Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology
www.jsecjournal.com – 2007, 1 (1): 1-6.

EDITORIAL

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY: THE INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL, EVOLUTIONARY, AND CULTURAL STUDIES

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Abstract
The *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology* is an online initiative designed to bridge sub-disciplines of psychology in order to gain holistic insights into human behavior, emotion, cognition, and motivation. We believe that the perspectives of social, evolutionary, and cultural psychology each provide unique advantages for psychological investigation. Social psychology emphasizes individual functioning within the local group; cultural psychology emphasizes the role of one's social environment and emergent cultural practices; and evolutionary psychology emphasizes the adapted function of particular behaviors at the level of the individual. In this editorial, we introduce the philosophical questions guiding the formation of this new journal.

Keywords: social psychology, evolutionary psychology, cultural psychology

The Purpose of the Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology

Gone are the days of segregation in psychology. The earliest researchers contributing to modern psychology had to establish the field from the ground up, which led to a separation of theoretical backgrounds. William James (1890/1981) focused on the function of behavior, reflecting on Darwin's theory of natural selection almost to the exclusion of the role of learning; John Watson (1924) focused on the role of learned associations between stimuli on behavior to the exclusion of consciousness; Sigmund Freud (1995) developed his psychoanalytic approach based on the role of unconscious drives on behavior. Each was developed with great detail, allure, and value, though much to the exclusion of other psychological theories. However, in modern times with these great traditions underway, it is now not only possible, but a necessity to aspire to interdisciplinary scholarship in psychology – in practice (e.g. cognitive-behavioral therapy), pedagogy (e.g. combining media and psychology) and research (e.g. socio-cultural psychology).

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Our goal in this journal is to provide a space for scholars to share these integrated theories and research. With the *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology* (JSEC), we offer a forum not only for work combining different fields within psychology, but also for interdisciplinary work combining psychology and other fields. Psychologists and social scientists are beginning to integrate resources to more comprehensively understand human behavior. The nature-nurture issue is ceasing to be a debate in which psychologists posit themselves on one side or another of the issue. Today, psychologists are adopting the idea that social, cultural, and evolutionary forces affect human behavior, thought, and emotion.

Throughout modern psychology's brief history, one of the reasons that psychologists have focused on a single aspect of psychology exclusively is because it is difficult to study all of the influences on human behavior simultaneously. However, with recent advances in statistics, such as multiple regression, multi-dimensional scaling, and easily computed ANOVAs, as well as advances in methodology and tools, such as the human genome project and brain imaging, we are no longer limited to approaching human behavior from one perspective. In addition, there is a new ease to the sharing of information, which allows for the exchange of ideas from academicians all over the world and many types of research with peoples from diverse cultures. Part of this exchange is aided by online, free-access, peer-reviewed journals such as JSEC. We are no longer limited to Western psychology, but are able to explore theories of psychology from other parts of the world. While the complexity seems daunting, it offers a productive challenge for psychologists – "the world is so complex that without sound empirical data the theorists are blind…quantifying is precisely what we do when things get complicated" (Richerson & Boyd, 2005, 257).

Psychologists are increasing their interdisciplinary collaborations, intercultural perspectives, and inclusion of complex ideas. We hope to provide a space for the psychologists who are venturing into this new interdisciplinary realm of psychology, combining the areas of social, evolutionary, and cultural psychology, as well as other related areas of study.

The Nature/Nurture Issue Need Not Be a Debate

When people outside of the fields of cultural and evolutionary psychologies think of the two fields, they often equate the relationship between the two with the nature-nurture debate. Is individual behavior the result of an inborn, cognitive architecture (nature) or the result of experience from interactions with one's culture (nurture)? When the question is framed in this way, one is forced to focus on either the role of the human mind in the creation of culture, or the role of culture in the creation of the human mind. This distinction was the starting point for modern Evolutionary Psychology.

