

New Research From Psychological Science

January 04, 2019



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

[A Robust Neural Index of High Face Familiarity](#)

Holger Wiese, Simone C. Tüttenberg, Brandon T. Ingram, Chelsea Y. X. Chan, Zehra Gurbuz, A. Mike Burton, and Andrew W. Young

Wiese et al. examined the differences in neural activity elicited by familiar and unfamiliar faces. They randomly presented to each participant photos of familiar faces (of friends and relatives, provided by the participant), photos of unfamiliar faces (provided by a different participant), and photos of butterflies. The participant had to press a key whenever a butterfly photo appeared, and electroencephalographic (EEG) activity was recorded. Brain activity measured was higher for familiar faces than for unfamiliar faces — a sustained-familiarity effect (SFE). The SFE did not occur when faces were unfamiliar. The effect also decreased with photo repetition, was reduced for lesser known familiar faces, and was absent for celebrity faces. The location and timeline of neural activity indicate that the recognition of familiar faces relies on the integration of perceptual and affective information. The SFE might explain why most humans are so good at recognizing familiar faces, even from degraded stimuli, but not so good at identifying unfamiliar faces.

[Extremeness Aversion Is a Cause of Anchoring](#)

Joshua Lewis, Celia Gaertig, and Joseph P. Simmons



When estimating unknown quantities, people tend to insufficiently adjust from values they have previously considered — a phenomenon known as *anchoring*. Aversion to providing extreme numerical values might cause this tendency. In seven studies, Lewis et al. manipulated the perceived extremeness of adjustments relative to the initially considered value (i.e., the anchor) and tested whether it influenced

how far people would adjust their final estimates. They asked participants to provide estimates after considering an anchor value (e.g., product prices after seeing the price of a product of the same category, a company's stock price in a week given the current price, or the total points in upcoming NBA games after seeing an expert's prediction). For each estimate, they established a maximum value that participants could provide; this value was based on the participants' phone number, and thus explicitly random. Participants who could adjust only by a lower value were less likely to use that low value for their estimate than participants who could adjust by a higher value. In all studies, participants avoided using the most extreme values available to them when making their estimates. The authors say that anchoring effects thus seem to be caused by extremeness aversion and not by effortful adjustments or scale distortions, as other theories posit.