



2022

IMPACT REPORT

Applying science-based solutions to solve
today's most pressing social issues

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	Reflections
04	Mission
05	Elevating Quality of Life
06	East Pasco Initiative
08	East Tampa Academy
09	Seshat: Global History Databank
10	Project Spotlight: Sister Schools
12	Project Spotlight: Cambridge Elements Series
13	Partnerships
14	Partner Spotlight: Mondragon University
15	Looking Forward

Reflections

Dear Friends of the Evolution Institute,

2022 has been an exciting and promising year for EI. Once again, we were able to travel for face-to-face meetings with our partners in Oslo and the Basque region of Spain, whom we brought together in Oslo before we reconvened afterwards in Mondragon.

In Oslo, we participated in two events: Work life and Industrial Organization in the 21st Century, a workshop/seminar arranged by the BI Norwegian Business School & EI. The May 24 workshop/seminar brought together scholars and practitioners from Europe and the United States to discuss business models and governance principles for sustainable enterprises for our time. Spanning across cooperative, collaborative, and corporate approaches, we explored their strengths and weaknesses in delivering productive, fair, and ecological balanced solutions for our time.

Agenda, a local think tank closely associated with the present government of Norway, sponsored the May 25 forum, Roles of Cooperatives & Higher Education for Sustainability, for EI, the Democracy Collaborative, and Mondragon University to discuss their work as related to what cooperatives have to offer in strengthening democracy and reducing inequality. Before leaving Oslo, we met with members and affiliates of two other think tanks, De Facto and Manifest, to discuss cross-fertilization of Norway's highly democratized government and the Basque region's highly democratized workplaces.

Contact information was exchanged for continuing dialogue.

Once in the Basque region, which includes Mondragon, Bilbao, and San Sebastian, we placed special emphasis on identifying and cultivating our best fit for continued collaboration among the cooperatives in Mondragon: The Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences of Mondragon University.

An unexpected bonus was the pleasure of meeting members of Friends of Arizmendiarieta, the Catholic priest who led the creation and development in the 1940s of what we now know as Mondragon.

Our Board of Directors expanded in October to include three remarkable leaders in education: Nagore Ipiña Larrañaga, Dean of The Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences of Mondragon University, Heather Parker, Dean of Arts and Sciences of Saint Leo University, and Darlene DeMarie, Educational Psychology Professor at University of South Florida.

Most importantly, without you and the support of our funders, none of this would be possible. Thank you for helping us make an impact in 2022, and we are motivated to continue working together to uplift science and revitalize communities here and abroad.

With gratitude,
Rafael Wittek, President
Nina Witoszek, Vice President
Jerry Lieberman, Co-founder & Treasurer

MISSION

Our mission is to apply science-based solutions and use evidence-based best practices to solve today's most pressing social issues and improve quality of life.

We bring science experts and practitioners together, resulting in a new agenda for research, policy formulation, and policy implementation. Many of our projects are focused on serving underserved neighborhoods in Tampa Bay and Pasco County, Florida with the aim to develop innovative yet practical approaches that meet the specific needs and opportunities of communities.

VISION

Our vision is to apply research, knowledge and expertise in order to elevate quality of life, advance social justice and human equality, and add value to issues affecting humanity for the benefit all people.

VALUES

We are committed to being part of the solution.

- We believe in a just and fair society. Everything we do is oriented toward the welfare of others and society as a whole.
- We believe in the importance of scientific knowledge, research, evidence and facts and the importance in applying these to help others and improve the world.
- We value quality of life for humans, and the environment that sustains them, now and for future generations.
- We value diversity and have respect for all communities and cultures.
- We value democratic practices, secular education, free inquiry, and humanistic philosophy and ethics.
- We value cooperation and collaboration and believe in working together to help others and to improve the world.
- We value inclusivity and believe that first and foremost every human being deserves the same rights and respect.
- We value an understanding of cultural evolution and believe we can learn from our history, to improve our future.
- We value innovation and creativity and believe that we can all contribute to improving the world in which we live.
- We value integrity and professionalism and operate within a framework of accountability, transparency and fiscal responsibility.

OVERARCHING PROJECT

ELEVATING QUALITY OF LIFE

Our quest to learn as much as possible about “quality of life” and how it is defined and measured began in 2011 with a workshop at the University of Memphis. There we considered which nations received consistently high ratings on the United Nations Human Development Index, learning that Norway was repeatedly the highest - with the least inequality according to the UN Gini coefficient.

After careful preparation, EI hosted a 2013 workshop in Oslo with Norwegian humanists, historians, and members of the University of Oslo faculty, and ten years later maintains many of these relationships for the purpose of mutual learning.

