



# Sex Differences in Mood Effects on Stigma in Mental Illness

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## Abstract

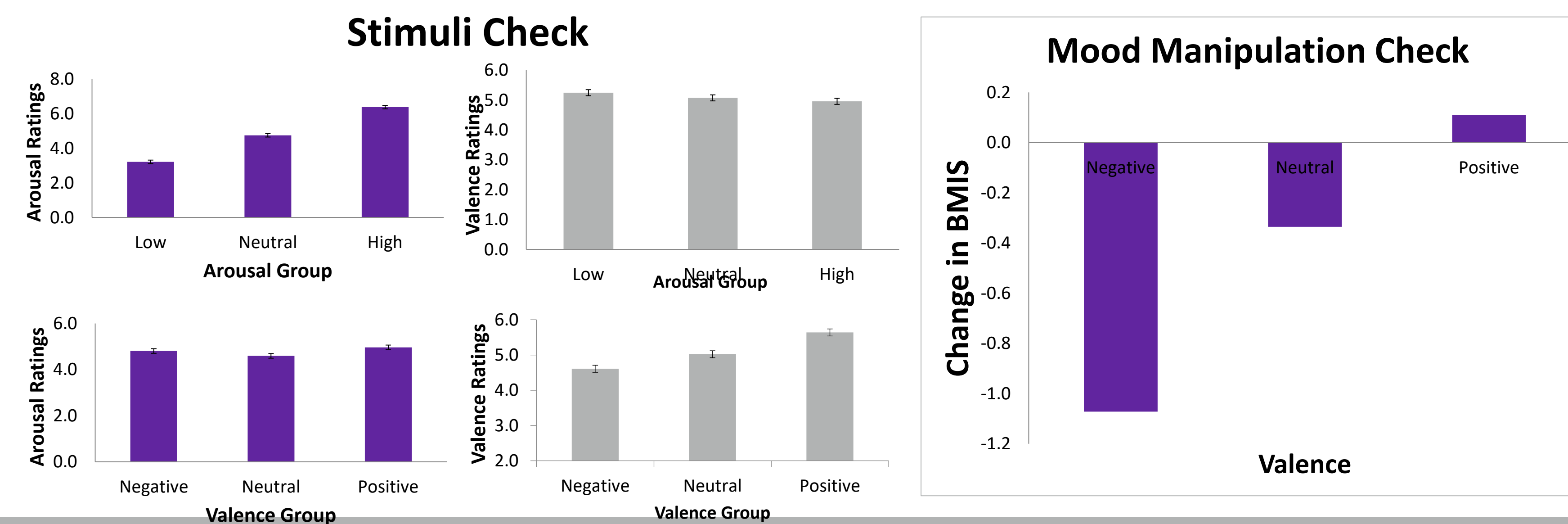
In Study 1, it was found that men induced into a positive mood held higher stigma scores than all other conditions. However, that study was confounded in that valence and arousal were included in a single measure. This study was conducted as a conceptual replication of the first study. The International Affective Picture System (IAPS) was utilized in this study in order to provide a measure that parsed apart valence and arousal.

## Background

Previous research has found that when participants were induced into a positive mood, this led to more favorable impressions of individuals (Forgas & Bower, 1987). Gold (2002) also found that positive moods led to more positive judgments, even in regards to sexual risk-taking. Lastly, Forgas (1992) found that being induced into a positive mood led to more positive impressions of unusual people. In regards to sex and mental illness stigma, it was found that men are less inclined to help individuals in gender typical cases (i.e.: men who have alcohol use disorder or women who experience depression) (Wirth & Bodenhausen, 2009). It was also found that women are more likely to help in all cases (Wirth & Bodenhausen, 2009). Ewalds-Kivst, Hogberg, and Lutzen (2003) found that women are more positive and empathetic about open-mindedness and pro-integration with individuals with mental illness. Study 1 was conducted in order to find if there was an interaction between the two variables of mood and sex.

