

New Research From Psychological Science

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

[Do People Inherently Dislike Uncertain Advice?](#)

Celia Gaertig and Joseph P. Simmons

Studies have shown that people dislike advisors who lack confidence – does this mean they also dislike advice that lacks certainty? To find out, the authors conducted a series of studies in which participants predicted the outcome of an uncertain event (e.g., sports games, temperature, stocks) after receiving advice that varied in its certainty and confidence. In line with previous studies, the results showed that participants evaluated unsure advisors more negatively than confident advisors. However, participants did not evaluate uncertain advice—advice that included a possible range of outcomes, an exact probability, or an approximate probability—more negatively than certain advice. Additional findings showed that participants actually preferred an advisor who provided uncertain advice over an advisor who provided certain advice. The results of these studies challenge the popular belief that advisors must express false certainty for their advice to be taken seriously, the authors conclude.

[To What Extent and Under Which Circumstances Are Growth Mind-Sets Important to Academic Achievement? Two Meta-Analyses](#)

Victoria F. Sisk, Alexander P. Burgoyne, Jingze Sun, Jennifer L. Butler, and Brooke N. Macnamara

Numerous studies suggest that having a growth mind-set—believing that one’s personal attributes and abilities can be changed or improved with effort—is associated with various positive outcomes, including higher academic achievement. This finding has informed the design of educational interventions implemented in various countries. Sisk and coauthors conducted two meta-analyses to examine the strength of the relationship between mind-set and academic achievement and the effectiveness of mind-set interventions. Overall, the authors found that effect sizes were inconsistent across studies, and most studies showed small or null effects. The first meta-analysis indicated a weak association between

students' mind-sets and their academic achievement. The second meta-analysis suggested that mind-set interventions have a small effect on academic achievement, but may have specific benefits for academically high-risk students and economically disadvantaged students. The authors note that future studies should include manipulation checks and investigate the role of potential moderators and mediators to gain further insight into the effects of growth mind-sets.

[Genetics and Crime: Integrating New Genomic Discoveries Into Psychological Research About Antisocial Behavior](#)

Wertz, A. Caspi, D. W. Belsky, A. L. Beckley, L. Arseneault, J. C. Barnes, D. L. Corcoran, S. Hogan, R. M. Houts, N. Morgan, C. L. Odgers, J. A. Prinz, K. Sugden, B. S. Williams, R. Poulton, and T. E. Moffitt

Aggregating very small associations between millions of individual genetic variants and a specific behavioral outcome allows researchers to construct a polygenic score, a probabilistic measure indicating the likelihood that an individual will experience that outcome given their genetic profile. Integrating work across scientific fields, the authors examined whether genetic risk for low educational attainment, indexed by a polygenic score, is associated with criminal offending. Data from two longitudinal studies showed that individuals with lower polygenic scores for educational attainment were more likely to have a criminal record in adulthood, a modest association that remained after the researchers took family socioeconomic status and parents' antisocial behavior into account. Several factors – including lower cognitive ability, lower self-control, early academic difficulties, and leaving school with poor educational qualifications – partially mediated the association. The authors note that the findings do not support a view of genetics as destiny; rather, they reinforce the idea that many genes contribute to many outcomes via early-emerging characteristics and their influence on developmental pathways.

[On the Clock: Evidence for the Rapid and Strategic Modulation of Mind Wandering](#)

Paul Seli, Jonathan S. A. Carriere, Jeffrey D. Wammes, Evan F. Risko, Daniel L. Schacter, and Daniel Smilek

Findings from various studies suggest that the degree to which people engage in mind wandering varies across situations. The authors investigated whether some of this variation could be due to deliberate modulation, by which people regulate mind wandering in anticipation of upcoming cognitive demands. Participants saw an analog clock displayed on a computer monitor and were tasked with pushing a button every time the clock's hand pointed at 12:00, which occurred every 20 s. Thought probes appeared pseudorandomly during the 20-s intervals, asking participants whether they were “on task,” “intentionally mind-wandering,” or “unintentionally mind-wandering” at that moment. The data showed that participants reported increasing rates of mind wandering after they had pressed the button and decreasing rates of mind wandering just before a button press. The findings suggest that participants deliberately modulated their mind wandering over time in relation to the demands of the clock task.