More recently, we have built a partnership with Mondragon Corporation in the Basque region of Spain. Despite differences in their culture and history, residents of both Norway and Mondragon enjoy a very high quality of life.

People’s basic needs are met with little income disparity in both places. Workers in Mondragon have democratic control of their cooperative workplaces, and early public education and lifelong learning is valued.

We have learned about early childhood care and education in both Norway and Mondragon and implemented these findings in our two early learning centers. Such understandings complement our original research for literacy learning and social-emotional development.

Our early childhood learning centers are more than day care centers and pre-kindergartens for children. East Tampa Academy VPK and East Pasco Academy serve as community hubs for the families of our children - working with other nonprofit organizations to meet the unmet needs of families in impoverished and marginalized neighborhoods.





PROJECT EAST PASCO INITIATIVE

Together with our partners in Tommytown, Farmworkers Self-Help, and Resurrection House, we opened East Pasco Academy in Fall 2020 – the community's first early learning center that provides a quality, bilingual, culturally sensitive education for a diverse group of low-income families.

HIGHLIGHTS

EPA currently has 38 students enrolled and has served an additional 12 students throughout 2022. We graduated 8 VPK students in May of 2022 and now have 11 VPK students enrolled.

Many of our students come from Spanish only speaking households, so one of our primary goals is to improve their English skills before kindergarten, and we have had great success in this area. We do employ bilingual teachers to help with their comfort and communication, and while all children learn some Spanish in our curriculum as well, we encourage the development of their English literacy.

In June of 2022, we obtained a grant to help open our infant room, which has been fully occupied. We successfully completed an accompanying program called LENA, to help improve our teachers' communication and instruction with their students, which will also help in improving our CLASS score.

EPA hired a new employee who has a Master's Degree in Social Work and will be helping us as a substitute and supplemental teacher. Tiffany also will be assisting us with in-house assessment of students who may exhibit signs of trauma and learning disabilities.

EPA is deeply involved in the community and helps our parents connect with various local organizations to meet their needs, such as a local food bank that also provides snacks for the school, back to school supplies, shoes, and Christmas presents for those families who struggle during the holiday season.

EPA has been able to provide scholarships for 5 families who otherwise would not be able to afford childcare, as they did not meet the requirements for assistance from the Early Learning Coalition.





PROJECT

EAST TAMPA ACADEMY

We launched East Tampa Academy in 2017, which added grade levels to include VPK – 2nd grade until May, when we closed the charter school to focus on VPK and younger children.

HIGHLIGHTS

More than 70 students and their families were served in our VPK, After-School Program, and Summer SMART Camp.

The VPK curriculum includes the state-approved Teaching Strategies curriculum and Florida VPK Standards, using Star student assessments. The Director/Lead Teacher is certified in both areas.

Special school events included Literacy at Home visits from Bess the Book Bus (pictured), a VPK Spring Festival and Graduation, a Tampa Police Department Back-to-school event with backpacks provided to students and their family members, a family Game Day and luncheon, a Fall Thanksgiving celebration for students and families, and a December holiday celebration sponsored by the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc.



PROJECT SESHAT

Global History Databank

The Seshat: Global History Databank brings together the most current and comprehensive body of knowledge about human history in one place. This unique Databank systematically collects what is currently known about the social and political organization of human societies and how civilizations have evolved over time. Our work is designed to aid decision-makers and policy leaders in navigating the current intersecting crises of climate change, sociocultural instability and breakdown, and violent civil turmoil.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Consequences of Crisis project began in January 2021 and was finalized in December 2022. The Rasmussen foundation provided a new grant to continue this work for the next 2 years.

Daniel Hoyer gave a talk at the Rand institute in November 2022, which led to follow-up possibilities for collaboration and grant proposals with researchers there. Peter Turchin, a project leader at the Complexity Science Hub Vienna,

hosted a “school” for PhD and postdoctoral students interested in pursuing research about societal crises.

An article exploring the intersection of climate adaptation and cultural evolution was accepted as part of a forthcoming special issue of Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Academy B.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Combining VPK Academies as Sister Schools in East Tampa and East Pasco

Bruce Edwards joined EI as Manager of Operations last Fall. One of his primary responsibilities includes liaison between an EI Board committee comprised of Michelle Shimberg, Gin Lieberman, and Darlene DeMarie and the Directors of the two early learning centers: Frankie Jones at East Tampa Academy and Cathy Fisher at East Pasco Academy. The aim is to assess what works best and share those best practices between the sister schools.

