

# New Research From *Clinical Psychological Science*

July 24, 2020



## [Fractured Pasts: The Structure of the Life Story in Sexual-Trauma Survivors With Posttraumatic Stress Disorder](#)

*Georgina Clifford, Caitlin Hitchcock, and Tim Dalgleish*

Sexual-trauma survivors appear to organize the negative and positive attributes of their life in structures different from those used by individuals who have not experienced sexual trauma. When asked to divide their lives into past chapters (e.g., childhood, college) and characterize each chapter, sexual-trauma survivors used more negative attributes, were more likely to separate positive and negative attributes into different chapters, and were less likely to repeat positive attributes across chapters, compared with participants who had not experienced trauma. These differences did not occur when participants were asked to characterize chapters in their future life.

## [Addiction or Transgression? Moral Incongruence and Self-Reported Problematic Pornography Use in a Nationally Representative Sample](#)

*Joshua B. Grubbs, Brinna N. Lee, K. Camille Hoagland, Shane W. Kraus, and Samuel L. Perry*



Individuals who report being more religious appear to use less pornography than others, but those reporting high levels of religiousness appear more likely to experience addiction to pornography than those reporting low levels of religiousness. Grubbs and colleagues analyzed a large sample of American individuals (66.4% men) to determine whether religiousness affected addiction to pornography. Results may indicate that religiousness is associated with a moral incongruence between beliefs about sexual behavior and actual sexual behavior, which can inflate both compulsive pornography use and the distress associated with it.

## [Randomized Controlled Trial Testing Mobile-Based Attention-Bias Modification for Posttraumatic](#)

### [Stress Using Personalized Word Stimuli](#)

*Andrea N. Niles, Joshua D. Woolley, Paige Tripp, Ana Pesquita, Sophia Vinogradov, Thomas C. Neylan, and Aoife O'Donovan*

In this study, a mobile app that implements attention-bias modification (ABM), an intervention designed to reduce exacerbated attention to threats, was not effective in the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Participants with a probable PTSD diagnosis went through an intervention using the app for 12 days, receiving either a personalized ABM with threat-word stimuli tailored for them, a nonpersonalized ABM, or a placebo ABM with neutral-word stimuli. The type of ABM had no bearing on PTSD, anxiety, depression, or attention bias, even after a 5-week-follow-up, although the nonpersonalized ABM reduced threat sensitivity more than the placebo ABM.

### [Differences in Affective Dynamics Among Eating-Disorder Diagnostic Groups](#)

*Gail A. Williams-Kerver, Stephen A. Wonderlich, Ross D. Crosby, et al.*

Williams-Kerver and colleagues used ecological momentary assessment (EMA) to examine the daily negative affect (NA) among adults diagnosed with anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or binge-eating disorder. For 2 weeks, participants used a handheld computer that prompted them to answer questions throughout the day. Participants with anorexia and bulimia experienced greater NA intensity and better emotion differentiation than participants with binge-eating disorder. Participants with bulimia experienced more NA lability than those with anorexia, and their NA was more persistent than for those with binge-eating disorder. These differences may have implications for the treatment of different eating disorders.

### [Improving the Reach of Clinical Practice Guidelines: An Experimental Investigation of Message Framing on User Engagement](#)

*Alexandra Werntz, Lynn Bufka, Brian E. Adams, and Bethany A. Teachman*



How to disseminate information about treatments for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)? Werntz and colleagues tested whether slightly changing the language on a website about clinical practices to treat PTSD would increase engagement of visitors to the site. They found that changing the subheadings on the main page, along with a page with treatment descriptions, did not increase engagement. But on a “Patients and Families” page, the subheading “Say goodbye to symptoms” was the most effective at improving engagement, such as increasing clicks on a link to find a psychologist.

### [Risk and Resilience in an Acute Stress Paradigm: Evidence From Salivary Cortisol and Time-Frequency Analysis of the Reward Positivity](#)

*Paige Ethridge, Nida Ali, Sarah E. Racine, Jens C. Pruessner, and Anna Weinberg*



Ethridge and colleagues examined the association between stress-related psychopathology and reward sensitivity. Male participants completed a monetary-reward task before and after completing a task

designed to induce stress. The researchers measured participants' neural activity using EEG and collected their salivary cortisol—a stress hormone. Acute stress reduced the magnitude of their neural responses to gains and losses. Participants with a higher sensitivity to rewards showed a reduced cortisol response to stressors. These findings suggest that robust reward sensitivity, associated with reduced cortisol responses, may be a marker of resilience to stress-related psychopathology.