

# New Research From Psychological Science

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## [Backward Semantic Inhibition in Toddlers](#)

*Janette Chow, Anne M. Aimola Davies, Luis J. Fuentes, and Kim Plunkett*

Studies in adults have suggested that *backward inhibition*, or inhibition of an initial stimulus, occurs when the next stimulus belongs to a different category of semantic representation (e.g., switching from the word “dog” to the word “sea”). Backward inhibition leads to inhibition not only of the previously attended item (dog) but also of new items semantically related to the previous item (e.g., cat). Although backward inhibition has been demonstrated in adults, this phenomenon has not been investigated in toddlers. Toddlers completed a backward-semantic-inhibition lexical-decision paradigm in which they were shown a prime (e.g., a chair), an unrelated image (e.g., a chicken or a checkerboard), and finally a target image that was or was not related to the prime (e.g., a table) and a distractor image (e.g., a flower). Toddlers’ attention to the target item was impaired when it was semantically related to the prime, providing evidence of backward semantic inhibition.

## [Beliefs About the Causal Structure of the Self-Concept Determine Which Changes Disrupt Personal Identity](#)

*Stephanie Y. Chen, Oleg Urminsky, and Daniel M. Bartels*

Which features are most central to people’s concept of personal identity? The authors hypothesized that the importance of different features of identity hinges on how they are causally related. To test this, the researchers had participants rate causal connections between features of identity (their own and other people’s) and to rate the extent to which disruptions in each feature would disrupt identity. These features were either chosen from a list (Experiment 1) or self-generated (Experiment 2). In a third experiment, the researchers manipulated the centrality of features presented to participants in vignettes. In support of the authors’ hypothesis, features perceived to be more causally central were seen as more important for identity, and manipulating a feature to make it more causally central increased that feature’s perceived importance to identity.