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The features marked with a star (*) are based entirely on material taken straight from standard research (and other Official and Therefore Always Correct) literature. Many of the other articles are genuine, too, but we don't know which ones.

ANNALS OF

IMPROBABLE RESEARCH



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Where There's More

There's always new improbable — it's not what you expect! — stuff on the **Improbable Research blog** at IMPROBABLE.COM

On the Front Cover

Many coffee beans, and one teabag.



On the Back Cover

An advertisement for a cremation free lunch, mailed to our office in early 2020. (We have blurred out the contact info.)



Some Coming Events

See IMPROBABLE.COM for details of these and other events:

NOTE: The 2020 Ig Nobel EuroTour was scheduled to occur in March and April, but was truncated after the first show, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The cancelled events will be re-scheduled.

NOTE: Several other events, elsewhere, also will be re-scheduled.

NOTE: Because of the pandemic, we will not do the 2021 Ig Nobel Prize ceremony, and the Ig Informal Lectures, in the usual way. They will be done entirely via the internet, rather than in Sanders Theatre. Please check our web site WWW.IMPROBABLE.COM for updates!

September 17, 2020 – 30th First Annual Ig Nobel Prize ceremony – WEBCAST

Fall 2020 (Date TBD) – The Ig Informal Lectures – WEBCAST

October 2, 2020 – Gothenburg, Sweden (virtual)

MAR/APR 2021 (pandemic permitting) – Ig Nobel EuroTour



COFFEE, TEA, AND MOOD EXPERIMENTS

Emotional effects that perhaps flow from two beverages

compiled by Alice Shirrell Kaswell, Improbable Research staff

A Possible Effect of Merely Walking Near a Coffee Shop

“Coffee Cues Elevate Arousal and Reduce Level of Construal,” Eugene Y. Chan and Sam J. Maglio, *Consciousness and Cognition*, vol. 70, April 2019, pp. 57-69. The authors, at Monash University, Australia, and the University of Toronto, Canada, explain:

Coffee shops abound, some at every corner of an intersection, and our results suggest that people may be more aroused simply after walking by a coffee shop. Not only would they be more aroused but, at a more downstream level, their decision making might shift as well.... In four experiments, we find that coffee cues prompted participants to see temporal distances as shorter and to think in more concrete, precise terms....

In Experiment 1, coffee cues decreased temporal psychological distance, but only for individuals from Western backgrounds, consistent with our lay-association-related process model. In Experiments 2 and 3, arousal mediated the effect of coffee cues on a lower level of construal, with arousal measured via self-reports and heart rates.



Suzanne J.L. Einöther, co-author of the study “Infusing Pleasure: Mood Effects of the Consumption of a Single Cup of Tea.” Drawing by Nan Swift.

Infusing pleasure: Mood effects of the consumption of a single cup of tea

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ABSTRACT

Tea has historically been associated with mood benefits. Nevertheless, few studies have investigated mood changes after tea consumption. We explored immediate effects of a single cup up to an hour post-consumption on self-reported valence, arousal, discrete emotions, and measures of mood. In a parallel group design, 153 participants received a cup of tea or placebo glass of water. Immediately (i.e. 5 min) after consumption, tea increased valence but reduced arousal compared to the placebo. There were no differences at later time points. Discrete emotions did not differ significantly between conditions, immediately or over time. Water consumption increased positivity as compared to placebo. Finally, consumption of tea and water resulted in higher intensity activities overall and in specific activity types compared to placebo. The present study shows that

Mood Effects of Consuming a Single Cup of Tea

“Infusing Pleasure: Mood Effects of the Consumption of a Single Cup of Tea,” Suzanne J.L. Einöther, Matthew Rowson, Johannes G. Ramaekers, and Timo Giesbrecht, *Appetite*, vol. 103, 2016, pp. 302-308. The authors, at Unilever in The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, and Maastricht University, The Netherlands, explain:

The present study shows that effects of a single cup of tea may be limited to an immediate increase in pleasure and decrease in arousal, which can increase interest in activities. Differences between tea and water were not significant, while differences between water and placebo on implicit measures were unexpected. More servings over a longer time may be required to evoke tea’s arousing effects and appropriate tea consumption settings may evoke more enduring valence effects.

continued >

COFFEE, TEA, AND MOOD EXPERIMENTS [CONTINUED]

Daily Coffee Drinking, and Suicidal Thoughts

“Relationship Between Daily Coffee Intake and Suicidal Ideation,” Hwanjin Park, Byung Seong Suh, and Kounseok Lee, *Journal of Affective Disorders*, vol. 256, 1 September 2019, pp. 468-472. The authors, at Sungkyunkwan University School of Medicine and Hanyang University Medical Center, Republic of Korea, explain:

Analysis of the Kangbuk Samsung Cohort Study (KSCS) data from 80,173 individuals was performed...

The results on the relationship between daily coffee intake and suicidal ideation [thinking about committing suicide] revealed that suicide risk was high in both men and women who consume four or more cups of coffee a day. However, once the age, depression and sleep problems were adjusted for, suicide risk decreased in women of 1-4 cups of coffee intake per day, whereas no change was observed in men.



Kounseok Lee, co-author of the study “Relationship Between Daily Coffee Intake and Suicidal Ideation.” Drawing by Nan Swift.

Coffee Expectation May Make One Seem Smarter

“Expectation of Having Consumed Caffeine Can Improve Performance and Mood,” Lynne Dawkins, Fatima-Zahra Shahzad, Suada S. Ahmed, and Caroline J. Edmonds, *Appetite*, vol. 57, no. 3, December 2011, pp. 597-600. (Thanks to Maria Konnikova for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, at the University of East London, UK, explain:

We explored whether caffeine, and expectation of having consumed caffeine, affects attention, reward responsivity and mood using double-blinded methodology. 88 participants were randomly allocated to ‘drink-type’ (caffeinated/decaffeinated coffee) and ‘expectancy’ (told caffeinated/told decaffeinated coffee) manipulations. Both caffeine and expectation of having consumed caffeine improved attention and psychomotor speed. Expectation enhanced self-reported vigour and reward responsivity. Self-reported depression increased at post-drink for all participants, but less in those receiving or expecting caffeine.



Lynne Dawkins, lead author of the study “Expectation of Having Consumed Caffeine Can Improve Performance and Mood.” Drawing by Nan Swift.

Research paper

Relationship between daily coffee intake and suicidal ideation

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Caffeine is the most widely-used psychoactive substance in the world. The present study examined the relationship between caffeine intake and suicide risk according to gender.

Method: Analysis of the Kangbuk Samsung Cohort Study (KSCS) data from 80,173 individuals using Chi-square tests and t-tests to determine the relationships between psychosocial variables and suicidal ideation. The relationship between caffeine intake and suicidal ideation was analyzed by obtaining multivariate logistic regression in which depression and sleep problems were adjusted for.

Results: In both men and women with suicidal ideation, the proportion of those who consumed coffee per day was highest among the groups of various coffee intake levels. The results revealed that suicide risk was high in both men and women who consumed four or more cups of coffee a day. However, once the age, depression and sleep problems were adjusted for, suicide risk decreased in women of 1-4 cups of coffee intake per day, whereas no change was observed in men.