

Introduction

After a long period of dominance by the behaviourist and cognitivist paradigms, contemporary psychology seems to be waiting for a new inflexion point. We cannot predict with certainty what the future of psychology will be in the next decades, but we are confident that this future will incorporate a significant amount of knowledge provided by the biological sciences. Neuroscience, genetics, and evolution are the three legs of this “new” biological knowledge, and they are becoming important parts of contemporary psychologists’ tool kits. This Special Issue deals with evolution, the third of these legs, particularly as it relates to developmental psychology. In fact, *evolutionary developmental psychology* is the name of a modern approach that aims to increase our understanding of infant, child, and adolescent development through the lens of evolutionary theory. This is not the first time that evolutionary thinking and developmental science have been viewed as compatible pieces to the same puzzle. The romance between evolution and development is as old as the origins of psychology. However, although this was an initially happy marriage, it eventually ended in divorce and left few healthy offspring, the one exception being attachment theory.

In this sense, we purposely use the word “re-searching” in the subtitle of the Issue to mean, on the one hand, that evolutionary developmental psychology (re) searches again, as in the past, the ancient roots of human development and human nature, and, on the other hand, generates new empirical evidence (re-search) to help deepen our comprehension of the links between ontogeny and phylogeny.

But, many may query, “What is new or different this time?” This is what we hope you will discover in the first paper of this Issue by Carlos Hernández Blasi, Amy Gardiner, and David Bjorklund, “*When development matters: from evolutionary psychology to evolutionary developmental psychology*”. In this article, we trace the path from evolutionary psychology, a now well-established though sometimes controversial academic discipline, to evolutionary developmental psychology. As their names make clear, the two perspectives are obviously related, but they are each also distinctive in a number of features. In the Introductory article, Hernández Blasi and his colleagues describe briefly the principle features of evolutionary psychology, then quickly turn their attention to the primary tenets and assumptions of evolutionary developmental psychology. They also provide a brief “state-of-the art” summary for several content areas within evolutionary developmental psychology. In a nutshell, evolutionary developmental psychology is a perspective that aims to become a tool in the service of developmental science, providing a global framework and emphasising the need to integrate both proximal (ontogenetic)

and distal (sociohistorical and phylogenetic) perspectives to obtain a comprehensive view of psychological development.

The second and third papers are examples of applications of evolutionary developmental psychology to important issues. In “*Competition and social and personality development: Some consequences of taking Darwin seriously*”, Patricia Hawley presents her own research program, in progress for nearly 10 years, on the role of aggression in development. Beyond many insightful and thought-provoking views, she proposes that aggression can be used in the service of social dominance and resource control beginning in early childhood. She has empirically identified an interesting child and adolescent profile –individuals she calls *bistrategics*– who use both aggression and prosocial behaviour effectively, depending on the circumstances, and gain a high degree of acceptance from both adults and their peers. If violence and aggression are going to be prevented or approached successfully from different levels (family, school, society) in the near future, this will require a better understanding of their evolutionary nature along the perhaps controversial lines suggested by Hawley.

In the third article by David Geary, “*Children’s academic development: Where evolution meets culture*”, evolution “goes to school”. Geary presents arguments supporting the application of evolutionary principles to contemporary school learning and motivation, something that, if adopted, may be a bitter pill to swallow for politicians in some Darwinian-reluctant states in the US. On the basis of his “soft” modularity view on human cognition and a distinction prevalent in his writings that, we feel, is destined to become classical (biologically primary abilities vs. biologically secondary abilities), Geary proposes that school has become, in practice, a bottleneck where the need to learn new cultural abilities, such as reading and mathematics, has to be harmonised with children’s ancient biases.

If arriving at this point of the Issue, you feel compelled to know a bit more about this approach and/or related perspectives, we recommend to you the *Selected readings and resources for a thorough understanding of the evolutionary developmental psychology perspective* by Kayla Causey. She provides a listing of introductory material on evolutionary developmental psychology as well as evolutionary psychology, for those not yet familiar with the latter approach. Furthermore, supplementary sources of information, with a few but, we hope, very useful, internet websites and, eventually, what she has called a “route to evolutionary developmental psychology”, with a selection of organised readings to pursue, as if one were taking a graduate seminar, are provided.

This Special Issue has been prepared with the purpose of addressing the broader audience of readers that *Anuario de Psicología* has. As such, we include, particularly in the opening paper by Hernández Blasi, Gardiner, and Bjorklund, some issues and information that we typically would not detail in a more specialized journal. For example, we provide a more extended description in the first paper of some basic issues in evolutionary psychology, crucial to understanding the pros and cons of the evolutionary developmental psychology position, but perhaps unfamiliar to many developmentalists. Similarly, the third paper by David Geary pays substantial attention to some topics that may

be familiar to most developmental psychologists (e.g., core knowledge in infants), but is less familiar to educational and/or adult-focused psychologists. Overall, we have tried to select topics and invite authors whose expertise made it possible to present clearly both basic and applied interests in social and cognitive development from an evolutionary developmental perspective in the short space dedicated to a Special Issue.

In any case, we wish, that this Special Issue on evolutionary developmental Psychology (which is the second published in Spain) will eventually be useful and/or suggestive to both those focused on psychological research on development and those who work with infants, children, adolescents, and their caregivers/teachers on a daily basis. In a more general sense, we wish also it could be equally fruitful to psychologists, researchers, and practitioners from any field, who are interested in psychological development, evolution, and their potential relationships.

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