Priming Emotion-Eliciting Appraisals through Music

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**Abstract**

Appraisal theory claims that emotions are elicited as a result of a meaning analysis in which a person evaluates the implications of his or her circumstances for his or her personal well-being. This study tests the process model of appraisal proposed by Smith and Kirby by examining if music can be used to incidentally prime appraisals of self and other accountability. Forty-five participants were randomly assigned to one of two negative conditions, self accountability (guilt/shame) or other accountability (anger), or a neutral condition with no music. Participants were partnered with a confederate and engaged in a difficult tinker toy building task in which they were expected to fail. The participants then completed appraisal ratings and other questionnaires to assess their appraisals of accountability and resulting emotional state, with the expectation that participants in the guilt/shame condition would blame themselves for the failure and those in the anger condition would blame their partner. The results were not significant, but some trends suggest that with adjustments, future studies might succeed in priming appraisals of self and other accountability in order to influence emotion and emotion-related behavior, providing support for the process model of appraisal.

**Introduction**

Emotions play an important role in our everyday lives. Whether we cognitively focus on them or not, emotions affect our actions and judgment and are present in a variety of situations. For example, we experience happiness when we spend time with our friends and family, anger when we feel slighted, and sadness when dumped by a girlfriend or boyfriend. Emotions influence our well-being, physical health, social functioning, and problem-solving abilities, and they often motivate our responses to situations (Smith & Lazarus, 1990).

But what exactly is an emotion that sets it apart from any other psychophysiological state such as hunger? According to Aristotle, one of the first philosophers of emotion, emotions are “that which leads one’s condition to become so transformed that his judgment is affected, and which is accompanied by pleasure and pain.” Now, modern researchers define an emotion as a reflexive response to an appraised meaning, suggesting that emotions are determined by a person’s evaluations of his or her surroundings (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Emotional reactions are said to arise under conditions representing potential benefit or harm and have three components: 1) a distinctive subjective feeling state, 2) a physiological response, for example, skeletomuscular, autonomic, and endocrine activity, and 3) an “action tendency,” or urge to respond to the situation in a particular way (Smith & Kirby, 2000). Theorists believe emotions are adaptive, and each emotion expresses a person’s appraisal of his or her interaction with the environment involving the potential benefit or harm. This appraisal generates action tendencies relevant to the environmental situation, and these tendencies are expressed in a particular physiological pattern (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). For example, if a woman has a negative, fearful reaction to seeing a poisonous snake, physiological responses may include sweating, increased heart rate, and high adrenaline levels, and her action tendency may be to flee the scene. Here, her fear was adaptive because it led her to leave a potentially harmful situation.

*Appraisal Theory*

Because this psychobiological reaction to an event that affects one’s well-being is what constitutes an emotion, the process in which emotions occur is important. Emotions are derived from a variety of internal and external events, real or imagined, and generate a variety of responses depending on how people interpret the adaptational significance of the situation (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). People experiencing the same situation can evaluate it differently, so the resulting emotions are based on each person’s unique interpretation. Consequently, appraisal theorists have developed a structural model of cognitive activities where if it is known how a person evaluates the environment in a particular situation, his or her emotional reaction can be predicted. The structural model encompasses two stages, primary and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal focuses on whether and how the event is relevant to a person’s well-being. It is divided into two components, motivational relevance (or importance) and motivational (in)congruence (or desirability). For motivational relevance, one evaluates how the encounter coincides with personal needs and goals. In the second component of congruence or desirability, the person determines how consistent or inconsistent the situation is with these goals (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Is the situation good (desirable), bad (undesirable), or a combination? Both motivational relevance and congruence are necessary in order for a person to have an emotional response. If an event is not relevant and the person has no personal stake in the situation, he or she is likely to feel an indifferent state of mind. This motivational relevance then combines with motivational congruence or incongruence to determine the potential harm or benefit of the situation (Smith & Lazarus, 1990).

However, the two components of primary appraisal alone cannot determine the emotion a person will experience—the secondary appraisal components are necessary to determine if the person experiences happiness, anger, sadness, guilt, pride, envy, or the like (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Secondary appraisal concerns the person’s options for reacting and coping with the event. It can be further split into accountability, coping potential, and future expectancy. Accountability determines who is responsible (self vs. other) for the credit or blame, and it helps direct the emotional response and coping strategies. Credit occurs when the situation is motivationally congruent, and blame arises when it is motivationally incongruent. Coping potential and future expectancy are related to evaluating the potential to maintain a desirable situation or improve an undesirable one. Coping potential can be problem-focused or emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping potential refers to the ability to change the situation to make it more congruent with one’s goals, whereas emotion-focused coping potential is the ability to adjust psychologically in order to handle or adapt to situations that are not congruent with one’s goals. Future expectancy recognizes the possibilities for change in motivational congruence for any reason (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Together, these factors influence the resulting emotion.

For example, both anger and guilt arise in situations appraised as motivationally relevant and incongruent, but it is the secondary component of accountability that determines which emotion is experienced. Anger occurs when the situation is appraised to be someone else’s fault. Guilt arises when one blames oneself. The emotion provides physiological preparation and motivates the person to respond. For instance, with anger, the angry person might have an urge to lash out at the other person or thing responsible for the anger in attempt to make the anger-inducing situation end (Smith & Kirby 2000).

