

# New Content From *Perspectives on Psychological Science*

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## [Why Evolutionary Psychology Should Abandon Modularity](#)

*David Pietraszewski and Annie E. Wertz*

Philosophers and psychologists have long debated whether the human mind consists of distinct systems or modules. Evolutionary psychology has been considered to endorse massive modularity—the mind is mostly composed of modules—and this has served as grounds for skepticism of evolutionary psychology’s assumptions. Pietraszewski and Wertz suggest that the debate about modularity and the notion of massive modularity are confused by the level of analysis that researchers use to approach the mind. They provide a framework to clarify levels of analysis and explain how confusion between levels has led to misunderstandings of evolutionary psychology and other fields.

## [Connecting Theory to Methods in Longitudinal Research](#)

*Christopher J. Hopwood, Wiebke Bleidorn, and Aidan G. C. Wright*

Longitudinal research requires data collection across time. But what are the optimal time points to collect those data? A disconnect between theories about psychological processes and timing of assessments in longitudinal research has led to issues such as mixed findings and nonspecific conclusions, Hopwood and colleagues argue. Hence, they call for researchers to connect theories to methods in longitudinal research and offer potential solutions for researchers to address how time should be scaled, how many assessments should be conducted, and how frequently and when assessments should occur.

## [Challenging the Idea That Humans Are Not Designed to Solve Climate Change](#)

*Quentin D. Atkinson and Jennifer Jacquet*

Atkinson and Jacquet defy the idea that the human brain has not evolved to cope with the demands needed to solve the crisis of climate change. They explain that attributing climate inaction to psychological barriers presents several problems, including disregard for variability within and between

populations, oversimplification of psychological research and its policy implications, shifting of responsibility to individuals while minimizing the roles of institutions, and rationalization of inaction. Thus, instead of framing climate inaction as a result of individual universal and fixed psychologies, scientists should frame it as a cultural phenomenon that reflects values, norms, institutions, and technologies and a concern that humans can collectively change.

[Reexamining Social Media and Socioemotional Well-Being Among Adolescents Through the Lens of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Theoretical Review and Directions for Future Research](#)

*Jessica L. Hamilton, Jacqueline Nesi, and Sophia Choukas-Bradley*

Is the use of social media helping or harming adolescents? Hamilton and colleagues summarize perspectives on this debate and ponder how the COVID-19 pandemic may have magnified social media's effects on adolescents' socioemotional well-being, providing an opportunity for the field to reevaluate current research approaches. The authors propose future research directions guided by a more nuanced approach to the effects of social media use. They conclude with a call to action for psychological scientists to translate their findings into clinical and health guidelines and inform policies that promote adolescents' well-being.

[The Power of Odor Persuasion: The Incorporation of Olfactory Cues in Virtual Environments for Personalized Relaxation](#)

*Silvia Francesca Maria Pizzoli, Dario Monzani, Ketti Mazzocco, Emanuela Maggioni, and Gabriella Pravettoni*

Recent research in virtual-reality tools is creating opportunities to include the sense of smell in clinical psychological research. Pizzoli and colleagues review the importance of olfaction for relaxation, including, for instance, using pleasant smells to reduce heart rate, blood pressure, and negative affect. They mention how smells, for example, may enhance sense of presence, augment affective activation, or provide sensorial experiences and perceptions that can leverage emotional engagement to personalize and enhance relaxation. The researchers discuss possible future applications of olfaction in virtual-reality interventions for relaxation and the clinical applications of such interventions.

[Dismissing “Don’t Know” Responses to Perceived Risk Survey Items Threatens the Validity of Theoretical and Empirical Behavior-Change Research](#)

*Erika A. Waters, Marc T. Kiviniemi, Jennifer L. Hay, and Heather Orom*

Waters and colleagues describe a decade-long research program that investigates the possibility that some people might genuinely not know their risk of even well-publicized hazards and, thus, ignoring their “don’t know” responses on perceived risk surveys might threaten the applicability of risk and behavior-change research. “Don’t know” responses are prevalent in the U.S. population, especially among marginalized groups, and appear to be associated with fewer health-protective behaviors. The prevalence of “don’t know” responses about certain risks might reveal populations that need targeted interventions to change their behaviors to promote health and protection from hazards.

[Unstandard Deviation: The Untapped Value of Positive Deviance for Reducing Inequalities](#)

*Kai Ruggeri and Tomas Folke*

Studying individuals who emerge from disadvantaged circumstances to experience better outcomes than the average outcomes of their group (i.e., show positive deviance) may help to inform public policies aimed at reducing inequalities. Ruggeri and Folke use examples from the real world and experiments to illustrate how studying the behaviors and outcomes of positive deviants can reveal how they depart from their groups and overcome inequalities. The authors propose that understanding these individuals' trajectories can help to inform interventions that are population-relevant and have a higher likelihood of benefiting individuals in adverse circumstances.

### [Psychology's Stewardship of Gender/Sex](#)

*Zach C. Schudson*

Schudson, a junior scholar, writes the preface for a special section that brings together independently submitted articles that bear on a similar theme—in this case, diversity of current directions in psychological research on gender and/or sex. Schudson uses the four articles in the section to examine psychology's stewardship of gender/sex and suggests strategies for improving the field's sense of responsibility toward the concepts it uses, promoting collective goals and prosocial actions, and fostering healthy environments.