Research-Problem Validity in Primary Research: Precision and Transparency in Characterizing Past Knowledge

Martin Schweinsberg, Stefan Thau, and Madan Pillutla

Research-problem statements contrast a review of past research with other knowledge that extends, contradicts, or calls into question specific features of that past research. However, the validity of empirical inferences (quantitative judgments) about past research is sometimes questionable. By coding a random sample of research articles, Schweinsberg and colleagues showed that 83% of quantitative judgments were vague, making it difficult to assess their validity. They propose that documenting the literature search, reporting how the search was coded, and quantifying the search results facilitate more precise and transparent judgments. This practice may allow for more informed evaluations of the contribution of primary research articles.

Psychology’s Contributions to Anti-Blackness in the United States Within Psychological Research, Criminal Justice, and Mental Health

Evan Auguste et al.

Auguste and colleagues explain how psychology as a scientific and applied field has contributed to the formation and perpetuation of anti-Blackness (including the criminalization and pathologizing of Blackness) and, consequently, the mass incarceration of Black people. Presenting historical and contemporary examples of psychology’s oppression of Black people through research and clinical practices, the authors consider how this practice directly contradicts the American Psychological Association’s ethics code. They outline how anti-Blackness informed the history of psychological diagnoses and how contemporary systems of forensic practice and police involvement in mental-health-crisis response maintain historical harm. Finally, they propose specific strategies psychologists can use to interrupt the criminalization of Blackness and to redefine psychology’s relationship with justice.

Why We Gather: A New Look, Empirically Documented, at Émile Durkheim’s Theory of
Collective Assemblies and Collective Effervescence
Bernard Rimé and Dario Páez

Rimé and Páez take a new look at Durkheim’s theory of collective assemblies and collective effervescence, according to which individuals’ survival and well-being rest on cultural resources and social belonging that require periodic reviving in collective assemblies. Rimé and Páez examined research questions (translated from Durkheim’s main statements) in relation to current theories and findings. They found data supporting collective assemblies’ contribution to reducing self-other differentiation and shared emotions’ fueling of high-intensity experiences. Moreover, recent studies of self-transcendent emotions can account for the self-transformative effects Durkheim described as occurring at the climax of collective assemblies. In conclusion, Durkheim’s century-old model appears to be supported by recent experimental results.

Does Electrophysiological Maturation Shape Language Acquisition?
Katharina H. Menn, Claudia Männel, and Lars Meyer

Menn and colleagues provide a new perspective on language acquisition emphasizing neuronal development as a critical driving force of infants’ language development. Shortly after birth, infants recognize the slow acoustic modulations specific to their native language. Between 6 and 12 months of age, they begin to recognize faster language-specific patterns. Menn and colleagues propose that this developmental trajectory is constrained by the gradual emergence of high-frequency neural oscillations revealed in the infants’ electroencephalograms. Evidence from premature infants, who cannot exploit their earlier speech availability because of electrophysiological constraints, supports this perspective.

Positionality and Its Problems: Questioning the Value of Reflexivity Statements in Research
Jukka Savolainen, Patrick J. Casey, Justin P. McBrayer, and Patricia Nayna Schwerdtle

Positionality (or reflexivity) statements are meant to address genuine concerns about the limits of knowledge production. However, Savolainen and colleagues argue for avoiding these statements in scholarship because (a) positionality statements are constrained by the very positionality they seek to address; (b) reducing bias—positional or otherwise—in scientific literature does not hinge on individual scholars’ biographical details but on the integrity of the collective process of truth-seeking; and (c) asking scholars to disclose information about themselves undermines the norms and practices that safeguard research impartiality. The authors suggest that scholarly communities should instead focus on protecting the freedom of scholarly inputs, while also insisting on methodological transparency and rigor.