However, because the structural model of appraisal does not explain the mechanisms by which these cognitions are generated, critics interpreted the structural descriptions of appraisal as suggesting that the process of appraisal is deliberate, slow, and verbally meditated. These critics believe this observation would contradict the notion that emotions can be elicited very quickly, unbidden, with minimum cognitive effort, and sometimes even with little or no awareness of the nature of the emotion-eliciting stimulus (Smith & Kirby, 2009). Thus, a process model was developed to fill in the gaps and supplement the structural model by specifying the cognitive routes by which appraisals are generated. The process model, as proposed by Smith and Kirby, is divided into two modes: associative processing and reasoning. Associative processing involves priming and activation of memories, and it can occur quickly and automatically. It relies on perceptual or conceptual similarities in one’s current circumstances to activate memories of prior experiences outside of focal awareness and with a minimum use of attentional resources. When these memories are activated, they also activate the appraisal meanings associated with them. The meanings can then be recognized by the appraisal detectors and influence the person’s emotional state (Smith & Kirby, 2001). Appraisal detectors, believed to be subcortical and most likely in the limbic system, are continuously monitoring and responding to appraisal information from multiple sources in the environment.

On the other hand, reasoning is a more controlled, deliberate thinking process. It is more flexible than associative processing, but it is relatively slow and attention-intensive. Reasoning uses contents of focal awareness to produce appraisal meanings. While associative processing can access any memory stored in the brain, reasoning can only draw upon semantic memory. Regardless, reasoning is important because it employs abstract thinking processes and analysis and reappraisal of emotion-eliciting situations. The results from reasoning can then be stored in memory and become available for subsequent associative processing. Together, associative processing and reasoning provide a highly intelligent and adaptive emotional system (Smith & Kirby, 2000).

*Priming*

As mentioned, priming utilizes associative processing to trigger past memories and behaviors and influence a person’s current state. Priming can occur without an intervening act of will or even awareness, and it centers on temporary activation of a person’s mental representations by the environment and the effect of this activation on various psychological phenomena such as perception, evaluation, motivation, and behavior. A variety of priming techniques have been used to show these effects. For instance, in conceptual priming, the activation of mental representations in one context creates a passive, unintended, and non-aware influence in subsequent unrelated contexts until their activation dissipates (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000).

Examples of successful priming include Bargh, Chen, and Burrows (1996) and Epley and Gilovich (1999). In the second experiment of Bargh et al., participants in the experimental group were primed for the elderly stereotype. All subjects were told they were participating in a language proficiency experiment and were given a scrambled sentence task. The scrambled sentence task for those primed for the elderly stereotype included words such as old, Florida, bingo, conservative, knits, retired, and wrinkled. However, all references to slowness (a trait characteristic of the elderly) were excluded. Participants were debriefed, and then a confederate in the experiment, disguised as a student waiting to talk to a professor in the hallway, used a stopwatch to time how long the participants took to walk to the elevator. A t test confirmed that participants primed for the elderly condition were significantly slower walking to the elevator. This study shows that triggering a knowledge structure such as the elderly stereotype outside the awareness of the participants activates the semantic knowledge associated with it and influences future behaviors.

In the study by Epley and Gilovich (1999), participants were primed for either conformity or nonconformity through scrambled sentence tasks. Participants then rated their interest and enjoyment in the experiment after listening to three confederates state their opinions. Experimenters found that subjects primed to conform were, in fact, more likely to conform. The significant results of this study demonstrate that priming can have an effect in a social context.

*Priming and Music*

In a study by Tan, Spackman, and Bezdek (2007), participants viewed film excerpts with music presented before or after a scene with a single character. The characters had emotionally neutral or subdued facial expressions, yet the music conveyed happiness, sadness, fear, or anger. The results showed that subjects interpreted the characters’ emotions in ways consistent with the emotion expressed in the music, providing evidence that music can have forward and backward affective priming effects. The findings show that music is an effective priming tool and can affect a person’s appraisal of a situation. This study suggests that if it is possible to prime appraisals through music, it is worth exploring to see if people could apply these appraisals to themselves in their own situations, consequently affecting their emotions.

*Testing the Process Model through Priming Appraisals*

The Smith and Kirby process model of appraisal is important because once fully developed, it will help predict and understand when, and under what conditions, different emotions are likely to be experienced (Smith & Kirby, 2000). The ability to incidentally prime appraisals of motivational relevance, coping potential, and accountability to influence emotional reactions and emotion-related behaviors will provide theoretical support for a causal role for appraisal in emotion elicitation (Kirby & Smith, 2006). Recent studies have succeeded in priming appraisals, offering evidence in favor of the process model. One study found that appraisals of coping potential can be primed to influence emotion and emotion-related behavior (Edwards, 2004). Participants were primed with appraisals of high, low, or neutral coping potential using a scrambled sentence task then were given two math problems to look at levels of challenge/determination. One of the math problems was of medium difficulty that most people should have been able to solve, and the other was of high difficulty that few were expected to solve. Participants in both the high and low coping conditions were more successful solving the medium difficulty problem than participants in the neutral condition. Additionally, the study showed that participants primed with the appraisal of high coping potential, opposed to low or neutral coping potential, reported reduced feelings of resignation and were more likely to solve the difficult math problem. Thus, this study supports the process model of appraisal, suggesting that appraisals can be made automatically outside of awareness but still influence a person’s emotional reactions and emotion-related behaviors (Smith & Kirby, 2005).

Currently, other research in the Smith and Kirby lab is using posters to also incidentally prime appraisals and test the process model. Participants are assigned to a condition before entering the lab, and three posters corresponding to the condition are displayed around the room. The conditions include high and low coping potential as well as different emotions such as gratitude. Participants complete a modified Stroop task, with the hypothesis that they will respond faster to words related to the condition in which they were assigned. The study will serve as a pilot test to verify that the poster priming works, then the posters will be used in a future study to examine effects on emotion and behavior. While these two studies are a starting point in testing the process model through incidental priming, it is still necessary to target other appraisals.

