

Kellen Mrkva

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Assistant Professor of Marketing, Hankamer School of Business, Baylor University (2022-current)

Assistant Professor (Lecturer), School of Management, University of Bath, UK (2021-2022)

Postdoctoral Scholar, Department of Marketing, Columbia Business School (2018-2021)

EDUCATION

Ph.D., 2018 University of Colorado Boulder

M.A., 2017 Psychology
Advisor: Leaf Van Boven

B.A., 2012 University of Notre Dame. magna cum laude
Major Field: Psychology

PUBLICATIONS (see appendix for abstracts)

Mrkva, Kellen, Nathaniel A. Posner, Crystal Reeck, and Eric J. Johnson (2021). Do nudges reduce disparities? Choice architecture compensates for low consumer knowledge. *Journal of Marketing* ([html](#))

- Covered in HBR magazine, HBR online, and other media outlets

Mrkva, Kellen, Eric J. Johnson, Crystal Reeck, and Nathaniel A. Posner (2021). Design systems with your most vulnerable users in mind. *Harvard Business Review* ([html](#))

Mormann, Milica, Tom Griffiths, Chris Janiszewski, J Edward Russo...and Kellen Mrkva. (2020). Time to pay attention to attention: Using attention-based process traces to better understand consumer decision-making. *Marketing Letters*. ([html](#))

Mrkva, Kellen, Jennifer C Cole, and Leaf Van Boven. (2020). Attention increases environmental risk perception. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. ([html](#))

Mrkva, Kellen, Eric J Johnson, Simon Gächter, and Andreas Herrmann. (2020). Moderating loss aversion: Loss aversion has moderators but reports of its death are greatly exaggerated. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. ([html](#))

- Lead article in July issue and covered by Forbes
- JCP “CW Park Early Career Contributor Award” 2nd place.

Mrkva, Kellen, and Leaf Van Boven (2020). Salience theory of “mere” exposure: Relative exposure increases liking, evaluative extremity, and emotional intensity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. ([html](#)).

Mrkva, Kellen, Luca Cian, and Leaf Van Boven (2020). Above and beyond the content: Feelings influence mental simulations (commentary). *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. ([html](#))

Mrkva, Kellen, Jacob Westfall, and Leaf Van Boven (2019). Attention drives emotion: Voluntary visual attention increases perceived emotional intensity. *Psychological Science*. ([html](#))

Mrkva, Kellen, Mark Travers, and Leaf Van Boven (2018). Simulational fluency reduces feelings of psychological distance. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. ([html](#))

Mrkva, Kellen. (2017). Giving, fast and slow: Reflection increases costly (but not uncostly) charitable giving. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*. ([html](#))

Mrkva, Kellen, and Leaf Van Boven. (2017). Attentional accounting: Voluntary spatial attention increases budget category prioritization. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. ([html](#))

R&Rs, WORKING PAPERS, or UNDER REVIEW

Reeck, Crystal, Nathaniel Posner, Kellen Mrkva, and Eric J. Johnson Nudging app adoption: Choice architecture increases consumer adoption of smartphone apps. Revise & resubmit (risky) at *Journal of Marketing*. ([abstract](#))

Mrkva, Kellen, Michaela Huber, Tehila Kogut, and Leaf Van Boven. Structured introspection helps people align decisions with their priorities. Reject & resubmit at *JPSP*. ([abstract](#))

Posner, Nathaniel, Andrey Simonov, Kellen Mrkva, and Eric J. Johnson. Nudges or Tricks? Defaults Increased Donations to Trump, but were they Mistakes? In prep for *Science*.

Mrkva, Kellen, Jesse Walker, and R.A. Farrokhnia. Effort accounting: Consumers prefer to spend hard-earned money on long-lasting purchases and investments. In prep for *Journal of Consumer Research*. ([abstract](#))

Mrkva, Kellen, Elizabeth C. Webb, and Eric J. Johnson. Search now or pay later? How time preferences influence consumer search and choice. ([abstract](#))

SELECTED RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Reconciling mere exposure with hedonic adaptation (with Rob Smith and Yuqi Guo).

Motion and vividness influence clickthrough for digital advertisements in largescale field experiments (with Gal Zauberan, et al). 5 studies completed including 2 field experiments and 1 “big data” study analyzing over 700,000 ad campaigns.

