**Introduction**

Derryberry and Tucker (1996) and the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001) hypothesised that one of the functions of positive emotion is to broaden people's scope of attention. This was shown in studies by Fredrickson and Branigan (2005) and Rowe, Hirsh and Anderson (2007), but only with certain stimuli (i.e. music) and using specific measures. More clarity is needed.

**Key Questions:**
1) Do positive stimuli that involve complex cognitive processing influence the relationship between positive mood and the scope of attention?
2) Does focusing on one’s mood in particular influence the relationship?

**What is the Scope of Attention?**

The scope of attention is the extent to which an individual can attend to all of the stimuli in their visual field.

- **Narrow Scope:**
- **Broad Scope:**

**Method**

**Participants:** 68 Healthy Individuals

**Independent variables:**
1) Positive Vs Neutral mood induction (within participants) using cartoon images with captions.
2) Mood Vs Object focus (between participants) through instructions and questions asked.

**Dependent variable:** The scope of attention measured by reaction times from a flanker task (used in Rowe, Hirsh and Anderson, 2007). Participants were presented with a row of 5 letters in the center of the screen, varying distances from each other (near, med, far), and asked:

"Is the middle letter a 'W' or 'H'?"

Examples:
- NNHNN (incompatible letters)
- HHHHH (compatible letters)

**Procedure:**

- Baseline Flanker Task
- Neutral OR Positive Cartoons
- Flanker Task post manipulation
- Neutral OR Positive Cartoons
- Flanker Task post manipulation

**Results**

We calculated the extent to which incompatible flankers at increasing spatial distances interfered with attention.

**Interference effect = compatible - incompatible trial reaction times**

A repeated measures ANOVA was carried out on the interference reaction time with mood (positive and neutral) and distance (near, medium, far) as within-subject variables. Results showed a significant (p<0.05) mood versus distance interaction (see graph).

**Key Questions:**

1) Do positive stimuli that involve complex cognitive processing influence the relationship between positive mood and the scope of attention?
2) Does focusing on one's mood in particular influence the relationship?

**Discussion**

- The results showed that the positive mood induction led to a broadening in the scope of attention when flankers were presented furthest apart from each other.
- The mood induction changed the direction of the interference effect in relation to the neutral condition and baseline (shown by the crossing of the lines - see graph).
- However the effects are likely to have been stronger had we used a stronger mood induction, such as short film footage with audio instead of written words.

**Conclusion**

Stimuli that involve a complex cognitive route to the generation of positive affect has the potential to broaden the scope of attention. This is regardless of whether the individual is focused on their actual mood or has a separate task to do.

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**References**