*Research Aims, Goals, and Expected Results*

Presently, while research has studied coping potential and the process model, little work has been done to effectively prime accountability in relation to the process model. Thus, my research examines if appraisals of self and other accountability can be primed to influence emotion and emotion-related behavior, lending further support for the process model of appraisal by providing evidence of a causal role of appraisals in eliciting emotional experiences. Traditional priming methods such as scrambled sentence tasks and Stroop tasks are not sufficient techniques for priming appraisals of accountability. These tasks would require multiple synonyms for self and other accountability, and unfortunately, very few of these words exist in the English language. For example, even words such as responsibility, reliability, and fault are neutral in accountability. Therefore, because it was necessary to determine another priming method, my research addresses the question of whether appraisals of self and other accountability can be selectively activated through chosen songs playing in the background while participants work on an unrelated task.

More specifically, my research focuses on priming appraisals of negative self and other accountability. Guilt/shame arises in a motivationally relevant and incongruent situation where a person blames him/herself (self accountability). On the other hand, anger arises in a motivationally relevant and incongruent situation where someone else is to blame (other accountability). Thus, in a task that is motivationally relevant and incongruent, it is hypothesized that appraisals of self and other accountability, primed through music, will lead participants to experience guilt/shame or anger in accordance to their condition.

For my study, participants were randomly assigned to one of two negative conditions, self accountability or other accountability, or a neutral state, hereby referred to as guilt/shame, anger, or neutral (no music). Participants were matched with a confederate and instructed to work on a highly difficult tinker toy building task. The guilt/shame and anger conditions corresponded to music playlists intended to prime appraisals of self and other accountability, respectively. For example, the Avett Brothers’ “Shame” on the guilt/shame playlist was expected to prime self-blame, and Kelly Clarkson’s “Because of You” on the anger playlist was expected to prime other-blame. After pilot testing the building task (see Pilot Study Three), it was believed that the participant and confederate pair would fail at completing the model. In this difficult situation, appraisals of self accountability for the failure were hypothesized to result in shame or guilt, whereas appraisals of other accountability would result in anger. Participants in the neutral condition acted as a baseline for comparison. Emotion self-reports served to measure this hypothesis and show if these appraisals of accountability did in fact result in guilt or shame. Accordingly, it was predicted that post-task emotion ratings for the adjective groups related to guilt and shame, once adjusted for the pre-task baseline emotion ratings, would be elevated in the self accountability condition. Similarly, it was expected that adjective groups related to anger would be elevated in the other accountability condition.

Behaviorally, in assessing who was responsible for the team’s performance in the appraisal questions, it was predicted that participants in the guilt/shame condition would blame themselves and those in the anger condition would blame the confederate. Additionally, in evaluating impressions of themselves and their partner, it was expected that participants in the guilt/shame condition would rate their partners more positively than themselves and that participants in the anger condition would rate themselves more favorably than their partners.

Finally, in evaluating the pre-tested neutral accountability vignettes (see Pilot Study Two), it was hypothesized that participants in the guilt/shame condition would rate themselves as more responsible in the negative scenarios and participants in the anger condition would rate the other person as more responsible. This was expected because participants, once primed for appraisals of either self or other accountability, should have applied this appraisal when imagining and evaluating themselves in the neutral scenario.

*Pilot Study One*

Initially, a list of over two hundred songs was compiled for the following conditions: Negative, other accountability (anger); Negative, self accountability (guilt/shame); Positive, other accountability (gratitude), Positive, self accountability (pride); General Positive; and General Negative. The songs were cut into thirty second clips, and for the first part of the pilot study, six lab group members (5 female, 1 male) and four Vanderbilt University undergraduate males who were compensated for their time rated the songs in each category from the best exemplar (1) to the worst. The top twenty songs for each condition were then embedded into a survey and 62 Vanderbilt University undergraduates (43 female, 19 male) answered extensive appraisal ratings for each song clip (see appraisal questions in Appendix H). At this point, it was decided that the study would solely focus on negative self and other accountability, but the remaining songs in other conditions have now been piloted for future studies. From these appraisal ratings, for the anger condition, the top ten songs were selected based off of the mean ratings for other accountability over 6.5, self accountability at least two points lower than other accountability rating, and high negativity and low positivity. Similarly, for the guilt/shame songs, the top ten songs were chosen from songs with an average self accountability of at least seven and at least a two point differential between self and other accountability. These final ten songs for each condition were used in the study. (See Appendix G)

*Pilot Study Two*

In order to provide another measure for assessing a person’s appraisals of self and other accountability and to see how he or she applied these appraisals to other situations, thirty-two vignettes with neutral accountability were created using the positive and negative sides of sixteen scenarios. 119 Vanderbilt University undergraduates received course extra credit for completing appraisal ratings about self accountability, other accountability, and chance accountability for each vignette on a scale of 1 to 9. The top six most neutral positive and negative vignettes were selected for use in the study by first eliminating any vignettes that differed in their self vs. other accountability ratings by more than two points, then by adding together the positive and negative accountability ratings of the remaining vignettes and taking the six with the lowest combined scores across both categories. The lowest scores represented the most neutral vignettes.

*Pilot Study Three*

In order to determine how much time to give participants in the study to build the tank model out of tinker toys, four pairs of male friends were instructed to complete the model together as fast as possible, resulting in the following times: 4:27, 5:34, 6:00, and 8:20, an average of 6:05 minutes. Because it was expected for pairs of male friends to be faster than female or mixed pairs and pairs of strangers or acquaintances (confederates could not participate with friends in the study), we decided to allot participants five minutes during the study to complete the building task. It was believed that the participant and confederate would be unable to finish the model within five minutes, but they would make enough progress that they would not suspect that the task was designed for them to fail.

**Methods**

*Participants*

The participants were 45 Vanderbilt University undergraduate students (33 female, 12 male). The students volunteered to participate or received extra credit in their class. There were 11 females and 4 males in the anger condition, 12 females and 3 males in the guilt condition, and 10 females and 5 males in the neutral condition.

