

# New Research From Psychological Science

September 19, 2014

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

## [Early Experience Affects the Strength of Vigilance for Threat in Rhesus Monkey Infants](#)

*Tara M. Mandalaywala, Karen J. Parker, and Dario Maestriperi*

Research has suggested that the cognitive bias to threatening stimuli (i.e., attention toward and vigilance for threat) displayed by adult human and nonhuman primates may arise in part from early experiences. The researchers measured 3- and 9-month-old infant rhesus macaques' cognitive bias to threat by measuring their eye gaze in response to pictures of neutral and threatening macaque faces. Behavioral data were collected for the 9-month-old infants and their mothers to determine the mothers' dominance rank and their level of protective behavior toward their infants. Whereas 3-month-old infants did not show a cognitive bias toward threat, 9-month-old infants with high-ranking or protective mothers did. These results suggest that the early development of cognitive bias to threat in rhesus macaque infants is influenced by both mothers' protectiveness and social rank.

## [Learned Helplessness and Learned Prevalence: Exploring the Causal Relations Among Perceived Controllability, Reward Prevalence, and Exploration](#)

*Kinneret Teodorescu and Ido Erev*

Although the phenomenon of learned helplessness has been well documented, researchers are still unsure of its underlying cause. Participants performed an exploration task in which they were rewarded or penalized for picking squares from a grid. The researchers manipulated the average payoff from exploration of the grid, the most frequent payoff received from exploration, and whether the reward received was linked to participants' own grid choices or was determined by another person's grid choices. Participants' perceptions of controllability within the task were also assessed. The researchers found that learned helplessness behavior was related not to participants' perception of control or to the average reward they received but to the frequency of reward for exploration.