

# New Research in *Psychological Science*

June 04, 2021



## [The Development of the Liking Gap: Children Older Than 5 Years Think That Partners Evaluate Them Less Positively Than They Evaluate Their Partners](#)

*Wouter Wolf, Amanda Nafe, and Michael Tomasello*



After meeting someone new, people tend to inaccurately believe they liked the other person more than the person liked them. Wolf and colleagues tested the development of this liking gap in children. They tested 4- to 12-year-olds and found that the liking gap began when children were 5 years old and became more pronounced as they got older. As 5 years is also the age children begin to become concerned about the impressions they make on others, these findings support the hypothesis that the liking gap results from people constantly worrying about how others are evaluating them.

## [Adaptive Repulsion of Long-Term Memory Representations Is Triggered by Event Similarity](#)

*Avi J. H. Chanales, Alexandra G. Tremblay-McGaw, Maxwell L. Drascher, and Brice A. Kuhl*



Memory appears to exaggerate differences among similar events to prevent some similarity-based confusion and errors. Chanales and colleagues analyzed this adaptive-memory feature by showing participants objects paired with faces. Some objects were identical except in color. High color similarity between identical objects interfered with object–face associations. However, participants remembered identical objects as having more dissimilar colors than they did in reality. Participants’ repulsion of color similarity increased with experience seeing the object–face pairs. This repulsion was also associated with lower associative-memory interference, indicating that it might have an adaptive purpose.

### [Personality Traits Predict Long-Term Physical Health via Affect Reactivity to Daily Stressors](#)

*Kate A. Leger, Nicholas A. Turiano, William Bowling, Jessica L. Burris, and David M. Almeida*



Leger and colleagues studied how people's reactions to daily stressful events might explain the association between their personality traits and physical health. Data collected in three waves spanning 20 years revealed two key findings: Individuals higher in neuroticism in Wave 1 were more likely to react with negative affect to stressors in Wave 2, which predicted the development of chronic illnesses at Wave 3, and individuals higher in conscientiousness reacted more positively to stress, which predicted better health. These findings suggest that personality traits can help to identify people at higher risk for illness.

### [Against Empathy Bias: The Moral Value of Equitable Empathy](#)

*Zoë Fowler, Kyle Fiore Law, and Brendan Gaesser*



Feeling equal empathy for all people is seen as the most valuable approach to empathy, this study indicates. Participants viewed vignettes in which a character learned about two individuals experiencing famine. The character felt empathy toward either the socially distant individual (i.e., from a distant country), the socially close individual (e.g., in the same country), both, or neither. When rating the character's empathy, participants showed a moral preference for empathy toward socially close individuals over distant ones. However, participants rated equal empathy for close and distant individuals as the most morally and socially valuable approach.

### [Encoding Context Determines Risky Choice](#)

*Christopher R. Madan, Marcia L. Spetch, Fernanda M. D. S. Machado, Alice Mason, and Elliot A. Ludvig*



Madan and colleagues assessed how context influences people's risky choices when they learn about odds and outcomes from experience. The researchers created different contexts with multiple options to choose from (i.e., scenarios with different probabilities and amounts for monetary loss or gain). Participants chose differently even between identical options that appeared in different contexts. Influenced by the outcomes experienced in a given context, participants overweighted the most extreme outcomes. Moreover, their choices depended on the context in which they initially encountered options rather than the context at decision time.

### [When Forecasting Mutually Supportive Matches Will Be Practically Impossible](#)

*Brian Lakey et al.*



This study suggests that forecasting whether a mutually supportive relationship will emerge between two people might be practically impossible. Pairs of coworkers, housemates, and strangers rated each other after a brief interaction. Lakey and colleagues measured how much each pair agreed on their relationship's supportiveness. Agreement was so low that the pairs were unlikely to be measured reliably; thus, according to psychometric theory, it would be practically impossible to accurately forecast whether a supportive relationship would emerge spontaneously. Researchers could not forecast supportive matches even when they included a measure of similarity of conversation preference.

### [Lay Beliefs About Gender and Sexual Behavior: First Evidence for a Pervasive, Robust \(but Seemingly Unfounded\) Stereotype](#)

*Jaimie Arona Krems, Ahra Ko, Jordan W. Moon, and Michael E. W. Varnum*



Across six experiments, Krems and colleagues found that both genders stereotype women (but not men) who engage in casual sex as having low self-esteem, although this sexual behavior does not appear to be related to self-esteem. This stereotyping persisted even when participants were explicitly told that the behavior was a woman's choice. Participants' religiosity, conservatism, or sexism did not drive this stereotyping, which appeared to be mediated by inferences that women who engage in casual sex are unsatisfied with their mating strategy.

### [In Which Direction Does Happiness Predict Subsequent Social Interactions? A Commentary on Quoidbach et al. \(2019\)](#)

*Timon Elmer*



Quoidbach and colleagues (2019) suggested that people might seek fewer social interactions when they are feeling happy than when they are feeling unhappy. Here, Elmer argues that a methodological issue might affect the reliability of these findings. He investigated the raw data provided by Quoidbach and colleagues and found that when multilevel analyses were conducted excluding a covariate (i.e., average daily happiness) or with a different set of covariates (i.e., average happiness over the past week and past day), the direction of the effect reversed (i.e., happier individuals were more likely to seek social interactions than less happy individuals).

### [Happiness and the Propensity to Interact With Other People: Reply to Elmer \(2021\)](#)

*Jordi Quoidbach, Quentin Dercon, Maxime Taquet, Martin Desseilles, Yves-Alexandre de Montjoye, and James J. Gross*



Quoidbach and colleagues report a series of analyses to pinpoint which component of average daily happiness was critical to their 2019 results. Their analyses indicate that controlling for overall happiness at the day level might not help to assess momentary affective fluctuations, as they thought in 2019. Instead, temporal proximity appears to be key to assessing these momentary fluctuations. Quoidbach and colleagues found that, as Elmer showed in his Commentary, happier people are more likely to seek social connections, but when people experience a recent decrease in happiness, they seem particularly prone to seek out and interact with other people.