*Design*

Participants were partnered with a confederate, and the pair was randomly assigned to one of three conditions: anger, guilt/shame, or no music (control). There were fifteen participants in each of the conditions. The anger and guilt/shame conditions corresponded to a playlist of ten songs previously selected through extensive ratings. These ratings were used to narrow down over one hundred songs to the best ten exemplars for each category. These final playlists were set to present the songs at random. The study lasted about thirty minutes on average, and the playlists lasted about thirty-five minutes. In the event the study lasted longer than the playlists, the playlist was set to repeat (only one song was repeated for one participant).

*Measures*

*Emotion Ratings*. The Emotion-Rating Form (Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993) was completed by the participant both immediately before and after the building task. The questionnaire presents participants with groups of two or three adjectives that describe a specific emotional state and asks them to rate the degree to which it describes how they are currently feeling on a Likert-type scale from 1 (not at all) to 9 (extremely much). The version of the form used in this study included a total of 26 groupings, designed to assess a wide range of emotional states. Sample items include “mad, angry, irate,” “surprised, amazed, astonished,” and “ashamed, disgraced.” Using an ANCOVA test with pre-task ratings as the covariate will remove the variance of the baseline measures and show if participants in the three conditions express changes in emotions after the task as a result of their appraisals. (See Appendices A & B)

*Appraisals.* Appraisals were assessed after the task, following the Emotion-Rating form. The questions assessed all of the appraisal components, such as accountability and motivational relevance, on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 9 (extremely well). Additional questions about appraisals of accountability forced the participants to determine who was the most responsible for their team’s performance and teamwork. (See Appendix C)

*Impression Ratings.* The Positive Impression Scale, Negative Impression Scale, and Perceived Attractiveness Scale are derived from the impression ratings questionnaire (Rymer, 2008). Of particular interest are the positive and negative impression scales. Participants rated how descriptive adjectives are of both themselves and their partner, on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 9 (extremely descriptive). Sample items include “warm,” “rude,” and “productive.” (See Appendices D & E)

*Vignette Ratings.* After the vignette pilot study (See Pilot Study Two), participants were randomly presented the final 12 vignettes with neutral accountability, six positively toned and six negatively toned. Participants answered ten appraisal questions for each vignette, with the main analysis focusing on participants’ assessment of self vs. other accountability in the pre-tested, neutral situation. (See Appendix F)

*Procedure*

When participants reported to the lab, a sign on the closed lab door asked them to knock and wait on the couch. Upon hearing the knock, the playlist for the condition assigned to that participant was started, and then the experimenter propped opened the door and led the participant through the front room to a table in the main room. In a reminder e-mail about the study, participants had been informed that they were matched with a partner (actually a confederate) for the experiment, so participants were told they could read a magazine until their partner arrived. Meanwhile, the confederate was hiding in the control room and entered the main room about twenty seconds after the participant was already seated. If the participant was more than three minutes late, the confederate sat at the table and read a magazine until he/she arrived because it would be suspicious if they were both running that late. Once the two were seated, the experimenter told them that they were participating in a study on team competition, motivation, and performance, and that after completing an initial questionnaire, they would be working together in a cooperative team to build a replica of a tinker toy car. For the two music conditions, the participant was given the cover story that “the lab is located right next to a large conference room that frequently has a lot of noisy meetings this time of the year. Because this task requires communication and concentration, we have elected to play music throughout the experiment to drown out other conversations so no team is at a disadvantage.” The participant was then instructed to use the computer in the main room and the confederate was led to a computer in the front room, out of the participant’s sight. The participant completed the pre-task Emotion Ratings questionnaire on-line, then returned to the building table and was soon joined by the confederate. The experimenter brought out the model and explained that they would have five minutes to create their own model exactly like the original. To add incentive and encourage participants to give their best efforts, they were told that “most teams have been able to complete the task within this time. The team that has the fastest completion time will win a $50 iTunes gift card, and all other teams who are able to build the replica within the allotted time will be entered into a drawing for a $50 iTunes gift card.”

After the five minutes expired, the pair was told that they came close but had not finished the model. Participants were then instructed to return their computers to complete questionnaires for the remainder of the study. The participants completed the questionnaires in the following order: post-task Emotion Ratings, Appraisal Ratings, Impressions Ratings- Other, Impression Ratings- Self, and lastly, the Vignette Ratings. Upon completing the questionnaires, participants were debriefed and dismissed.

**Results and Discussion**

The intent of the study was to test the process model of appraisal by examining if appraisals of self and other accountability can be primed through music to influence emotion and emotion-related behavior. The resulting between-subject analyses are reported below in four sections.

*Emotion Ratings-* It was hypothesized that the ANCOVA test, with the pre-task emotion ratings as the covariate, would show elevated ratings of guilt and shame for participants in the self accountability condition and elevated ratings of anger for those in the other accountability condition. Conversely, the ANCOVA test yielded no significant results for the key emotions, thus not providing evidence that appraisals of self and other accountability influenced emotions. (See Table 1)

*Appraisal Ratings-* The main focus of the appraisal ratings was to examine the participants’ assessment of accountability for the team’s performance (failure).It was predicted that participants in the guilt/shame condition would assign more blame to themselves whereas participants in the anger condition would blame the confederate. However, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test showed that the conditions had no significant effect on the means for the ratings. For the assessment of who was the most responsible for the team’s performance, F(2,42)= 2.545,ns. (See Table 2)

*Impression Ratings*- It was hypothesized that participants in the guilt/shame condition would rate their partners more positively than themselves and that those in the anger condition, comparatively, would have more positive self ratings and lower other ratings. The ratings measure positive impressions, negative impressions, and perceived attractiveness, but the perceived attractiveness scale, although included in the ratings, was not relevant to this study because sex differences were not of concern. While the ratings yielded mostly non-significant results, the positive impressions (self) were the one significant finding in the study, F(2,42)=3.828, *p* < .05. As expected, participants in the neutral condition felt more positively about themselves (M=7.023) than participants in the guilt/shame condition (M=6.723) who were blaming themselves for their failure. (See Table 3)

