

Improving Quality of Life, with Science



2016
IMPACT
REPORT

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends of the EI,

It has been another eventful year for the Evolution Institute, with some great accomplishments to report and some great new people who have become involved. I will use our “Think, Say, Do” format to describe some of the highlights.

THINK

Scientific research is an integral part of our mission because using evolutionary theory to understand and improve the human condition is so recent. Two academic volumes based on EI conferences have been published this year, one on [education](#) edited by Daniel B. Berch and David C. Geary and another on [economics](#), edited by Alan Kirman and myself.

EI Vice President Peter Turchin has made great progress with Seshat, the global history databank that he is compiling to study the cultural evolution of large-scale societies around the

world. The project was recently featured in a New Scientist article titled [“The Database that is Rewriting History to Predict the Future”](#). Please visit the [Seshat](#) website for more on this amazing project.

The EI’s Norway Project made progress on the “Think” front with an academic volume on Sustainable Modernity organized by Nina Witoszek and Atle Midttun. Finally, we can be proud to have played a major role launching a new academic society, the [Cultural Evolution Society](#), based on an EI workshop and a grant awarded by the John Templeton Foundation in 2015.

SAY

Few topics are as misunderstood as evolution, especially in relation to human affairs. An essential part of the EI’s mission is therefore to educate the general public and policy experts of all stripes about evolution as an essential body of knowledge for understanding and improving the human condition. That is the *raison d’être* of [This View of Life](#) (for the general public) and [Social Evolution Forum](#) (for a professional audience). Kudos to Ashle Bailey and Eric Michael Johnson for helping me manage these communication outlets. Thanks also to the many authors who have contributed content.

Arguably the most exciting news on the “Say” front is [Economics.com](#), an online magazine started by EI associate Robert Kadar (who was also the founding editor of TVOL) with EI support to publicize “the next evolution of economics”. In a single year, it has achieved a circulation of a quarter million page views per month and has become widely discussed in economics circles.

DO

First on my list of “Do” accomplishments is the new early learning center that is being created in the Tampa area with the help of the Pastor Daniel Dean, a solid friend of the EI thanks to Jerry Lieberman and the other EI associates in the Tampa area. Education was the first policy area that Jerry and I decided to address as a proof of concept for the Evolution Institute and the early learning center therefore reflects the full Think-Say-Do cycle that we strive to achieve for all policy areas.

I’m also proud of the progress that my own [PROSOCIAL](#) project has made this year. This practical method for improving the efficacy of groups and wellbeing of its members is now being used by groups around the world, from government

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

agencies in Australia, to urban neighborhoods in America, to villages in Sierra Leone.

The Mother Ship, Board, Advisors, and Donors

None of these accomplishments would be possible without the “Mother Ship”—the central staff that includes Jerry Miller, Jerry Lieberman, Gin Kohl Lieberman, Ashle Bailey, and numerous part time staff. Or the guidance of our Board members and advisors, including several new members. Or the generosity of our donors, including prominent conservationist George Rabb. It is amazing what we have done with comparatively little resources.

How much could we accomplish if we entered the ranks of the major think tanks? Let’s do our best to find out!

David Sloan Wilson

President
The Evolution Institute



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



To say it is an interesting time, particularly in the western world, is an understatement. We are seeing potentially seismic shifts in governments, with growing nationalism and, one could say, even tribal-like forces becoming very influential across many western nations. While much can – and will – be written about the so-named ‘identity politics’, it is a force that has deep roots in human nature, and evolutionary science has much to say about such groups’ collective identities and the consequences when mismanaged and misdirected.

However, one aspect I want to focus on is the anti-science bias that seem to emerge when such highly charged beliefs and emotions become activated. The Evolution Institute, partly by design, and partly by circumstances, is now in the forefront of the effort to engage science with policy in a meaningful way.

While the best known examples of anti-science relate to the physical sciences, such as the dismissal of global warming as a [Chinese plot](#), it also includes one of the potential cabinet members dismissing the ‘big bang’ theory as a [‘fairy tale’](#) and our now Vice President-Elect [passionately affirming](#) that “only the theory of intelligent design provides even a remotely rational explanation for the known universe”.

