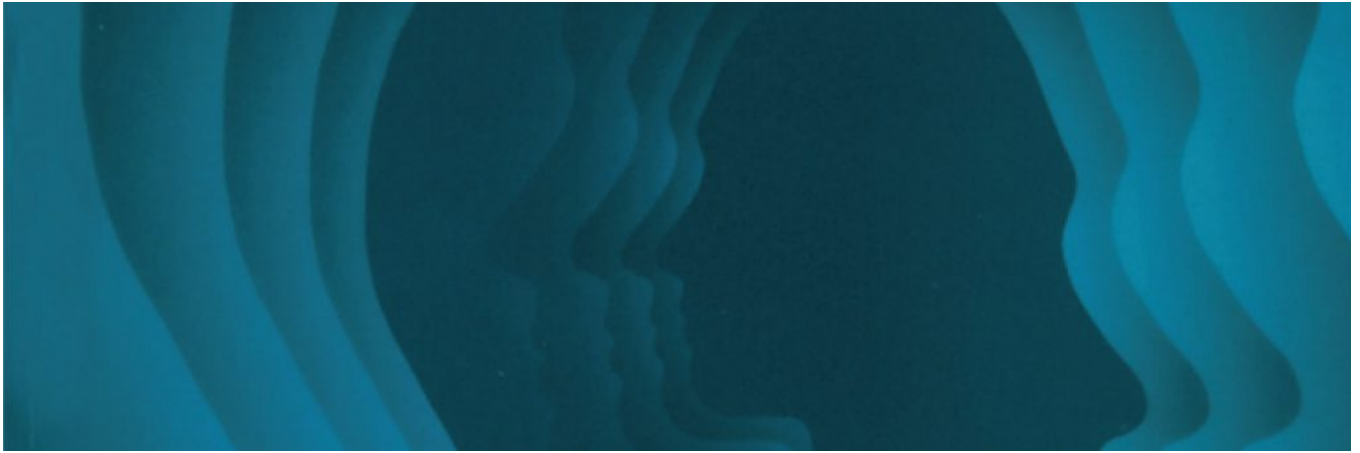


New Research From Clinical Psychological Science

March 15, 2019



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

[Quantitative Analysis of Heterogeneity in Academic Achievement of Children With Autism](#)

Lang Chen, Daniel A. Abrams, Miriam Rosenberg-Lee, Teresa Iuculano, Holly N. Wakeman, Sandhya Prathap, Tianwen Chen, and Vinod Menon

Children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are increasingly included in mainstream classrooms, so it is important to develop educational interventions that will help them keep up with their peers. Such interventions should be informed by research that characterizes variations in cognitive abilities across this population. Chen and colleagues investigated patterns of cognitive abilities in reading and math in a sample of 7- to 12-year-olds who did or did not have ASD. Participants completed measures of math abilities, reading abilities, intelligence, social and behavioral difficulties, working memory, and autism symptoms. Using clustering and cross-validation procedures, the authors identified a heterogeneous profile in ASD, with two distinct subgroups — a low-achieving subgroup whose math skills were inferior to their reading skills, and a high-achieving subgroup whose math skills were superior to their reading skills. These two subgroups did not differ in terms of ASD symptoms but showed different working memory profiles: the high-achieving group showed greater scores in verbal and central executive working memory than the low-achieving group. Moreover, verbal and central executive but not visuospatial working memory predicted math skills in the ASD group, whereas only visuospatial working memory predicted math skills of children without ASD. This research provides new insights into the heterogeneous academic profiles of children with ASD, which may have implications for educational practice.

[The Loss of the Self in Memory: Self-Referential Memory, Childhood Relational Trauma, and Dissociation](#)

Chui-De Chiu, Marieke S. Tollenaar, Cheng-Ta Yang, Bernet M. Elzinga, Tian-Yang Zhang, and Hoi Lam Ho

Dissociation (i.e., a disconnection from one's sense of consciousness, memory, or identity) may reflect intrusions of one's past triggered by current stressful events. However, this study suggests that this relationship seems to depend on individual differences such as childhood trauma and the accessibility and ease of processing information regarding the self. Participants completed a measure of dissociative experiences in daily life and a self-referential memory task, in which memory for information about oneself was tested. In the first phase of the self-referential memory task, participants judged whether some positive and negative adjectives could describe themselves, were socially desirable, or were handwritten; in the second phase, participants saw a list of adjectives and were asked whether they had seen them in the first phase. Participants with higher levels of dissociative experiences remembered the self-referential adjectives less accurately than those with lower levels of dissociative experiences but were equally accurate for the other adjectives. In another experiment, childhood trauma was also assessed, and results indicated that the association between high childhood trauma and high proneness to dissociation was present only in those participants with worse performance in the self-reference task. These results highlight the importance of self-referential memory in understanding dissociation related to childhood trauma.

[Personal Strivings to Understand Anxiety Disorders: Social Anxiety as an Exemplar](#)

Fallon R. Goodman, Todd B. Kashdan, Melissa C. Stikma, and Dan V. Blalock

How do people with social anxiety disorder (SAD) pursue their goals? Participants with and without anxiety generated six strivings or goals (e.g., "trying to be a good role model," "trying to avoid feeling inferior to others"), their consequences (i.e., difficulty, effort, enjoyment, past success, interpersonal conflict, social disclosure, and social support), and motives. Compared with participants without anxiety, those with SAD reported more difficulty and less past success in pursuing their strivings, more interpersonal difficulties, and less likelihood to share their strivings with others. They also reported more strivings related to emotion management and more external motivations to pursue their strivings (e.g., doing so because someone told them to; feeling guilty if they did not). For 2 weeks, participants completed a diary in which they rated their positive and negative affect (e.g., contentment, anger) during the day and how meaningful they felt their day was. Contrary to participants without anxiety, participants with SAD who reported greater frequency of affiliation and interpersonal strivings reported greater daily positive affect and meaning. For all groups, external motives were associated with daily negative affect, and internal motives and desire were associated with daily positive affect. Thus, people with SAD seem to have goals similar to those of people without SAD but to encounter greater difficulty in pursuing them. Clinicians can take these results into account and work with patients with SAD to explore ways to build support networks and harness existing social resources.