

# Research Briefs

March 25, 2020



## Thinking of You: How Second-Person Pronouns Shape Cultural Success

*Grant Packard and Jonah Berger*



Second-person pronouns (i.e., you, your, yours, and yourself) might contribute to the popularity of some songs. Packard and Berger analyzed the lyrics of songs ranked on the Billboard charts and found that those that used “you” words more often had a higher sales rank. This was especially true when “you” was the object of someone’s actions (e.g., “cats love you”) rather than the subject (e.g., “you love cats”). The authors suggest that “you” might evoke another person in the listener’s mind and foster social connection. Three laboratory experiments supported this finding that songs with “you” as an

object were more popular and more liked, indicating that pronouns can shape cultural success.

[Psychological Science](#)

## **Turtle, Task Ninja, or Time Waster? Who Cares? Traditional Task-Completion Strategies Are Overrated**

*Lisa Vangsness and Michael E. Young*



Individuals who initiate tasks as soon as possible (precrastinators) as well as those who delay beginning tasks (procrastinators) seem to struggle to finish tasks on time. Vangsness and Young analyzed when and how 8,500 students received credit for research participation. A latent profile analysis, which identified patterns among students' behaviors, was better than using single behaviors to identify task-completion strategies. Compared with students who adopted a steady work habit, those who precrastinated or procrastinated were less likely to gain credits through research participation.

[Psychological Science](#)

## **Replicating Roaches: A Preregistered Replication of Zajonc, Heingartner, and Herman's (1969) Social-Facilitation Study**

*Emma Halfmann, Janne Bredehöft, and Jan Alexander Häusser*



In 1969, Zajonc and colleagues showed that cockroaches took longer to complete a complex maze in the presence of other cockroaches than when alone, but they completed a simple runway faster in the presence of other cockroaches. Halfmann and colleagues replicated the original procedure and found that cockroaches took longer to complete both the complex and easy tasks in the presence of other cockroaches. These findings show the social-inhibition effect but not the social-facilitation effect Zajonc et al. had reported.

## [Psychological Science](#)

### **Subjective Well-Being Around the World: Trends and Predictors Across the Life Span**

*Andrew T. Jebb, Mike Morrison, Louis Tay, and Ed Diener*

New research conducted in 166 nations indicates that neither life satisfaction nor negative affect changed with age. However, positive affect seemed to decline. Marriage, employment, prosociality, and life meaning were associated with higher well-being (measured by increased positive affect and life satisfaction and decreased negative affect) over the life span in every world region. Employment and life meaning had large associations with well-being, whereas marriage and prosociality had smaller associations. These findings illustrate how different life priorities, such as marriage or employment, might relate to well-being as we age.

## [Psychological Science](#)

### **Depressive Symptoms and Self-Esteem as Moderators of Metaperceptions of Social Rejection Versus Acceptance: A Truth and Bias Analysis**

*Daniel Moritz and John E. Roberts*



Individuals who are more depressed and have lower self-esteem might tend to underestimate how much (a) they are liked by others and (b) others are interested in future contact with them. Nondepressed individuals with higher self-esteem, however, might tend to overestimate others' opinions of them, this research suggests. Moritz and Roberts measured participants' depressive symptoms and self-esteem and their perceptions of being liked and desired for future contact following social interactions with new acquaintances. Their findings highlight the role of depression and self-esteem in social interactions.

## [Clinical Psychological Science](#)

### **Health in the United States: Are Appeals to Choice and Personal Responsibility Making Americans Sick?**

*Cayce J. Hook and Hazel Rose Markus*

Appeals to “choice” and “personal responsibility” that pervade policymaking, advertising, media, and social norms in the United States might contribute to ill health, Hook and Markus propose. These

appeals appear to encourage (a) worry and stress over health, (b) blame and stigmatization of the unhealthy, (c) widened health disparities, and (d) failure to adopt policies that could improve health. Psychologists can help to expand appeals to reflect current science about health's physical, cultural, and social factors, thus promoting the effective communication and implementation of health-supportive policies, the authors offer. (*See related article, page 17.*)

### [Perspectives on Psychological Science](#)

## **Identity Research That Engages Contextual Forces to Reduce Socioeconomic Disparities in Education**

*Mesmin Destin*

Peers, parents, instructors, and institutions can be leveraged in ways that have positive effects on student outcomes, with benefits for science and society, Destin proposes. Several studies show how socioeconomic resources and opportunities shape students' identities, especially how they imagine their lives in the future. These identities, in turn, affect how students perform in school. Connecting identity with academic outcomes is more meaningful when we consider the people and institutions that surround the students—an approach that might help to reduce socioeconomic disparities in education, Destin suggests.

### [Current Directions in Psychological Science](#)

## **The Sexualization-Objectification Link: Sexualization Affects the Way People See and Feel Toward Others**

*Philippe Bernard, Carlotta Cogoni, and Andrea Carnaghi*

Research has found that sexualized individuals—people whose sexual appearance and physical beauty are emphasized—are more likely to be seen and categorized as objects. They also are perceived as possessing fewer human traits (e.g., fewer intentions or emotions). Bernard and colleagues review findings from electroencephalography and behavioral tasks showing that the brain processes sexualized individuals differently from nonsexualized ones and that sexualized individuals are perceived as possessing less intellect and agency. These findings clarify some mechanisms that might underlie violence, and the acceptance of violence, toward sexualized individuals.

### [Current Directions in Psychological Science](#)

## **Metascience on Peer Review: Testing the Effects of a Study's Originality and Statistical Significance in a Field Experiment**

*Malte Elson, Markus Huff, and Sonja Utz*



How effective is peer review, and how do study originality and statistical significance affect reviewers' evaluations? Elson and colleagues manipulated the originality and statistical significance of the research reported in a fictitious abstract that had ostensibly been submitted to a conference and sent to peer review. They found that there was a small bias in favor of significant results and no aversion to replication studies (i.e., less original studies). This research supports the feasibility and value of conducting metascientific experiments on the peer-review process to develop practical procedures to increase the utility of peer review.

[Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science](#)