New Research From Psychological Science

April 29, 2016

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

Touch or Watch to Learn? Toddlers' Object Retrieval Using Contingent and Noncontingent Video
Koeun Choi and Heather L. Kirkorian
Although young children are typically adept at learning information in person, they often have more difficulty when the same information is presented through video demonstrations. Two-year-olds watched a hiding event in a video that afforded no contingency (the video advanced automatically), general contingency (children could touch the screen anywhere to advance the video), or specific contingency (children had to touch a specific location on the screen to advance the video). The specific-contingency video supported learning best among the youngest participants but hindered older participants' performance. The researchers suggest that specific contingency may allow young children to selectively encode target information, helping learning, whereas in older children — who do not need this additional help — specific contingency leads to the overcontextualization of memory and thus hinders learning.

Attention's Accelerator
Robert M. G. Reinhart, Laura J. McClenahan, and Geoffrey F. Woodman
When people make important sales calls or scan the field for teammates in the championship game, they need to focus their attention as efficiently as possible. How does the human mind enable this? Previous research has suggested that people recruit both working and long-term memory systems to process task-relevant information. In this study, 20 subjects performed visual search tasks with varying monetary rewards and time limits. Electroencephalogram recordings indicated that subjects used both working memory and long-term memory to control attention when there was a large reward at stake or when they were cued to respond quickly. When there was less financial or time pressure, however, they recruited only one type of target memory to perform the visual search. The findings provide insight into how people step on the "attentional accelerator" in a variety of high-pressure situations.