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## Evolutionary Insights into Life History

Guest Editors:

### **Prof. Dr. Thomas Colard**

1. PACEA, UMR 5199 CNRS,  
Bordeaux University, Bordeaux,  
France

2. Oral and MaxilloFacial  
Radiology Department, Lille  
University, 59160 Lille, France

### **Dr. Adeline Le Cabec**

1. PACEA -UMR 5199, Bordeaux  
University, 33000 Bordeaux,  
France

2. Max Planck Institute for  
Evolutionary Anthropology,  
04103 Leipzig, Germany

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### **Message from the Guest Editors**

Mammals' life cycles are punctuated by major milestones, among which are weaning, sexual maturity, reproduction fitness, and lifespan. Together with the pattern and timing of growth and development, these traits define what is termed "life history". Among primates, modern humans show a uniquely extended life history. Their particular pattern is characterized by slow and prolonged growth and development, involving specific ontogenic stages known as childhood and adolescence. The modern human life cycle is also unique in implying first reproduction at a relatively late age, menopause for females in late adulthood, and an exceptionally long lifespan among primates. Several advantages could result from this unusual pace of development, such as an extended period for brain growth and maturation, the acquisition of technical skills, and the socialization and development of complex social roles. As the correlation between ontogeny and phylogeny becomes better understood, evolutionary developmental biology concepts (EvoDevo) are especially relevant in exploring the variability in life history.



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Research Programme in  
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University of Helsinki, P.O. Box  
56, FI-00014 Helsinki, Finland

### **Prof. Dr. Andrés Moya**

Integrative Systems Biology  
Institute, University of Valencia  
and CSIC, 46980 Valencia, Spain

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*Biology* Editorial Office  
MDPI, Grosspeteranlage 5  
4052 Basel, Switzerland

Tel: +41 61 683 77 34  
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