

# MONITOR ON PSYCHOLOGY

In Brief

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## Dads, Daughters and Sons



**Fathers' brains respond differently to toddler daughters than to toddler sons, and their behavior is different around them, too**, suggests research in [Behavioral Neuroscience](#). Researchers used wearable devices to record **52 fathers** (of 30 girls and 22 boys) at random intervals over two days. In the recordings, fathers of daughters talked more about emotions and sang more with their children, while fathers of sons used more achievement-related language and engaged in more rough-and-tumble play. In a follow-up experiment, the researchers used fMRI to image the fathers' brains as they viewed photos of their children. Fathers of daughters responded more strongly to their daughters' happy facial expressions, while fathers of sons responded more strongly to their sons' neutral facial expressions. There was no significant difference in their brain responses to sad facial expressions.

## Time's passing

**Bilingual people can perceive time differently depending upon which language they're using**, suggests research in the [Journal of Experimental Psychology: General](#). The Swedish and English languages generally use "distance" words to describe duration (e.g., a short break, a long wedding), while the Spanish language uses "quantity" words (e.g., a small break, a big wedding). In the study, researchers asked Spanish-Swedish bilinguals to estimate how much time had passed as they watched one of two actions on a computer monitor: either a line growing or a container being filled. At the same time, participants were prompted with either "duración" (the Spanish word for duration) or "tid" (the Swedish word). When prompted by the Spanish word, participants based their time estimates on how full the containers were and ignored the lines growing on screens; when prompted by the Swedish word, the opposite was true.

## Charisma



**Despite the stereotype of a charismatic leader, too much charisma may hinder leadership ability**, suggests research in the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#). Researchers compared the charisma scores (as measured by a personality test) of nearly 600 business leaders with their effectiveness as rated by peers, subordinates and superiors. As charisma increased, so did perceived effectiveness—but only up to a point. Above a certain charisma level, perceived effectiveness declined. The researchers also found that **people tended to view low-charisma leaders as weak on strategic leadership, while they viewed high-charisma leaders as weak at operational leadership**, such as managing details and resources.

## Nudge

**Behavioral "nudges" are a cost-effective tool to get people to change their behaviors**, finds a review in [Psychological Science](#). Researchers searched the literature for papers that evaluated nudges—behavioral science-derived interventions for policy problems—in seven focus areas, including increasing workers' retirement savings, boosting flu vaccination rates and reducing energy consumption. In each area, **the researchers compared nudge interventions to traditional interventions, such as public education campaigns and cash incentives**. They found that nudges were often more cost-effective than traditional interventions. For example, a mailing that prompted people to write down when and how they planned to get a flu shot led to 13 people getting vaccinated per \$100 spent on the mailing, while an education campaign on the benefits of the vaccine led to only nine additional vaccinations per \$100 spent.

## Bullies and victims



**Childhood bullies and their victims both face an increased risk of stress, anger and hostility as they grow into adulthood, increasing their risk for**

**cardiovascular disease and other physical health problems**, suggests a study in [Psychological Science](#). Researchers analyzed data from 305 men who participated in the Pittsburgh Youth Study, which followed them from first grade, in 1987, through their early 30s. As part of the study, researchers collected data from the children, their parents and teachers on bullying behavior when the children were 10 to 12 years old. Boys who bullied other children were more aggressive and more likely to smoke in adulthood, while those who were bullied as children had more financial difficulties, more stressful life experiences and less optimism as adults.

## Flip-flop

**Politicians and other leaders who change their minds after taking a moral stance on an issue are viewed as more hypocritical than those who change their minds after taking a stance based on pragmatic concerns**, finds a study in the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#). In a series of experiments, researchers asked 5,552 participants to read vignettes about politicians and business executives who changed their minds about same-sex marriage or the death penalty. In every experiment, participants rated leaders who based their initial opinions on moral concerns—such as justice—as more hypocritical than those who based them on pragmatic concerns, such as economic cost.

## Tai chi



**A 12-week tai chi program could help reduce depression symptoms among Chinese-American patients who might be unlikely to take advantage of other mental health services**, suggests a study in the [Journal of Clinical Psychiatry](#). Researchers assigned 67 participants with mild to moderate depression, who were receiving no other treatment, to either a 12-week program in which they learned and practiced tai chi, a 12-week educational program with discussions of stress and mental health, or a wait-list control group. Afterward, the tai chi group had significantly greater improvements in depression symptoms than did members of either other group.