The goal of Evolutionary Psychology is to determine the ways in which the human mind is adapted to past environments (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992; Buss, 1995). As humans and human ancestors evolved they faced a series of reproductive problems – such as where to find food and shelter and how to avoid predators, as well as problems related to finding a mate, raising offspring, and cooperating within a social group. According to Evolutionary Psychologists, each problem requires a different solution, in the form of a mental module that can produce the appropriate behavior. For example, though paternal

investment is rare among mammals, many human fathers provide some form of investment (direct or indirect) for their offspring (Geary, 2000). Without paternal investment, infant mortality rates increase. In our evolutionary past, those infants born to fathers with a module that produced the behavior of paternal care were more likely to survive and reproduce than those infants only cared for by a mother, therefore the father-assisted infants passed on the "paternal care module" more often than the mother-only infants passed on their traits. Today we often see instances of paternal care, in part because of our evolved cognitive architecture. If we adopt this Darwinian perspective of human behavior, we can assume that our adapted minds lead to the generation of culture, but culture does not produce the universal responses to the environment observed in common among humans. Thus the important topic of study is the human mind itself, or the individual.

Conversely, the goal of the Standard Social Science Model (SSSM) is to determine the ways in which human culture shapes the human mind. The SSSM is the depiction of cultural studies laid out by Evolutionary Psychologists (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992), and includes the views of scholars such as Clifford Geertz and Emile Durkheim. From this perspective the culture into which one is born creates the individual mind, and thus human behavior. Accordingly, with the rise of cultural studies "the blank slate was traded in for blank cognitive procedures" (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992, 29), and the infantile mind is viewed as complex, but content free – a hard drive devoid of software. Complex psychological structures within the individual emerge and are organized by the socio-cultural group. Support for this view comes from the diversity of human behavior that appears dependent upon to which group one belongs. The important topics of study are the cultures (transmission of traditions, information, knowledge, and symbols) of different groups of people.

These two extreme views – one that human behavior is determined entirely by culture, and the other that human behavior is determined entirely by an adapted cognitive architecture – might have at one point pitted scholars against one another. Attempts at the integration of evolution and social behavior has historically received criticism from both sides, such as Wilson's theory of Sociobiology, which sparked criticism from social scientists and biologists alike (Laland & Brown, 2002). The heated debate about whether evolutionary theory could be applied to human behavior inspired early Evolutionary Psychologists to band together, come forward with creative theories, and leave criticism to those in opposition of the field. Now that Evolutionary Psychology has made its way into textbooks, and perhaps too much into the popular culture (a "gene" for shopping?, Dagg, 2004), the field stands to become more rigorous, and filled with exciting debates. Modern Evolutionary Psychology was founded on the ideal of integrating areas of science – biology, psychology, anthropology, and primatology, to name only a few (Barkow, Cosmides & Tooby, 1992). Thus discussions of the role of culture in evolution, and vice versa, are at an interesting and fruitful point in the field of Evolutionary Psychology. However, the confusion as to how the two combine is prevalent still.

A distinction between culture and the evolved human mind is misleading because culture and the individual are not isolated entities, but are concurrent. An Evolutionary Psychologist would not deny that there is an emergent aggregate of human values, traditions, technology, and symbols that in part combine to create culture. The discussion then becomes one of the chicken and the egg – did the adapted human mind create

culture, that then in part shapes human behavior, or did human culture emerge, which then shapes the human mind, which in turn can manipulate the culture? Each is a different level of examination, with historical relevance of different time frames. Evolutionary Psychologists examine the individual by looking at the ways in which traits are selected for and come to characterize a species by means of individual reproduction at the genetic level. Cultural psychologists examine an entire group of peoples by looking at the ways in which the wealth of tradition, knowledge, and other aspects of culture influence the people within the culture. This level can be considered the cultural level, because rather than looking to immediate group processes (such as social psychologists) many aspects of a culture can be transmitted without group interaction of a face-to-face type nature. For example, one can be influenced by what she reads or watches on television (aspects of culture) without ever interacting with another person. Each level of examination is necessary for an understanding of human behavior in proximate times (see Strout, 2006).

