

# New Research in *Psychological Science*

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## [The Worst-Motive Fallacy: A Negativity Bias in Motive Attribution](#)

*Joel Walmsley and Cathal O'Madagain*



The worst-motive fallacy consists of a negativity bias when attributing motives to others' actions. Participants read vignettes about different choices available to a character and selected which option they thought the character would choose. Participants also rated the “goodness” and “badness” of the motives in the vignette. They tended to think the character would choose the option that would satisfy the worst motive, contrary to the option they would choose. Thus, individuals appear to think that others are more likely than themselves to choose actions they consider morally bad.

## [Broken Physics: A Conjunction-Fallacy Effect in Intuitive Physical Reasoning](#)

*Ethan Ludwin-Peery, Neil R. Bramley, Ernest Davis, and Todd M. Gureckis*



Individuals appear to be prone to the conjunction fallacy—rating a conjunction of specific events as more likely to occur than only one of the events, despite this being a logical impossibility—when reasoning about physics. Participants viewed videos of physical scenarios and judged the probabilities that single and combined events would occur. Regardless of the type of scenario or phrasing, participants rated the combined events as more likely than the single events. These findings indicate that intuitive physical reasoning can be affected by a fallacy thought to affect only other types of cognitive activities.

## [Early Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Relationship Satisfaction and Attributions](#)

*Hannah C. Williamson*

Rather than deteriorating relationship satisfaction, the forced close proximity brought by the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have made individuals more forgiving of their partners' behaviors. Individuals in romantic relationships provided data about their relationships before the onset of the pandemic and

during its early stages. Overall relationship satisfaction did not change, but individuals became less blaming of their partners' negative behaviors by attributing them less to their partners' characteristics. Couples who initially reported less conflict and better coping strategies were likely to see improvements in relationship satisfaction, whereas those with negative functioning were likely to see decreases in satisfaction.

### [Playing With Fear: A Field Study in Recreational Horror](#)

*Marc Malmdorf Andersen, Uffe Schjoedt, Henry Price, Fernando Rosas, Coltan Scrivner, and Mathias Clasen*



Enjoying a recreational fear experience appears to hinge on it triggering a moderate physical response, as measured by changes in heart rate that are large enough to be felt but not so frightening that the physical arousal becomes extreme. Visitors of a haunted house wore heart-rate monitors, were video-recorded at peak scare points, and reported on their levels of fright and enjoyment. Results indicated that as fear increased, enjoyment increased up to a certain point before decreasing (as in an inverted U shape). The more frightened participants were, the more their heart rates deviated from their usual base-rate, whereas enjoyment peaked at an optimal heart rate deviation.

### [The Altered Course of Learning: How Alcohol Outcome Expectancies Are Shaped by First Drinking Experiences](#)

*Hayley Treloar Padovano, Tim Janssen, Alexander Sokolovsky, and Kristina M. Jackson*



How do first drinking experiences change a person's expectations about the outcomes of drinking alcohol? Treloar Padovano and colleagues surveyed more than 1,000 youths from early to mid-adolescence. Across time, participants identified their expectancies about drinking (e.g., have fun, act stupid) and their drinking milestones (i.e., first sip, first full drink, and first heavy-drinking experience). Positive expectancies tended to increase and negative expectancies tended to decrease over adolescence, but these trajectories were altered by the reported drinking milestones, which made positive expectations more concrete and invalidated negative expectancies.

### [Automatic Misguidance of Visuospatial Attention by Acquired Scene Memory: Evidence From an N1pc Polarity Reversal](#)

*Artyom Zinchenko, Markus Conci, Thomas Töllner, Hermann J. Müller, and Thomas Geyer*

Zinchenko and colleagues used electroencephalogram (EEG) data to explore how memory influences the identification of visual targets among distractors. They found that when the targets appeared in the same position in layouts that preserved the position of distractors, finding the target was easy due to contextual cuing, which was accompanied by an EEG-amplitude increase, starting with early posterior negativity (N1pc). However, when the target was relocated, contextual cuing did not occur and the N1pc was reversed in polarity. This indicates that the similar layouts lead attention to be misguided to the original target location, interfering with contextual relearning.

### [Age Advantages in Emotional Experience Persist Even Under Threat From the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

*Laura L. Carstensen, Yochai Z. Shavit, and Jessica T. Barnes*



Despite being at heightened risk, older adults appear to show relatively better emotional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to younger adults. While infection rates were increasing exponentially in the United States, Carstensen and colleagues surveyed Americans between the ages of 18 and 76. They found that older adults reported higher emotional well-being regardless of the perceived risk of contagion and complications from the virus. These findings provide additional evidence for the benefits of emotional experience during prolonged stress.