Does clickbait backfire? Using field experiments and “big data” to test the effects of clickbait headlines on conversions, purchases, and clicks.

Are couples more “green” than the sum of their parts? Attribute weights of couples buying products together vs. separately.

Does spending increase giving? Shopping momentum and charitable donations at checkout.

ADDITIONAL PUBLICATIONS (CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS, BOOK CHAPTERS, INVITED REVIEW PAPER, PRESS COVERAGE)

*Mrkva, Kellen, Jesse Walker, and R.A. Farrokhnia. (2021). Effort accounting: People prefer to spend hard-earned money on long-lasting purchases and investments. *ACR North American Advances*.

Reeck, Crystal, Nathaniel Posner, Kellen Mrkva, and Eric J. Johnson. (2021). Nudging app adoption. *ACR North American Advances*.

Mrkva, Kellen, Jairo Ramos, and Leaf Van Boven. (2020). Attention influences emotion, judgment, and decision making to explain mental simulation. *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice*.

*Mrkva, Kellen, Elizabeth C. Webb, and Eric J. Johnson (2019). Searching, fast and slow: How time preferences influence credit card search and choice. *ACR North American Advances*.

*Mrkva, Kellen, and Leaf Van Boven (2019). Salience theory of mere exposure: Salience causes hedonic escalation and accounts for exposure effects. *SCP Conference Proceedings*.

Mrkva, Kellen, and Leaf Van Boven (2018). A salience theory of three exposure effects. *ACR North American Advances*.

Mrkva, Kellen, and Darcia Narvaez (2018). Moral psychology and the cultural outgroup. In B. Zizek (Ed). *Formen der Aneignung des Fremden*. (wrote chapter as an undergraduate)

Narvaez, Darcia, and Kellen Mrkva. (2014). Creative moral imagination. In Moran, S., Cropley, D., and Kaufman, J. (Eds): *The Ethics of Creativity*. (wrote chapter as an undergraduate)

Mrkva, Kellen, Jacob Westfall, and Leaf Van Boven (2014). Attention increases emotional intensity. *ACR North American Advances*.

Selected press coverage: Forbes, HBR, Wall Street Journal Buyside, AAAS, ScienceDaily

*was also chair of these symposia

PRESENTATIONS

Invited presentations:

University of Chicago, Booth School of Business (spring marketing seminar series)

Iowa State University, Ivy College of Business

Baylor University, Hankamer School of Business

Cornell University, SC Johnson College of Business

University of Texas at Austin, McCombs

Behavioural Insights Team (UK)

jSchool: Junior Research Programme, guest speaker

US Office of Evaluation Sciences

Journal of Marketing Webinar for Marketing Professionals

Cornell University, SC Johnson College of Business

Tilburg University, TISEM

Bocconi University, School of Management

University of Bath, School of Management

TU Munich, School of Management

Purdue University, consumer science

Texas A&M, Mays College of Business

UCSD, Rady School of Management

Conference presentations

Association for Consumer Research (2021, October). Effort accounting: People prefer to spend hard-earned money on long-lasting purchases and investments.

*Association for Consumer Research (2021, October). Nudging app adoption: Choice architecture increases adoption of COVID-19 digital contact tracing.

Boulder Conference for Consumer Financial Decision Making (2021, May). Do nudges reduce disparities? Choice architecture compensates for low financial literacy.

Society for Consumer Psychology (2021, March). Searching, fast and slow: How time preferences influence credit card search and choice.

Society for Judgment and Decision Making (2020, December). Do nudges reduce disparities?

Boulder Conference for Consumer Financial Decision Making (2020, May). Searching, fast and slow: How time preferences influence credit card search and choice. Accepted, but cancelled (COVID-19).

Society for Judgment and Decision Making (2019, November). Salience theory of exposure effects: Relative exposure influences judgment and choice.

*Society for Judgment and Decision Making (2019, November). Searching, fast and slow: How time preferences influence credit card search and choice.

Association for Consumer Research (2019, October). Searching, fast and slow: How time preferences influence credit card search and choice.

Triennial Choice Symposium (2019, May). Attention influences priorities.

