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Implicit Emotional Priming of Traumatic Events: The Effects of Semantic Level and Emotional Activation

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Abstract: Vivid representations are often made by traumatic events with intense emotions. The emotions may be activated automatically from memory on the mere exposure of an affect-loaded stimulus. The aims of this study were to investigate the implicit emotional processing of traumatic events and the moderation of priming by semantic level of the events, using primed naming task at short stimulus onset asynchrony (150ms). A 3 semantic level of traumatic primed events (general, domestic, or foreign words) by 3 target emotions (high-arousal negative, moderate positive, low-arousal negative words) repeated design was used. When the primed words were general (e.g. terror) or domestic (e.g. Sewol ferry disaster) events, response time of high-arousal negative words (e.g. fear or angry) were significantly longer than other emotion words (e.g. happy or sadness). Our findings suggest contrast effects of affective priming as a result of automatic implicit regulation.