

# New Research in *Psychological Science*

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## [Parent Contributions to the Development of Political Attitudes in Adoptive and Biological Families](#)

*Emily A. Willoughby et al.*



To test where political attitudes originate, Willoughby and colleagues tested 394 adoptive and biological families whose offspring were more than 30 years old. Parents and their children completed sociopolitical-attitude scales evaluating their political orientation, authoritarianism, egalitarianism, retribution, religiousness, social liberalism, and economic liberalism. Biometric modeling indicated that genetic and nongenetic transmission from both parents contributed to each political-attitude phenotype. The largest genetic influence appeared in religiousness and social liberalism, whereas the largest environmental influence appeared in political orientation and egalitarianism. Thus, genes, environment, and genes-environment correlation all appear to contribute to adults' sociopolitical attitudes.

## [Harsh but Expedient: Dominant Leaders Increase Group Cooperation via Threat of Punishment](#)

*Fan Xuan Chen, Xinyu Zhang, Lasse Laustsen, and Joey T. Cheng*



What might explain support for dominant leaders? Other studies have indicated that conflict might increase this support, but the ways in which such leadership may benefit the followers can also contribute. Chen and colleagues found that leaders with a dominant reputation appear to increase cooperation among followers regardless of how they rose to power (i.e., assignment, election, or leading in a competition among groups). Personality profiles, authoritarian attitudes, and physical characteristics associated with impressions of leader dominance also increased followers' cooperation. Cooperation under dominant leaders may be instigated by the threat of punishment that these leaders represent.

## [Sustained Stress Reduces the Age Advantages in Emotional Experience of Older Adults: Commentary on Carstensen et al. \(2020\)](#)

*Rui Sun and Disa Sauter*



Sun and Sauter replicated and extended Carstensen and colleagues' 2020 findings indicating that older adults showed relatively better emotional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic than younger adults. Sun and Sauter used data from 23,350 participants across 63 countries and found that older adults showed an emotional advantage over younger adults during the pandemic. In a second study comparing data collected before and during the pandemic, they found that the age advantage decreased during the pandemic. These findings suggest that older adults' emotional advantage might be due to their ability to avoid negative situations, which can be challenging at times of sustained stress.

### [Gender Gaps in Deceptive Self-Presentation on Social-Media Platforms Vary With Gender Equality: A Multinational Investigation](#)

*Dasha Kolesnyk, Martijn G. de Jong, and Rik Pieters*

Kolesnyk and colleagues surveyed 12,257 adults (51% female) from 25 countries on their degree of deceptive self-presentation online. Deceptive self-presentation about physical attractiveness was higher among women than men, whereas deceptive self-presentation about personal achievement was higher among men than women. In countries with lower gender equality, both genders admitted to more deceptive self-presentation, especially regarding physical attractiveness, than in countries with higher gender equality. However, there were greater gender differences in self-deception domains in countries with more gender equality.

### [Neural Representations of the Committed Romantic Partner in the Nucleus Accumbens](#)

*Ryuhei Ueda and Nobuhito Abe*

This research suggests that neural activity patterns in the nucleus accumbens, a brain region involved in the processing of rewards, pleasure, and addiction, differently represent romantic partners and nonpartners. Forty-six men romantically involved with female partners performed a task in which a successful response triggered a photo in which their partner or unfamiliar women showed a happy expression and gesture. Using functional MRI to scan participants' brains during the task, Ueda and Abe found that the spatial patterns of activity in the nucleus accumbens discriminated between romantic partners and unfamiliar women, regardless of their attractiveness.

### [Facial Impressions Are Predicted by the Structure of Group Stereotypes](#)

*Sally Y. Xie, Jessica K. Flake, Ryan M. Stoler, Jonathan B. Freeman, and Eric Hehman*



Learned stereotypes about social groups might have as much influence on people's impressions of others' faces as morphological characteristics, this research suggests. Participants rated faces representing different genders and ethnicities (Black, East Asian, and White) on 14 traits, including warmth, trustworthiness, and intelligence. Results indicated that faces from each group elicited impressions consistent with group stereotypes (e.g., Black male faces were rated similarly to classifications of Black males as a social category). Participants' unique stereotypical beliefs appeared to shape their facial impressions. These results indicate that stereotypes may affect how we form impressions, potentially impacting outcomes such as hiring or sentencing.

## [Sources of Cognitive Conflict and Their Relevance to Theory-of-Mind Proficiency in Healthy Aging: A Preregistered Study](#)

*Foyzul Rahman et al.*



To disentangle age-related declines in theory of mind (ToM) proficiency (the ability to interpret what others think) from other functional decline, Rahman and colleagues examined how different sources of conflict within ToM affected younger and older adults. When conflict within ToM originated from different agents (i.e., agents providing different locations cues for a hidden ball), older adults were worse than younger adults at guessing where an agent believed a ball was hidden. However, when the sources of conflict involved having more knowledge of the agent's reality or a conflicting perspective with another agent, older adults and younger adults performed similarly. These findings suggest that different aspects of ToM tap different cognitive mechanisms that affect younger and older adults differently, and that previous studies might have overestimated the effects of aging on ToM.

## [Resourceful Actors, Not Weak Victims: Reframing Refugees' Stigmatized Identity Enhances Long-Term Academic Engagement](#)

*Christina A. Bauer, Raphael Boemelburg, and Gregory M. Walton*

Bauer and colleagues developed a brief (~10-min) intervention that reframed refugees' identities as strong and skillful, which appeared to improve the academic engagement of actual refugee participants. In this cost-efficient intervention, refugees read and reflected on quotes that reframed refugees broadly as possessing strength and resourcefulness, countering default stigmatizing representations. Compared with a control activity, the intervention boosted participants' confidence in their ability to succeed at an imagined university and their likelihood to take on difficult academic exercises. The intervention also boosted their engagement in a real online university.