

Evolutionary Psychology

- Why EP?
- The Standard Social Science Model
 - Problems with this model

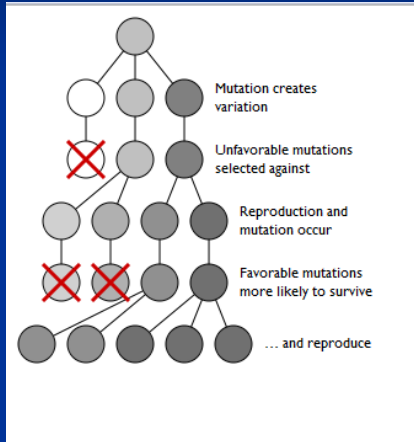
Why Evolutionary Psychology?

- Traditional psychology overlooks what the mind is for

Other life-sciences: design-for-a-function is results of evolution by natural selection

Simply put: Natural selection shapes organisms by preserving those chance genetic variants that aid survival and reproduction

Evolution 101



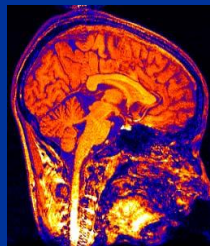
White peppered moth

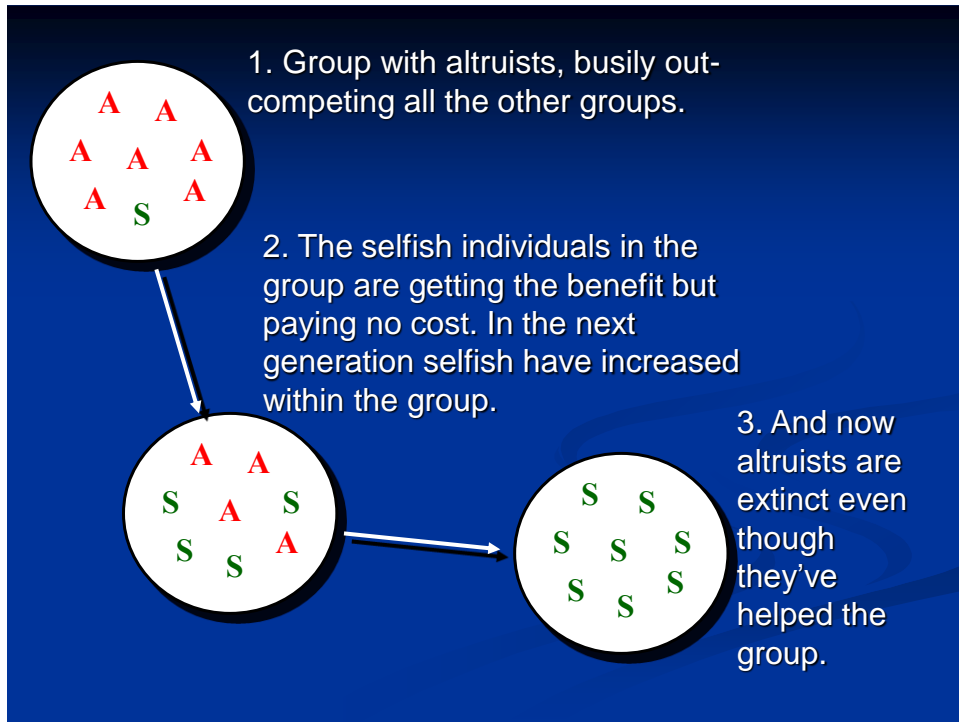


Why Evolutionary Psychology?

Why not think about the mind in the same way?

That is: the mind is an organ like any other
(e.g., liver, heart)





Why Evolutionary Psychology?

Why hasn't EP developed earlier?



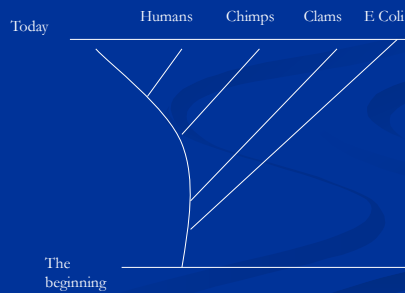
Why Evolutionary Psychology?

