

New Research From Psychological Science

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

[Is There a Chastity Belt on Perception?](#)

Jessica K. Witt, Nathan L. Tenhundfeld, Michael J. Tymoski

Research has suggested that people's ability to perform an action influences their spatial perception — something suggested by action-specific accounts of perception. Other researchers have argued that findings from these studies are instead attributable to response bias. To examine these contrasting views, the researchers conducted a study that employed a task commonly used in experiments supportive of the action-specific account of perception — the Pong task. In this computer-based task, participants were trained to recognize the speed (fast or slow) of computerized ping pong balls. Participants then attempted to hit virtual ping pong balls moving at variable speeds using a large or a small virtual ping pong paddle. After each trial, participants were asked to indicate whether the speed of the ball was more like that of a “fast” ball or a “slow” ball. After the task participants were questioned about their knowledge of the study's hypothesis and goals. In support of the action-specific account of perception, the researchers found that the size of the paddle influenced participants' perception of the speed of the balls and that this effect was not influenced by participants' intuitions about the study goals.

[Can Science Explain the Human Mind? Intuitive Judgments About the Limits of Science](#)

Sara Gottlieb and Tania Lombrozo

Are some topics of research more appropriate than others? The researchers examined, in several studies, which phenomena are deemed to be within the scope of scientific study and why. In each study, the researchers asked participants to rate mental traits, abilities, or phenomena (e.g., appreciating music, falling in love, cooperating in groups) according to (a) how likely it was that the topic could one day be fully explained by science and (b) their comfort with the ability of science to provide such an explanation. Participants were asked to rate each topic in various dimensions, including human

uniqueness, abnormal functioning, introspection, and human exceptionalism. The researchers found that people are more likely to see a topic as being beyond the scope of scientific study — and to be uncomfortable with its study — if it supports privileged introspective access, makes humans exceptional, and involves conscious will. The findings may inform the reception of certain topics of study by the general public.

[Concern for Group Reputation Increases Prosociality in Young Children](#)

Jan M. Engelmann, Esther Herrmann, and Michael Tomasello

The current study investigated whether concerns for group reputation exists in 5-year-old children. Researchers used a donation task to assess concerns for group reputation by measuring prosocial behavior. The donation box was manipulated to show one of four conditions — both group and individual donations were visible, only group donations were visible, only one target participant's donation was visible, or no donations were visible. Children were assigned to groups and instructed that, if they wanted, they could share their toys with children from another kindergarten by placing them in a donation box. The participants were shown their donation-box condition and confirmed that they knew what would be visible. Two children were then brought in to observe the participant as they made their donation. The authors found that children were more generous when either individual or group donations were visible than when all donations were private.