

# ASU expert in cultural evolution elected to National Academy of Sciences

**Robert Boyd adds the esteemed distinction — one of the highest honors a researcher can receive — to his list of accolades**

By Megan Martin, ASU News  
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A leading authority on cultural evolution, [Robert Boyd](#), a professor in Arizona State University's [School of Human Evolution and Social Change](#) and a research scientist with the [Institute of Human Origins](#), has been elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

Election to the NAS is one of the highest honors a researcher can receive. It recognizes exceptional scholarly achievement and distinguished contributions to their field.

Boyd's research examines how evolutionary psychology has influenced the development of human culture.

He has authored and co-authored several foundational texts in the field, including "Culture and the Evolutionary Process" and "Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution."

With his wife, ASU primatologist and [Regents Professor Joan Silk](#), he co-authored "How Humans Evolved," a widely used textbook in biological anthropology courses. His solo work, "A Different Kind of Animal," continues his exploration of culture's role in human evolution.

(Video: <https://youtu.be/QbHKjq4TzZI>)

"Robert Boyd's election to the National Academy of Sciences is a remarkable and well-deserved recognition of his groundbreaking contributions to our understanding of the evolution of human culture," said [Ryan Williams](#), director of the School of Human Evolution and Social Change. "... From human cognition to understanding large-scale cooperation, Rob's work has revolutionized the field and frames the ways that make the human species unique on Earth. We are incredibly proud to have him as a colleague and celebrate this milestone achievement with him."

Boyd is the [sixth faculty member](#) from the School of Human Evolution and Social Change to be elected to the academy — an extraordinary testament to the depth and impact of scholarship within the school.

"Most of Rob Boyd's career has been dedicated to how culturally transmitted social learning influences human behavior and what mechanisms are at play to shape human culture," said [Yohannes Haile-Selassie](#), director of the Institute of Human Origins at ASU.

"Rob has been, for a long time, one of only a few leading experts on this subject. His election to the National Academy of Sciences is a great recognition of his decades-long contribution to science. I am glad that Rob is a research scientist at the Institute of Human Origins as well, and we're all proud of him."

When Boyd published "Culture and the Evolutionary Process" in 1985, cultural evolution was not widely accepted as a legitimate scientific field. However, in the decades since, research on human culture and cultural evolution has grown significantly thanks to the foundation created by Boyd. He is among the highest-cited scholars at Arizona State University. Just last year, he was also elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

"It feels great to be recognized by the National Academy of Sciences," Boyd said. "Evolutionary anthropology is special because it brings together both our species' evolutionary history and its cultural complexity. Our brains and our bodies are products of both biological and cultural evolution."

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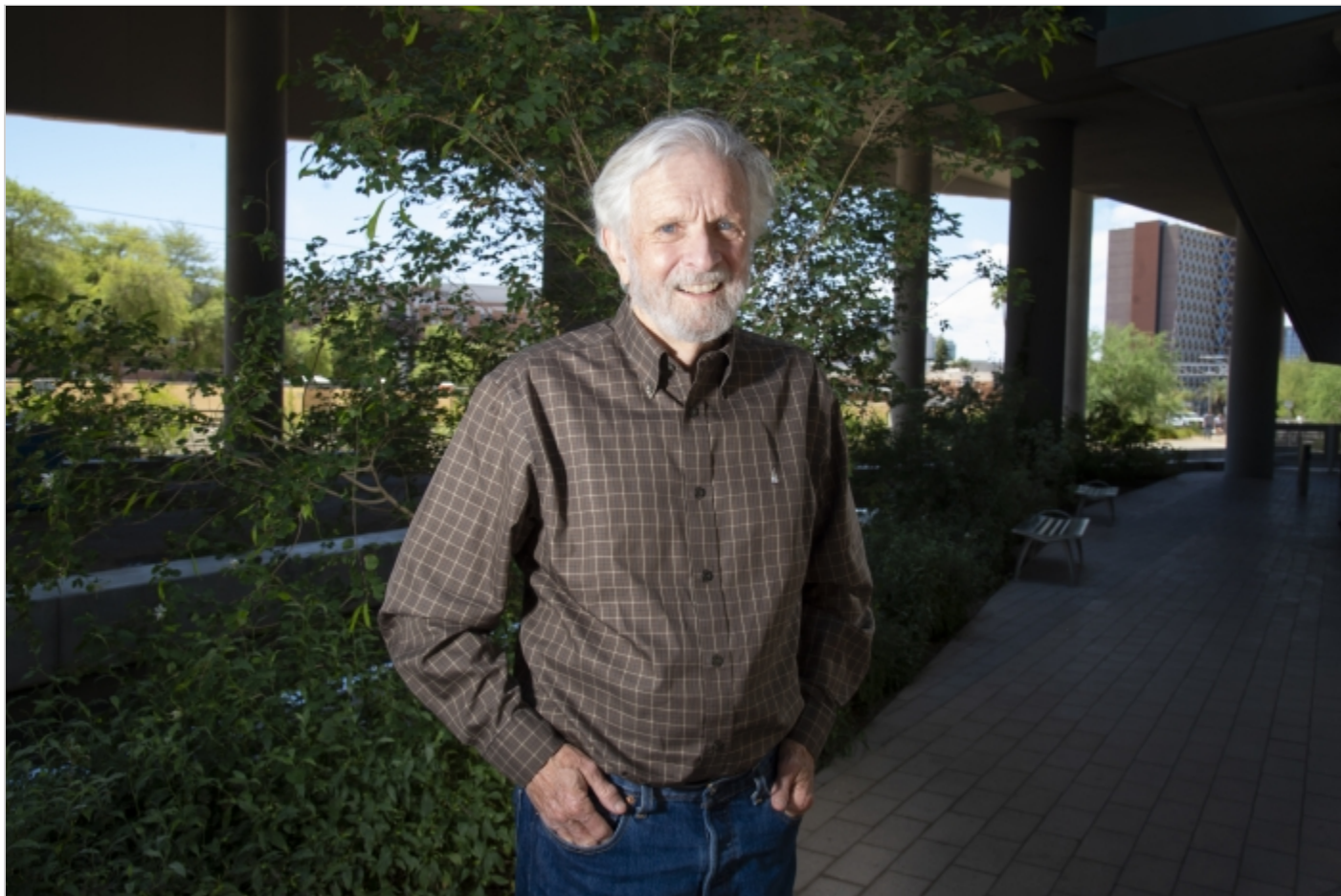
## About the NAS

[The National Academy of Sciences](#) is a private, nonprofit institution established by a congressional charter signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. It recognizes outstanding scientific achievement through election to membership and provides independent, objective advice on science, engineering and health policy to the federal government and other organizations, according to their website.

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## Main image



Robert Boyd, considered to be the leading expert in the study of the evolution of human culture, has been elected as a member of the National Academy of Sciences. Courtesy photo