Bruce was instrumental in the successful 2020 opening of East Pasco Academy – overseeing everything from preparing the building and play area to Cathy’s and families’ recruitment – all during the outbreak of the pandemic.



Pastor Bruce Edwards
EI Manager of Operations
East Pasco Initiative Liaison

Members of the EI Board committee previously served as Board Members of East Tampa Academy Charter School, which closed in May. All were invested in curriculum, family and community outreach, and providing auxiliary services to meet community needs of fellowship, food, and school supplies.

Frankie, with vast experience in Head Start with the Hillsborough County School District, began with ETA when it opened in 2017. Presently she is in her third year as VPK Director.



Ms. Frankie Jones
East Tampa Academy VPK Director

Cathy, also an experienced childcare provider, has toddlers as well as recently added infants in her early learning program at EPA. With guidance from Bruce and EPA, ETA is presently hoping to expand its program to accommodate younger children.

Much has been published recently about the childcare crisis that limits options for working-class families. Both of our programs operate as partnerships with community-based organizations such as Rainbow Heights in East Tampa and Resurrection House and Farmworkers Self-Help in East Pasco, which are our source for recruitment of children and staff and in providing attractive, culturally sensitive, and enriching facilities.



Cathy Fisher
East Pasco Academy Director

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Cambridge Element Series

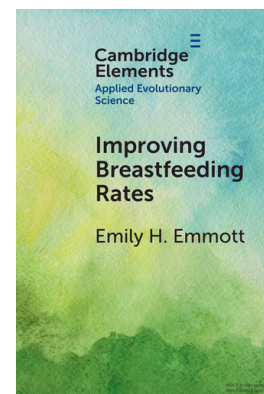
Half a century ago the biologist Theodosius Dobzhansky wrote that, “Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution.” Since Dobzhansky’s time, evolutionary thinking has made its way into the human sciences to the extent that many social and behavioral scientists today might say that “nothing in psychology, anthropology, sociology, child development, education, public policy, culture, medicine, and mental health makes sense except in the light of evolution.”

Consequently, evolutionary thinking now has a solid foothold in nearly all of the social and behavioral sciences, and not only does an evolutionary approach benefit scholars trying to understand all levels of human functioning, but it also can be applied to important real-world social issues. An important contribution that an evolutionary perspective can offer is the analysis and solution of practical and societal problems. An evolutionary perspective provides better guidance to the design and functioning of institutions because it has a more realistic micro-foundation – assumptions about how humans function – than other approaches to institutional design.

Cambridge University Press awarded EI a five-year contract to provide five Elements each year for its Cambridge Elements in Applied Evolutionary Science series. At 20,000-30,000 words (40 to 75 pages), Elements are significantly longer than journal articles but shorter than a typical book.

This hybrid format is in part a response to the frustration of authors in the social sciences with journal-article requirements that do not allow space to adequately contextualize and present research. By allowing greater freedom in word and page counts, the series enables authors to publish their work at its natural length.

Presently, two submissions from 2022 are slated for publication in February and April: Emily H. Emmott’s, “Improving Breastfeeding Rates: Insights from an Evolutionary Perspective,” and Bruce Ellis’, “The Hidden Talents Framework: Implications for Science, Policy, and Practice.”



Additionally, four board members have Elements under review: EI president Rafael Wittek, vice-president Nina Witoszek, secretary-treasurer Jerry Lieberman, and his co-author Gin Lieberman.

The aim of Cambridge Elements in Applied Evolutionary Science is to become a leading reference publication in the field. Research and reviews are presented in ways that are engaging for a range of readers – from interested laypeople to students and research academics.

PARTNERSHIPS

Our mission to apply science-based solutions to solve today’s most pressing social issues and improve quality of life would not be possible without the expertise and dedication of our partners:

- Rainbow Heights
- Civic Association Kiwanis Club
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity
- Gamma Eta Chapter
- James & Amy Shimberg Foundation
- Bible Truth Ministries
- Early Learning Coalition Hillsborough
- Early Learning Coalition Pasco-Hernando
- Pasco County Community Development
- Cornerstone Family Ministries Child Care
- Food Program
- W.E. Davis Enrichment Center
- Farmworkers Self-Help
- Resurrection House
- Moore Mickens School
- Lanki Institute of Cooperative Research
- Arne Naess Center University of Oslo
- Issachar Fund, Templeton Religious Trust
- Brain Expansion
- Saint Leo University
- Mondragon University



East Tampa Academy, 2022

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

College of The Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences, Mondragon University

The Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences works mainly in three areas of knowledge: Education, Communication, and Cooperativism.

