

## INTRODUCTION

## What Is the Next Big Question in Evolutionary Psychology?: An Introduction to the Special Issue

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It is usually next to impossible to determine exactly when a new scientific field began, and this is true of evolutionary psychology. Despite the fact that the use of the term “evolutionary psychology” dates at least as far back as to 1973 (Ghiselin, 1973), predating even the publication of E. O. Wilson’s classic *Sociobiology* (1975), many evolutionary psychologists and others nonetheless regard the year 1992 as the official beginning of the new scientific field. Even though there were a few important evolutionary psychological books and articles published before 1992 (Betzig, 1986; Buss, 1989; Cosmides, 1989; Daly & Wilson, 1988), many regard *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* (Barkow, Cosmides, & Tooby, 1992) as the field’s “bible” that put the new science on the map and marked its birth. If 1992 marked the birth of evolutionary psychology, then we are rapidly approaching its 30th birthday. We thought it would be a good time to take stock of the past 30 years by looking to the future, by asking the question “What is the next big question in evolutionary psychology?” in the special issue of *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences* devoted to the theme.

We are delighted that a large number of evolutionary behavioral scientists answered our call

and offered their respective views on the past and future of evolutionary psychology. We are particularly delighted that as many as three original contributors to “the bible” (David M. Buss, Martin Daly, and John Tooby) have graciously agreed to contribute to this special issue by offering their unique perspectives. Reflecting the rich history of evolutionary psychology in the last 30 years, not only in theoretical and empirical research but also in education, training, and mentorship, we are also delighted that the special issue includes independent contributions from no fewer than four different mentor–mentee pairs from four different intellectual dynasties and great labs in evolutionary psychology in three different countries throughout the world (Martin Daly and Catherine Salmon from McMaster University in Canada; David M. Buss and Sarah E. Hill from the University of Texas, and Douglas T. Kenrick and Norman P. Li from Arizona State University in the United States; and Meri Tadinac and Ivana Hromatko from the University of Zagreb in Croatia). Note that Li coauthors his piece with his own protégé, Jose C. Yong; thus the Kenrick dynasty is represented by three generations of contributors.

When we first issued the call for papers for this special issue, asking contributors to answer the question “What is the next big question in evolutionary psychology?”, we secretly feared that all contributors would propose the same next big question. Convinced of the correctness of our own view on the future of evolutionary psychology, we thought that everyone else would also choose our question as the obvious next big question in the field. What else could it

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possibly be besides what we think it is? In the end, however, it turned out that there was very little overlap in contributors' views on the future of evolutionary psychology. We didn't even agree with each other!

Nevertheless a few common themes emerge among the contributions. Several emphasize the importance of "translational research," policy implications, and the solution of "real-world problems" (Beaver & Joyner; Gallup; Kenrick; Li, Yong, & van Vugt). Some ponder the reasons that civilians cannot accept evolutionary theory (Gallup; Hromatko & Hrgović) and highlight methodological issues (Salmon; Tadinac) or the importance of proximate mechanisms (Hill; Tadinac). Bailey and Tadinac ask different questions, yet arrive at the same answer. For the most part, however, the visions of the contributors, who range from established senior figures in evolutionary psychology to the field's young rising stars, are equally varied. In 1994, nearly at the beginning of the field of evolutionary psychology, Wright remarked, "For now, this is the state of evolutionary psychology: so much fertile terrain, so few farmers" (p. 84). Three decades hence, we now have many more farmers, but still so much more fertile terrain to till. The terrain is getting even more fertile, and we could always use more farmers.

We would like to offer our sincere appreciation to all of our contributors, who took the time to ponder the question we posed for this special issue. We would particularly like to thank Catherine Salmon and David M. Buss, who went the extra mile behind the scenes to make this special issue as great as it could possibly be. We hope the readers of *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences* will enjoy reading the views of the current generation of evolutionary psycholo-

gists on where their field is going. We would love to come back in a decade's time, on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the publication of *The Adapted Mind*, to reassess the field yet again, and pose the same question, "What is the next big question in evolutionary psychology?" to the current contributors and the (then) new emerging stars of the field, who may currently be in high school or in one of our undergraduate classes.

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