*Vignette Ratings-* It was predicted thatwhen evaluating the neutral accountability vignettes, participants in the guilt/shame condition would rate themselves as more accountable in the negative scenarios and participants in the anger condition would rate the other person as more responsible. While participants completed the full range of appraisal questions for the vignettes, the focus was on the appraisals of accountability. The ANOVA test did not lend support to the hypothesis, as none of the results were significant. (See Table 4)

**General Discussion**

Overall, the study was unfortunately unsuccessful in priming appraisals of self and other accountability through music. However, while the data does not lend support for the process model as intended, there are signs that future studies may be more promising.

*Trends*

Although the results were not significant, some of the means in relation to appraisals of accountability appeared to be going in the hypothesized directions, suggesting that the lack of significance may have been an issue of power. Increasing sample size would increase power, enhancing the ability of the experiment to detect a real effect if one exists. For example, when participants rated to what extent they were responsible for the team’s performance (assuming failure), the mean for the neutral condition was higher than the anger condition but lower than the guilt/shame condition, as expected (anger M=5.530, guilt/shame M=6.200, neutral M=5.600). Although not significant, participants in the guilt/shame condition blamed themselves more for the failure than those in the anger condition. Additionally, the emotion rating form showed that participants in the anger condition had a higher mean for “mad, angry, irate” than participants in the guilt/shame condition, as expected (anger M= 2.530, guilt/shame= 2.330). Furthermore, the vignette analyses showed that for the negative vignettes, participants in the guilt/shame condition rated themselves as more accountable than those in the anger condition (anger M= 6.222, guilt/shame M= 6.522). The neutral condition mean did not fall in the middle as expected (M= 6.711), but this is a step in the hypothesized direction. These trends provide hope that once accounting for the limitations described below, future studies may yield significant results in support of the process model of appraisal by successfully priming appraisals of accountability and subsequently influencing emotion and emotion-related behavior.

*Limitations and Future Directions*

As mentioned, one key factor that may have led to the lack of statistical significance was the small sample size. Increasing each condition to have more than 15 participants would increase power. Also, the study took participants less than thirty minutes, on average, so there is a possibility that there was not adequate exposure to the music before participants began completing the questionnaires. Introducing a filler task in the beginning would increase the exposure to the music, potentially leading to stronger priming effects. Another possible explanation for the lack of significant results is that the participants may not have cared enough about their performance in the experiment. In response to the question about how much they cared about how well they did in the experiment, the mean was only 3.93 on a scale of 1 to 9. The opportunity to win an iTunes gift card was intended to create an incentive to perform well and care about their performance, but the task still might not have been motivationally relevant enough. If the task was not motivationally relevant, a component of primary appraisal, then participants may feel indifferent and the attempt to prime appraisals of accountability, a secondary component, would not be as effective.

Additionally, there is a possibility that participants misunderstood the questions regarding accountability. For example, participants may have misinterpreted the question “Who do you think is the MOST responsible for your team’s performance?” Although the experimenter indicated that the teams did not complete the model within five minutes, some participants may have answered this question in response to the failure whereas others may have assessed who was the most responsible for the amount of the model that was completed. It is possible that these accountability appraisals may have been significant had all participants correctly interpreted the questions. Future studies should clearly indicate that performance represents the team’s success or failure.

Further, it is not clear whether the priming was unsuccessful or if the interpersonal task overwhelmed the individual differences in discussion. For example, one study examining the effects of affiliative orientation in response to a teaching task found that an anger-eliciting manipulation caused the absence of significant effects. This manipulation, combined with the situational constraints under which it was administered, was too strong to allow possible influences of affiliative orientation to be expressed (Griner & Smith, 2000). Therefore, for my study, it may be necessary to start from the beginning and bring participants into the lab to simply listen to music and answer appraisal questions. Once the music is shown to be an effective tool for priming accountability, a new study can attempt to test the process model of appraisal using these songs. If it is determined that the tank building model overwhelms the priming effects, then a new interpersonal task needs to be developed.

Moreover, the music pilot study included songs for other conditions, and these songs can be used in future studies. For example, a similar study could be designed to prime the appraisals of positive self and other accountability (pride and gratitude). If the same interpersonal tank building task is used, then participants could be given twelve minutes to complete the model, ensuring that they would successfully finish. Once successful, participants could complete the measures used in this study. In relation to accountability, it would be expected that participants in the gratitude condition would credit their partner for their success, and those in the pride condition would credit themselves. Similarly, the general positive and general negative playlists could be used to examine the effects of other, non-accountability related music. However, if future studies are still unsuccessful in using music to prime self and other accountability, then it will be necessary to explore other methods to successfully prime accountability.