Society for Consumer Psychology (2019, February). Salience theory of exposure effects: Salience causes hedonic escalation and accounts for exposure effects.

Association for Consumer Research (2018, October). A salience theory of three exposure effects.

Society for Judgment and Decision Making (2017, November). Attentional accounting: Attention biases prioritization in consumer budget decision making.

American Psychological Society (2017, May). Introspecting about personal weighting beliefs reduces intrapersonal empathy gaps.

American Psychological Association (2016, August). From mindless to mindful judgment and decision making.

Association for Consumer Research (2014, October). Attention drives emotion.

University of Notre Dame Undergraduate Scholars Conference (2012, May). Giving from the head or the heart? Impact information and donation decisions. (presented as an undergraduate)

*presented by another co-author

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Baylor University, Hankamer School of Business

- Undergraduates: Consumer Behavior – Fall 2022

University of Bath, School of Management:

- MBAs: The Psychology of Decision Making – March 2022 (block-week)
 - Student evaluations: **4.76/5** average rating
 - All open-ended feedback (not selected): “Very nice method of teaching, the professor is kind and patient.” “Very insightful. Good to see many examples.” “Really like the content, important for everyone! Thank you for the opportunity!!”

- Undergraduates: Consumer Behavior – Fall 2021

Columbia University (MBA courses):

- Guest lecture for Elizabeth Webb’s MBA course
- Three guest lectures for Eric Johnson’s EMBA course
- Guest lecture for Vicki Morwitz’s EMBA course
- Two guest lectures for Elizabeth Friedman’s MBA course

University of Colorado Boulder (undergraduate courses):

- Judgment and Decision Making (I led one class session per week; Leaf Van Boven led the other two sessions per week)
 - 2 semesters, 2 sections each semester
- Research Methods (I led one class session per week; Angela Bryan led the other two sessions per week)
- Guest lecture on Judgment and Decision Making (for Geoff Umland’s course)
- Guest lecture on Intelligence and Creativity (for R. McKell Carter’s course)
- Guest lecture on Prospect Theory (for Leaf Van Boven’s course)

GRANTS AND AWARDS

Conducted pilot studies and wrote first draft of NSF grant (Attention Influences Emotional Judgment and Decision Making; PI Leaf Van Boven) which was awarded \$400,200.

Contributed to editing and writing of Sloan Foundation grant (Effects of Heterogeneous Nudging; PI Eric J Johnson) which was awarded \$209,610

Co-PI on IBM-Columbia Blockchain Center grant, which was awarded \$50,000 and renewed for another \$50,000. We used choice architecture and digital marketing principles to increase uptake of digital contact tracing apps.

JCP Early Career Contributor Award, 2nd place

MENTORSHIP (research assistants & undergrad collaborators, with initial appointment)

Shannon Duncan – PhD student, The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

Nathaniel Posner – PhD student, Columbia Business School

Jesse Walker – PhD student, Cornell University

Monique Baca – internship at Yale School of Management

Steven Carlson – PhD student, University of California Irvine

Undergraduate Honors Thesis supervision: Monique Baca, Ashley Schuett, Steven Carlson, Jessica Zweibel

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Ad-hoc Reviewer: Journal of Consumer Research; Journal of Consumer Psychology; Psychological Science; JPSP; Journal of Experimental Psychology: General; OBHDP; Climatic Change; Frontiers in Psychology; Risk Analysis; JESP

Conference Reviewer: Association for Consumer Research; Society for Consumer Psychology

REFERENCES

Eric J. Johnson. Norman Eig Professor of Marketing; Department of Marketing, Columbia Business School, Columbia University. (646) 220-0274. Uris 514. Ejj3@columbia.edu

Leaf Van Boven. Professor of Psychology; Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, University of Colorado Boulder. (303) 735-5238. D343B Muenzinger Hall. vanboven@colorado.edu

Bernadette Park, Professor of Psychology; Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, University of Colorado Boulder. D365C Muenzinger Hall. (303) 492-1569. Bernadette.park@colorado.edu

Crystal Reeck. Assistant Professor of Marketing; Department of Marketing & Supply Chain Management, Temple University. 1801 Liacouras Walk. (215) 204-8885. Crystal.reeck@temple.edu

Appendix A: Working Paper/In Prep Manuscript Abstracts.

