be pleasant rather than unpleasant (Isen & Simmonds, 1978; Forest, Clark, Mills & Isen, 1979; Shaffer & Graziano, 1983). Yet subjects in a positive mood state displayed less concern that engaging in helping would maintain or increase their positive mood state (Manucia, Baumann & Cialdini, 1984). More perplexing was the fact that negative mood seemed to increase helping only when the subject's attention was strongly focused on the helping request (Barnett, King & Howard, 1979; Thompson, Cowan & Rosenhan, 1980; Rogers, Miller, Mayer & Duval, 1982). Thus, the relationship of mood to helping behavior did not seem to be the simple result of affect increasing hedonism.

An alternative formulation, the Dual Process model of mood, suggested that negative mood produced an egocentric orientation, which included increased self-reflection, decreased social interest and increased interest in intrumental behaviors. Positive mood, by contrast, was said to produce a more expansive orientation, which included an increase in social interest, and positive expectations about a wide range of activities (Cunningham, 1981; Cunningham, in press). In an explicit test of the Dual Process model (Cunningham, Steinberg & Grev, 1980), negative mood was found to increase helping only when helping opportunity focused attention on the responsibility of the subject to help. Positive mood, by contrast, increased helping when the helping request emphasized the positive consequences for the beneficiary, rather than the obligation of the helper.

The present experiment was designed as a further test of the Dual Process model, to explore the effects of induced positive, negative and neutral moods on helping, under conditions of high or low social inducement, with a helping task having positive or negative interest valence. The Dual Process model predicted that subjects in a positive mood would be most affected by the degree of social inducement to help (Shaffer & Smith, 1984), while negative mood subjects would be most influenced by the valence of the helping task

Method

Subjects: One hundred and twenty subjects volunteered for the experiment to meet a eneral Psychology course requirement at a large southeastern university.

Procedure: The experiment employed a 3 (Mood Condition) X 2 (Task Valence) X 2 (Social Inducement) experimental design.

Mood Condition: The positive, negative or neutral moods were induced using a modification of the Velten Mood Induction Procedure (VMIP). The effect of the Velten was enhanced by having the subjects dramatically read out loud the mood related statements into a tape recorder, under the belief that they were in a control condition of an experiment in which spoken messages would be evaluated by a psychological stress analyser.

Task Valence: After the induction, and the apparent completion of the experiment, subjects were asked by a second experimenter to volunteer for no credit to help on an experimental task that was described either as fun and interesting or as dull and boring.

Social Inducement: Following the request, a confederate immediately volunteered. In the low social in ucement condition, the confederate also stated that the other subject might be too busy to help, while in the high social inducement condition the confederate indicated that he thought that they both should had plenty of time to help. The principle dependent variable was whether or not the subject helped in response to the request. Additional manipulation checks were also recorded prior to debriefing.

Results

Manipulation checks. Analyses of variance were conducted to determine the effectiveness of the experimental manipulations. Subjects' self reports on the impact of reading the Velten statements out loud indicated significant differences in emotional change across mood conditions (F (2, 117) = 23.41, $p < .0001$). The subjects in the positive mood condition were more likely than those in the neutral condition to indicate that the procedure raised in their moods (F (1, 78) = 10.44, $p < .002$). Subjects in the negative condition were more likely than those in the neutral condition to report that the procedure lowered their moods (F (1,78) = 24.26, $p < .001$). There were also significant differences across mood conditions in self-reports on positive emotion terms (F (2, 118) = 8.67, $p < .0001$) and negative emotion terms (F (2, 118) = 10.08, $p < .004$), indicating that the mood manipulations had their intended effects.

Subjects in the fun task condition were more likely to indicate that they expected the task to be fun than those in the dull task condition (F (1,118) = 36.82, $p < .0001$), indicating that the two task conditions differed in their perceived affective valence.

The social inducement manipulation was clearly effective. Subjects in the high social inducement condition reported that they felt under greater pressure from the confederate compared to those in the low social inducement condition (F (1, 118) = 24.88, $p < .001$)

Tests of hypotheses. The major dependent variable in this study was subject's compliance with the request to work without compensation on the anagram task after the completion of the voice analysis test. Table 1 presents the means and ANOVA on this dependent variable.

Insert Table 1 about here

Significantly more helping occured in the positive mood condition than in the neutral condition (.68 vs .38, F (1, 78) = 9.79, $p < .002$) and more helping occured in the negative mood condition than in the neutral condition (.65 vs .38 F (1, 78) = 7.01, $p < .009$).

Significantly more helping occured when the task was described as fun than when it was described as dull (.65 vs .48, F (1, 108) = 4.67, $p < .03$). The interaction of Mood by Task Interest was significant, such that negative mood subjects showed significantly greater helping to the fun task than neutral condition subjects showed to the fun task (.90 vs .35, t (38) = 4.23, $p < .001$), but no difference from neutral subjects on the dull task (.40 vs .40). Positive mood subjects, by contrast, were more likely than the neutral condition subjects to agree to help on both the fun task (.70 vs .35, t (38) = 2.54, $p <$ .01) and the dull task (.65 vs .40, t(38) = 1.56, $p < .06$).

