New Content From *Current Directions in Psychological Science*

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[Social Psychological Research on Racism and the Importance of Historical Context: Implications for Policy](#)

Sophie Trawalter, Gerald D. Higginbotham, and Kyshia Henderson

Trawalter and colleagues suggest that psychology must acknowledge historical and systemic racism and offer guidance for how. They highlight that in the context of intergroup relations, and the study of racism specifically, the tight focus on mind and behavior has meant an incomplete understanding of racism. The researchers summarize a long-standing but oft-neglected critique that psychology, by neglecting historical and systemic racism, offers incomplete and sometimes harmful solutions to redressing it. They discuss four examples of research that connect psychology to history and might lead the way to better solutions.

[The Emergency of Prosociality: A Developmental Perspective on Altruism and Other Prosocial Behavior in the Face of Disaster](#)

Lucie Rose, Guillaume Dezecache, Tara Powell, Sylvie Chokron, and Klara Kovarski

Regardless of the nature of an emergency, people tend to engage in prosocial behavior that benefits others. Rose and colleagues provide an overview of altruistic and other prosocial behavior in typical human development as well as of developmental distinctions between helping, sharing, and comforting. They focus on the expression of these behaviors in emergency situations, using the COVID-19 pandemic to illustrate how prosociality shifts and adapts in a specific context. They suggest that a developmental framework may help researchers and professionals in the field achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the many facets and underlying mechanisms of prosociality in emergency contexts.

[Studying Mental Health Problems as Systems, Not Syndromes](#)

Eiko I. Fried

Fried discusses two barriers that have contributed to a problematic oversimplification of mental illness:

diagnostic literalism, mistaking complex mental health problems for the simplified diagnoses by which they are classified; and reductionism, the isolated study of individual elements of mental disorders. The author proposes conceptualizing people's mental health states as emerging from complex systems of biological, psychological, and social elements and shows how this perspective explains phenomena such as variability within diagnoses, comorbidity among diagnoses, and transdiagnostic risk factors. This systems approach may help researchers understand diagnoses and reductionism as useful epistemological tools for describing the world, rather than ontological convictions about how the world is.

Exceptional Abilities in Autism: Theories and Open Questions
Lucina Q. Uddin

A small but significant portion of individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) exhibit exceptional cognitive abilities in one or more domains, making them twice-exceptional individuals—that is, those who present exceptional cognitive strengths in one domain coupled with profound deficits in another (i.e., cognitive divergence). Uddin reviews the current literature on cognitive divergence in ASD, focusing on cognitive theories, neural substrates, and clinical and societal implications. The author suggests that future research identify predictors of and contributors to successful social, academic, and occupational trajectories for these individuals, as well as the neural correlates of cognitive divergence in ASD.

An Introduction to Ecological Active Learning
Azzurra Ruggeri

Ruggeri proposes a developmental framework that focuses on children's ability to adapt and tailor their active-learning strategies to the particular characteristics of a learning environment: ecological active learning. Noting that previous research has suggested that efficient, adaptive search strategies emerge around 3 years of age, Ruggeri highlights the importance of developing age-appropriate paradigms that capture children's early competence to better understand their abilities. Ruggeri also discusses some of the most promising avenues for future research on ecological active learning for children, including how the results from research on active and adaptive learning can inform the development of successful educational interventions.

How Do LGBTQ+ Parents Raise Well-Adjusted, Resilient, and Thriving Children?
Rachel H. Farr, Samantha L. Tornello, and Sharon S. Rostosky

Despite stigma and discrimination, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) parents raise well-adjusted children, research has shown. Research on processes and socialization within LGBTQ+-parent families suggests that LGBTQ+ parents demonstrate flexibility, creativity, and intentionality, which are associated with children's positive outcomes and resilience. Farr and colleagues recommend that researchers adopt intersectional, queer-theory-based, and strengths-based models of explanation to generate new questions and new knowledge about the unique strengths of LGBTQ+ parenting that positively influence children's development. Such findings may provide insights into parenting practices that could benefit all children and families.

The Emotional Rewards of Prosocial Spending Are Robust and Replicable in Large Samples

Lara B. Aknin, Elizabeth W. Dunn, and Ashley V. Whillans

Spending money on other people—prosocial spending—increases a person's happiness, according to research conducted before the replication crisis in psychological science. But are these findings credible? Aknin and colleagues considered all 15 published preregistered experiments on prosocial spending and found that, despite mixed evidence, the emotional benefits of prosocial spending appear to be robust and replicable in large samples. These benefits are particularly likely when people have some choice about whether or how to give and when they understand how their generosity makes a difference.

Critical Ignoring as a Core Competence for Digital Citizens
Anastasia Kozyreva, Sam Wineburg, Stephan Lewandowsky, and Ralph Hertwig

Encouraging online users to embrace critical ignoring—choosing what to ignore and where to invest one's limited attentional capacities—can empower them to avoid the excesses, traps, and information disorders of today's digital world, Kozyreva and colleagues suggest. They argue that digital information literacy must include competence in critical ignoring and review three types of cognitive strategies for developing this literacy: self-nudging, in which users ignore temptations by removing them from their digital environments; lateral reading, in which users vet information by leaving the source and verifying its credibility elsewhere online; and the do-not-feed-the-trolls heuristic, which advises users to not reward malicious actors with attention.

Estimating the Time to Do Nothing: Toward Next-Generation Models of Response Inhibition
Patrick G. Bissett and Russell A. Poldrack

Controlled behavior requires response inhibition—a cognitive function that involves withholding action as goals change. Response inhibition is often assessed using the stop-signal paradigm, in which participants respond to most stimuli but periodically withhold their response when a stop signal occurs. The stop-signal paradigm rests on the theoretical foundation of the independent race model, which assumes a stop racer that races independently against a go racer; which racer finishes first determines behavior. Bissett and Poldrack highlight research showing violations of this independence (between the stop and go racers) assumption and discuss promising new models of response inhibition.

Intergroup Leadership: The Challenge of Successfully Leading Fractured Groups and Societies
Michael A. Hogg and David E. Rast III

According to intergroup-leadership theory, successful intergroup (between group) leaders need to construct, promote, and exemplify an intergroup relational identity that preserves subgroups' distinctiveness and celebrates that distinctiveness and intersubgroup cooperation as fundamental aspects of subgroup and superordinate-group identity. Hogg and Rast III describe intergroup-leadership theory (which applies to groups of all sizes and complexions), summarize empirical support for its main tenets, and outline extensions and future directions. They conclude that research is starting to focus on intergroup-relational-identity messaging, which can come from leaders but also (social) media and other sources, in the wider context of political dynamics and multicultural societies.

Water From the Lake of Memory: The Regulatory Model of Nostalgia
Tim Wildschut and Constantine Sedikides

Wildschut and Sedikides organized the literature on triggers and functions of nostalgia—an emotion elicited by experiences that are appraised as unique, temporally or psychologically distant, and predominantly pleasant but irretrievable. The researchers advance a regulatory model in which nostalgia serves as a homeostatic corrective (i.e., a process that establishes and maintains a relatively stable psychological equilibrium) that countervails the negative effects of psychological perturbations and adverse environmental conditions. They illustrate complementary approaches to testing this model as it applies to transient nostalgia and show how it can be generalized to chronic nostalgia and collective nostalgia.

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