Reeck, Crystal, Nathaniel Posner, **Kellen Mrkva**, and Eric J. Johnson. Nudging app adoption: Choice architecture facilitates consumer adoption of COVID-19 digital contact tracing. Revise & resubmit (risky) at *Journal of Marketing*.

How can managers nudge consumers to adopt smartphone apps? Billions of dollars are spent annually on advertising designed to increase smartphone app adoption, but simple choice architecture tools offer inexpensive alternatives to advertising. We demonstrate across four pre-registered experiments that novel choice architecture interventions, which manipulate the color, wording, and choice sequence of app adoption decisions, dramatically increase the number of people who enable apps. Using ecologically valid smartphone app interfaces that mirrored a common COVID-19 exposure notification app, we show that integrating three privacy features into a single decision increased adoption. Manipulations that changed the color of choice options or worded defaults as if enabling the app was the default response (even without changing the de facto default) also increased adoption. In Experiments 3-4, we isolated different components of the choice architecture manipulations. When choice buttons were presented in blue, this increased adoption partly because it accelerated consumers' decisions by mimicking the blue color of habitually-chosen "continue" options in common smartphone app interfaces. In contrast, mechanisms that account for traditional default effects (ease, endorsement, and endowment) did not account for our results. The effects were remarkably robust across smartphone users, purposive samples from particular states that had recently released similar apps, and across diverse subsamples varying in political affiliation and COVID-19 risk factors. These results suggest simple tools that managers and app developers can use to increase app adoption.

Mrkva, Kellen, Jesse Walker, and R. A. Farrokhnia. Effort accounting: People prefer to spend hard-earned money on long-lasting products. In prep for *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Consumers sometimes earn money through hard work and other times acquire money effortlessly. Previous research suggests that the source of money influences how it is spent, however little is known about how the amount of effort exerted to attain money influences spending. Across 6 studies (total $n > 100,000$), we hypothesized and demonstrated that acquiring money through higher effort influences the way it is spent and invested. Specifically, consumers prefer to spend hard-earned money on long-lasting items, such as computers with warranties, durable goods, and donations with long-term impact. In Study 1, we use credit transaction data from over 100,000 consumers and over 5,000 small-stakes lotteries to show that lotteries and economic stimulus windfalls increase spending on non-durable goods and charitable donations more than durable goods. In Study 2, we manipulate whether economic stimulus payments are framed as an easily-acquired gift vs. hard-earned money, showing that people are more willing to spend the money on computers without warranties and donations with only short-term impact when the money is easily acquired. In Studies 3-5, we conceptually replicate these results with money earned in high-effort vs. low-effort laboratory tasks (Study 3) and across other controlled manipulations of effort (Studies 4-5). These effects were driven by consumers' subjective

perceptions that they had less resource slack after earning money through substantial effort (though participants were aware their objective slack and future earning potential was equivalent).

Mrkva, Kellen, Elizabeth C. Webb, and Eric J. Johnson. Search now or pay later? How time preferences influence credit card search and choice. In prep for *Journal of Marketing Research*.

Across four studies and four field surveys ($n_{\text{total}} = 1,200$ and 17,360, respectively), we examined consumer search and choice among credit cards, showing a robust relationship between present bias and search. Across studies, present-biased consumers searched less than other consumers, which led them to acquire inferior credit cards that had higher costs and could accumulate more debt. In the first pre-registered study, we used an ecologically valid credit card choice; participants were shown eight credit cards that varied in introductory interest rate, introductory period, standard interest rate, annual fee, rewards, appearance, and total costs. In all studies, participants' choices were incentivized to choose the card with lowest total costs. As predicted, present-biased individuals searched less and chose cards with higher total costs. In Studies 2-4, we used eye and mouse-tracking to examine search processes, showing that present biased individuals do not simply search for different attributes; rather they terminate search more quickly, leading to choices of high-cost credit cards. Studies 5A-5D, examine the association between measured time preferences and search in large representative random samples of Americans, showing that time preferences predict real-world search for financial products. Finally, we manipulated the context to make participants temporarily more or less patient, demonstrating that impatience causes people to search less and choose cards with higher total costs (Study 6). We discuss implications for theories of time preferences and their role in consumer behavior.

