New Research From Psychological Science

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

[Local Competition Amplifies the Corrosive Effects of Inequality](#)
B. Krupp and Thomas R. Cook

Experimental evidence indicates that inequality reduces cooperation, but observational studies on the link between inequality and conflict have produced inconsistent findings. The authors propose that the scale of competition–whether it is local or global–matters. They hypothesized that the zero-sum nature of local competition makes conflict likely among a small group of individuals, whereas individuals competing on a global scale are not in direct competition and are more likely to cooperate. The authors developed a mathematical model of the evolution of conflict under inequality and tested the model's predictions in an experiment with human players. Players were more likely to choose a conflict-based strategy as the payoff structure became increasingly unequal, especially in head-to-head competition. Consequently, players competing on a local scale often earned less than they could have by taking a cooperative approach. The authors conclude that the scale of competition is an important consideration in trying to understand when inequality leads to conflict.

[Religious People Are Trusted Because They Are Viewed as Slow Life-History Strategists](#)
Jordan W. Moon, Jaimie Arona Krems, and Adam B. Cohen

Research has shown that people tend to view religious individuals as more trustworthy than nonreligious individuals. The authors hypothesized that this trust may go beyond a sense of shared belief. Rather, religious affiliation or behavior may cue particular traits associated with a slow life-history strategy–such as later sexual debut, greater parental investment, or less risk-taking–that people perceive as trustworthy. In one online study, participants viewed individuals' dating profiles and rated them according to various traits. Participants rated religious individuals as more likely to follow a committed reproductive strategy, to be less impulsive and aggressive, and to be more educated–but not more valuable as mates–compared with nonreligious individuals. Some of these traits mediated the

relationship between religious affiliation and perceived trustworthiness. A second online experiment indicated that information about individuals' reproductive strategies is the primary factor driving participants' perceptions of trustworthiness. Additional findings suggest that this pattern holds for participants' assessments of Christian and Muslim individuals. These results suggest a novel theoretical perspective on the relationship between religion and trust.

Visual Memories Bypass Normalization
Ilona M. Bloem, Yurika L. Watanabe, Melissa M. Kibbe, and Sam Ling

Do visual memory representations follow the same rules as visual perception? To find out, the authors focused on divisive normalization, an essential computation underlying perception by which neural responses to neighboring stimuli dampen the response to a target stimulus. Participants saw a series of striped circles that varied in visual contrast; sometimes, a striped ring surrounded the circles. Participants' attempts to reproduce the contrast of a target circle showed signs of divisive normalization, but only when the circle and surrounding ring were shown simultaneously. The ring did not suppress perceived contrast when it appeared after participants had seen the circle and committed it to memory. A second experiment produced similar results, and there was no evidence of normalization between representations stored in memory. These experiments suggest that representations stored in visual memory do not necessarily follow the same set of computational rules as representations in visual perception.

Subjective Confidence Predicts Information Seeking in Decision Making
Kobe Desender, Annika Boldt, and Nick Yeung

The role that subjective confidence plays in decision making, independent of the influence of objective accuracy, remains unclear. To investigate, the authors contrasted conditions in a perceptual decision task that were matched in objective accuracy. Participants saw a stimulus composed of eight colored circles arranged in a ring. They then saw a continuous scale ranging from "sure blue" to "sure red" and were asked to move a slider to indicate the average color of the stimulus, which also indicated their confidence in the judgment. In some cases, participants could choose to see the stimulus again before responding. On conditions matched for accuracy, participants were more likely to choose to see the stimulus again when the eight circles varied considerably in color (associated with lower confidence) than when the average color was close to the midpoint between blue and red (associated with higher confidence). The findings support the hypothesis that subjective confidence predicts information seeking in decision making.