This anti-intellectual streak extends to the social sciences and makes fundamental assumptions that impact policy at the programmatic level. Decisions about education are developed with little or no regard to the facts. For example, ‘school choice’ by itself generally does not impact academic performance and has unintended consequences that may lead to [increased disparity](#).

Even more fundamental, this disregard for facts has a significant impact on the discourse around our understandings of the social fabric of society, including how humans cooperate, compete, and interact with a diverse population. The Evolution Institute works to overcome this anti-science rhetoric that is driven by motivations that, in some cases, are sincere and in other cases, financially driven.

Together with you, we are moving the needle in applying and implementing important research in evolutionary science to on-the-ground efforts and policy, addressing pressing social issues and improving quality of life for children, families, and communities.

We want to thank our supporters. Both your intellectual and financial support keeps the light burning. We all must keep focus on the effort to improve the planet at the grand scale and our lives at the local.

If you have been a supporter of this work, I want to extend a personal thank you. You have made this organization grow from an idea to one that is now working around the world in just over 6 years.

If you are new to us, please look through this report, reach out to us and let’s engage. Now more than ever, we need to work together if we are to make a difference. Become a partner in this effort.

Jerry Miller
Executive Director
The Evolution Institute

ABOUT US

WE SOLVE REAL WORLD PROBLEMS

The Evolution Institute is a non-profit think tank with a global presence based in Tampa, FL. Our mission is to provide science-based solutions for today's most pressing social issues in order to improve quality of life.

The Evolution Institute is different from other non-profits and think tanks. Where others are counseled to have a single focus, the EI is capable of applying a single theoretical framework – evolution – to all major policy issues at all scales, from neighborhoods to nations to world history:



NEIGHBORHOODS

Building relationships locally to understand and improve educational, social and economic conditions.



NATIONS

Understanding and improving how nations approach social and economic problems.



WORLD HISTORY

Building a historical database to investigate the evolution of social, political, and economic processes.

THE EVOLUTION INSTITUTE IS A THINK TANK THAT DOESN'T JUST THINK



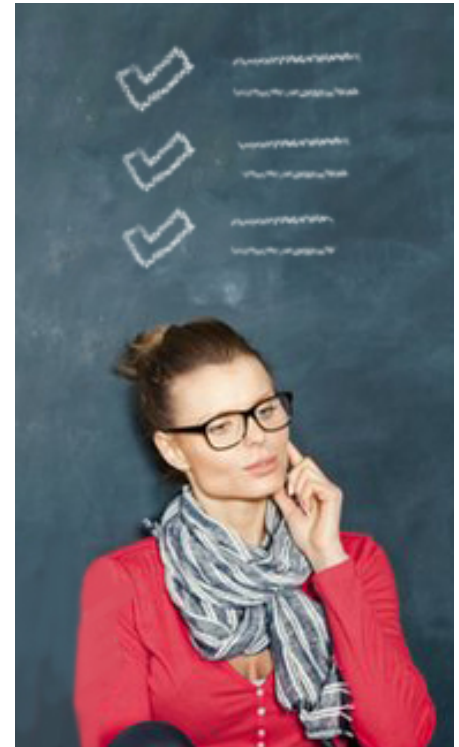
WE THINK

We undertake original research both theoretical and applied; we hold workshops with leading scientists from around the globe; we publish in leading journals to share information and to advance the sciences; we build scientific databanks.



WE SAY

A quiet voice is not heard. Though our own media outlets, our workshops, and our direct communications, the voices of science are heard in an effort to influence policy and program decisions that can lead to a better quality of life.



WE DO

Applied work provides the laboratory to improve quality of life. Combining theoretical work with best practices, and working in collaboration with practitioners, we create models that can empirically demonstrate the value of applying this science.

