

# MANVIR SINGH

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## PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

2020– Research Fellow, Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse

## EDUCATION

2020 Ph.D. in Human Evolutionary Biology  
Harvard University

2012 Sc.B. with Honors in Human Biology: Evolution, Environment, & Ecosystems  
Brown University

## OTHER AFFILIATIONS

2020– Associate, Department of Human Evolutionary Biology, Harvard University

2018–19 Visiting Student, Institut Jean Nicod, École Normale Supérieure

2018 Visiting Student, Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History

2017 Visiting Scholar, Andalas University

2012–13 Research Fellow, Centre for Social Evolution, University of Copenhagen

## GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

2021–23 Multidisciplinary Prize (with M. Derex, J. Peña, C. Molho), IAST

2015–19 Graduate Research Fellowship Award, NSF

2016–17 Frederick Sheldon Traveling Fellowship, Harvard University

2016 MBB Graduate Student Award, Harvard University

2015 MBB Graduate Student Award (with S. Mehr), Harvard University

2012–13 Fulbright Scholarship, Danish-American Fulbright Foundation

## OTHER AWARDS & HONORS

2022 Richerson Award for Best PhD in Cultural Evolution, Cultural Evolution Society

2021 New Investigator Award, Human Behavior & Evolution Society

2020 Diverse Intelligences Summer Institute (DISI) Research Fellow

2018 Best Student Paper, International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religion

2017 Student Showcase, Cultural Evolution Society

2015 Editor's Choice Selection, *Oikos*

## PUBLICATIONS

\* Corresponding author

† Co-first author

## BOOKS

Singh, M. (in progress) *Shamanism: The timeless religion*. Knopf.

## JOURNAL ARTICLES (PEER-REVIEWED)

- \* Singh, M. & Mehr, S. A. (in press) Universality, domain-specificity, and development of psychological responses to music. *Nature Reviews Psychology*.
- Nayak, S. M., Singh, M., Yaden, D. B., & Griffiths, R. (in press) Belief changes associated with psychedelic use. *Journal of Psychopharmacology*.
- \* Singh, M. (2022) Subjective selection and the evolution of complex culture. *Evolutionary Anthropology* 31:266–280.
- Hilton, C. B., Moser, C., Bertolo, M., Lee-Rubin, H., Amir, D., Bainbridge, C. M., Simson, J., Knox, D., Glowacki, L., Alemu, E., Galbarczyk, A., Jasienska, G., Ross, C. T., Neff, M. B., Martin, A., Cirelli, L. K., Trehub, S. E., Song, J., Kim, M., Schachner, A., Vardy, T. A., Atkinson, Q. D., Salenius, A., Andelin, J., Antfolk, J., Madhivanan, P., Siddaiah, A., Placek, C. D., Salali, G. D., Keestra, S., Singh, M., Collins, S. A., Patton, J. Q., Scaff, C., Stieglitz, J., Ccari Cutipa, S., Moya, C., Sagar, R. R., Anyawire, M., Mabulla, A., Wood, B. M., Krasnow, M. M., & Mehr, S. A. (2022). Acoustic regularities in infant-directed speech and song across cultures. *Nature Human Behaviour* 6:1545–1556.
- \* Singh, M. & Glowacki, L. (2022) Human social organization during the Late Pleistocene: Beyond the nomadic-egalitarian model. *Evolution and Human Behavior* 43:418–431.
- \* Singh, M. & Garfield, Z. (2022) Evidence for third-party mediation but not punishment in Mentawai justice. *Nature Human Behaviour* 6:930–940.
- \* Fitouchi, L. & Singh, M. (2022) Supernatural punishment beliefs as cognitively compelling tools of social control. *Current Opinion in Psychology* 44:252–257.
- \* Singh, M. (2021) The sympathetic plot, its psychological origins, and implications for the evolution of fiction. *Emotion Review* 13:183–198.
- \* Singh, M., Acerbi, A., Caldwell, C., Danchin, É., Isabel, G., Molleman, L., Scott-Phillips, T., Tamariz, M., Van der Berg, P., van Leuwen, E., & Derex, M. (2021) Beyond social learning. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 376:20200050.
- \* Singh, M. (2021) Magic, explanations, and evil: The origins and design of witches and sorcerers. *Current Anthropology* 62:2–29.
- \* Singh, M., Kaptchuk, T. J., & Henrich, J. (2021) Small gods, rituals, and cooperation: The Mentawai water spirit Sikameinan. *Evolution and Human Behavior* 42:61–72.
- \* Singh, M. & Henrich, J. (2020) Why do religious leaders observe costly prohibitions? Examining taboos on Mentawai shamans. *Evolutionary Human Sciences* 2:e32.