Thus the integration of culture and evolution must in part distinguish between these two levels of examination. More recent theories seek to do so by examining the interplay between the two, and the contributions each provides to understanding human behavior. With the dual inheritance theory, Richerson and Boyd (2005) argue for the inseparability of culture and evolution. One aspect of this theory is the importance of population thinking to each. Darwin's theory of natural selection is not to conjecture about the changes to an entire species, but rather the changes in the variation of traits among a population made up of individual organisms. So too is culture made up of beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge that varies among individuals, with some aspects of culture being passed on more than others as those aspects provide advantages to the people of the culture. A fad is not likely to pass between generations, but a powerful new technology will. Humans cannot be viewed as cultural species devoid of adapted traits, nor vice versa – but perhaps more important are the ways that cultural evolution and genetic evolution parallel each other. Richerson and Boyd (2005) tackle the varying levels of culture and evolution by blurring the boundary between both and focusing on process similarities.

The Re-integration of Social Psychology

Social psychologists have historically not shied away from integration. Lewin's (1951) field theory was an integration of the group and individual level. From this approach, one must examine the ways social environments influence human behavior, as well as the ways that human behavior influences social environments. From the influence of this early work, there is no surprise that 50 years later the term 'socio-cultural' is known by any introductory psychology student. One might find it quite obvious that how humans relate to one another is influenced by culture. Humans live together in groups, and thus the norms, values, and laws of the immediate group to which we belong will affect how we relate to one another. As the norms of the group fluctuate, our behavior also fluctuates. Classic experiments show this quite well. For example, Asch's (1951) conformity studies showed that individuals will agree to judgments they know are incorrect if group members do also. Milgram's (1963) obedience experiments showed

that people who believe themselves to be kind will act in a way that brings harm to others if encouraged to do so by an authority.

The integrative nature of social psychology offered a near-seamless integration with Evolutionary Psychology as well. While social psychologists describe behavior and the role of current influences, evolutionary psychologists ask, and provide answers for the why questions by explaining past selection pressures. For example, social psychologists Tajfel and Turner (1986) proposed social identity theory of prejudice, proposing that we have a tendency to identify with our own 'in-group', and compare people not in our group (our out-group) negatively. To offer an explanation of this behavior, an evolutionary perspective of prejudice asserts that we are prejudice towards people not of our own group because of an evolved disease-avoidance mechanism (Faulkner, Schnaller, Park & Duncan, 2004). Thus we identify more with in-group members than with out-group members because in our evolutionary past, those who feared strangers were less likely to contract life threatening diseases than those who did not fear strangers.

Within this integrative framework, social psychology has a history with both culture and evolution, but not necessarily at the same time. In the rich history of social psychology, we have had in one corner the socio-cultural psychologists, and in the other the evolutionary social psychologists. It seems that social psychology has been part of a lopsided love triangle in which social psychology interacts with evolution and culture, but the latter two remain unacquainted. A theory stands to gain much explanatory power by examining the individual, the social group, and culture. Humans, like other great apes, are a social species and as such their behavior cannot be examined in isolation from the group (Wilson, 1975). Perhaps unique to humans, we also live in complex cultures, so we must examine the influences on behavior at more local and global levels as well.

While we have been focusing for the most part on work that combines branches of psychology, the integration of social behavior, culture and evolution is necessarily interdisciplinary. Those who adopt a Darwinian perspective enter into a rich history of ideas that allow for an integration of the levels of examination (Richerson & Boyd, 2005). No longer is the individual separated from the group or the culture, but the three can be viewed interdependently. Further, culture acts as a bridge between the natural and social sciences (Richerson & Boyd, 2005). Shifting the focus to that of human behavior provides an opportunity to view behavior from many perspectives – the biological and neurobiological, the cultural and social, the psychological, the sociological, the developmental, the anthropological, and on and on. As scholars, those of us in these different disciplines often ask the same questions, for example, "what does it mean to be human?" We hope that the *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology* will become an outlet for sharing the answers to questions of this nature. This new journal is dedicated to providing a forum for quality scholarship that uses novel approaches to understanding human behavior, one in which readers who are interested in these novel approaches may find ideas that will spur their own research and create exciting dialogues about these great collaborations in psychology.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank Jessica Willis for her keen eye in reviewing this manuscript.

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