New Research on Social Cognition From Psychological Science

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Read about the latest research on social cognition published in *Psychological Science.*

[Reading Between the Minds: The Use of Stereotypes in Empathic Accuracy](#)

Karyn L. Lewis, Sara D. Hodges, Sean M. Laurent, Sanjay Srivastava, and Gina Biancarosa

Do stereotypes help us determine what people are thinking? Participants watched a movie of a new mother and at certain points were asked to infer what the mother was thinking at that moment. Researchers then compared the accuracy of the participants' inferences to the mother's actual thoughts. Researchers also coded the stereotypicality of both the mother's and the participants' thoughts. The researchers found that stereotypic inferences about the mother's thoughts were more accurate — especially if the mother's thoughts were also stereotypic in nature. This finding suggests that using stereotypes to infer what others are thinking is a good strategy, but only if the stereotypes one is using are accurate.

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[Completing the Implicit Association Test Reduces Positive Intergroup Interaction Behavior](#)

Jacquie D. Vorauer

Becoming aware of racial biases is often touted as a first step in overcoming those biases. In this study, White participants performed a race-irrelevant or a race-relevant Implicit Association Task (IAT) — a task that indicates whether the taker associates a particular concept with some groups more strongly than others — and then took part in a discussion with a White or an Aboriginal partner. Aboriginal partners reported feeling that White participants who had taken the race-based IAT viewed them less positively than those who had taken the race-irrelevant IAT. IAT type (race-relevant or race-irrelevant) had no impact on how well-liked White partners felt. This suggests that IAT administrators should be aware of the potential effects of administration of this task on participants' behavior toward out-groups.

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[Combating Automatic Autobiographical Associations: The Effect of Instruction and Training in Strategically Concealing Information in the Autobiographical Implicit Association Test](#)

Xiaoqing Hu, J. Peter Rosenfeld, and Galen V. Bodenhausen
The autobiographical Implicit Association Test (aIAT) is a new assessment that has been used to detect when statements represent true autobiographical memories. In this study, participants were asked to "steal" an exam or an article from a faculty member's mailbox. They then performed an aIAT task in

which they had to press buttons to indicate if sentences had to do with exams or articles and whether the statements were true or false. Some participants were instructed to speed up their responses on certain trial blocks. The researchers found that when participants were instructed to speed their responses, the aIAT test could not reliably discriminate between those who had taken the exam or the article. This is the first study to show that participants can voluntarily change their aIAT scores.