

Safety Behavior and Test Anxiety:  
*Reassurance Seeking,  
 College Entrance Exams, Psychology  
 Course Exams, and Spoiled Answers*

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**INTRO:**

- Test anxiety is associated with lower performance on standardized tests and course exams (Cassady & Johnson, 2002)
- Individuals may use safety behaviors, such as reassurance seeking, during assessments in an attempt to quell this anxiety but actually maintain anxiety (Knoll, Valentiner, & Holzman, 2016).
- Valentiner et al. (2019) found that reassurance seeking predicted the spoiling of answers (changing from correct to incorrect answers) on a course exam.
- The current study aimed to examine reassurance seeking and its relationship with prior performance on college entrance exams, scores on future introductory psychology course exams, and spoiled answers on these course exams.
- It was hypothesized that higher scores on a measure of reassurance seeking would be associated with lower scores on college entrance exams and future introductory psychology courses and an increase in spoiled answers.

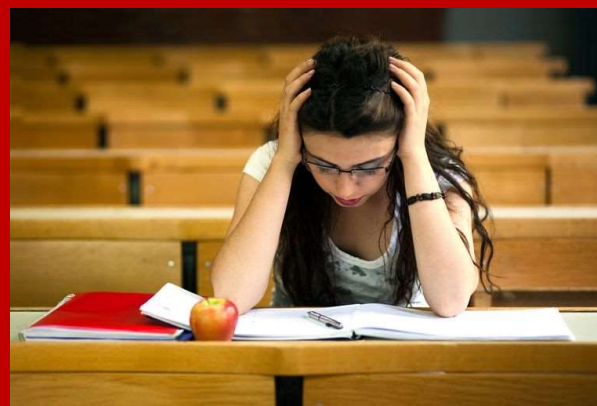
**METHODS**

- $N = 266-326$  introductory psych students completed measures on reassurance seeking (SBTAQ), worry/anxiety (SPS, SIAS-SF, PSWQ), and memory beliefs(BAMI), Given access ACT/SAT scores, HS GPA, and psychology course exam results.
- RAs coded exams for erasure marks; answer changes were coded as irrelevant, corrected, or spoiled.
- Correlation analyses were run.

**DISCUSSION**

- High levels of reassurance seeking was associated with lower ACT/SAT Scores and exam performance. This was not the case for spoiled answers. Spoiled answers are, of course, impacting exam performance. There may be another construct explaining this behavior.
- Strengths: Incorporation of self-report and behavioral measures. Limitations: Self-report measures only administered once. Same sample of students. All were not present for each exam.
- May be useful to administer self-report measures after receiving feedback on first exam

# Reassurance seeking test behavior was associated with lower exam scores but not spoiled answers.



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Table 1  
 Correlations among Performance Measures with Anxiety Measures.

	Reassurance Seeking	Beliefs About Memory	Performance Anxiety	Interaction Anxiety	Worry	ACT/SAT
ACT/SAT	-.268**	-.120*	.059	.132*	-.022	...
First Exam						
Irrelevant Changes	.002	-.044	-.014	-.053	-.113*	-.115**
Corrected	.013	-.019	-.019	.009	-.032	-.058
Spoiled Answers	-.006	-.034	-.023	-.085	-.078	-.108
Performance Score	-.119**	.004	.018	.039	.021	-.565*
Second Exam						
Irrelevant Changes	.014	-.099	-.040	-.056	-.044	-.063
Corrected	-.012	-.059	-.148	-.131*	-.041	-.001
Spoiled Answers	-.014	-.047	-.068	-.041	-.012	-.092
Performance Score	-.017*	.013	.127	.195**	.103	-.619**
Third Exam						
Irrelevant Changes	-.114	.093	-.031	.027	-.040	-.169**
Corrected	-.022	-.006	.071	-.002	-.037	-.069
Spoiled Answers	-.021*	-.030	.024	.015	-.106	-.131*
Performance Score	-.013*	-.004	.092	.097	.000	-.728**
Final Exam						
Irrelevant Changes	.075	.007	.022	.037	.024	-.180**
Corrected	.013	.016	-.051	.007	-.067	-.041
Spoiled Answers	-.030	-.040	-.008	-.008	.035	-.111
Performance Score	-.011*	-.061	.060	.091	.031	-.507**

Note:  $N$  range from 266-326. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 2  
 Correlations between measures of anxiety.

	Reassurance Seeking	Beliefs About Memory	Performance Anxiety	Interaction Anxiety	Worry
Reassurance Seeking		.124*	.135*	.119*	.314**
Beliefs About Memory	.124*		.228**	.319**	.295**
Performance Anxiety	.135*	.228**		.733**	.456**
Interaction Anxiety	.119*	.319**	.733**		.509**
Worry	.314**	.295**	.456**	.509**	
ACT/SAT	-.268**	-.120*	.089	.132*	-.022

Note:  $N$  range from 266-326. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 3  
 Correlations among and between examine mark patterns and performance scores.

	First Exam			Second Exam			Third Exam			Final Exam		
	Irrelevant Changes	Corrected	Spoiled Answers	Irrelevant Changes	Corrected	Spoiled Answers	Irrelevant Changes	Corrected	Spoiled Answers	Irrelevant Changes	Corrected	Spoiled Answers
First Exam												
IC												
C	.360**			.350**			.322**			.310**		
SA	.181**	.162**		.184**	.154**		.184**	.154**		.184**	.154**	
PS	.248**	.004	-.134	.248**	.004	-.134	.248**	.004	-.134	.248**	.004	-.134
Second Exam												
IC	.222**	.161**	.150*	.222**	.161**	.150*	.222**	.161**	.150*	.222**	.161**	.150*
C	.134	.014	.024	.134	.014	.024	.134	.014	.024	.134	.014	.024
SA	.210**	.181**	.160**	.210**	.181**	.160**	.210**	.181**	.160**	.210**	.181**	.160**
PS	.070	.078	-.200**	.070	.078	-.200**	.070	.078	-.200**	.070	.078	-.200**
Third Exam												
IC	.130*	.040	.210**	.130*	.040	.210**	.130*	.040	.210**	.130*	.040	.210**
C	.148	.104	.083	.148	.104	.083	.148	.104	.083	.148	.104	.083
SA	.078	.180**	.120**	.078	.180**	.120**	.078	.180**	.120**	.078	.180**	.120**
PS	.130*	.131	-.100	.130*	.131	-.100	.130*	.131	-.100	.130*	.131	-.100
Final Exam												
IC	.184**	.118	.212**	.184**	.118	.212**	.184**	.118	.212**	.184**	.118	.212**
C	.002	.119*	.240**	.002	.119*	.240**	.002	.119*	.240**	.002	.119*	.240**
SA	.060	.213**	.181**	.060	.213**	.181**	.060	.213**	.181**	.060	.213**	.181**
PS	.081	.082	.118	.081	.082	.118	.081	.082	.118	.081	.082	.118

Note:  $N$  range from 266-326. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .  
 IC = Irrelevant Changes, C = Corrected, SA = Spoiled Answers, PS = Performance Score

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