

Study Hall: Winter 2015

Research briefs.

By

[Lauren Savage](#)

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Fracking Fallout

People who live near wells created through hydraulic fracturing are more likely to be hospitalized for heart conditions and other illnesses, according to a new study from Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania. The paper, which looked at hospital admittance rates from 2007 to 2011 in two Pennsylvania counties where the fracking industry has surged, found a rate of cardiology hospitalizations 27 percent higher than in areas without fracking.

The Power of Attraction

A study published in the *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* suggests that being attracted to someone besides your significant other could actually improve your relationship. Sexual-health researchers at Columbia, Indiana University, and the University of Kentucky surveyed 160 women who had been in relationships for at least three years and found that 70 percent of them had been attracted to someone else. In most cases, respondents felt the attraction had no effect on their relationship or it made them more attracted to their partners.

Breaking Bad (Habits)

The compulsive dieting that is characteristic of anorexia may, over time, become a habit that is hard-wired into the brain. Researchers from Columbia and New York University examined brain activity in twenty-one women with anorexia and twenty-one healthy women while they made choices about what foods to eat. The results of their research, which appear in *Nature Neuroscience*, add to the evidence that brain physiology plays a powerful role in disorders characterized by repeated destructive behavior.

Teen-Bullying Breakthrough

A federal effort to combat bullying in schools appears to be working, according to a Columbia study that analyzed data from surveys of almost sixty-four thousand high-school students in twenty-five states. The researchers found that students who attend schools in states that have followed at least one of the US Department of Education's recommendations for anti-bullying policies are 24 percent less likely to report bullying and 20 percent less likely to report cyberbullying. "The results suggest that such policies are an important part of a comprehensive strategy for preventing bullying among youth," said Mark Hatzenbuehler, the lead author of the study and a psychologist at the Mailman School of Public Health.

Melancholy in the Middle

Middle managers are more likely to suffer from depression than those above or below them in the corporate hierarchy. In a study led by Columbia epidemiologist Seth Prins '14PH, researchers found that 18 percent of middle managers report symptoms of depression, compared to 12 percent of blue-collar workers and 11 percent of top executives. Middle managers may suffer the most, the researchers say, because they manage discontent from colleagues in both higher and lower positions.

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