

Building bridges between fields

Nature Reviews Psychology provides a home for articles that integrate research across fields of psychology.

“ interdisciplinary papers are particularly exciting because they bring insights from one field to bear on another, building bridges between independent literatures ”

Many researchers have experienced the realization at some point in their career that scientists from a different subfield have been asking a similar research question to their own. In some cases, parallel literatures rarely meet owing to differences in terminology or because they are rooted in different experimental paradigms and traditions. For example, what cognitive psychologists call ‘executive function’ or ‘cognitive control,’ clinical psychologists might call ‘inhibitory control’ and social psychologists might call ‘self-regulation.’ Similar tasks are used to assess these functions, but a complete understanding of how people control and inhibit inappropriate attention, thoughts, and behaviours might be best understood by drawing together findings across multiple tasks and construct names.

Despite their surface differences, related literatures might provide key insights into the same underlying behaviour. However, given the challenge of finding time to keep up with one’s own discipline, wading into a new literature is daunting and sometimes unfeasible, leaving cross-field connections undiscovered.

Some *Nature Reviews Psychology* articles fit squarely within a subfield of cognitive, social, or clinical psychology. However, because the journal spans the full breadth of psychological science, we offer a unique home for work that brings together distinct fields and subfields to draw conclusions across methods or research approaches. These papers bring a productive new angle to entrenched debate and provide a big-picture synthesis of psychological phenomena.

Within cognitive psychology, [White and Burton](#) review individual differences in face perception, noting how the extremes of performance inform basic and applied research in cognition. In clinical psychology, [Lincoln and colleagues](#) highlight how basic and interventional research into emotion regulation in psychopathology have operated largely separately, and how they might be better linked to advance understanding and treatment in future work. Turning to social psychology, [Hadley and colleagues](#) discuss face-to-face social interaction and non-verbal behaviours, applying a cognitive lens to a social phenomenon that is relevant to many research traditions.

Moving beyond subfield boundaries, we are particularly excited about publishing reviews that bridge broader

gaps within psychology. Two recent examples in the May and June issues integrate cognitive and clinical psychology.

In the May issue, [Coull and Giersch](#) review how people process timing information, drawing a distinction between processing the order of two events and processing the duration of one event. When both timing processes are working well, they contribute together to the sense of time flowing forward (or, as depicted on the [May cover](#), ‘time’s arrow’). Coull and Giersch suggest that this distinction is key to understanding the cognitive and neural mechanisms of timing as well as instances in which timing is disrupted. Integrating the cognitive and clinical literatures, Coull and Giersch reveal that individuals with schizophrenia seem to have an underlying difficulty with order processing that also affects their ability to process duration. Cognitive and clinical dissociations support the division of the sense of time into two processes. This conclusion can guide both cognitive and clinical research in this domain.

In this issue, [Pearson and colleagues](#) review how reward influences attention and decision-making. They describe how visual attention processes prioritize stimuli that are associated with rewarding outcomes, in turn influencing decision-making. The effects of learned value persist even after the reward is no longer available or relevant, acting as a sort of attentional ‘habit.’ Cognitive psychology experiments often involve trivial or artificial rewards such as small amounts of money or points, but the idea of prioritising reward has considerable echoes in the context of addiction. Turning to clinical psychology, [Pearson and colleagues](#) review the habitual prioritization of reward in individuals with substance use disorder. Integrating findings across these two literatures, they note that substance use is often associated with an unusually strong attentional priority for valuable stimuli in experimental contexts. These combined insights about how value modulates attention can improve our understanding of both adaptive and maladaptive decision-making.

These interdisciplinary papers are particularly exciting because they bring insights from one field to bear on another, building bridges between independent literatures. We hope that insights from these and similar papers will bring new understanding and enrich scientific progress across the field.