

New Content From *Perspectives on Psychological Science*

November 05, 2020



[Construct Validation of Experimental Manipulations in Social Psychology: Current Practices and Recommendations for the Future](#)

David S. Chester and Emily N. Lasko

Chester and Lasko assessed the construct validity of manipulations in social psychology (i.e., whether the manipulations meaningfully affect the psychological processes they are intended to affect). They coded 348 experimental manipulations and analyzed the frequency with which various manipulation practices were adopted. Only 9% of the manipulations had their construct validity evaluated by pilot testing or by manipulation checks and provided a citation for the validation, and about 40% relied solely on face validity. These findings suggest that validating manipulations is not common, which may contribute to replicability issues. The authors describe possible ways to assess and increase construct validity in social psychology.

[Regulatory Scope and Its Mental and Social Supports](#)

Yaacov Trope, Alison Ledgerwood, Nira Liberman, and Kentaro Fujita

How do individuals and groups regulate thoughts and behaviors to address current and future experiences (i.e., proximal and distal events)? Trope and colleagues suggest that people contract or expand their regulatory scope to meaningfully regulate their present thoughts and behaviors to address proximal and distal events. The authors propose that humans evolved mental and social tools that enable the contraction and expansion of regulatory scope to provide efficient regulation. These tools vary in abstractness, with low-level tools (e.g., an individual's opinion) enabling the contraction of regulatory scope and high-level tools (e.g., group norms) enabling the expansion of scope.

[Shifting Minds: A Quantitative Reappraisal of Cognitive-Intervention Research](#)

David Moreau

Moreau shows that cognitive interventions in the areas of brain training, video gaming, mindset, and

stereotype threat might not effectively improve individual performance. He provides a quantitative reappraisal of the findings summarized in recent meta-analyses and shows that the effect-size distributions in these areas are best explained by multimodal characteristics that are not common in psychology. As a result, the characteristics of the effect sizes in cognitive-intervention research are largely unexplained by current theoretical frameworks. Thus, he argues for constructive skepticism in evaluating claims of cognitive improvement after cognitive interventions and for caution when this research influences large-scale policies.

[Better Safe Than Sorry: A Common Signature of General Vulnerability for Psychopathology](#)

Omer Van den Bergh, Jos Brosschot, Hugo Critchley, Julian F. Thayer, and Cristina Ottaviani

Van den Bergh and colleagues suggest that the “better-safe-than-sorry” processing strategy implies a scarcity of sensory-perceptual details in information processing, which can lead to threat-related preconceived categories to dominate conscious experience. This processing strategy may have benefits in the short term but important costs in the long term and underlies different characteristics associated with a broad dimension of psychopathology, such as worry and rumination, reduced autobiographical memory specificity, compromised fear learning, and enhanced symptom reporting. Specifically, the authors propose that these characteristics represent the same processing strategy and differ only regarding the type of information involved.

[Asymmetries in Mutual Understanding: People With Low Status, Power, and Self-Esteem Understand Better Than They Are Understood](#)

Sanaz Talaifar, Michael D. Buhrmester, Özlem Ayduk, and William B. Swann, Jr.

People who perceive themselves as having low status, even when they do not, understand others better than they are understood. Talaifar and colleagues show that people with low self-esteem as well as people with low status or power tend to understand those with high self-esteem, status, and power—but this understanding is not reciprocal. Several studies indicate that providing the latter group with information about people with low self-esteem, status, and power, and increasing that group’s motivation to understand those with lower status, might reduce these asymmetries in mutual understanding.

[Charting the Diversity of Strategic Processes in Visuospatial Short-Term Memory](#)

Corentin Gonthier

What strategies do people use to keep visuospatial information (e.g., roads in a map) in their short-term memory? Gonthier reviews literature suggesting that people use many different strategies relying on multiple operating mechanisms. The author identifies seven broad strategic processes used in visuospatial short-term memory: chunking, holistic encoding, relational encoding, subdivision and categorical encoding, recoding, long-term memory, and visuospatial rehearsal. Each strategy has multiple variants and varies across individuals, depending on the perceptual features of the to-be-remembered information. Gonthier discusses the implications of the strategies for the differences between visual and spatial tasks and the interpretation of performance in visuospatial memory tasks.