WHO WE ARE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



David Sloan Wilson
President of Evolution
Institute, This View of Life
Magazine Editor in Chief



Jerry Lieberman
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Executive Director



Ashle Bailey-Gilreath
Operations Manager





THINK

IN 2016, OUR ACADEMIC-FOCUSED PROJECTS ACHIEVED A GREAT DEAL

Continued to Build a Historical Databank

[Seshat: Global History Databank](#) brings together the most current and comprehensive body of knowledge about human history in one place. Our unique Databank systematically collects what is currently known about the social and political organization of human societies and how civilizations have evolved over time. The mission of the databank is to gather information from historical societies in order to rigorously test different hypotheses about the rise and fall of large-scale societies across the globe and human history. There are currently 71 historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists working on the databank. As of December 12, 2016 an impressive 152,259 data points have been collected on 30 geographical societies.

Formed an Academic Society on Cultural Evolution

With the coordination of Joe Brewer, we have been actively building a prestigious scientific society devoted to the study

of cultural evolution. It is called the Cultural Evolution Society (CES) and has been carefully guided into being in the last year and a half with generous support from the John Templeton Foundation (JTF). The CES has a founding membership of more than 1600 researchers, instructors, practitioners, and students from more than 50 nations and dozens of academic disciplines.

Publish Academic Research

Two academic volumes based on EI conferences have been published this year: [Evolutionary Perspectives on Child Development and Education](#), edited by Daniel B. Berch and David C. Geary, based on a conference that they helped the EI organize in 2015. The second is [Complexity and Evolution: Toward A New Synthesis for Economics](#), edited by David Sloan Wilson and the economist Alan Kirman.

Held Multiple Workshops and Lectures

A number of presentations were held in 2016 to discuss

Seshat, most notably at the Human Behavior and Evolution Society 28th Annual meeting in June, at Stanford University, the University of Oslo, the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, and at the 17th World Economic History Conference in Kyoto, Japan. Additionally, over the past year we have held numerous workshops in locations such as Japan, Dublin, Tampa, and Singapore in order to continue to advance the research and work behind Seshat.

Were Featured in a Number of Media Outlets

The Seshat project and related research has been featured in an episode of Morgan Freeman's documentary series "[Through the Wormhole](#)" featuring Project Leader Peter Turchin and in [International Business Times](#). Additionally, an article on the recent Seshat Dublin workshop was published in [NewScientist](#), and a previous article on [NewScientist](#) discussed related historical research and its implications.



SAY

2016 SAW TREMENDOUS GROWTH TO OUR COMMUNICATION OUTLETS

We launched a blog network on all things evolution

The Evolution Institute is excited to report on the launch of the Social Evolution Forum blog network, the only evolution themed blog network on the web. SEF is comprised of 21 professional evolutionary researchers from a diversity of fields and backgrounds. Together they offer news, commentary, and analysis on a range of topics under the umbrella of evolutionary science. The content includes reviews and analyses of new peer-reviewed papers, the implications of evolutionary research to the modern world, perspectives on the state of the field, and observations pertaining to the scientific life. The Social Evolution Forum blog network will continue in the tradition of our other communication outlet [This View of Life Magazine](#) as an organization run by evolutionary scientists for both evolutionary scientists and the wider public.

We Launched the Economics Magazine, Economics

[Economics](#) is devoted to celebrating, embracing, and

exploring that Next Evolution of Economics. We scour the world for the most promising and exciting approaches and insights, share them in comprehensible and engaging form, and spread the word about them far and wide. Much of that thinking comes from the world's top economists. But much comes for lesser-known practitioners, and from differently-credentialed or uncredentialed students of the discipline. Economics is a home for real interdisciplinary exchanges. In a short time, Economics has become an amplifier and soundboard for new economic thinking, expanding the reach of that thinking to a broad community of citizens, thinkers, influencers, and policymakers. It has gained attention and praise from Jason Fuhrman (former head, Obama's Council of Economic Advisors), Tim O'Reilly (Next:Economy conferences, two million twitter followers), Joseph Stiglitz (Nobel economist), Yanis Varoufakis (former Greek minister of finance), economist Steve Keen, Frans de Waal (seminal primatologist, ethologist, and evolutionist), and many others.