- \* Mehr, S. A., Singh, M., Knox, D., Ketter, D. M., Pickens-Jones, D., Atwood, S., Lucas, C., Egner, A., Jacoby, N., Hopkins, E. J., Howard, R. M., Hartshorne, J. K., Jennings, M. V., Simson, J., Bainbridge, C. M., Pinker, S., O'Donnell, T. J., Krasnow, M. M., & Glowacki, L. (2019) Universality and diversity in human song. *Science* 366:eaxx0868.
- \* Singh, M. (2018) The cultural evolution of shamanism. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 41:e66.
- \*† Mehr, S. A., Singh, M., York, H., Glowacki, L., & Krasnow, M. M. (2018) Form and function in human song. *Current Biology* 28:356-368.
- \* Singh, M., Wrangham, R. W., & Glowacki, L. (2017) Self-interest and the design of rules. *Human Nature* 28:457-480.
- Ioannou, C. C., Singh, M. & Couzin, I. D. (2015) Potential leaders trade-off goal-oriented and socially-oriented behavior in mobile animal groups. *The American Naturalist* 186:284-293.
- \* Singh, M. & Boomsma, J. J. (2015) Policing and punishment across the domains of social evolution. *Oikos* 124:971-982.

#### JOURNAL ARTICLES (IN PROGRESS)

- \* Singh, M. & Hoffman, M. Commitment and impersonation: A reputation-based theory of principledness. *Pre-print available at [psyarxiv.com/ua57r](https://psyarxiv.com/ua57r)*
- Yurdum, L., Singh, M., Glowacki, L., Vardy, T., Atkinson, Q., Hilton, C., Sauter, D., Krasnow, M., & Mehr, S. A. Cultural invariance in musical communication. *Pre-print available at [psyarxiv.com/nar2e](https://psyarxiv.com/nar2e)*
- \*† Fitouchi, L. & Singh, M. Punitive justice serves to restore reciprocal cooperation in three small-scale societies. *Pre-print available at [psyarxiv.com/bjwn7](https://psyarxiv.com/bjwn7)*
- \* Singh, M. & Hoffman, M. Individualist moral principles and the expansion of the moral circle. *Pre-print available at [osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/pqem7](https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/pqem7)*

#### LETTERS & COMMENTARIES

- Singh, M. (2022) Cognitive and evolutionary foundations of superstition and paranoia. *Current Anthropology* 63:456-457. [Response to reply by Planer and Sterelny]
- Singh, M. (2021) Science, delusions, explosive cockroaches, and other issues surrounding witchcraft and sorcery. *Current Anthropology* 62:22-24. [Response to commentaries]
- Bertolo, M., Singh, M., & Mehr, S. A. (2021) Sound-induced motion in chimpanzees does not imply shared ancestry for music or dance. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118:e2015664118. [Letter in reply to Hattori & Tomonaga]
- Singh, M. (2020) Why people rarely divine by flipping coins. *Current Anthropology* 61. [Commentary on Boyer]
- Singh, M. (2018) Why is there shamanism? Developing the cultural evolutionary theory and addressing alternative accounts. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 41:e92. [Response to commentaries]

Singh, M., Glowacki, L., & Wrangham, R. W. (2016) Self-interested agents create, maintain, and modify group-functional culture. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 39:e52. [Commentary on Richerson et al.]

## POPULAR AUDIENCE

Singh, M. (in progress) You first. *The New Yorker*.

Singh, M. (2022) The evolutionists. *The New Yorker*, November 28, pp. 78–83.

