

Effects of Social Experience on Object Decisions

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Abstract

Exclusion and inclusion from a social group have been shown to elicit powerful psychological and behavioral responses. Previous research has demonstrated that excluded individuals' object acquisition behavior varies greatly depending on their attachment style. Rejected individuals are believed to increase self-sufficiency as a result of uncertain status, as opposed to an increase in prosociality shown in non-rejected individuals. Effects of attachment style conditions on object choices following social rejection were examined in the context of a computerized object decision task containing two categories of items; survival and sexual. A within-subjects comparison was conducted measuring object acquisition behaviors in secure vs. avoidant attachment conditions. It was hypothesized that social rejection would increase the relative acquisition of survival items. Additionally, it was predicted that people with avoidant relationship styles will avoid others while those with secure attachment styles will attempt reintegration with the group. However, individuals with avoidant attachment who were socially excluded did not acquire more sexual signals than survival items. Moreover, avoidant and secure individuals exhibited an overall increase in confrontation following social rejection. These findings could suggest that individuals who are socially excluded will acquire more items overall, constituting an adaptive response to an unstable environment.

Keywords: attachment, rejection, social exclusion, survival