



## Working Memory in the Wild: An Introduction to the Special Issue



Randall W. Engle, David Z. Hambrick

Over 40 years ago, [Baddeley and Hitch \(1974\)](#) described working memory as a mental “workspace” for information processing and storage, and demonstrated the importance of this system for complex cognition. Working memory has since emerged as a central construct in theories of human cognition. In recent decades, there has been particular focus on individual differences in *working memory capacity* and its consequences for complex tasks that people are called on to perform in the workplace, the classroom, the home, and other real-world settings.

At a theoretical level, we now know that working memory capacity reflects mechanisms of encoding and retrieval from long-term memory, maintenance of information in a temporary state, and blocking of unwanted information from consciousness. Tying all of this together is the executive attention system, which regulates the contents of attention and consciousness. While the literature often refers to this broad area as cognitive control, it is now clear that the system is important in the

regulation of not just thought, but emotion and behavior more generally.

The goal of this special issue of the JARMAC is to publish new theory and research concerning the role of working memory capacity in the everyday world—“in the wild”, to borrow from [Hutchins’ \(1995\)](#) book *Cognition in the Wild*. The 14 articles include both reviews of pertinent literature and empirical reports of findings from original research, covering the role of working memory capacity in everyday settings and tasks.

We hope you find these articles as enlightening and fun to read as we did in editing them.

### References

- [Baddeley, A. D., & Hitch, G. \(1974\)](#). *Working memory*. In [G. H. Bower \(Ed.\)](#), *The psychology of learning and motivation: Advances in research and theory* (Vol. 8) (pp. 47–89). New York: Academic Press.
- [Hutchins, E. \(1995\)](#). *Cognition in the wild*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.