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Table 1: ANCOVA Results for Emotion Ratings

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Anger | | Guilt/Shame | | Neutral | |  |  |
|  | n = 15 | | n = 15 | | n = 15 | |  |  |
| Emotion | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation | F-value | Significance |
| Grateful, appreciative, thankful | 3.270 | 2.251 | 3.530 | 2.475 | 4.200 | 2.007 | 15.668 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Joyful, happy, glad | 4.400 | 2.063 | 4.000 | 2.236 | 4.730 | 1.981 | 10.099 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Interested, engaged | 4.730 | 1.534 | 5.270 | 1.751 | 5.270 | 2.434 | 1.653 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Proud, triumphant | 2.800 | 1.935 | 3.330 | 2.059 | 2.670 | 1.839 | 2.737 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Guilty, culpable | 2.670 | 2.637 | 1.870 | 1.685 | 2.800 | 1.971 | 3.991 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Ashamed, disgraced | 2.870 | 2.560 | 2.670 | 1.988 | 2.930 | 1.944 | 3.053 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Mad, angry, irate | 2.530 | 1.922 | 2.330 | 1.543 | 2.600 | 2.165 | 1.648 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |

Table 2: ANOVA Results for Appraisal Ratings

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Anger | | Guilt/Shame | | Neutral | |  |  |
|  | n = 15 | | n = 15 | | n = 15 | |  |  |
| Appraisal Questions | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation | F-value | Significance |
| How difficult was it for you to work with the other participant to build the model? | 2.600 | 2.230 | 3.070 | 2.520 | 2.870 | 1.598 | 0.178 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| To what degree have things in this experiment gone the way you wanted them to go? | 3.470 | 2.031 | 4.270 | 1.944 | 4.000 | 2.035 | 0.620 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| How much do you care about how well you've done in this experiment? | 3.870 | 2.295 | 4.470 | 2.100 | 3.470 | 1.727 | 0.901 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| How much do you care about how things have gone between you and the other participant? | 3.870 | 1.995 | 4.470 | 1.885 | 3.730 | 1.907 | 0.615 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| How satisfied are you with how well you have completed your assigned role? | 3.530 | 1.727 | 4.400 | 1.957 | 4.000 | 2.330 | 0.692 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| How satisfied are you with how well things have gone between you and the other participant? | 5.670 | 1.397 | 5.400 | 2.063 | 5.000 | 2.035 | 0.489 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| To what extent do you think that YOU are responsible for your team's performance? | 5.530 | 1.407 | 6.200 | 1.474 | 5.600 | 1.183 | 1.093 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| To what extent do you think that the other participant is responsible for your team's performance? | 5.070 | 1.100 | 5.800 | 1.014 | 5.600 | 0.986 | 2.015 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| To what extent do you think that YOU are responsible for how things have gone between you and the other participant? | 5.870 | 1.552 | 6.330 | 1.345 | 6.070 | 1.033 | 0.467 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| To what extent do you think that the other participant is responsible for how things have gone between you and the other participant? | 5.000 | 1.000 | 5.870 | 1.302 | 5.600 | 0.737 | 2.738 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Who do you think is the MOST responsible for your team's performance? | 1.000 | 0.000 | 1.270 | 0.458 | 1.270 | 0.458 | 2.545 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Who do you think is MOST responsible for how things have gone between you and the other participant? | 1.070 | 0.258 | 1.130 | 0.352 | 1.070 | 0.258 | 0.259 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| To what degree were you able to influence how things went between you and the other subject? | 5.130 | 2.356 | 5.530 | 1.457 | 5.530 | 0.915 | 0.282 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| To what extent do you feel able to deal emotionally with what has happened in this experiment? | 8.330 | 1.047 | 8.270 | 1.387 | 7.270 | 2.434 | 1.797 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |

Table 3: ANOVA Results for Impression Ratings

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Anger | | Guilt/Shame | | Neutral | |  |  |
|  | n = 15 | | n = 15 | | n = 15 | |  |  |
| Impression Scale | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation | F-value | Significance |
| Positive Impression Scale (Partner) | 6.100 | 1.395 | 6.110 | 1.311 | 6.656 | 0.920 | 1.011 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Positive Impression Scale (Self) | 6.103 | 0.964 | 6.723 | 0.978 | 7.023 | 0.839 | 3.828 | *p* < .05, Significant |
| Negative Impression Scale (Partner) | 1.426 | 0.402 | 1.662 | 0.802 | 1.556 | 0.623 | 0.527 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Negative Impression Scale (Self) | 2.639 | 0.922 | 1.928 | 0.797 | 2.397 | 1.231 | 1.956 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Perceived Attractiveness Scale (Partner) | 3.187 | 1.845 | 4.013 | 1.636 | 4.480 | 2.092 | 1.846 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Perceived Attractiveness Scale (Self) | 4.733 | 1.451 | 4.280 | 1.558 | 5.453 | 1.590 | 2.231 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |

Table 4: ANOVA Results for Vignette Ratings

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Anger | | Guilt/Shame | | Neutral | |  |  |
|  | n = 15 | | n = 15 | | n = 15 | |  |  |
| Accountability Appraisal, Vignette Type | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation | F-value | Significance |
| Self-responsibility, Positive | 5.867 | 1.162 | 6.322 | 1.036 | 6.489 | 1.193 | 1.214 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Self-responsibility, Negative | 6.222 | 1.025 | 6.522 | 1.146 | 6.711 | 0.987 | 0.820 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Other-responsibility, Positive | 6.122 | 0.981 | 6.656 | 0.937 | 6.589 | 1.135 | 1.214 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Other-responsibility, Negative | 5.667 | 1.016 | 5.867 | 1.201 | 6.156 | 1.162 | 0.711 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Chance-responsibility, Positive | 3.267 | 1.696 | 3.233 | 1.630 | 3.567 | 2.212 | 0.145 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |
| Chance-responsibility, Negative | 3.300 | 1.659 | 3.833 | 1.361 | 3.811 | 2.076 | 0.460 | *p* > .05, Non-significant |

Appendix A

Emotion Ratings, Pre-task

Instructions: Below are a number of clusters of adjectives that describe different emotions or feelings.  Each group of adjectives is meant to get at a single basic feeling or emotion.  Please indicate the extent to which each cluster of adjectives characterizes your feelings and emotions RIGHT NOW in your CURRENT situation.

Items were rated on a Likert-type scale: 1 = Not at all, 5= Somewhat, 9 = Extremely much.

