The Efficacy of a Mindset Prime on Evoking Feelings of Nurturance

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ABSTRACT

This two-part study tested the efficacy of a mindset prime to evoke nurturing feelings. Mindset primes have been used to elicit emotions, but we have not found any studies that evoked nurturing emotions. In part one, we created and selected the no-prime scenarios (elicited the least emotions) and priming scenarios (elicited the greatest nurturing feelings). In part two, we tested the mindset prime for its ability to elicit nurturing feelings. A mixed-design ANOVA, $F(1, 66)=14.8$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2_p=.19$, revealed that participants who were primed (M = 2.74, SD = 4.93) showed a greater increase in nurturing feelings between the pre- and post-tests on the Nurturing State Scale, an original scale that measured nurturing feelings, compared to the control group (M = -1.33, SD = 3.48). We conclude that our mindset prime effectively evoked nurturing feelings, which may be useful in exploring the role of nurturance in a number of contexts and behaviors.

INTRODUCTION

- ***Priming***: preparing one's mental state to serve a response function (Lashley, 1951).
- ***Conceptual priming***: activating mental representations in one context so that they exert an influence in subsequent, unrelated contexts without the participant's awareness.
- ***Mindset priming***: engaging in or reading about someone engaging in a specific goal-directed type of thought so that same this "mindset" will operate in a later, unrelated context (Bargh and Chartrand, 2000, p. 7).
- Emotional states can be induced through mindset priming (e.g., Lindquist & Barrett, 2008; Zemach-Rugar, Bettman, & Fitzsimons, 2007), and studies have demonstrated the efficacy of having participants read and imagine vignettes to prime for a specific emotion (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2005).
- We have not found studies that used mindset priming to induce nurturance, an important construct in many domains, including developmental psychology, conservation psychology, and evolutionary psychology, and industrial-organizational psychology.
- The goal of this study was to develop a mindset priming method that would effectively evoke feelings of nurturance to explore the relationship between nurturing and environmental decision making.

HYPOTHESES

- **H1**: Participants who read only no-prime scenarios will show no change between baseline and post-test on their scores on the NSS.
- **H2**: Participants who read a mix of no-prime and nurturing scenarios will show an increase in NSS scores from base-line to post-test.
- **H3**: NSS post-test scores for the experimental group will be positively correlated with scores on the nurturance subscale of the Personality Report Form E.

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METHODS

Part One – Creation and Selection of Priming Scenarios

Demographic Information:

The final sample used for analysis was comprised of 50 men and 27 women ranging in age from 18 to 28 (M=20.70, SD=2.63).

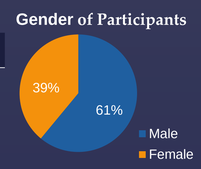
Procedure:

1. Participants read 30 neutral and nurturing scenarios
   - *No-Prime (Neutral) Scenario*: should not evoke any emotions in participants
   - *Nurturing Scenario*: should make participants feel loving, compassionate, kind, caring, and similar nurturing emotions
2. Rated on a 5-point Likert scale (*clearly does not describe my feelings* to *clearly describes my feelings*) how much the scenario evoked each of 6 primary emotions (i.e., *love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness, fear*, and *indifference*).
3. Participants answered on a 5-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) how much they felt each scenario stirred up emotions and made them feel as though they had contributed to their community.
4. Scenarios that participants ranked as *indifferent* significantly more than the other scenarios were designated as *neutral (no-prime)*. Scenarios that evoked feelings of *love* and *community involvement* in participants significantly more than other scenarios were designated as *nurturing.*

Part Two: Testing the Efficacy of the Nurturing Mindset Prime

Demographic Information:

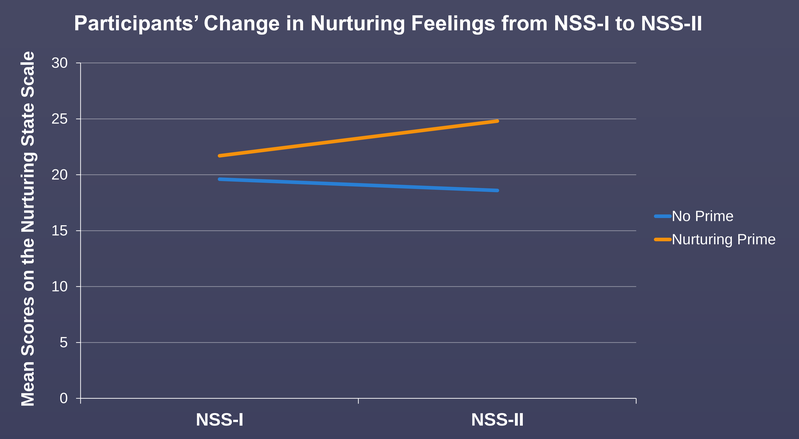
	Sample	Mean	SD	Median	Min.	Max.
Male	n=40	22.7 yrs	3.98 yrs	22 yrs	18 yrs	39 yrs
Female	n=26	22.46 yrs	4.14 yrs	20.5 yrs	18 yrs	39 yrs
Total	N=66	21.61 yrs	4.01 yrs	22 yrs	18 yrs	39 yrs



Procedure:

CONTROL (NO-PRIME)	EXPERIMENTAL (PRIME)
1. Nurturing-State Scale (NSS-I), Pre-Test -- to measure nurturance as a state. An original scale based on the *Profile of Mood States-SF* (McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1982), with the addition of specific nurturing type emotional words (i.e., loving, concerned, kind, compassionate, caring, tender, sympathetic, and helpful).	
2. No Prime -- Participants read, imagined themselves in, and wrote about each of 5 neutral (no-prime) scenarios	**2. Nurturing Prime** -- Participants read, imagined themselves in, and wrote about 3 scenarios designed to elicit feelings of nurturance interspersed with 2 neutral scenarios
3. Nurturing -State Scale (NSS-II), Post-Test -- to measure nurturance as a state	
4. Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS) -- A self-report inventory - measures concern for future generations (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992).	
5. Nurturance Subscale of the Personality Report Form E (PRF-E) -- A personality inventory measuring nurturance as a trait (Jackson, 1967).	
6. Demographic Questionnaire -- Collected data on age, gender, ethnicity, class standing, country of origin, and comfort with English as a written, read, and spoken language.	

RESULTS



H1: Participants who read only no-prime scenarios will show no change between baseline and post-test on their scores on the NSS.

- A repeated measures ANOVA revealed no significant change between NSS-I and NSS-II scores for participants who received only no-prime scenarios.

H2: Participants who read a mix of no-prime and nurturing scenarios will show an increase in NSS scores from baseline to post-test.

- A repeated measures ANOVA, $F(1, 66)=14.8$, $p=.004$, $\eta^2_p=.24$, showed that participants who received the prime had a significantly greater increase in NSS scores between baseline and post-test.
- A mixed-design ANOVA, $F(1, 66)=14.8$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2_p=.19$, revealed that participants who were primed (M = 2.74, SD = 4.93) showed a significantly greater increase in nurturing feelings between the NSS-I to NSS-II compared to the control group (M = -1.33, SD = 3.48).

H3: NSS post-test scores for the experimental group will be positively correlated with scores on the nurturance subscale of the Personality Report Form E.

- We found a significant correlation (r = .36, p =.003) between our NSS and the nurturance subscale of the Personality Report Form E.

IMPLICATIONS

- The nurturing scenarios chosen for the prime significantly evoked nurturing feelings in participants while the no-prime scenarios did not significantly evoke any feelings in participants.
- Our nurturing mindset prime effectively evoked nurturing feelings in the participants who received it.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The nurturing mindset prime, which was shown to be effective in this study, may be useful to researchers who are interested in the relationship between nurturance and a number of other personality traits and emotions, as well as those who wish to study the influence of nurturance on decision-making behaviors. A nurturing prime might be used to encourage people to engage in altruistic behaviors, community service, or pro-environmental decisions.