The Willpower Paradox: Possible and Impossible Conceptions of Self-Control
Thomas Goschke and Veronika Job

There is a paradox in the common assumption that self-control is required when short-term desires are stronger than long-term goals, Goschke and Job argue: How can a person possibly desire to recruit self-control to prevent the behavior they most strongly desire to perform? They propose that any coherent theory must abandon the assumptions that (a) recruitment of self-control is an intentional process, (b) humans are unitary agents, or (c) self-control consists in overriding the currently strongest desire. Goschke and Job propose a taxonomy of different kinds of self-control processes and discuss the
Four Misconceptions About Nonverbal Communication
Miles L. Patterson, Alan J. Fridlund, and Carlos Crivelli

Patterson and colleagues argue that faulty presumptions about nonverbal behavior have hindered understanding of its patterns and functions in social settings. They write that four misconceptions about nonverbal communication are that people: (a) communicate using decodable body language; (b) have a stable personal space they use to regulate contact with others; (c) express emotion using universal facial expressions; and (d) can deceive and detect deception, using dependable telltale clues. Patterson and colleagues describe the pervasiveness of these misconceptions and their consequences across domains, from intimate relationships to the courtroom and even to international security.

Is It the Judge, the Sender, or Just the Individual Message? Disentangling Person and Message Effects on Variation in Lie-Detection Judgments
Sarah Volz, Marc-André Reinhard, and Patrick Müller

Are some message-senders generally more transparent than others, or do individual messages differ in their transparency of veracity regardless of sender? Using veracity judgments to analyze multiple messages from individual senders, Volz and colleagues estimated how variance in the accuracy of veracity judgments is attributable to judges, senders, and senders’ messages. Truth/lie detectability varied for the messages but not for the senders. Message veracity accounted for most variation in truth/lie detectability. Consistent with the notion that a (mis)match between sender demeanor and veracity determines accuracy, lie and truth detectability varied within individual senders. And judges primarily determined variance in lie-versus-truth classifications and in confidence, but they did not impact truth/lie detectability.

(Why) Is Misinformation a Problem?
Zoë Adams, Magda Osman, Christos Bechlivanidis, and Björn Meder

Advancements in information technology (e.g., the Internet, social media) are viewed as a main cause of misinformation’s proliferation, according to the authors’ examination of different disciplines that investigate misinformation. However, they argue that this relationship is unclear, and a causal relationship between misinformation and misbehavior has not been empirically demonstrated. Given these two doubts, Adams and colleagues suggest that any regulatory interventions should aim to empower people to navigate both traditional and online information landscapes without posing the risk of eroding the foundations of an open and democratic society.

Neurocognitive Model of Schema-Congruent and -Incongruent Learning in Clinical Disorders: Application to Social Anxiety and Beyond
David A. Moscovitch, Morris Moscovitch, and Signy Sheldon

Schemas such as negative mental representations of the self (e.g., “I am unlovable”) guide people’s thoughts and behaviors and lie at the core of many mental disorders. Moscovitch and colleagues suggest that the optimal development of interventions aimed at changing negative schemas can benefit from a framework outlining how schema change occurs in the brain. Their memory-based neurocognitive
framework for schema emergence and change, the SCIL model, highlights the critical roles of the hippocampus, ventromedial prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and posterior neocortex in directing schema-congruent and -incongruent learning (SCIL). The authors use this model to recommend optimal interventions to change schemas and provide cognitive-behavior therapy for social anxiety disorder as an illustrative example.

Toward Parsimony in Bias Research: A Proposed Common Framework of Belief-Consistent Information Processing for a Set of Biases
Aileen Oeberst and Roland Imhoff

Oeberst and Imhoff argue that several information-processing biases (e.g., bias blind spot, hostile media bias, egocentric/ethnocentric bias, outcome bias) can be attributed to the combination of an individual’s fundamental prior belief and the human tendency to process information in a way that is consistent with their beliefs. They propose that different biases share the same underlying belief and differ only in the outcomes being assessed (i.e., the dependent variables), thus tapping into different manifestations of the same latent information processing. Thus, Oeberst and Imhoff suggest a more parsimonious approach to explaining biases than the current theoretical explanations.

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