Resting (Tonic) Blood Pressure Is Associated With Sensitivity to Imagined and Acute Experiences of Social Pain: Evidence From Three Studies

Tristen K. Inagaki and Peter J. Gianaros

This research supports the idea that social and physical pain share a similar cardiovascular correlate—elevated resting blood pressure. Inagaki and Gianaros tested whether blood pressure was related to sensitivity to imagined and acute experiences of social pain (i.e., ostracism) and to emotional responding unspecific to social pain (i.e., facial expressions). Individuals with higher resting blood pressure, which had been associated with lower sensitivity to physical pain in previous studies, showed lower sensitivity to social pain. Moreover, individual differences in general emotional responding did not explain this association.

Early Adolescents Demonstrate Peer-Network Homophily in Political Attitudes and Values

Benjamin Oosterhoff, Ashleigh Poppler, and Cara A. Palmer

Oosterhoff and colleagues examined whether the tendency for people to affiliate with those who have similar political views (i.e., political homophily) is present in early adolescence. They used a social network approach to test rural American middle school students (mean age = 12.5 years) and found that individuals were more likely to spend time with people who shared similar political attitudes. These effects were most consistent for right-wing authoritarianism, patriotism, and anti-immigration attitudes. Thus, political homophily appears evident at an early age when people are forming their political beliefs, suggesting that peer political-attitude socialization may emerge early in life.
Taking a Disagreeing Perspective Improves the Accuracy of People’s Quantitative Estimates
Philippe P. F. M. Van de Calseyde and Emir Efendi?

Van de Calseyde and Efendi? tested a novel means of improving the accuracy of people’s quantitative estimates (e.g., “What is the weight of rodeo bull Bodacious?”): combining their first estimate with a second estimate made from the perspective of someone they often disagree with. They found that this strategy produced more accurate estimates than when people made a second guess or a second estimate from the perspective of someone they often agree with. Results indicated that taking a disagreeing perspective prompted people to consider estimates they normally would not, resulting in first and second estimates that were more diverse and independent and thus more accurate when combined.

Vocal-Stress Diary: A Longitudinal Investigation of the Association of Everyday Work Stressors and Human Voice Features
Markus Langer et al.

This research suggests that work stressors are associated with voice features such as increased speech rate and voice intensity. Langer and colleagues tested 111 working adults. For 1 week (Sunday until Sunday), participants provided daily voice messages and self-report data on their mood, everyday work stressors, hours worked that day, and perceived stress. Results indicated that everyday work stressors were associated with higher voice intensity, higher speech rate, and a tendency toward higher frequency and lower shimmer (i.e., short-term changes and irregularities in voice intensity). These findings support the hypothesis that everyday stress-related changes in the human body influence the mechanics of speech production.

Ready to Learn: Incidental Exposure Fosters Category Learning
Layla Unger and Vladimir M. Sloutsky

Everyday experiences have the incidental effect of shaping the categories individuals learn (e.g., dogs, cups, chairs). Unger and Sloutsky investigated whether incidental exposure contributes to category knowledge by allowing people to rapidly capitalize on brief access to explicit teaching about the category (i.e., rendering people “ready to learn”). Across five experiments, they found that incidental exposure produced a ready-to-learn effect, even when learners showed no evidence of robust category learning during exposure. Importantly, this readiness to learn occurred only when categories possessed a rich structure in which many features were correlated within categories (i.e., features tended to co-occur in members of the same category).

Grief Symptoms Promote Inflammation During Acute Stress Among Bereaved Spouses
Ryan L. Brown et al.
Brown and colleagues investigated whether high grief symptoms in recently bereaved older adults were associated with an amplified inflammatory response to subsequent stress. Participants completed a laboratory task that elicits psychological stress (making a presentation for a job interview and being judged on it) and underwent a blood draw before, 45 min after, and 2 hr after the stress task. Those experiencing high grief symptoms, measured by the Inventory of Complicated Grief, experienced a 45% increase in interleukin-6 (IL-6; a proinflammatory cytokine associated with aging and disease) per hour, whereas those experiencing low grief symptoms demonstrated only a 26% increase.

Anxiety-Related Frontocortical Activity Is Associated With Dampened Stressor Reactivity in the Real World

Juyoen Hur et al.

Hur and colleagues used a combination of approaches, including ecological momentary assessments of emotional experience and neuroimaging assays of threat anticipation and emotional-face perception, to study the relationship between everyday distress and neural circuits governing negative affect. Results indicated that (a) individuals who showed greater activation in a cingulo-opercular circuit during an anxiety-eliciting laboratory task experienced diminished distress in response to everyday stressors, and (b) extended amygdala activation was not significantly related to momentary negative affect. The researchers suggest that these observations provide a framework for understanding the neurobiology of negative affect in the laboratory and the real world.

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