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## Editorial to Special Issue: Human Ethology

# WHAT IS THE RELATION OF HUMAN ETHOLOGY TO ANTHROPOLOGY? A BRIEF HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

This Special Issue is dedicated to the study of human ethology. Its main aim is to present to the readers of *Anthropologie* with a broad range of scholarly topics and methodological approaches which are frequently covered under the umbrella of *Human Ethology*. However, one may ask: why are studies in human ethology being relevant for a scholarly journal such as *Anthropologie*? This is certainly a valid question and in the subsequent paragraphs we seek to answer this by providing links between the agendas of anthropological and ethological research. We decided to do so in the form of a historical account, which might give readers a perspective of possible associations that might not otherwise be apparent.

Human ethology as a discipline was established by scientists who considered themselves ethologists. Ethology was originally formed in 1930's, flourished in 1950–60's and is most frequently associated with the concepts proposed by K. Lorenz, N. Tinbergen and others (Plotkin 2004). This period is nowadays often referred to as *Classical Ethology* to distinguish it from the subsequent conceptual shifts. Importantly, these ethologists theoretically framed their work within

evolutionary theory and methodologically stressed the unique salience of behavioral observation in the natural habitat of an animal (Lorenz 1981). The concepts of classical ethology were extensively criticized, for instance for overlooking the developmental perspective or naïve group selectionism (Lehrman 1953). Nevertheless, the study of animal behavior became widely regarded as ethological research irrespective of the ultimate theoretical perspective. Thus, what started as a doubtless mainland European endeavor soon became a more general and widespread field which is evidenced by the International Ethological Conferences (for details see [www.ethologycouncil.org](http://www.ethologycouncil.org)) or work published in the scholarly journal *Ethology*.

The fortunes of the human ethology took a slightly different path. The term *Human Ethology* was coined by I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, a student of K. Lorenz. He started his academic career by studying communication in mammals, however, as early as in mid-1960's, he turned his attention to humans and argued how ethological concepts and methodologies could be applied in psychology and anthropology (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1967, Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Hass 1967). This, for instance, included

his work on nonverbal behavior in congenitally deaf and blind people (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1973) or studies on expressive behavior in nonindustrial cultures such as !Ko people of Botswana or Eipo of New Guinea (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Hass 1967). As noted above, behavioral observation became a respected method for studying animal behavior, including that of our primate relatives. Thus, perhaps not surprisingly some primatologists, among others R. A. Hinde (1972), proposed the need to apply ethological and comparative approaches to the study of human behavior. Another pioneer whose work can not be omitted is John Bowlby (1969); his attachment theory was strongly influenced by writings of the classical ethologists. The theory eventually became part of mainstream developmental psychology. Finally, the broader public became aware of this academic movement thanks to extensive popularization by a British zoologist Desmond Morris (Morris 1968).

The early studies in human ethology embraced both theoretical concepts and methodology from the classical ethology. Thus, not surprisingly they focused on aspects of behavior which either showed low cross-cultural variance, such as facial expressions, or on aspects of behavior which were considered inborn (e.g., Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1973, Hinde 1972). Similarly, their primary methodological approach was structured observation, stressing the unobtrusive role of the observer, which led to the invention of several special filming devices and the foundation of an extensive film archive. These early attempts inspired several human developmental psychologists and behavioral observation became a recognized and valid method during 1970's. Interestingly, the adjective "ethological" in the titles of many human behavioral studies was meant to indicate that it was based on structured non-interfering observation.

A key year in human ethology appears to be 1972, when the International Society for Human Ethology was established (Charlesworth 1991) and two pioneering books on child behavior from the ethological perspective were published, namely McGrew's *An Ethological Study of Children* (McGrew 1972) and *Ethological Studies of Children Behavior* edited by N. Blurton-Jones (Blurton-Jones 1972). The author of the latter book also played a significant role in terms of establishing a link between ethology and anthropology. As many other researchers of that era, he was trained in behavioral biology (Blurton-Jones did his PhD at Oxford under Tinbergen's supervision) and applied this knowledge to children's spontaneous behavior. After he had moved to UCLA in the early 1980's, he joined an emerging group

of evolution-oriented anthropologists. These researchers were inspired by what were at that time fresh ideas of evolutionary theorists such as W. Hamilton's concept of kin selection (Hamilton 1964), R. Trivers's work on parental investment and parent-offspring conflict (Trivers 1971) and E. O. Wilson's seminal book *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Wilson 1975) and they framed their work within evolutionary theory while employing traditional anthropological methodology. This movement gave birth to what is currently known as Human Behavioral Ecology. Sociobiologists were in many respects critical of ethologists, especially those working in Lorenzian tradition. However, more fundamental was what they had in common, namely acknowledging the heuristic value of evolution. Note that the concept of evolution was alien to virtually all mainstream social sciences until the late 1980's and speaking about such issues might have easily presented a serious hazard to one's academic career (Segestråle 2001). The transition was eventually accomplished with the rise of evolutionary psychology and evolutionary approaches now appear to be taken seriously by many respected social scientists of different theoretical backgrounds. However, this could only have been possible thanks to its predecessors. Although individual behavioral sciences such human ethology, behavioral ecology and evolutionary psychology remain in disagreement over some key concepts (such as the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptiveness), which resulted in numerous academic struggles (see for instance, Gangestad, Simpson 2007), currently we are witnessing a mélange of these individual disciplines and the methods they employ. Such interdisciplinarity includes other fields such as traditional psychology and, most importantly, also biological anthropology.

This brief (and limited) historical overview was intended to elucidate why behavioral sciences including human ethology are in some regions regarded as a part of the psychology curriculum while in other countries are considered as part of the anthropology or zoology curriculum.