1. Proud, triumphant

2. Disgusted, repulsed, revolted

3. Eager, enthused, excited

4. Determined, challenged, motivated

5. Surprised, amazed, astonished

6. Nervous, anxious, apprehensive

7. Sad, downhearted, blue

8. Relieved, unburdened

9. Joyful, happy, glad

10. Interested, engaged

11. Defeated, resigned, beaten

12. Regretful, remorseful, sorry

13. Embarrassed, humiliated

14. Frustrated, thwarted, exasperated

15. Tranquil, calm, serene

16. Disappointed, let down

17. Grateful, appreciative, thankful

18. Shy, timid, bashful

19. Mad, angry, irate

20. Ashamed, disgraced

21. Guilty, culpable

22. Irritated, annoyed

23. Hopeful, optimistic

24. Afraid, frightened, scared

25. Overwhelmed, overloaded

26. Bored, detached, uninterested

Appendix B

Emotion Ratings, Post-task

Instructions: Below are a number of clusters of adjectives that describe different emotions or feelings.  Each group of adjectives is meant to get at a single basic feeling or emotion.  Please indicate the extent to which each cluster of adjectives characterizes your feelings and emotions RIGHT NOW after having completed the building task.

Items were rated on a Likert-type scale: 1 = Not at all, 5= Somewhat, 9 = Extremely much.

1. Proud, triumphant

2. Disgusted, repulsed, revolted

3. Eager, enthused, excited

4. Determined, challenged, motivated

5. Surprised, amazed, astonished

6. Nervous, anxious, apprehensive

7. Sad, downhearted, blue

8. Relieved, unburdened

9. Joyful, happy, glad

10. Interested, engaged

11. Defeated, resigned, beaten

12. Regretful, remorseful, sorry

13. Embarrassed, humiliated

14. Frustrated, thwarted, exasperated

15. Tranquil, calm, serene

16. Disappointed, let down

17. Grateful, appreciative, thankful

18. Shy, timid, bashful

19. Mad, angry, irate

20. Ashamed, disgraced

21. Guilty, culpable

22. Irritated, annoyed

23. Hopeful, optimistic

24. Afraid, frightened, scared

25. Overwhelmed, overloaded

26. Bored, detached, uninterested

Appendix C

Appraisal Ratings

Instructions: Now you will be presented with questions about your thoughts regarding the building task you just completed.  For each question, please answer from 1 to 9 to indicate what you are thinking RIGHT NOW, having just engaged in the model-building task.

Items were rated on a Likert-type scale: 1 = Not at all, 5= Moderately, 9 = Extremely.

1. How much effort did you expend in working with the other participant to build the model?

2. How difficult was it for you to work with the other participant to build the model?

3. To what degree have things in this experiment gone the way you wanted them to go?

Instructions: Please answer the following regarding the building task you just completed.

Items were rated on a Likert-type scale: 1 = Not at all, 5= Moderately, 9 = As much as I’ve ever cared about anything.

1. How much do you care about how well you’ve done in this experiment?

2. How much do you care about how things have gone between you and the other participant?

Instructions: Please answer the following regarding the building task you just completed.

Items were rated on a Likert-type scale: 1 = Not at all, 5= Moderately, 9 = Extremely.

1. How satisfied are you with how well you have completed your assigned role?

2. How satisfied are you with how well things have gone between you and the other participant?

Instructions: Please answer the following regarding the building task you just completed.

Items were rated on a Likert-type scale: 1 = Not at all, 5= Somewhat, 9 = Completely.

To what extent do you think that YOU are responsible for your team’s performance?

1. To what extent do you think that the other participant is responsible for your team’s performance?

2. To what extent do you think that YOU are responsible for how things have gone between you and the other participant?

3. To what extent do you think that the other participant is responsible for how things have gone between you and the other participant?

Items were rated as 1 = Me, 2 = The other participant.

1. Who do you think is the MOST responsible for you team’s performance?

2. Who do you think is MOST responsible for how things have gone between you and the other participant?

Instructions: Please answer the following regarding the building task you just completed.

Items were rated on a Likert-type scale: 1 = Not at all, 5= Moderately, 9 = Extremely.

1. To what degree were you able to influence how things went between you and the other subject?

2. To what extent do you feel able to deal emotionally with what has happened in this experiment?

Appendix D

Impression Ratings, Other

Instructions: Now you will be asked several questions about your impression of your partner in the model-building task that you just completed.  Please use the scale below to indicate to what extent the adjectives listed are descriptive of what you think your partner is like as a person.

Items were rated on a Likert-type scale: 1 = Not at all descriptive, 5= Somewhat descriptive, 9 = Extremely descriptive.

Rude

Immature

Warm

Annoying

Cool-headed

Friendly

Helpful

Grouchy

Short-tempered

Bossy

Cooperative

Irrational

Inefficient

Hot

Appealing

Pessimistic

Unpleasant

Over-critical

Competent

Respectful

Practical

Polite

Uptight

Cranky

Easygoing

Incompetent

Fit

Considerate

Unenthusiastic

Lazy

Demanding

Mature

Insulting

Happy

Sexy

Open-minded

Enthusiastic

Patient

Good-humored

Positive

Impatient

Reasonable

Attractive

Arrogant

Good-looking

Productive

Agreeable

Stupid

Stubborn

Argumentative

Unproductive

Unfriendly

Pleasant

Nice

Smart

Optimistic

Appendix E

Impression Ratings, Self

Instructions: Now you will be asked several questions about your impression of YOURSELF.  Please use the scale below to indicate to what extent the adjectives listed are descriptive of what you think you are like as a person.

Items were rated on a Likert-type scale: 1 = Not at all descriptive, 5= Somewhat descriptive, 9 = Extremely descriptive.