Mrkva, Kellen, Michaela Huber, Tehila Kogut, and Leaf Van Boven. (reject & resubmit at JPSP). Structured introspection helps people align decisions with their priorities.

Weighting bias in decision making occurs when people overweight attributes they believe should be weighted less or underweight attributes they believe should be weighted more. For example, people overweight the perceived severity of terrorist attacks when prioritizing terrorist threats while underweighting less salient attributes like perceived probability of attacks, even though they believe severity and likelihood should be equally weighted. We suggest that weighting bias can be reduced through structured introspection, which involves asking people how much relevant attributes should influence them. Structured introspection reduces inattention to less salient attributes such as probability, to personal beliefs about attribute weighting, and to the correspondence between beliefs and behavior. In six experiments, we found that structured introspection reduced weighting bias, increasing the correspondence between people's behavior and their beliefs about how much attributes should be weighted. This occurred in the contexts of romantic dating decisions, prioritization of terrorist threats, and politically partisan evaluations of environmental policies. Structured introspection made people more aware of which attributes were descriptively influencing others' decisions and which attributes should normatively influence decisions, and this caused people to evaluate decisions that deviated from their

personal beliefs as being of lower quality. Structured introspection effects were neither moderated by individual differences in cognitive reflection nor by experimentally manipulated cognitive load, suggesting the effects were not heavily dependent on cognitive resources. Discussion focuses on implications of these findings for theories of debiasing, introspection, attention, and weighting bias in judgment and decision making.

Appendix B: Published Manuscript Abstracts.

Mrkva, Kellen, Nathaniel Posner, Crystal Reeck, and Eric J. Johnson (2021). Do nudges reduce disparities? Choice architecture compensates for low consumer knowledge. *Journal of Marketing*

Choice architecture interventions, commonly known as nudges, are powerful tools that impact decision making and can improve welfare. Yet it is unclear *who* is most impacted by such interventions. If nudge effects are moderated by socioeconomic status (SES), such differential effects could increase or decrease disparities in wealth, health, and social welfare. We hypothesize and demonstrate that people with lower socioeconomic status, domain knowledge, and numerical ability are more affected by a wide class of nudges. As a result, “good nudges” designed to increase selection of the best option reduced choice disparities, improving choices more among people with lower SES, financial literacy, and numeracy than among people with higher levels of these variables. Compared to good nudges, “bad nudges” (designed to facilitate selection of inferior options) exacerbated choice disparities. These results generalized across real world retirement decisions, three different nudges, and four different decision domains. Across studies, we tested different explanations of why SES, domain knowledge, and numeracy moderate nudge effects, revealing that uncertainty partially accounts for these effects in mediation models. Our results suggest that nudges are a useful tool for those who wish to reduce disparities.

Mrkva, Kellen, Eric J. Johnson, Crystal Reeck, and Nathaniel A. Posner (2021). Design systems with your most vulnerable users in mind. *Harvard Business Review*.

There are massive gaps between low-SES and high-SES Americans in retirement savings, COVID-19 vaccine uptake, and many other outcomes. Nudges can reduce gaps like these if used well, because they typically impact low-SES individuals most, according to recent research. Nudges are also inexpensive and get more bang for the buck compared to other techniques that firms use to reduce inequities, such as offering financial education or discounts for the poor. Nudges are therefore a win-win for managers and employees.

Mormann, Milica, Tom Griffiths, Chris Janiszewski, J. Edward Russo, Anocha Aribarg, Nathaniel Ashby, Rajesh Bagchi, Sudeep Bhatia, Aleksandra Kovacheva, Martin Meissner, and **Kellen Mrkva** (2020). Time to pay attention to attention: Using attention-based process traces to better understand consumer decision-making. *Marketing Letters*.

Given the overabundance of information and choice alternatives in the marketplace, understanding and managing consumer attention remains of utmost importance for marketers. In this paper, we examine the latest advances in measuring, modelling, and interpreting attentional

processes during consumer decision making. Due to the increased ease and reduced cost of gathering process data, we argue that process data is now more accessible to a wider group of researchers. We identify and discuss several promising areas for future research.

