

# New Research From Psychological Science

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

## [When the Muses Strike: Creative Ideas of Physicists and Writers Routinely Occur During Mind Wandering](#)

*Shelly L. Gable, Elizabeth A. Hopper, and Jonathan W. Schooler*



Mind wandering, which involves thoughts that are both independent from the task at hand and different from one's previous thoughts on the matter, can generate creative ideas experienced as "aha" moments, this study suggests. Every day for 1 or 2 weeks, physicists and writers listed their most important creative idea of the day, described what they were thinking and doing when the idea occurred, and rated the importance of the idea and whether it felt like an "aha" moment or not. Participants reported that about 20% of their most important ideas occurred when their minds were wandering, and these ideas were rated as being equally important and creative as the ideas formed while working on task. After 3 or 6 months, they rated all these previous ideas as slightly more creative but less important. Overall, ideas generated during mind wandering were more likely to be rated as "aha" moments, compared with ideas generated while working. Hence, profession-related ideas that occur outside of work when people are not thinking about the topic can be inventive and create sudden insights, showing a positive side of mind wandering.

## [Conceptually Rich, Perceptually Sparse: Object Representations in 6-Month-Old Infants' Working Memory](#)

*Melissa M. Kibbe and Alan M. Leslie*

Do infants remember conceptual information about an object (e.g., the object is a ball) even when they do not remember perceptual information (e.g., the object is round and green)? This study indicates that

they do. Six-month-old infants were familiarized with a yellow and red striped ball and a doll's head with brown skin and eyes. The two objects were then hidden one at a time in separate locations. One of the objects then reappeared at the location where the first object was hidden; critically, this object could be the same one that had been hidden there or the other object. The experimenters measured the time that infants spent looking at this object. Infants looked longer when the object had been swapped, indicating that they remembered the hidden object's conceptual information. This effect did not occur when the doll's head was inverted and therefore not processed as a face. It also did not occur when the ball was swapped for a green ball with red polka dots or when the doll's head was swapped for a doll's head with pink skin and blue eyes, indicating that infants' memory for the first object hidden relied on conceptual details (e.g., is the object a ball or a head?) but not on perceptual details (e.g., does the object have brown or blue eyes?). These results suggest that infants may encode the conceptual category of a hidden object, even when perceptual features are lost.

### [A Tight Spot: How Personality Moderates the Impact of Social Norms on Sojourner Adaptation](#)

*Nicolas Geeraert, Ren Li, Colleen Ward, Michele Gelfand, and Kali A. Demes*

How do contextual factors and personality traits affect how individuals adapt to a new culture when they temporarily move to a different country? To answer this question, Geeraert and colleagues analyzed data from a longitudinal acculturation project that measured young adults' personality and cultural adaptation during and after a temporary move to a different country. These measures were collected on three occasions: 3 months before departure as well as 2 weeks and 5 months after arrival to the host country. Overall, participants who moved to a tight culture (i.e., one with strong norms and little tolerance for deviance) showed less adaptation than those who moved to a loose culture (i.e., one with less rigid norms), but participants originally from a tight culture showed more adaptation than those from a loose culture. Participants who scored higher on agreeableness and honesty-humility were less likely to feel the negative effects of cultural tightness or to return early to their home country. These results may help ensure a good fit between individuals' personalities and their destination culture, which will increase the benefits of the rapid increase in international mobility.