Singh, M. (2022) The ‘shamanification’ of tech CEOs. *Wired*, July 14.

Singh, M. (2022) The idea of primitive communism is as seductive as it is wrong. *Aeon*, April 19.

Singh, M. (2022) It’s easy to blame mental health issues on tech. But is it fair? *Wired*, March 30.

Singh, M. (2021) Is coping with PTSD harder for US soldiers? *The Guardian*, June 11.

Singh, M. (2021) Beyond the !Kung. *Aeon*, February 8.

Singh, M. (2021) The power of prohibition. *Kulturaustausch*, January.

Singh, M. (2020) Psychedelics weren’t as common in ancient cultures as we think. *Vice*, December 10.

Singh, M. (2020) The cute critter rewriting our understanding of prehistory. *Atlas Obscura*, October 23.

Singh, M. (2020) Marriage is dead, long live marriage. *Aeon*, March 31.

Singh, M. (2019) Violence and the Inuit [Letter]. *The New York Review of Books*, December 5, p. 58.

Singh, M. (2019) People suspected of witchcraft are still being persecuted and killed. *Vice*, October 30.

Singh, M. (2019) What makes the sympathetic plot a universal story type? *Aeon*, October 8.

Singh, M. (2019) Modern shamans. *The Conversation*, May 2.

## INVITED TALKS

“The role of third parties in maintaining social order in small-scale societies.” (October 2022) Economic Sociology Seminar, MIT Sloan.

“What work is.” (June 2022) Sophia Club, Aeon Media.

“Indigenous psychedelic use in Orinoquía.” (June 2022) Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research, Johns Hopkins University.

“The nature and origins of ubiquitous cultural traditions.” (April 2022) Mind, Technology, & Society Speaker Series, Department of Cognitive and Information Sciences, University of California, Merced.

- “Evidence for third-party mediation but not punishment in Mentawai justice.” (February 2022) Social Evolution and Behaviour Lab, University College London.
- “Rigorously evaluating claims about the scope and history of traditional psychedelic use.” (February 2022) Neurobiology Research Unit, Copenhagen University Hospital.
- “Subjective selection and the development of ubiquitous religious traditions.” (December 2021) Laboratory for the Experimental Research of Religion, Masaryk University.
- “Subjective selection and the development of sociocultural universals.” (December 2021) Evolutionary Anthropology Seminar Series, University College London.
- “Storied creatures: Universals in story and where they come from.” (November 2021) Campfire Series, World Experience Organization.
- “The psychological and evolutionary foundations of some narrative universals.” (October 2021) Evolutionary Anthropology Research Group, Durham University.
- “The deep origins of sedentism, inequality, and large groups.” (September 2021) Dondena Seminar Series, Bocconi University.
- “The past explains the present: Revisiting the EEA.” (September 2021) John Tooby and Leda Cosmides: Honoring 40 Years of Innovation; Royaumont Abbey, France.
- “Rigorously evaluating claims about the scope and history of traditional psychedelic use.” (September 2021) Insight Conference 2021; Berlin, Germany.
- “Human social organization during the Late Pleistocene: Beyond the nomadic-egalitarian model.” (April 2021) DySoC Webinar Series on Human Origins and Cultural Evolution.
- “The nature and origins of religious super-attractors.” (March 2021) Behavior, Evolution, and Culture Speaker Series, University of California, Los Angeles.
- “The nature and origins of religious super-attractors.” (November 2020) Reasoning Lab, Naval Research Laboratory.
- “The nature and origins of religious super-attractors.” (October 2020) Department of Anthropology Colloquium, University of New Mexico.
- “The cultural evolution of shamanism.” (June 2019) Department of Religious Studies Seminar, Victoria University of Wellington.
- “The cultural evolution of shamanism.” (May 2019) Department of Psychology Colloquium, University of Auckland.
- “Form and function in human song.” (February 2019) Lunch Series, Human Dynamics Group, Massachusetts Institute for Technology.
- “Documenting and explaining recurrent cultural traditions.” (November 2018) Department of Linguistic and Cultural Evolution, Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.

