

New Research in *Psychological Science*

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[Preparing for the Worst: Attention Is Enhanced Prior to Any Upcoming Emotional or Neutral Stimulus](#)

Tal Makovski and Eran Chajut

The visual system appears to increase alertness in response to any upcoming stimulus, but the effects of emotional stimuli occur only after the stimulus appears. Participants saw an array of colored circles followed by either an image or a blank screen, then they were asked whether the location of a single colored circle matched the initial array. They were also asked to detect whenever a gray dot appeared. Negative images (i.e., threatening or disgusting) impaired participants' memory more than neutral or joyful images. Threatening and disgusting images also impaired participants' accuracy in subsequently detecting the dot. However, when the dot appeared before the expected image, participants were equally accurate in detecting it (i.e., preparedness effects) regardless of whether the subsequent images were negative, neutral, or joyful.

[Dissociating Representations of Time and Number in Reinforcement-Rate Learning by Deletion of the GluA1 AMPA Receptor Subunit in Mice](#)

Joseph M. Austen, Corran Pickering, Rolf Sprengel, and David J. Sanderson



Animals appear to learn by explicitly encoding variables rather than by implicitly using variations in associative strength between variables. Austen and colleagues analyzed learning in mice that had been genetically modified to lack the GluA1 AMPA receptor, a brain receptor needed for event-rate sensitivity. Results indicated that learning in these mice depended on the number of cue-reinforcement pairings but not on event rate, suggesting that without GluA1, the mice could not weigh numeric information by temporal information to calculate reinforcement rate. This suggests that learning might reflect encoding of event details through symbolic knowledge.

[Does Choice Cause an Illusion of Control?](#)

Joowon Klusowski, Deborah A. Small, and Joseph P. Simmons



In 17 experiments, Klusowski and colleagues examined whether giving participants a choice increased their illusion of control (i.e., feeling more likely to achieve preferable outcomes). When every option led to identical outcomes (e.g., lottery tickets with identical chances of winning), individuals did not feel that choice gave them more control over the outcomes. However, when the options could have different outcomes, participants believed that choosing could lead to a preferable outcome. Thus, choice alone does not seem to cause an illusion of control, but it can lead individuals to believe they may achieve better outcomes when there are different options.

[Gender Stereotypes in Natural Language: Word Embeddings Show Robust Consistency Across Child and Adult Language Corpora of More Than 65 Million Words](#)

Tessa E. S. Charlesworth, Victor Yang, Thomas C. Mann, Benedek Kurdi, and Mahzarin R. Banaji



Charlesworth and colleagues quantified gender stereotypes in language samples of more than 65 million English words from the 1800s to the present, including samples of children and adult language retrieved from conversation transcripts, books, movies, and TV. Regardless of the time period, format, and age group of each corpus, gender stereotypes were pervasive and reflected four domains: female–home/male–work, female–arts/male–science, female–reading/male–math, and female–good/male–bad. Male and female words were also associated with different traits and occupations, although these stereotypical associations appeared to become less stereotypical and reflect an increasingly female workforce over time.

[The Long-Term Effects of New Evidence on Implicit Impressions of Other People](#)

Jeremy Cone, Kathryn Flaherty, and Melissa J. Ferguson



Learning new information about other people can update previous implicit impressions in a lasting and durable manner, this research suggests. Cone and colleagues examined whether people's implicit feelings and impressions about fictional and familiar individuals could change if they saw new evidence involving those individuals. They found that when the new information was highly diagnostic and believable, the original implicit impressions could change and even remain changed after days, weeks, and months. These findings suggest that implicit impressions and biases may not be as resistant to change as previous research had suggested.

[Children Show a Gender Gap in Negotiation](#)

Sophie H. Arnold and Katherine McAuliffe



Women tend to have lower wages than men. One potential contributing factor to this discrepancy is a gender gap in negotiation that emerges early in childhood. Children between the ages of 4 and 9 years old negotiated for a bonus (number of stickers) with a male or a female evaluator. Boys asked for the same bonus from male and female evaluators, whereas girls, especially older girls, asked for a smaller bonus from male evaluators than from female evaluators. These findings suggest that childhood might be a key period for interventions aimed at reducing the gender negotiation gap.

[Levels of Processing Affect Perceptual Features in Visual Associative Memory](#)

Rebecca Ovalle-Fresa, Arif Sinan Uslu, and Nicolas Rothen



The more deeply a person processes a verbal stimulus, the more likely they will remember it later. This is the basis for the levels of processing (LOP) account. Ovalle-Fresa and colleagues showed that the LOP can also be applied to visual mental representation. In four experiments, they found that participants memorized associations more accurately when they processed them at a deep level (i.e., by making a pleasantness judgment) than at a shallow level (i.e., by judging the presence of a perceptual feature such as a straight line). This applied to object-color associations as well as fractal-color associations.

[Never Too Much—The Benefit of Talent to Team Performance in the National Basketball Association: Comment on Swaab, Schaerer, Anicich, Ronay, and Galinsky \(2014\)](#)

Bartosz Gula, Nemanja Vaci, Rainer W. Alexandrowicz, and Merim Bilali?



In 2014, Swaab and colleagues showed that there can be “too much talent” in team sports—having talented team members increases performance but only up to a certain level, after which “too much” talent becomes detrimental to performance. Gula and colleagues reexamine this effect in basketball specifically and suggest that Swaab and colleagues’ findings were based on an inappropriate approach to testing the inverse-U-shaped relation. Gula and colleagues reanalyze the original data and show that laypeople’s common belief that talent is never detrimental to success might, after all, be correct, at least when it comes to basketball.

[The Unintended Consequences of the Things We Say: What Generic Statements Communicate to Children About Unmentioned Categories](#)

Kelsey Moty and Marjorie Rhodes



Using generic language (e.g., “Boys play sports”) may accidentally communicate social stereotypes to children (e.g., implying that girls do not play sports). Moty and Rhodes examined the inferences that four- to six-year-olds make about the unmentioned groups in generic claims. They found that children as young as 4.5 years old drew inferences (e.g., in discussing the imaginary groups of “zarpies” and “gorps,” the statement “Zarpies are good at baking pizzas” implies that gorps are not). The tendency to make these inferences increased with age, but presenting specific statements instead of generic ones (e.g., “This zarpie is good at baking pizzas”) overrode this tendency.