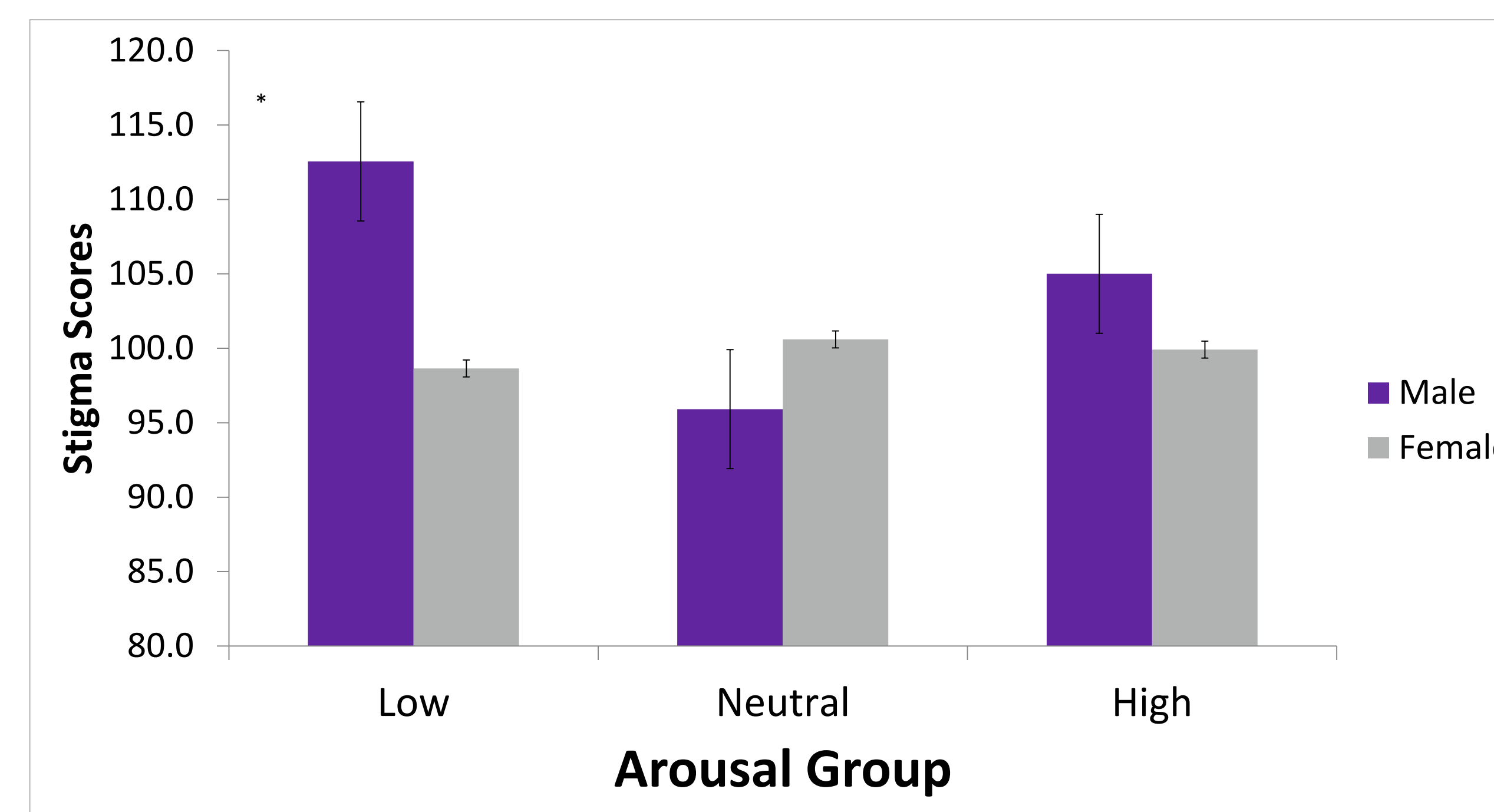
## Methods

Two hundred fifty-three undergraduate students participated in an online study. Fourteen participants were eliminated for not completing the survey. Participants were asked to complete an overall question from Mayer and Gaschke's (1988) Brief Mood Introspection Scale (BMIS) as a pre-manipulation measure and view 10 pictures each displayed for 5 seconds from the International Affective Picture System (IAPS). Participants then completed the overall BMIS question again as a post-manipulation measure. Once participants completed the BMIS question, they completed Day, Edgren, and Eshleman's 2007 Mental Illness Stigma Scale (Day MISS, four personality scales, and a demographics questionnaire. The personality scales were not analyzed and simply served as a means to prevent participants from discovering the true nature of the study and answering in a biased manner. Once all scales were completed, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.



## Results

A 2 (Sex) x 3 (Arousal) x 3 (Valence) Analysis of Variance was run on stigma scores in order to test for a significant interaction. Results indicated that there was a significant interaction between arousal and sex, such that males in the low arousal condition had higher stigma scores than all other conditions,  $F(2, 231) = 3.189, p = .043$ .



## Discussion

This research confirmed that the arousal levels of the stimuli led to an effect on participants' stigma scores. Future research should aim to sample a more demographically diverse population from multiple locations or institutions. Future research may also benefit by examining how religious affiliation and experience with mental illness affects stigma scores.

## References

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