“Magic, explanations, and evil: On the origins and design of witches and sorcerers.” (October 2018) Mind and Development Lab, Yale University.

“Why are there shamans and witches? On the design and origins of some religious near-universals.” (August 2018) Department of Religious Studies, University of Otago.

“The psychological and cultural evolutionary foundations of shamanism and religious self-denial.” (October 2017) Social Lunch, Department of Psychology, Harvard University.

“Whence shamanism?” (January 2017) Boston Area Morality Group; Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## CONFERENCE & WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS

*Includes only those talks or posters presented by M. Singh; excludes invited presentations.*

Singh, M. & Glowacki, L. (June 2022) “Human social organization during the Late Pleistocene: Beyond the nomadic-egalitarian model.” Presentation at: Human Behavior & Evolution Society Conference; online.

Singh, M., Zeng, T.C., Aygen, A., Bollée, J., Choi, J., Kaur, N., Kunaparaju, A., Mackiel, A., Nhuquynh, N. Owens, A., Quintana, S., Sanders, S., Stasta, C., Xue, M., Yin, H., Barrett, J., Moya, C., Baumard, N., Blasi, D., Chaudhuri, P., Crockett, M., Mehr, S., Tamir, D., Tangherlini, T., Tehrani, J. (April 2022) “Introducing Anansi, a global story database.” Speed talk at: European Human Behaviour and Evolution Association Conference; online.

Singh, M., Kaptchuk, T., & Henrich, J. (June 2021) “Small gods, rituals, and cooperation: The Mentawai water spirit Sikameinan.” Presentation at: Human Behavior & Evolution Society Conference; online.

Singh, M. & Garfield, Z. H. (June 2021) “Third parties arbitrate but do not punish in Mentawai justice.” Presentation at: Cultural Evolution Society Conference; online.

Singh, M. (April 2019) “Motivations to satisfy proximate psychological goals shape culture.” Presentation at: Investigative Workshop on Social Norms and Institutions; National Institute for Mathematical and Biological Synthesis.

Singh, M. (October 2018) “Magic, explanations, and evil: On the origins and design of witches and sorcerers.” Presentation at: Cultural Evolution Society Conference; Tempe, Arizona.

Singh, M. (July 2018) “The cultural evolution of shamanism.” Presentation at: Human Behavior and Evolution Society Conference; Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Singh, M. & Henrich, J. (May 2018) “Self-denial by shamans promotes perceptions of special powers and religious credibility.” Poster at: Future Directions on the Evolution of Rituals, Beliefs, and Religious Minds; Erice, Italy.

Singh, M. (May 2018) “The function of punitive justice in a small-scale society.” Presentation at: Harvard-Yale Conference on Human Evolution, Yale University.

Singh, M. & Henrich, J. (April 2018) “Self-denial, supernatural power, and religious credibility.” Poster at: Mind, Brain, and Behavior Showcase, Harvard University.

- Singh, M. (September 2017) “The cultural evolution of shamanism.” Presentation at: Cultural Evolution Society Conference; Jena, Germany.
- Singh, M., Mehr, S. A., & Glowacki, L. (April 2016) “The natural history of song.” Presentation at: Mind, Brain, and Behavior Open Science Conference, Harvard University.
- Singh, M. (September 2015) “The cultural design of the Mentawai taboos.” Absentee presenter at: Creating ASEAN Futures 2015; Padang, Indonesia.
- Singh, M. & Boomsma, J. J. (June 2013) “Punishment and policing across the social domains.” Presentation at: Inclusive Fitness and Game Theory Workshop; Arolla, Switzerland.
- Singh, M. & Smith, R. J. (August 2012) “Frenemies: Large females evict smaller males in the biparental burying beetle *Nicrophorus investigator*.” Poster at: International Society for Behavioral Ecology Conference; Lund, Sweden.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### Invited Instructor

- Evolution, Behaviour, and Cognition*, University of Auckland (Spring 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)  
*Evolution & Human Behaviour*, University of Auckland (Spring 2020)