## IVF babies

**Children conceived via the fertility treatments IVF and ICSI do not have lower cognitive abilities than children conceived without reproductive technology**,

**despite some previous research suggesting they might**, finds a study in [Human Reproduction](#). The researchers analyzed data from 214 children in the United Kingdom conceived via IVF and ICSI. Compared with a control group of children, the IVF and ICSI children showed no deficits on tests of verbal cognitive ability at ages 3, 5, 7 and 11, and in fact scored higher, on average, at ages 3 and 5 than children conceived without IVF. The researchers hypothesize this may be because the parents of the children conceived via fertility treatments were about four years older, on average, and more highly educated than parents of naturally conceived children, which could "override" any potential cognitive deficits stemming from the fact that the IVF children were more likely to be born prematurely and as part of a multiple birth.

## Gender and depression



**About twice as many females suffer from depression as males worldwide**, finds a meta-analysis in [Psychological Bulletin](#). Researchers analyzed data from 160 studies with more than 3.5 million participants from 90 countries. The gender difference in depression rates emerged by age 12 (the youngest age included in the analysis) and peaked in adolescence, with girls ages 13 to 15 more than three times as likely as boys those ages to experience major depression.

## Food insecurity

**Food insecurity is associated with poorer mental health**, finds a study in the [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#). Nearly 800 million people worldwide are considered food insecure, having inconsistent access to nutritious, affordable food. Researchers examined survey data from almost 150,000 participants in 149 countries and found that people who experienced food insecurity scored higher on the Negative Experience Index and lower on the Positive Experience Index, which measure experiences, such as pain, sadness and enjoyment. These associations held across regions and demographic characteristics.

## Family meal



**Instilling a strong dinnertime routine and cutting out television and other media during dinner could help children maintain a healthy weight**, suggests

research in the [Journal of Family Psychology](#). Researchers surveyed 160 parent-child pairs about their dinnertime routines and media use, and then measured the participants' heights and weights. Children who had regular, predictable dinnertime routines had lower body mass indices (BMIs). Less media use during dinner (including television, smartphones, books and newspapers) was also associated with lower BMIs for children. **There was no association between these factors and parents' BMIs, however.**

## Our flexible brain

**People who were born blind have a "category map" in the same visual area of the brain that sighted people do,** finds research in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#). In sighted people, this area—the ventral-temporal cortex—is divided into regions that quickly recognize visual input as belonging to categories such as faces, body parts, objects and scenes. In the study, researchers used fMRI to image the brains of participants who were blind since birth as they listened to sounds representing those different categories, such as a clock for objects, forest sounds for scenes and footsteps for body parts. They found that the "visual map" area of the blind participants' brains responded to this auditory input in the same way sighted people's brains respond to visual input.

## Environmental impact



**When people are told that they personally can help to stop climate change, they are more likely to try to do so,** suggests a study in the [Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied](#). Researchers asked more than 200 participants to read a message about climate change. One-third read a "high-efficacy" message (that personal actions do make a difference); one-third read a "low-efficacy" message (that personal actions make no difference); and a control group was given no efficacy message at all. Over the next week, the high-efficacy group reported 16.5 percent more conservation behaviors (such as driving less and turning the heat down) than those who read a "low-efficacy" message, and 13 percent more than the control group.

## Five stars

**When judging the value of a consumer product, the brain integrates information from online user reviews, taking into account both the information itself and the reliability of the source,** suggests a study in the [Journal of Neuroscience](#).

Researchers asked **18 participants** to rate products on Amazon and indicate how confident they were in their opinions. Then, the researchers used fMRI to image the participants' brains as they read user reviews of the products and then re-rated them. On average, participants' amended ratings fell somewhere between their original ratings and the user reviews. In addition, their amended opinions were more likely to fall closer to the user reviews when there were a large number of reviews and when participants were not confident in their original opinions.

## Paper goes here



**Recycling and composting rates go up dramatically when bins are placed in convenient locations,** finds a study in the [Journal of Environmental Planning and Management](#). The researchers tested bin placement in three apartment buildings and two dormitories. When compost bins were situated on each floor of an apartment building, instead of on the ground floor, composting rates

increased 70 percent. When recycling stations were placed just outside student suites, instead of in the dorm basement, recycling increased 141 percent, on average.

## Smile! (or don't)

**Contrary to popular belief, smiling does not make you look younger. In fact, smiling ages faces in photos by an average of two years,** finds research in [Psychonomic Bulletin and Review](#). Researchers asked participants to judge the ages of people either smiling, looking surprised or wearing a neutral expression in photos. On average, participants perceived the neutral faces to be younger than the smiling ones, and the surprised faces to be youngest of all. The researchers hypothesize that's because smiling shows wrinkles in a face, while looking surprised smooths wrinkles out. However, when researchers asked participants after the task how the expressions had affected their judgment, participants erroneously said that they believed they had judged the smiling faces to be younger—reflecting the popular belief that smiling looks youthful.

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