Pictured below are Dag Hessen, a biologist, environmentalist, leader of the UNESCO Report on transforming higher education for global sustainability from University of Oslo, meeting with Fred Freundlich at Lanki in Cooperativism at MU and Nagore Ipiña Larrañaga, Dean of the College in Oslo last May.



Throughout 2022, decisive steps were taken to identify the most salient ways for collaboration between the Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences of Mondragon University and the Evolution Institute.

It includes engaging students enrolled in the new Global Digital Humanities degree program in internships that apply what they are learning to linking cooperative project development into some of Florida's most distressed communities.

One example is an incubator program, KoopFabrika, which the Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences helped to develop for the purpose extending cooperatives beyond Mondragon and the Basque region. This is essentially an organization that is designed to create a cooperative ecosystem in underserved communities. The Tommytown community near Dade City, where a partnership between the farmworkers and EI has long existed is such a place. It is here where the interns are assisting in developing a KoopFabrika initiative and the first ever outside of Spain.

Another internship program that EI is engaged with is placing students majoring in elementary and secondary education in East Pasco Florida. As 2022 was ending, it became evident to the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences, Nagore Ipiña, the benefits of strengthening ties with EI, and she joined our Board of Directors in October. Plans to expand the partnership in 2023 are well developed and will be presented in more detail throughout the year in our newsletter.

Looking forward

Jerry Lieberman with Nina Witoszek

The 20th century witnessed the most heinous wars in history, including two world wars. Few predicted such cataclysms. And that the initiating parties would be from cultures that were highly literate, educated, and technologically advanced was even more alarming. Institutions like the United Nations and the European Union were created to provide greater stability and cooperation and to strengthen democracy. Now, well into the 21st century, we are seeing instability, a war in Europe that is impacting the world, and the weakening of democracy almost everywhere.

Some very keen and profound insights as to the origins of authoritarianism emerged in the writings of Erich Fromm, Hannah Arendt, Gordon Allport, and others in the 1940s and 1950s. Fromm's 1941 publication of *Escape from Freedom* provides a credible analysis of how and why authoritarianism emerges in the context of the modern era. According to Fromm, it is the nature of humans to adapt to their environment, and to do so even if it is not in their best interest and results in a loss of freedom and autonomy. Instead of freedom to be a healthy and vital human with strong intellect and a capacity for critical inquiry and independence of thought, freedom to be oneself is arrested and is replaced by social conformity.

According to recent evolutionary social science (Haidt 2013; Franzen 2014), human search for freedom is as strong a disposition as the opposite flight from freedom. It is cultural norms and democratic institutions – as well as the level of existential constraints (reduced by welfare states), that reinforce one or the other. Authoritarian systems disrupt human evolution and prevent human flourishing.

Living in a democracy requires a well-informed citizenry that is imbued with values most associated with secular or religious humanism, with a strong affinity and respect for nature. Fortunately, cultures exist that align well with nature and have strong democratic practices and institutions that provide a high quality of life, democracy in the workplace, and an educational system that fosters lifelong learning, and planetary consciousness and respect. Norway and the Basque region of Spain are two examples.

As the Evolution Institution moves vigorously to combat authoritarianism on a planetary scale, it does so with knowledge of, and relationships within, the Norwegian and Basque cultures. A crucial first step is the upcoming June summit, "Renewing Democracy in the 21st Century," sponsored by the European Movement International, Evolution Institute, and Collegium Civitas in Warsaw. This bottom-up event is designed to launch a dialogue between civil society and politicians – including those from the EU.

Poland is interesting because it is a "freedom laboratory": a country where fight for freedom has part of a cultural DNA, and where, at the same time, 50 years under authoritarian Soviet occupation has taught and promoted a disempowered homo sovieticus. The process of social emancipation and education to freedom has been sadly neglected by the 1989 founding fathers of independent Poland.

The Evolution Institute adds a theoretical perspective that accounts for the importance of shared intentionally to optimize social transformation. Based in Florida, but with an internationally led board of trustees, EI can not only contribute to the Poland summit, but help to reverse the trend that is occurring in the US toward authoritarianism in the state where it is corporately located.



THE EVOLUTION INSTITUTE

Evolutionary scientists have shown that altruism is deeply rooted in human nature, and we know that quality of life depends on people like you who care for others. With your support, we can make an impact in 2023 and for years to come.

Donate today and join us on our mission.

On Our Website | www.evolution-institute.org/give-science
PayPal Giving Fund | www.paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/74200
Cash or Check Mail to | 10627 Machrihanish Cir. San Antonio, FL 33576