

Researcher finds method behind magic

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(Medical Xpress) -- A magician will have the upper hand because he knows how his trick works. But, according to Jay Olson, the magician might not know why.

A recent study co-authored by Olson, a Simon Fraser University psychology teaching assistant, investigates the [mindset](#) behind card magic. It says that while the participant may think they have a free choice of any card, there are a number of patterns suggesting otherwise.

For example, the study found that when asked to name a playing card, most people chose only one of four: the ace, queen or king of hearts, or the ace of spades. Unexpectedly, women chose the king of hearts more than men did, and men chose the queen of hearts more than women. The magician's trick is to exploit these patterns.

The next step, according to Olson, is to apply the findings to a broader field than just magic; to see how the mind works. Understanding how magicians are able to influence people could lead to a better understanding of memory, decision-making and awareness.

"We hope this study will promote more collaboration between psychologists and [magicians](#)," says Olson. "This will help us learn more about magic from psychology, and more about psychology from [magic](#)."

The [full study](#) is available online from the [psychology](#) journal, *Perception*.

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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