

## People holding guns perceive others with guns, researcher says

December 20 2012

---

(Medical Xpress)—People holding guns perceive other people holding guns, according to a new study published this fall by a Colorado State University researcher.

The 217 students participating in the study were asked to react to images on a [computer screen](#). Specifically, they had to determine if the figure on the screen was holding a gun or a neutral object like a wallet or a shoe. The critical manipulation was that some of the participants also held a gun – in this case, a Wii gun.

A majority of students were more biased to perceive the figure in the photograph as holding a gun – even when it was a shoe – when they also held a gun than when they held a rubber ball.

Jessica Witt conducted the research while at Purdue University along with J.R. Brockmole at Notre Dame University. Witt joined Colorado State University this fall as an associate professor with a research focus on perception and action relationships.

"Your ability to respond influences what you see. Specifically when you can respond with a gun, that creates a [bias](#) to see guns," Witt said of the study results, which were published in the October issue of the [Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance](#).

"The results have theoretical implications for how perception and action interact," Witt said. "This interaction, however, has [negative](#)

[consequences](#) in the case of guns."

Witt also said, "For the most part, gun owners care about safety, they lock up guns, they're careful about who they let use their weapons. We think they're going to want to know other risks. In this case, another risk is a perceptual bias to see guns when they are holding a gun. Gun owners who care about safety will want to take [safety precautions](#) against this bias. We don't know what those are yet, but those need to be researched.

"We hope that this research leads to safer gun use."

To continue the research, Witt plans to look at whether this perceptual bias also exists in people who either play violent video games or own guns.

**More information:** [www.news.colostate.edu/content...uments/WittBrockmole%20paper.pdf](http://www.news.colostate.edu/content...uments/WittBrockmole%20paper.pdf)

Provided by Colorado State University

Citation: People holding guns perceive others with guns, researcher says (2012, December 20) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-12-people-guns.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.