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Cultural Diversity in Nursing Practice

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Abstract

Age differences were examined in affective processing, in the context of a visual search task. Young and older adults were faster to detect high arousal images compared with low arousal and neutral items. Younger adults were faster to detect positive high arousal targets compared with other categories. In contrast, older adults exhibited an overall detection advantage for emotional images compared with neutral images. Together, these findings suggest that older adults do not display valence-based effects on affective processing at relatively automatic stages.

Keywords: aging, attention, information processing, emotion, visual search

Effects of Age on Detection of Emotional Information

Frequently, people encounter situations in their environment in which it is impossible to attend to all available stimuli. It is therefore of great importance for one’s attentional processes to select only the most salient information in the environment to which one should attend. Previous research has suggested that emotional information is privy to attentional selection in young adults (e.g., & Tapia, 2004; Nummenmaa, Hyona, & Calvo, 2006), an obvious service to
EFFECTS OF AGE ON DETECTION OF EMOTION

Method

Participants

Younger adults (14 women, 10 men, Mage = 19.5 years, age range: 18–22 years) were recruited with flyers posted on the Boston College campus. Older adults (15 women, nine men, age = 76.1 years, age range: 68–84 years) were recruited through the Harvard Cooperative on Aging (see Table 1, for demographics and test scores). Participants were compensated $10 per hour for their participation. (section continues)

Materials and Procedure

The visual search task was adapted from Ohman et al. (2001). There were 10 different types of items (two each of five Valence × Arousal categories: positive high arousal, positive low arousal, neutral, negative low arousal, negative (section continues)

Valence and arousal ratings. Valence and arousal were judged on 7-point scales (1 = negative valence or low arousal and 7 = positive valence or high arousal).
The participants’ three choices were (a) working with another participant, (b) working with a team, and (c) working alone. . . (section continues)

We tested three groups: (a) low scorers, who scored fewer than 20 points; (b) moderate scorers, who scored between 20 and 50 points; and (c) high scorers, who scored more than 50 points. . . . (section continues)