We Published Special Edition Publications



1. [The Norway Project](#): A Deep Look at its Lessons to Help Us to Improve Our Society.
2. [What's Wrong \(and Right\) About Evolutionary Psychology?](#) This View of Life Magazine Special Report
3. [The Economic, Cultural and Ecosystem Values of the Sudd Wetland in South Sudan](#): An Evolutionary Approach to Environment and Development.
4. [Truth and Reconciliation for Social Darwinism](#). This View of Life Magazine Special Report

We Hosted Webinars

As part of the [Evolution Institute's Evolution & Education Webinar Series](#), Dr. Gabrielle Principe addressed how an evolutionary framework can provide keen insights into the sorts of instructional approaches, curricular materials, and educational contexts that best fit children's natural dispositions and tendencies, as well as how we can better design learning environments to support learning.

Our [second webinar](#) in this series featured Evolution Institute Scientific Advisor [Dennis Embry of Paxis Institute](#) and EI President David Sloan Wilson, as they discuss the [Good Behavior Game](#), its benefits, and its implications on education policy. In addition, the webinar highlighted how the Good Behavior Game illustrates important evolutionary principles and the challenges of spreading a best practice such as the Good Behavior Game, even after it has been shown to work.





DO

2016 SAW EXCITING DEVELOPMENTS IN OUR ON-THE-GROUND PROJECTS

From hosting policy workshops, improving group efficacy, strengthening international relations, to building a school!

We hosted a policy workshop

On September 23rd, the Evolution Institute and United Way Suncoast jointly sponsored a unique professional development opportunity in Tampa, FL, which featured researchers who advise the White House and other national leaders on child development and early childhood care and education policy.

The workshop was broken up into two sessions. Attendees learned from current research findings about stages of development in young children's thinking, techniques for fostering children's language and learning, state policies supportive of early learning, and how a neighboring state has made early learning a non-partisan issue.

The workshop presented educators with key findings from current research that can be translated directly into early childhood program practices, and state and local policy. All reports indicate that it was highly successful endeavor which

may pay significant dividends for the Tampa region and for advancement of the application of science into public policy.

We've built and strengthened relationships in Norway

The Norway: Quality of Life project is an investigation by the Evolution Institute to understand what makes Norway a successful society, ranking #1 in the UN Human Development index for 12 of the last 15 years, and what lessons we can take away to improve our own society and those societies that live in our shadow.

Over the past year, we have developed a strong and sustainable relationship with the University of Oslo, which is considered by many to be the premier higher education institution in the nation. Additionally, we've met with most of the Norwegian think tanks and collaborated with most on research regarding mutual interests as well as built trusting relationships. This has resulted in our being offered access to unions, political parties, youth groups and the media. This has allowed us to conduct over 200 interviews with people representing a cross-

section of Norway society, as well as conduct meetings with virtually all local unions and confederations. In addition to these groups, we are currently building a relationship with the largest youth organizations in Norway.

We've contracted with well-connected young people recommended by the University of Oslo in order to represent Evolution Institute on a year-round basis, thereby providing continuity and building capacity to achieve our projects objectives.

We began building an Early Childhood Learning Center, informed by science

In 2016, we broke ground in East Tampa and have laid the foundation for the Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC). The mission of the ECLC is to provide a high quality, family-centered education to young children in East Tampa that results in age-appropriate social, emotional, and academic success. The purpose is to prepare students to enter public school – in third grade – at or above grade level, ready to tackle the rigors of their education.

The vision of the Early Childhood Learning Center is to bring the

DO

best of what science tells us about how young minds learn together with the parents of the students, residents of the neighborhood where the school is located, and the agencies that directly impact a child's life. Science alone, while important to knowing how to structure learning environments, is insufficient by itself. However, when partnered with those who are key to a child's development, we can create an environment that is effective, nurturing, and one that results in academic achievement by the students.



The public secular school will serve children in kindergarten through second grade in order to build the foundation for learning during these critical developmental years. Students may start attending the center as young as 3 years of age in the planned pre-school on site, allowing us to begin the process even younger. We choose to start at age three because longitudinal studies have shown that children's vocabularies and language skills at three years old can predict how well they will be doing academically in third grade.

We're excited to announce that the school will open its doors in Fall 2017!