We are thought of as higher animals who transcend our biological nature

The Great Chain of Being

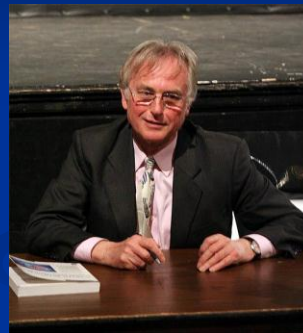
God
 Angels
 Humans
 Apes
 Cats
 Clams
 Rocks

↑



The Selfish-gene and replicators

- What is Dawkins hypothesis about the beginnings of life and the replication that followed?



Why Evolutionary Psychology?

EP is not a subfield of psychology - such as clinical or developmental

It is a way of thinking about the entire field

But what about the entire field? What's wrong with it?

The Standard Social Science Model

Tooby and Cosmides (1992)

- Many Psychologists hold to the **SSSM**
 1. The blank slate
 2. Differences between people arise from differences in experience and cultures
 3. Biological constraints on behavior are unimportant: we have few “instincts” or biological drives
 4. Learning operates by a small number of general-purpose mechanisms
 5. Aim of psychology is to discover how culture and experience, through general learning mechanisms, produce behavior

The Standard Social Science Model

Tooby and Cosmides (1992)

■ Critiques

1. SSSM misunderstands nature of development: If something is absent at birth, it is not necessarily learned
2. SSSM draws false dichotomy between nature and nurture: genes and experience work together to guide behavior

The Standard Social Science Model

Tooby and Cosmides (1992)

■ Critiques

3. General purpose mechanisms cannot explain all behavior:
 - Think of: Pavlov, Skinner, Watson
 - But, general learning can't account for everything (pigs, racoons, and piggy bank – Misbehavior of Organisms)
 - Instead: Seligman (1971): preparedness
 - Swiss Army Knife, Computer analogy

The Standard Social Science Model

Tooby and Cosmides (1992)



■ Critiques

4. SSSM drives a wedge between natural and social sciences

If culture is all important, psychology becomes divorced from biology

But: biology makes possible everything we do

■ Example:

- Men desire to mate more often than women: both psychologists and biologists agree. But same effect in most animals!

The Standard Social Science Model

Tooby and Cosmides (1992)

■ Critiques

5. SSSM lacks an overarching theory of design

- EP unifies psychology by providing an overarching single theory that allows prediction
 - Why should watching violence on TV cause one to become more violent?
 - Why are family ties important?
 - Why do we care about reputations?
 - Why can't we be happy all the time?
 - Why do we crave unhealthy foods?

The Standard Social Science Model

Tooby and Cosmides (1992)

- In essence:
 - Psychology asks “what”, “how”, and “when” questions
 - EP asks “why” questions
 - Psychology: When does learning occur? What parts of the brain are involved?
 - Biologists call these proximate questions
 - EP: Why do men and women have different mating strategies?
 - EP’s call these “Ultimate questions”

The Standard Social Science Model

Tooby and Cosmides (1992)

- There is a Human Nature
 - Both Psychology and EP agree that people have the same human nature:
 - ...but disagree on what that nature is.
 - SSSM: Human nature is a blank slate.
 - Behavior is malleable. We can teach people to be kind and gentle: Evidence? Mead (1928) and the Samoans
 - EP: The Universal People (Don Brown, 1991)
 - Freeman (1983) on Samoans: strict, careful about virginity, men commit rape, family nucleus

The Standard Social Science Model

Tooby and Cosmides (1992)

- People live in groups with rank and status
- To communicate: they use language and facial expressions
- They exchange gifts, track favors, dance and make music
- Live in families centered on mother and children and a man – recognize marriage, kinship, division of labor
- Modesty about sexual behavior
- They have supernatural beliefs, theories about disease, death, and misfortune

Finally: the Naturalistic Fallacy

- EP is controversial
 - Used to excuse repression: racism, sexism, and social injustice

How?

- EP explains behavior: It does not justify it
 - We do not reject EP because it can explain the “why” of marital infidelity?
- The confusion of “is” with “ought”
 - EP provides no moral seal of approval

The Naturalistic Fallacy continued

Good example of Naturalistic Fallacy:

- Social Darwinism (Herbert Spencer, 1820-1903): Social inequality is justified by evolutionary theory

“The poverty of the incapable, the distresses that come upon the imprudent, the starvation of the idle, and those shouldering aside of the weak by the strong...are the decree of a large, farseeing benevolence”

- Evolution means progress
- Shouldn't meddle with social forces
- Adopted by Andrew Carnegie: a religious principle