

Anthropology News



EAS at the 2016 AAA meetings in Minneapolis

Evolutionary Anthropology Society

The Evolutionary Anthropology Society had a productive 2016 and a successful showing at the 115th American Anthropological Association meetings in Minneapolis in November. This year, the EAS sponsored five sessions, including two invited sessions, that covered topics from an evolutionary perspective, ranging from inter-group relationships, health care and health outcomes, ethnographic experiences and the process of scientific discovery, and risk and inequality. During the Editors' Breakfast—the meeting held for all editors of AAA section news—we found out that co-editor Melanie Martin's column titled "[An Evolutionary Anthropology Master Syllabus](#)" was one of the most read pieces of section news in 2016! This post was also featured in this [Nature news article](#). Finally, once again, EAS hosted an excellent party and, despite the amount of fun we had, managed to avoid getting removed from the hotel.

Every year, the EAS awards members for outstanding talks given at the meetings. Best Paper by a Student is awarded to an individual who is enrolled as a student at the time of submission and Best Paper by a New Investigator is awarded to an individual who has received her or his PhD within the last five years. This year's award winners were [Sarah Alami](#) from the University of California, Santa Barbara and [Katherine Wander](#), PhD from Binghamton University, SUNY, respectively.

Alami's paper, which was coauthored with Christopher von Rueden, Aaron Blackwell, Hillard Kaplan, and Michael Gurven, titled "Evaluating the effects of parental social status on child health in Amazonian Bolivia," examined the relationship between parental political influence and child health among the Tsimane forager-horticulturalists of Bolivia. Most of the research to date has focused on men's political influence and their reproductive success, so this paper sought to determine if—and how—a mother's political influence would impact her own fitness through children's morbidity and mortality. In this talk, Alami showed that neither parent's political influence was associated with their children's anthropometric measures, but that maternal political influence was negatively associated with markers of inflammation and disease risk in children. Her data also suggests that mother's influence on these measures of child health is stronger than father's, suggesting an indirect path by which women's political influence positively effects reproductive success. Alami suggested possible mechanisms include more robust social networks, better education and/or preferential access to resources such as food and healthcare.



Sarah Alami with Tsimane children. Sarah Alami



Tanzanian women with their children. Katherine Wander

Wander's paper, titled "Is drinking tea a dietary adaptation? Tea, iron, and infection among children in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania," was coauthored with Molly Sherwood, Bettina Shell-Duncan, and Eleanor Brindle and examined the potential adaptive nature of iron deficiency. Iron deficiency has been suggested to protect against infectious disease by depriving pathogens of iron, however it may also compromise immune defense. Previous work by Wander in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania showed that moderate levels of iron deficiency may be adaptive among children. In this talk, the relative importance of dietary characteristics as predictors of iron deficiency were evaluated. Wander and her colleagues found that neither daily dietary iron intake nor intake of micronutrients were associated with iron deficiency, but that it was associated with daily consumption of tea, as tea has been found to inhibit iron absorption. Some have speculated that drinking tea, a behavior common across many cultures, may be a dietary adaptation for its ability to inhibit iron absorption. While this paper presents results that support that hypothesis, Wander suggests that examination of patterns in iron deficiency and infectious disease in rural Kilimanjaro may allow for a formal test of the hypothesis.

Congratulations to all of the winners and to all who gave talks in EAS sessions. EAS board members have worked hard to increase the number of sessions we have as a society and members have made each of these sessions a success. The 2017 AAA meetings will be in Washington, DC from November 29th through December 3rd.

Upcoming dates/events of importance:

1. EAS will be holding elections this spring for 4 positions: President-Elect, 2 Executive Board members-at-large, and Student Representative. Please send nominations for these positions to Pete Richerson, our current President, at pjricherson@ucdavis.edu.

2. Deadlines to submit sessions and talks for the 2017 AAA meetings will be fast-approaching. We will announce these as soon as they are final, but expect session submission deadlines to be no later than March 15th and talk submission deadlines to be around April 15th. Start planning your sessions and talks now!!

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Kathrine Starkweather and **Melanie Martin** are Contributing Editors for EAS's AN column.

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