We helped groups learn about and adopt principles in order to improve their efficacy

PROSOCIAL is an Evolution Institute project that strives to

increase the efficacy of groups based on a "core design principles" approach pioneered by political scientist Elinor Ostrom, who received the Nobel Prize in economics in 2009 for her work. Ostrom showed that groups are capable of managing common resources, avoiding the tragedy of overexploitation, if they possess certain core design principles. El president David Sloan Wilson collaborated with Ostrom for three years prior to her death in 2012 to integrate her core design principles approach with evolutionary theory.



Besides helping groups learn about and adopt these design principles in order to improve their efficacy in a practical sense, the other PROSOCIAL has also created a scientific database for

further improving knowledge about group efficacy. A group that joins PROSOCIAL receives a home page with standard functions for facilitating interactions, such as emailing each other, discussion forums, storing documents, and scheduling events. These functions are similar to other Internet platforms such as Facebook and Meetup.com. What makes PROSOCIAL unique is an online training course that members of the group work through together, which introduces them to the core design principles and guides them through an evaluation of their group.

In 2016, PROSOCIAL magazine was launched, which tells the story of the project to a broad audience and especially to the groups that become involved in the project.

THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT



THINK

- We are currently on schedule to open the Seshat: Global History Databank to the public in the Spring of 2017.
- The Seshat project editors have written software to analysis the databank's data and will be publishing a scientific article based on the results.
- Additionally, the Seshat project will host a two-day workshop at Oxford University in January 2017, which will bring together

some of the world's leading experts on Axial Age societies, religious and cultural history, and the history of social equality.

SAY

- Social Evolution Forum blog network will be working to increase its number of bloggers and the reach of its content by building sustainable relationships with other likeminded organizations and institutions.
- This View of Life Magazine will be continuing to build its

TVOL1000 network - 1,000 people who will join a group of professionals in order to work together to catalyze the acceptance and understanding of evolution, especially in relation to human affairs.

- In addition to a number of other publications, the Evolution Institute will publish a special issue on Evolution & Education in early 2017, which will be available to the public.
- The Norway: Quality of Life project has secured a book project with Routledge in order to publish "Forging a Cooperative

THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT



Society in a Competitive World”. The project has received funding from the University of Oslo and involves participation of three Evolution Institute members and several partners from the University

DO

- Our Early Childhood Learning Center will open in Fall 2017! It will serve 3 & 4 year olds and Kindergarten and 1st grade. 2nd grade will be available for the following school year.
- The Norway: Quality of Life project will be completing a number

of research applications, including the Advanced Research Grant (ERC) - involving funding up to 20 million EURO - in 2017.

- Additionally, the Norway project is working to establish an Evolution Institute NGO in Oslo in 2017. A Norwegian doctoral student is working with EI’s newest board member, Nina Witoszek, distinguished research professor at University of Oslo, in order to accomplish this.
- The Seshat project will host a policy event in partnership with the Toulouse School of Economics in June 2017. The two-day event will include 12 speakers.

Participants will work to examine historical institutional change and make policy recommendations.

- The Cultural Evolution Society will launch a website and database in 2017 to coincide with the Society’s first annual conference from September 13-15, 2017 at the Max Planck Institute in Jena, Germany.
- In 2017, PROSOCIAL will continue to recruit groups from a diversity of sectors (e.g., businesses, schools, churches, volunteer organizations) to join the project, as well as continue to develop PROSOCIAL as a scientific database.



GET INVOLVED

JOIN US IN OUR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE - WITH SCIENCE!

You have made this organization grow from an idea to one that is now working around the world in just over 6 years. Together with you, we have been moving the needle in applying important research in evolutionary science to public policy, as well as a number of applied projects.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING IT ALL POSSIBLE!

Become a partner in the fight to keep science in public policy as we address pressing social issues in a way that leads to an improved quality of life for children, families, and communities.

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 TheEvolutionInstitute

 @evoinstitute

GET IN TOUCH

 ei@evolution-institute.org

 10627 Machrihanish Circle
San Antonio, FL 33576
(813) 435-3534