

## How culture shaped human evolution

Culture is not a luxury; it is life or death. Culture has likely been the most important part of the human selective environment for hundreds of thousands of years. Humans are not adapted to life without culture. Robert Boyd, Peter Richerson, and Joseph Henrich (also the authors of the aforementioned 41-page PDF) invite us to consider the “lost European explorer experiment” in order to understand the gravity of our dependence on culture for survival:

“[The Lost European Explorer] experiment has been repeated many times when European explorers were stranded in an unfamiliar habitat. Despite desperate efforts and ample learning time, these hardy men and women suffered or died because they lacked crucial information about how to adapt to the habitat. The Franklin Expedition of 1846 illustrates this point. Sir John Franklin, a Fellow of the Royal Society and an experienced Arctic traveler, set out to find the Northwest Passage, and spent two ice-bound winters in the Arctic, the second on King William Island. Everyone eventually perished from starvation and scurvy. The Central Inuit have lived around King William Island for at least 700 years. This area is rich in animal resources. Nonetheless, the British explorers starved because they did not have the necessary local knowledge, and despite being endowed with the same cognitive abilities as the Inuit, and having two years to use these abilities, failed to learn the skills necessary to subsist in this habitat.”

Humans rely on culture to survive not only in marginal environments, but even in environments rich with resources, such as the Australian outback. People rely on culture to obtain sources of food, and also to eat their food safely.

**Read full, original article:** [Why Cultural Evolution Is Real \(And What It Is\)](#)