### Teaching Assistant

- Sophomore Tutorial in Human Evolutionary Biology*, Harvard University (Spring 2019)  
*Game Theory & Social Behavior*, Harvard University (Fall 2015)  
*Principles of Ecology*, Brown University (Spring 2011, 2012)

### Supervised Research

- Evolution of Principled Behavior*, Harvard University (Spring 2016)  
*Evolution of Music*, Harvard University (Fall 2015)

### Guest Lectures and Seminars

- “The scope and history of traditional psychedelic use.” (Lecture: March 2022) *Augmented Psychotherapy Training*, Mind Foundation.
- “Shamanism.” (Lecture: November 2021) *Biological Anthropology*, Tufts University.
- “Shamanism.” (Lecture: November 2021) *Culture and Cognition*, Boston University.
- “Animism.” (Lecture: October 2021) *Culture and Cognition*, Boston University.
- “Shamanism.” (Lecture: April 2021) *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, Pennsylvania State University.
- “Small gods, rituals, and cooperation.” (Seminar: March 2021) *Cognitive Science of Religion*, Indiana University, Bloomington.
- “Superstition, misfortune, and shamanism.” (Lecture: February 2021) *Cultural Evolution*, École Normale Supérieure.
- “Shamanism.” (Lecture: April 2020) *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, Pennsylvania State University.
- “The pleasurable origins of the sympathetic plot.” (Lecture: March 2020) *Cultural Evolution*, École Normale Supérieure.
- “The sympathetic plot.” (Lecture: February 2020) *Explaining Beauty*, Harvard University.

“Shamanism.” (Lecture: November 2019) *Biological Anthropology*, Tufts University.  
“The sympathetic plot.” (Lecture: November 2019) *Explaining Beauty*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.  
“Bio-cultural anthropology.” (Lecture: October 2019) *Research Methods in Biological Anthropology*, California State University, Long Beach.  
“Shamanism.” (Lecture: April 2019) *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, Pennsylvania State University.  
“The pleasurable origins of story.” (Lecture: February 2019) *Explaining Beauty*, Harvard University.  
“Rules, religion, and culture.” (Lecture: November 2015) *Biology of Aggression*, Harvard University.  
“Game theory & ESS.” (Seminar: February 2013) *Social Evolution*, University of Copenhagen.  
“Punishment.” (Seminar: October 2012) *Animal Behaviour*, University of Copenhagen.

## ACADEMIC SERVICE

### Journal Reviewing

American Anthropologist; American Psychologist; Behavioral and Brain Sciences; BioSystems; Clinical Psychology Review; Current Anthropology; Current Biology; Developmental Science; Emotion Review; Evolution and Human Behavior; Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences; Evolutionary Human Sciences; Human Nature; Humans; Journal of Experimental Child Psychology; Journal of Psychology and Psychotherapy; Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute; Journal of the Royal Society Interface; Method and Theory in the Study of Religion; Nature Communications; Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B; PLOS One; PNAS; PNAS Nexus; Proceedings of the Royal Society B; Religion, Brain, and Behavior; Religions; Science Advances; Social Psychological and Personality Science

### Grant Reviewing

Cultural Evolution Society Transformation Fund; National Science Foundation

### Other Service

2020– Member, Scientific Board on Cultural Behavior and Data Science, École Normale Supérieure

## OTHER PROJECTS

“The Future Perfect: Version Alpha” (with Anti-Matter Collective; Winter 2016)  
Co-creator of experimental play about future ethnographers studying Paleolithic peoples and shamanism.

## LANGUAGES

English (native); Indonesian (conversational); Mentawai (conversational); Punjabi (conversational); Spanish (conversational); French (basic); Hindi (basic)

## FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE

2022 Orinoco River Basin, Colombia (1.5 months)  
2020 West Sumatra (Mentawai, Enggano), Indonesia (1 month)



- 2018 Tanna, Vanuatu (2 weeks)
- 2017 Siberut Island, Mentawai Archipelago, Indonesia (7.5 months)
- 2015 Siberut Island, Mentawai Archipelago, Indonesia (2 months)
- 2014 Siberut Island, Mentawai Archipelago, Indonesia (2 months)