The social inducment manipulation produced a marginally significant main effect so that more helping occured under high than under low social inducement. The interaction of task and social inducement was statistically significant, such that high social inducement was more effective than low social inducement in inducing subjects to work on the fun task (.80 vs .47, t (58) = 3.30, $p <$ .01) but was no more effective than low social inducement in encouraging subjects to work on the dull task (.47 vs .50). The Mood by Social Inducemnt interaction was also marginally significant. The positive mood subjects significantly increased helping in response to the high social inducemnet confederate compared to the low social inducement confederate (.85 vs .50, t(38) = 2.53, $p < .01$) but the neutral (.40 vs. 35, t (38) = .31, ns) and negative condition subjects (.65 vs .65) showed no differences as a function of the high versus low social inducemnt manipulation.

Discussion

All Dual Process Model predictions were confirmed. Positive mood was associated with increased responsiveness to social inducements. Such increased social responsiveness was consistent with the perspective that positive mood produces expansiveness and an interest in a wide range of activity. Negative mood, by contrast, was associated with no increased sensitivity to social inducements, but hightened attention to the personal consequences of the helping request. Such results are consistent with the Dual Motivation model which suggested that negative mood may induce a restriction in focus, and an instrumental orientation.

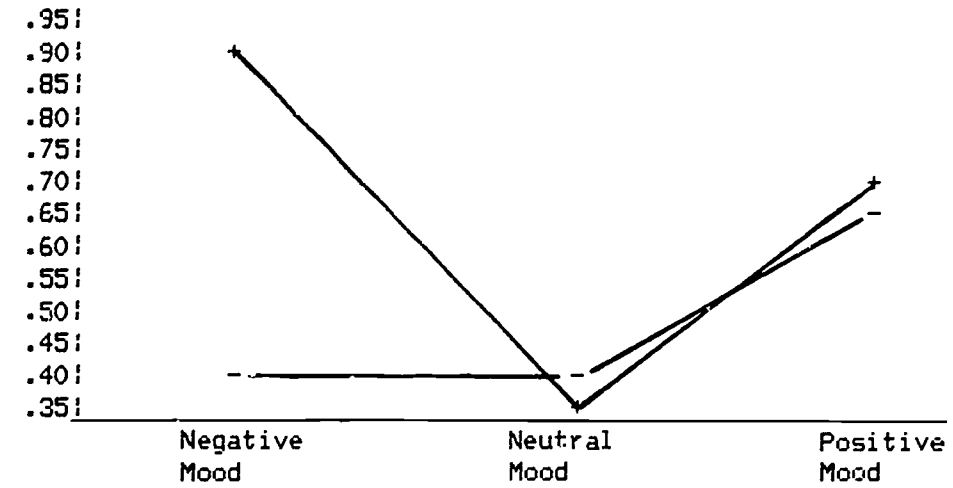
Table 1

Percentage of subjects vounteering to help
as a function of mood, task valence and social inducement

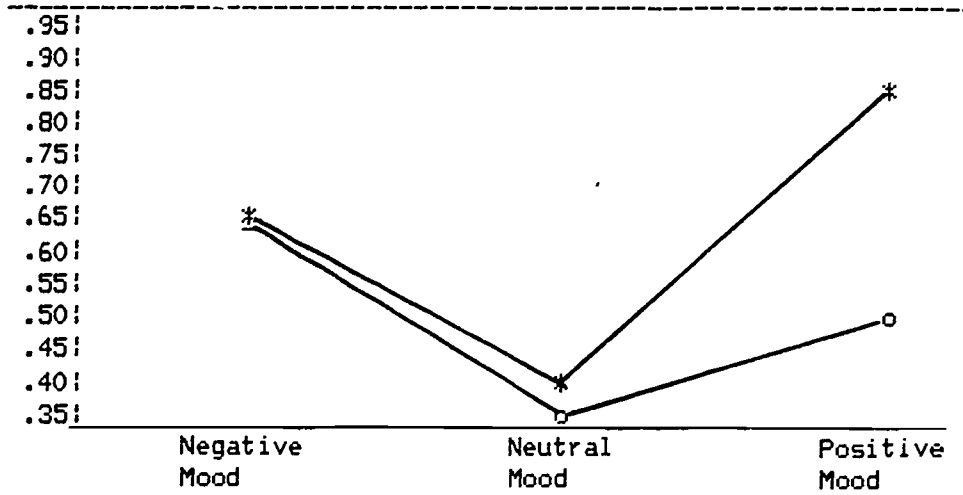
Mood condition	Negative		Neutral		Positive	
Task Valence	Dull	Fun	Dull	Fun	Dull	Fun
Social Inducement						
Low	.50	.80	.40	.30	.60	.40
High	.30	1.00	.40	.40	.70	1.00

n=10, each cell

The effects of mood, task valence and social inducement on volunteer rates



\+ fun task
\- dull task



* High social inducement
o Low social inducement

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