Mrkva, Kellen, Jennifer C Cole, and Leaf Van Boven. (2020). Attention increases environmental risk perception. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*

The authors suggest that mere attention increases the perceived severity of environmental risks, partly because attention increases the fear and distinctiveness of attended risks. In Experiments 1 and 2, participants were exposed to images of multiple risks, with attention repeatedly oriented to a subset of these risks. Participants subsequently perceived attended risks to be more severe, more frightening, higher priority, and more distinctive than control risks; attention did not influence perceived novelty. In Experiments 3 and 4, spatial cueing manipulations were used to briefly draw visual attention toward some risks and away from others. A briefly flashed rectangle drew attention toward one side of a computer screen just before two images depicting different risks appeared: one image very close to where the flash appeared and one further away (Experiment 3). In Experiment 4, incidental attention was cued toward some risks by giving participants an unrelated letter search task that required them to briefly attend to that location. Participants in both experiments selected cued (attended) risks as more severe, distinctive, and frightening than non-cued risks. Across experiments, sequential mediation analyses indicated that the effect of attention manipulation on severity was mediated by the effect of attention on fear which was mediated by distinctiveness. Across experiments, we equated duration of exposure to risks and sought to minimize demand characteristics.

Mrkva, Kellen, Eric J Johnson, Simon Gächter, and Andreas Herrmann. (2020). Moderating loss aversion: Loss aversion has moderators but reports of its death are greatly exaggerated. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

Loss aversion, the principle that losses impact decision making more than equivalent gains, is a fundamental idea in consumer behavior and decision making, though its existence has recently been called into question. Across five unique samples ($N_{\text{total}} = 17,720$), we tested predictions about what moderates loss aversion, which were derived from a preference construction account. Across studies, more domain knowledge, experience, and education were associated with lower loss aversion. Among car buyers, those who knew more about a particular car attribute (e.g., fuel economy) were less loss averse for that attribute but not other attributes (e.g., comfort), consistent with the idea that people with less attribute knowledge are more likely to construct preferences, thereby increasing loss aversion. Additionally, older consumers were more loss averse across different loss aversion measures and studies. We discuss implications for several accounts of loss aversion, including alternative accounts rooted in status quo bias, emotion, or feelings of ownership. In addition to discovering key loss aversion moderators, we cast doubt on recent claims that loss aversion is a fallacy or is fully explained by status quo bias, risk aversion, or the educated laboratory samples often used to study loss aversion.

Mrkva, Kellen, and Leaf Van Boven (2020). Salience theory of “mere” exposure: Relative exposure increases liking, evaluative extremity, and emotional intensity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

We propose and support a salience explanation of exposure effects. We suggest that repeated exposure to stimuli influences evaluations by increasing salience, the relative quality of standing out from other competing stimuli. In Experiments 1 and 2, we manipulated exposure, presenting some stimuli 9 times and other stimuli 3 times, 1 time, or 0 times, as in previous mere exposure research. Exposure increased liking, replicating previous research (Zajonc, 1968), and increased salience, made evaluations more extreme, and made stimuli more emotionally intense. Across experiments, results of multiple mediation models and a causal chain of experiments supported the idea that salience explains these exposure effects. Fluency and apprehension, two constructs that have been invoked to explain mere exposure, accounted for less of these effects according to the mediation models and the chain of experiments. We next manipulated relative exposure and absolute exposure orthogonally, finding that relative exposure increases liking more than absolute exposure. Stimuli presented 9 times were liked more when other stimuli in the context were presented less than 9 times than when the other stimuli were presented more than 9 times (Experiment 4). Whereas absolute exposure had no effect in Experiment 4, relative exposure increased liking, extremity, and emotional intensity. In Experiment 5, a direct manipulation of salience increased liking, evaluative extremity, and emotional intensity. These results suggest that salience partially explains effects previously attributed to absolute “mere” exposure.

Mrkva, Kellen, Jacob Westfall, and Leaf Van Boven. (2019). Attention drives emotion: Voluntary attention increases emotional intensity. *Psychological Science*.