As this Special Issue is mainly based on work of scholars from the Czech Republic we will now shortly introduce the paths of behavioral sciences in this region, which due to political interference within academia has tended to take one relatively specific track. In former Czechoslovakia, ethology was considered an "imperialist pseudo-science" by the ruling communist ideologists, mainly due to Lorenz's (1966) popular book *On Aggression*. Interestingly, several books based on the critique of Lorenz's ethology were translated into Czech

(see e.g., Hollitscher 1975); however, the original work was unavailable and readers may therefore not have been fully capable of comprehending what had caused such severe critique. The main proponent of ethology (although the term itself was systematically avoided) in that era was the longtime director of the Prague ZOO Zdeněk Veselovský, who considered himself Lorenz's disciple. Apart from his scholarly papers, he also published several dozens of popular books mainly on animal behavior (e.g., Veselovský 1972, 1992), which were widely read and significantly contributed to the dissemination of ethological thought to the broader public. In roughly the late 1960', several other Czech scholars of various backgrounds found inspiration for their work on humans in ethology. Among these scholars was pediatrician Hanuš Papoušek, who established working group within the Research Institute for Mother and Child Care in Prague, which focused on infant behavior and attachment formation. However, after the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, he emigrated to Germany, where he continued his work mainly on early mother-infant interactions and intuitive parenting (see e.g., Papoušek, Papoušek 1987) at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich (Hopkins, Lewis 2000). The ideas of ethology were also embraced by a group of scientists at the Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague, who focused on sexual disorders. They built on the work of sexologist Kurt Freund (see e.g., Freund 1965), who fled to Toronto, Canada in the wake of the Prague Spring in 1968. An informal leader among this group was psychologist Jaroslav Madlafousek. His main interest involved motivational circuits in sexual behavior (Madlafousek, Hlíňák, 1977) and he was heavily influenced by work in classical ethology (Bartoš 2009). From this perspective he also interpreted various sexual disorders such as exhibitionism (Madlafousek *et al.* 1981). At the same institute another researcher Zdeněk Klein, who was a biological anthropologist by training, conducted work mainly focused on nonverbal behavior (Klein 1998, 2000). Sadly though, from the late 1970's until the fall of communism in 1989, for political reasons he was forced to withdraw from work in academia (Höschl 2001). He delivered his enthusiasm for the ethological approach to human behavior, for instance, at the conferences of the Czechoslovak (predecessor of Czech and Slovak) Ethological Society (for details see, [www.csets.sk](http://www.csets.sk)) and later throughout his courses on human ethology at the Charles University in Prague. This contribution makes him one of several "father-figures" of human ethology in the Czech Republic. The further

development of human ethology since the 1990's is still too fresh to provide a broad perspective and to some extent involves both authors of this editorial, thus we will leave its characterization to future writers. It is worthwhile noting, however, that in the subsequent years, human ethology courses and research more generally has become a standard part of the anthropology curriculum at several Czech universities, namely the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen and Charles University in Prague. Also some of the recent work grounded in behavioral sciences specifically targeted domestic audience (see for instance the monograph *The Human Face* edited by Blažek, Trnka 2008).

This Special Issue contains contributions mainly by young Czech scholars who employ the human ethology and evolutionary psychology framework in their own research. The body of the work presented is by no means exhaustive or a representative display of the field or the particular study area, but rather tends to mirror the history of this field in the Czech Republic. However, we believe that it gives a perspective to the interested reader of what the possible links between ethology and other disciplines of anthropology are. Our main reasons to initiate such an enterprise were twofold. First, we aimed to give scholars at the beginning of their academic career a chance to present their work with editorial guidance rather than simple rejection. Some senior scholars tend not to consider how challenging (and often also how frustrating) the task is for young researchers to get their work published in high profile journals with high rejection rates. Second, our intention was to show that many of the research projects thought of as ethological by their authors in fact employ methods and theories which are commonly considered to be part of other disciplines such as biological anthropology or psychology.

The studies presented might be grouped into several research areas. Firstly, three of the studies presented are relatively closely linked to biological anthropology as they explore how variation in body characteristics affects perception. These include a methodological paper by Pivoňková, who evaluates several methods of sexual dimorphism assessment, a study by Kočnar and Kleisner on the effect of eye colour on the perception of dominance and, finally, a paper by Třebický *et al.* reviewing the current evolutionary approaches to the study of physical attractiveness.

Another set of studies explores the various aspects of romantic and sexual relationships. Specifically, Štěrbová and Valentová review studies on assortative mating including phenomena such as "sexual imprinting".

A paper by Bártová and Valentová presents evolutionary theories of homoerotic and sexual interaction. An empirical study by Varella *et al.* focuses on sex differences in the preference for psychological femininity/masculinity and, similarly, Binter *et al.* investigated sex differences in the frequency and occurrence of various sexual fantasies.

Yet another three studies complete the variety of topics and approaches covered. First, a review paper by Fialová and Havlíček explores the issue of emotion-related body odours and their effect on human psychology and behavior from the perspective of the theory of signalling. Further, Lindová *et al.* analyze non-verbal behavior related to domineering strategies using a novel two dimensional model of dominance. Finally, a theoretical paper by Uhlíř and Stella critically assesses memetic theories of culture.

We believe that these are examples of genuinely interdisciplinary work and not simply work the authors declared to be of interdisciplinary nature simply for the purpose of grant proposals. In wake of this research we do not find it difficult to convince readers that human ethology should be considered as an anthropological discipline. In our view, most of the discussions on what belongs to the particular academic discipline and what not is rather infertile and therefore find more enjoyment in reading and engaging in exciting findings and heuristic concepts instead.

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