New Research From Psychological Science

May 18, 2012

Read about new research published in *Psychological Science.*

[Is It Light or Dark? Recalling Moral Behavior Changes Perception of Brightness](#)

Pronobesh Banerjee, Promothesh Chatterjee, and Jayati Sinha

Can the recollection of past ethical and unethical acts change a person's perception of brightness? Participants were asked to recall an ethical or an unethical event from their past.They were then asked to rate their preference for a number of items — a lamp, a cracker, and a candle, for example — and were asked to judge the brightness of the testing room. Participants who had recalled an unethical event judged the room to be darker and had a greater preference for light-producing objects — such as a candle or a lamp — than did those who had recalled an ethical event. Increased object preference was not seen for objects that did not produce light. This suggests that metaphysical associations can affect the perception of real-world conditions, such as brightness.

[The Gleam of the Double-Edged Sword: The Benefits of Subgroups for Organizational Ethics](#)

Margaret E. Ormiston and Elaine M. Wong

Research has generally focused on the negative aspects of subgroup formation, but are there positives to the development of subgroups in organizational settings? Researchers analyzed data from 51 management teams working in Fortune 500 companies. The researchers identified subgroups within each team by analyzing the education level and tenure of each member. Researchers found that subgroup fragmentation was positively related to organizational ethical behavior only in organizations in which decision making was spread among more team members. This study indicates that subgroup fragmentation in leadership teams is related to positive outcomes in organizational settings.

[On Near Misses and Completed Tasks: The Nature of Relief](#)

Kate Sweeny and Kathleen D. Vohs

Although we often feel relief following near misses or upon completion of a task, there is still much researchers do not know about relief. To investigate relief, participants were told they would have to sing the song "Feelings" into a microphone in front of research staff. In some cases, the participants sang the song (task-completion condition), and in others they were told the microphone was broken so they would no longer have to sing (near-miss condition). Those in the near-miss condition experienced greater levels of negative counterfactual thinking (i.e., imagining what might have been) than those in the task-completion condition. Higher levels of counterfactual thinking in near-miss participants in turn led them to experience greater levels of social isolation.

[The Social Dimension of Stress Reactivity: Acute Stress Increases Prosocial Behavior in Humans](#)

Bernadette von Dawans, Urs Fischbacher, Clemens Kirschbaum, Ernst Fehr, and Markus Heinrichs

How do men act after they have been under stress? In this study, men took part in either the control or the active version of the Trier Social Stress Test for Groups. They then played several games with partners that measured participants' trust, trustworthiness, sharing, punishment, and nonsocial risk behavior. Men in the stress condition displayed greater levels of trust, trustworthiness, and sharing — but not punishment or nonsocial risk — than men in the control group. This study suggests that stress promotes prosocial approach behavior in men and that prosocial approach behavior may serve as an effective coping mechanism in those experiencing stress.