

New Research From Psychological Science

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

[Associative Learning of Social Value in Dynamic Groups](#)

Oriel FeldmanHall, Joseph E. Dunsmoor, Marijn C. W. Kroes, Sandra Lackovic, and Elizabeth A. Phelps

The researchers examined value-based learning in social situations in two experiments. In the first experiment, participants received large monetary offers from “good” dictators and small monetary offers from “bad” dictators. The good and bad dictators then offered similar monetary amounts while partnered with a novel dictator. Participants indicated how much they trusted the original dictators, their partners, and never-before seen dictators and recalled how much money each dictator had given them. The second experiment was similar to the first, except participants played a robbery game in which robbers stole more money (greedy robbers) or less money (kind robbers). The researchers found that the value of the original actor (dictator or robber) was associated with their partner only in the kind-robber situation. This was also the only situation in which participants’ recall of the monetary offer of the original actor and their partner was equally accurate. The authors suggest that the transfer of value from one social actor to another may depend on factors that influence attention and learning, such as whether expectations of behavior are violated and whether partners add information beyond that provided by the original actor.

[The Mismeasurement of Mind: Life-Span Changes in Paired-Associate-Learning Scores Reflect the “Cost” of Learning, Not Cognitive Decline](#)

Michael Ramscar, Ching Chu Sun, Peter Hendrix, and Harald Baayen

Age-related declines in performance on paired-associate-learning (PAL) tests have been used as evidence for age-related cognitive declines; however, research has suggested that certain factors influence learning on this test in ways that are a function of participants’ experience and may not reflect cognitive decline. The researchers predicted patterns of score changes on PAL tests using models that accounted for associative-learning processes. The models indicated that as experience increases, meaningless word pairs (e.g., jury-eagle) become more difficult to learn. This means that age-related declines in PAL scores could reflect learning costs associated with older adults’ increased language experience rather than cognitive decline. These modeled results were supported in a behavioral test in which monolingual German speakers and bilingual Mandarin-German speakers of different ages completed PAL tests in German (all participants) and Mandarin (bilingual speakers only).

[For Whom the Mind Wanders, and When, Varies Across Laboratory and Daily-Life Settings](#)

Michael J. Kane, Georgina M. Gross, Charlotte A. Chun, Bridget A. Smeeckens, Matt E. Meier, Paul J. Silvia, and Thomas R. Kwapil

Mind wandering generally occurs spontaneously in daily life. In contrast, lab-based studies often examine mind wandering by directing participants to engage in mind wandering. The researchers examined how personality and cognitive constructs are related to mind wandering in lab-based and daily-life studies by having participants complete lab-based tasks assessing working memory capacity, attention restraint, attention constraint, the propensity for task-unrelated thoughts, and personality traits. Participants then completed an experience sampling component in which they answered questions regarding current mind wandering, efforts to concentrate, current activity, and emotional context eight times a day for 1 week. The researchers found individual differences in how cognitive and personality factors related to mind wandering. In addition, results found in one research context (lab or daily life) were often not found in the other, indicating that context matters for mind wandering and that a purely lab-based understanding of mind wandering may lead to an incomplete understanding of this phenomenon.