

New Content From *Current Directions in Psychological Science*

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[The Situation of Situation Research: Knowns and Unknowns](#)

John F. Rauthmann and Ryne A. Sherman

Rauthmann and Sherman discuss theoretical and empirical studies that assessed psychological situations (sets of circumstances). These studies attempted to define what situations are; how they can be characterized, taxonomized, and measured; how they relate to person variables; and how people navigate them. The authors summarize the answers these studies provided and the questions that future research needs to address, such as situation characteristics across the life span and cross-cultural aspects of situation experience.

[Neuroscience and the Social Origins of Moral Behavior: How Neural Underpinnings of Social Categorization and Conformity Affect Everyday Moral and Immoral Behavior](#)

Naomi Ellemers and Félice van Nunspeet

Neuroscientific evidence might help to clarify the social origins of moral behavior and the judgments and decisions people make about their own and others' moral behavior. By reviewing neuroscientific findings related to social conformity, categorization, and identification, Ellemers and van Nunspeet demonstrate (a) when people are motivated by social norms to follow particular moral guidelines, (b) what prevents people from considering the moral implications of their actions, and (c) how people process social feedback about the appropriateness of their behavior.

[Learning to Write Words](#)

Rebecca Treiman

Focusing on the English writing system, Treiman discusses how young children learn about the visual appearance of writing and spelling, and how learners begin to use letters to represent the sounds they hear. She also discusses how older children acquire knowledge beyond simple sound-letter mappings. Her review shows how children use what they know, including the names of letters, the spelling of their

names, and similarities among sounds, to learn new things. She concludes that implicit learning plays an important role in spelling development, but explicit teaching is also important.

[Stress Reactivity: What Pushes Us Higher, Faster, and Longer—and Why It Matters](#)

Janice K. Kiecolt-Glaser, Megan E. Renna, M. Rosie Shrout, and Annelise A. Madison

The duration and magnitude of physiological responses (i.e., cardiovascular, hormonal, and immune changes) to daily stressors can differ widely among individuals. Kiecolt-Glaser and colleagues discuss factors that may heighten and prolong stress responses, such as depression, rumination, hostility, or negativity, and other factors that may dampen stress responses, such as positive affect, support, satisfaction, or validation. Heightened and prolonged stress reactivity can result in metabolic dysregulation, chronic disease, and even early mortality. The authors suggest that yoga, meditation, and healthy diet coupled with sleep, exercise, and cognitive behavior therapy may dampen stress reactivity.

[Affect, Attention, and Episodic Performance](#)

Howard M. Weiss and Kelsey L. Merlo

Weiss and Merlo explore how an individual's work performance varies according to changes in emotional states and attentional resources. The authors introduce the notion of performance episodes—during the day, people go through various units of work activity, and their performance during those units varies. Performance episodes can be used to capture changes in a person's performance throughout the workday. Weiss and Merlo suggest that emotions influence work performance by changing the attentional resources dedicated to the task (e.g., positive affect decreases difficulty focusing and improves episodic performance).