How does repeatedly searching for something influence people’s feelings about that thing? In five experiments, searching for objects increased the intensity of emotional reactions to those objects. Across positive, neutral, and negative images, participants searched 10 times for one randomly-selected “target” from a set of 10 sequentially presented images, reporting that target images were more emotionally intense, but not more liked, than control images (Experiments 1a–1c). This effect emerged early and did not increase with repeated search (Experiment 2). Merely directing voluntary attention towards one image, even without identifying it as “target,” increased emotional intensity of attended images compared with unattended images (Experiment 3). Across experimental paradigms, target (attended) images were more distinctive, which statistically mediated the effects on reported emotional intensity. These findings suggest that voluntary attention increases the intensity of people’s reactions to repeatedly searched for images, with implications for other affective phenomena and for well-being.

Mrkva, Kellen, Mark Travers, and Leaf Van Boven. (2018). Simulational fluency reduces feelings of psychological distance. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.

Psychological distance, the sense of separation from the present self, profoundly shapes thoughts, feelings, and behavior. But what shapes psychological distance? We hypothesized that the ease with which people mentally simulate, or imagine, events reduces the psychological distance of those events. Simulational fluency was associated with reduced psychological

distance of multiple past and future holidays (Studies 1a and 1b). Writing short, easy-to-generate descriptions of Christmas increased fluency and reduced psychological distance compared with writing longer, difficult-to-generate descriptions (Study 2)—a pattern that was not anticipated by readers of the same content, who did not directly experience the fluency (or disfluency) of writing short (or long) descriptions. Writing descriptions of Halloween increased fluency and reduced psychological distance, even as concrete “how” descriptions reduced construal level compared with abstract “why” descriptions (Study 3). Listening to a fluent audio description of a past Super Bowl game increased fluency and reduced the game’s temporal and spatial psychological distance compared with a disfluent audio description (Study 4). Reading a description of the Super Bowl in easy-to-read font increased fluency and reduced both temporal and spatial psychological distance compared with reading in difficult-to-read font (Study 5). We discuss implications for theories of psychological distance and its role in everyday life.

Mrkva, Kellen. (2017). Giving, fast and slow: Reflection increases costly (but not uncostly) charitable giving. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*.

Are people intuitively generous or stingy? Does reflection make people more willing to give generous amounts to charity? Findings across the literature are mixed, with many studies finding no clear relationship between reflection and charitable giving (e.g., Hauge, Brekke, & Johansson, 2016; Tinghög et al., 2016), while others find that reflection negatively affects giving (e.g., Small, Loewenstein, & Slovic, 2007), and still others find that reflection is positively associated with giving (e.g., Lohse, Goeschl, & Diederich, 2014). I demonstrate that reflection consistently increases *costly giving* to charity. In Study 1, people were initially reluctant to give costly amounts of money to charity, but those who reflected about the decision were more willing to give. In Studies 2-3, I isolated the role of costly stakes by randomly assigning people to either an uncostly donation (\$0.40) or costly donation condition (e.g., \$100), and randomly assigning them to decide under time pressure or after reflecting. Reflection increased their willingness to give costly amounts, but did not influence their willingness to give uncostly amounts. Similarly, the relationship between decision time and giving was positive when the stakes were costly but was relatively flat when the stakes were uncostly (Study 4).

Mrkva, Kellen, and Leaf Van Boven. (2017). Attentional accounting: Voluntary spatial attention increases budget category prioritization. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.

Too often, people fail to prioritize the most important activities, life domains, and budget categories. One reason for misplaced priorities, we argue, is that activities and categories people have recently attended to seem higher priority than other activities and categories. In Experiment 1, participants were cued to direct voluntary spatial attention toward one side of a screen while images depicting different budget categories were presented: one category on the cued side and one on the non-cued side of the screen. Participants rated cued budget categories as higher priority than non-cued budget categories. Cued attention also increased perceived distinctiveness, and a mediation model was consistent with the hypothesis that distinctiveness mediates the effect of cued attention on prioritization. Experiment 2 orthogonally manipulated two components of a spatial cuing manipulation—heightened visual attention and heightened mental attention—to

examine how each influences prioritization. Visual attention and mental attention additively increased prioritization. In Experiment 3, attention increased prioritization even when prioritization decisions were incentivized, and even when heightened attention was isolated from primacy and recency. Across experiments, cued categories were prioritized more than non-cued categories even though measures were taken to disguise the purpose of the experiments and manipulate attention incidentally (i.e., as a by-product of an unrelated task).