

New Research in *Psychological Science*

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[Young Adults Make Rational Sexual Decisions](#)

Laura E. Hatz, Sanghyuk Park, Kayleigh N. McCarty, Denis M. McCarthy, and Clinton P. Davis-Stober



Young adults make rational decisions when choosing sexual partners, this research suggests. Participants (18-31 years old) selected among hypothetical sexual partners varying in physical attractiveness and in the probability, provided by the researcher, that one would get a sexually transmitted infection (STI) from a sexual encounter with them. Nearly all participants evaluated the alternatives in a coherent fashion consistent with utility-based theories of rational choice. Some participants preferred to maximize attractiveness (i.e., risk-seeking choices) whereas others preferred to minimize STI risk (i.e., risk-averse choices). Participants who maximized attractiveness were also more likely to have engaged in previous risky sexual behavior.

[Can Short Psychological Interventions Affect Educational Performance? Revisiting the Effect of Self-Affirmation Interventions](#)

Marta Serra-Garcia, Karsten T. Hansen, and Uri Gneezy



Self-affirmation interventions might not reduce the gender gap in sciences or improve female student performance. Serra-Garcia and colleagues reanalyzed data from a 2010 study and concluded that, contrary to the original report, a 15-minute self-affirmation intervention in which students wrote about their most important values did not appear to improve female students' performance in a physics class. The results also do not support the hypothesis that self-affirmation interventions increase women's academic performance overall, according to a specific-curve analysis and accounting for the fact that the original findings were based on covariate-adjusted interaction effects.

[Confidence in Context: Perceived Accuracy of Quantitative Estimates Decreases With Repeated Trials](#)

Julia A. Minson and Christopher Umphres



Confidence in one's judgments tends to decrease over a series of quantitative estimates. This is what Minson and Umphres found across seven studies in which participants estimated animal weights, number of food items in a jar, people's weights, and cities' temperatures. Participants' confidence decreased regardless of monetary incentives, confidence rating scale (e.g., on a 5-point scale or by providing probabilities), or their expectations about how confidence would change over time. These findings suggest that individuals do not evaluate their confidence in isolation but rather in reference to their previously stated confidence.

[Exploring the Impact of Mindfulness on False-Memory Susceptibility](#)

Susan M. Sherman and James A. Grange



Contrary to the findings reported by Wilson and colleagues (2015), Sherman and Grange did not find that mindfulness increased false memory susceptibility. Participants underwent either a mindfulness/mind-wandering induction or a simple cognitive task before seeing lists of words designed to provoke false memories about a nonpresented critical lure. In memory tests that followed, participants who underwent the different inductions performed at the same level, suggesting that mindfulness did not alter their false-memory susceptibility.

["This is What a Mechanic Sounds Like": Children's Vocal Control Reveals Implicit Occupational Stereotypes](#)

Valentina Cartei, Jane Oakhill, Alan Garnham, Robin Banerjee, and David Reby

Children appear to associate certain voice characteristics with certain occupations, reflecting gender stereotypes even when these are not explicit. Cartei and colleagues asked 5-to-10-year-olds to imitate the voices of different occupations (e.g., "How would a mechanic say ...?"). Children masculinized their voices, by lowering pitch and resonance, when imitating voices of traditionally male occupations (e.g., mechanic) and feminized their voices, by increasing pitch and resonance, when imitating voices of traditionally female occupations (e.g., beautician). These voice shifts increased with age and occurred even when children did not express explicit gender stereotypes about occupations, indicating that this voice-imitation task may assess automatic stereotypes.

[Affective Arousal Links Sound to Meaning](#)

Arash Aryani, Erin S. Isbilen, and Morten H. Christiansen



People associate some pseudowords, such as bouba, to rounded shapes and others, such as kiki, to spiky shapes. Emotions appear to influence these associations. Aryani and colleagues found that kiki-like pseudowords and spiky shapes are associated with higher levels of affective arousal than bouba-like pseudowords and rounded shapes. The researchers verified that these differences in arousal generalized to new pseudowords and could be found in participants' subjective ratings and predicted by models derived from the pseudowords' acoustic features. These findings highlight the possible role of human emotion in language development.