

New Content From *Current Directions in Psychological Science*

March 21, 2023



[Rational Choice in Context](#)

Shlomi Sher, Craig R. M. McKenzie, Johannes Müller-Trede, and Lim Leong

Human decisions are context dependent, violating classical norms of rational choice. However, these norms implicitly depend on assumptions that are often unrealistic, such as the assumption that information is constant across contexts. Sher and colleagues review recent evidence that some important context effects reflect dynamically coherent belief and preference updating in response to ecologically valid cues (embedded in frames, procedures, or menus) to which human decision makers can be highly sensitive. This evidence, which supports the idea that human decision makers are not mere puppets of the choice architecture, might foster a richer view of rational choice in context.

[The Nature and Nurture of Callous-Unemotional Traits](#)

Luke W. Hyde & Hailey L. Dotterer

Callous-unemotional (CU) traits, a risk factor for psychopathy, are usually found in youths with relatively low empathy and guilt and tend to identify youths with high risk for chronic and severe antisocial behavior (e.g., aggression). Hyde and Dotterer describe research identifying nature and nurture influences on the development of CU traits, indicating that this development might be influenced by nurture but is not solely a product of the environment. They also clarify the relationship between CU traits and psychopathy, highlight potential misinterpretations of findings on influences of “nature” versus “nurture,” and discuss treatment implications.

[Pride-and-Prejudice Perspectives of Marginalization Can Advance Science and Society](#)

Tiffany N. Brannon

Research that conceptualizes marginalization as tied to pride and prejudice—or as simultaneously a source of strengths and stigma—is well positioned to address social problems and foster progress for science and society, Brannon writes. Focusing on marginalization associated with race-ethnicity, social

class, refugee status, and gender identity and sexual orientation, the author highlights growing research that harnesses pride-and-prejudice perspectives to advance psychological theory and application linked to (a) inclusion among marginalized groups and (b) intergroup attitudes among more dominant or privileged groups. Brannon suggests policy directions that can foster inclusion and facilitate positive intergroup attitudes.

Brain Reward Circuits Promote Stress Resilience and Health: Implications for Reward-Based Interventions

Janine M. Dutcher

From the COVID-19 global pandemic to persistent racial injustice and the continued impact of climate change on communities across the globe, the past couple of years have demonstrated the need for a greater understanding of how to protect people from the negative consequences of stress. Dutcher outlines a perspective on how the brain's reward system might be an important protective mechanism for stress outcomes. The author describes research suggesting that engagement of the reward system inhibits the stress response and is associated with improved health outcomes.

Impacts of Learning One's Own Genetic Susceptibility to Mental Disorders

Woo-kyoung Ahn and Annalise M. Perricone

Ahn and Perricone review the possible consequences of knowing one's genetic susceptibility to mental disorders. Upon learning of elevated genetic risks for a mental disorder (e.g., depression), people may become more pessimistic and misremember their symptoms as being more serious. Why? Because they misconceive genes as immutable and defining of their identity. In contrast, upon learning that they are not genetically predisposed to a mental disorder (e.g., alcohol use disorder), people may underplay symptoms even when they experience them. The researchers suggest that further research should study ways in which genetic feedback can be misunderstood and redress genetic misconceptions.

A Prosociality Paradox: How Miscalibrated Social Cognition Creates a Misplaced Barrier to Prosocial Action

Nicholas Epley, Amit Kumar, James Dungan, and Margaret Echelbarger

Behaving prosocially can increase well-being among both actors and recipients of prosocial acts, but failing to fully appreciate prosociality's positive impact may discourage more prosocial behavior. Epley and colleagues review recent evidence suggesting that miscalibrated social cognition may create a psychological barrier that keeps people from behaving prosocially. That is, those performing prosocial actions tend to underestimate how positively their recipients will respond. These miscalibrated expectations result partly from a divergence in perspectives: Prosocial actors tend to focus on whether their actions are efficient, whereas recipients focus on the warmth conveyed by the actors' actions.

Related content from APS: suggested [teaching plan](#) and [coverage of similar research](#) by the authors.

Metacognitive Myopia: A Major Obstacle on the Way to Rationality

Klaus Fiedler, Johannes Prager, and Linda McCaughy

Metacognitive myopia, or poor quality control of memory and reasoning processes, can be a major

obstacle to rational judgment and decision making. One example occurs when people consider samples of information and uncritically accept their validity when they make decisions. Fiedler and colleagues illustrate this phenomenon concerning biases (base-rate neglect, misattribution, perseverance). They explain why it is difficult to effectively monitor biases resulting from information sampling in an uncertain world and why the lack of volitional control over mental actions restricts the control function in metacognitive myopia.

What Do We Know About Threat-Related Perceptual Decision Making?

Aprajita Mohanty, Frances Jin, and Tamara Sussman

People may detect threats faster and more accurately than nonthreats because of their salient features (e.g., bright colors in a venomous snake)—a bottom-up process. In the real world, however, threats are often encountered in familiar environments in which cues signal their arrival—a top-down process. In this review, Mohanty and colleagues review how psychological, computational, and neural mechanisms help people integrate information from threatening stimuli with prior knowledge from cues and surrounding contexts to guide their perceptual decision making. The researchers highlight some of the top-down and bottom-up mechanisms by which threat enhances perceptual decision making generally but impairs it when anxiety levels are high.

Life Detection From Biological Motion

Nikolaus F. Troje and Dorita H. F. Chang

Biological-motion point-light displays have been widely used to study both the information contained in life motion stimuli and the visual mechanisms that make use of it. Humans and other animals can use life, or biological, motion—the active movements of other living beings—to quickly identify the presence of other living beings. Troje and Chang review recent research on behavioral, neurophysiological, and genetic aspects of life detection from biological motion and discuss its functional significance. Their review suggests that the visual mechanism that detects biological motion is present in early developmental stages and may lead to the maturation of an important tool for social perception later in life.

How Children Develop Healthy Behavioral Choices to Promote Illness Prevention

Vanessa LoBue, Elizabeth Bonawitz, Lauren Leotti, and Nina Fefferman

When faced with the possibility of getting sick, children might learn adaptive behaviors and make healthy behavioral choices. LoBue and colleagues examine various theories regarding the pathways for acquisition of healthy behaviors by children, including rule-based learning, disgust, and causal knowledge. By examining these pathways' strengths and weaknesses, the researchers develop recommendations for designing interventions aimed at teaching children about contagion and illness. They highlight the importance of understanding how children learn to use adaptive health behaviors in real-world situations for public health, potentially limiting disease spread in schools.

The Development of Perpetration and Tolerance of Sexual Harassment

Christia Spears Brown and Sharla Biefeld

Why is sexual harassment of girls and women so common and widely tolerated? Brown and Biefeld

provide an explanation using the bioecological theory of sexual harassment of girls. They discuss that perpetration and tolerance are built on a foundation of gendered socialization, media consumption, peer interactions, and permissive school environments that encourage girls' passivity and objectification and boys' aggressiveness and dominance. They outline how this process begins in infancy and continues throughout development, ultimately fostering an environment in which the sexual harassment of girls and women becomes usual and accepted.

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