

New Research From Clinical Psychological Science

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Read about the latest research in *Clinical Psychological Science*:

[Impact of Panic on Psychophysiological and Neural Reactivity to Unpredictable Threat in Depression and Anxiety](#)

Lynne Lieberman, Stephanie M. Gorka, Stewart A. Shankman, and K. Luan Phan

People who have panic disorder (PD) seem to be particularly sensitive to unpredictable threat. In this study, the authors examined whether this sensitivity is specific to PD or is applicable to the continuum of panic symptomatology. Participants with a range of panic symptoms completed a startle task in which they received no shock, a predictable shock, or an unpredictable shock. They then completed a similar task while undergoing fMRI. Greater levels of panic symptomatology were associated with greater startle potentiation in response to unpredictable shock. Reactivity in the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex was also associated with greater startle response to unpredictable threat. These findings suggest a biobehavioral profile of abnormal responding to unpredictable threat in those with panic symptomatology.

[Social Acknowledgment of Violent Experiences and Its Role in PTSD and Appetitive Aggression Among High-Risk Males in South Africa](#)

Jessica Sommer, Martina Hinsberger, Roland Weierstall, Leon Holtzhausen, Debra Kaminer, Soraya Seedat, Andreas Maercker, Solomon Madikane, and Thomas Elbert

People who experience violence are at risk for developing posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and appetitive aggression (i.e., inflicting harm for enjoyment). The researchers examined how social acknowledgment of violent experiences influenced these negative outcomes. Black Xhosa-speaking South African males from low-income neighborhoods were assessed for PTSD symptoms, exposure to a variety of traumatic events, attraction to violence, perpetrated violence, and perceptions of recognition or disapproval from their family and society after traumatic experiences. Experiences of violence and general disapproval — but not family disapproval — were positively associated with PTSD symptoms and appetitive aggression. Recognition was found to be associated with PTSD but not with appetitive aggression. Social acknowledgement after experiences of violence may therefore be an important target for reducing PTSD symptoms and appetitive aggression.

[Childhood Drinking and Depressive Symptom Level Predict Harmful Personality Change](#)

Elizabeth N. Riley and Gregory T. Smith

Researchers often examine the effect of personality on the onset of impulsive and maladaptive

behaviors. Few studies have examined the reverse relationship — whether engagement in maladaptive behavior can predict personality changes. Youth were followed from the spring of their fifth-grade year to the spring of their ninth-grade year. During this time, they were asked about their alcohol consumption, smoking behavior, and binge-eating behavior and were assessed for the personality trait of urgency and for depression symptoms. The researchers found that alcohol consumption and depression symptoms in fifth grade predicted urgency scores in seventh grade, which in turn predicted maladaptive outcomes such as smoking, alcohol use, depressive symptoms, and binge eating in ninth grade. These findings suggest that maladaptive behaviors can indeed predict harmful personality changes.