Rude

Immature

Warm

Annoying

Cool-headed

Friendly

Helpful

Grouchy

Short-tempered

Bossy

Cooperative

Irrational

Inefficient

Hot

Appealing

Pessimistic

Unpleasant

Over-critical

Competent

Respectful

Practical

Polite

Uptight

Cranky

Easygoing

Incompetent

Fit

Considerate

Unenthusiastic

Lazy

Demanding

Mature

Insulting

Happy

Sexy

Open-minded

Enthusiastic

Patient

Good-humored

Positive

Impatient

Reasonable

Attractive

Arrogant

Good-looking

Productive

Agreeable

Stupid

Stubborn

Argumentative

Unproductive

Unfriendly

Pleasant

Nice

Smart

Optimistic

Appendix F

Vignette Ratings

Instructions: Now you will be presented with a series of vignettes.  Please read each question carefully.  Some scenarios may seem similar, but they are all different.

Items were rated on a Likert scale: 1 = Not at all descriptive, 5= Somewhat descriptive, 9 = Extremely descriptive.

Appraisal Questions**:**

1. Something important is happening.

2. There are positive aspects – things I want – to what’s going on.

3. There are negative aspects – things I don’t want – to what’s going on.

4. I am responsible for what’s going on.

5. Someone else is responsible for what’s going on.

6. Some NON-HUMAN cause (i.e., God, nature, chance, etc.) is responsible for what’s going on.

7. I am confident that I can do something to make (or keep) things the way I want them to be.

8. I am confident that I will be able to deal emotionally with things, no matter how they turn out.

9. I am confident that I will be able to adjust to things, whatever the consequences.

10. I am confident that things are going to turn out the way that I want them to.

Negatively toned Vignettes**:**

1. You are a personal trainer.  You work out your overweight client three times a week and she follows the dietary recommendations you give her.  She doesn’t lose any weight in the first two months.

2. You and a partner are on a fundraising team for your company.  Your team raises less money than all of the other teams.

3. You and your roommate get a new puppy.  You are both trying to teach the dog basic commands.  Months later, the dog hasn’t learned any of the commands.

4. You took Spanish classes for the past three years with the same professor, but you still only comprehend at an elementary level.

5. You and your teammate are in a rowing race and get last place.

6. You are running the third leg in a 4 X 100 relay race at your high school’s state championship meet.  All of the runner’s are equally fast.  As you go to hand the baton to the final runner on your team, the baton falls to the ground and your team loses.

Positively toned Vignettes:

1. You work in landscaping and are cutting down a tree with a co-worker.  The sawing was successful and the tree was cleared with no excess damage.

2. You are running the third leg in a 4 X 100 relay race at your high school’s state championship meet.  All of the runner’s are equally fast.  The hand off of the baton to the final runner on your team goes smoothly, and your team wins.

3. You are an attorney involved in an important lawsuit.  The associate assigned to your case did almost all of the research prior to the trial, but you are the one to argue in court.  The judge rules in your favor and you win the case.

4. You and your roommate equally share the responsibility for cleaning your apartment.  A mutual friend comes over and comments on how clean the place looks.

5. You and a friend are playing tug-of-war against another duo.  You win as the other team goes flying into the mud in the center.

6. You and your roommate get a new puppy.  You are both trying to teach the dog basic commands.  The dog quickly learns and performs all of the commands.

Appendix G

Song Playlists

Guilt Playlist:

1. “Shame” – Avett Brothers

2. “Sorry” – Buckcherry

3. “Hard to Say I’m Sorry” – Chicago

4. “Cold” – Crossfade

5. “Unfaithful” – Rihanna

6. “Confessions Pt. II” – Usher

7. “Last Name” – Carrie Underwood

8. “Nobody’s Fault But My Own” – Beck

9. “Blame it on me” – Akon

10. “Whatever It Takes” – Lifehouse

Anger Playlist:

1. “Because of You” – Kelly Clarkson
2. “Look What You’ve Done” – Jet
3. “You Give Love a Bad Name” – Bon Jovi
4. “You Oughta Know” – Alanis Morisette
5. “Father of Mine” – Everclear
6. “I’ve Come to Expect it from you” – George Strait
7. “Before He Cheats” – Carrie Underwood
8. “Complicated” – Avril Lavigne
9. “Apologize” – Timbaland

10. “Torn” – Natalie Imbruglia

Pride Playlist:

1. “We are the Champions” – Queen
2. “Champion” – Queen Latifah
3. “Miss Independent” – Kelly Clarkson
4. “I’m Too Sexy” – Right Said Fred
5. “Can’t Touch This” – MC Hammer
6. “Something to be Proud of” – Montgomery Gentry
7. “Independent Women” - Destiny’s Child
8. “Good Life” – Kanye West
9. “I was Here” – Lady Antebellum

10. “How Do You Like Me Now” – Toby Keith

11. “Bad” – Michael Jackson

Gratitude Playlist:

1. “Thank You” – Dido
2. “Wind Beneath My Wings” – Bette Midler
3. “You Save Me” – Kenny Chesney
4. “Because You Loved Me” – Celine Dion
5. “Thankful” – Kelly Clarkson
6. “Kind and Generous” – Natalie Merchant
7. “Thank U” – Alanis Morisette
8. “Thank You” – The Redwalls
9. “Blessed” – Christina Aguilera

10. “My Angel” – Kellie Pickler

Positive Playlist:

1. “Walking on Sunshine” – Katrina and the Waves
2. “Beautiful Day” – U2
3. “Perfect Day” – Hoku
4. “Wonderful Day” – O.A.R.
5. “Island in the Sun” – Weezer
6. “Accidentally in Love” – Counting Crows
7. “I’m a Believer” – The Monkees
8. “Don’t Stop Me Now” – Queen
9. “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” – Bobby McFerrin

10. “I Got a Feeling” – Black Eyed Peas

Negative Playlist:

1. “Adagio for Strings” (on repeat)