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Evo-Devo Meets the Mind: Towards a Developmental Evolutionary Psychology

Griffiths, Paul E (2001) *Evo-Devo Meets the Mind: Towards a Developmental Evolutionary Psychology*. [Preprint]



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Abstract

The emerging discipline of evolutionary developmental biology has opened up many new lines of investigation into morphological evolution. Here I explore how two of the core theoretical concepts in evo-devomodularity and homology apply to evolutionary psychology. I distinguish three sorts of module - developmental, functional and mental modules and argue that mental modules need only be virtualfunctional modules. Evolutionary psychologists have argued that separate mental modules are solutions to separate evolutionary problems. I argue that the structure of developmental modules in an organism helps determine what counts as a separate evolutionary problem for that organism. I suggest that homology as an organizing principle for research in evolutionary psychology, has been severely neglected in favor of analogy (adaptive function). I consider some arguments suggesting that determining homology is less epistemically demanding than determining adaptive function and argue that psychological categories defined by homology are, in fact, more suitable objects of psychological - and particularly neuropsychological - investigation than categories defined by analogy. Extrapolations of experimental results in neuropsychology to homologues of the experimental system are warranted, but similar extrapolations to analogues are not warranted.

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Item Type: **Preprint**

Keywords: evolutionary developmental biology development evolutionary psychology modules modularity analogy homology adaptive function projectibility

Subjects: [Specific Sciences > Biology > Developmental Biology](#)
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Conferences and Volumes: [\[2001\] Pitt-London Workshop in the Philosophy of Biology and Neuroscience \(London, September 2001\)](#)

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Date Deposited: 17 Feb 2002

Last Modified: 07 Oct 2010 11:10

Item ID: 567

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