

Anthropology News



EVOLUTIONARY ANTHROPOLOGY SOCIETY

EAS at AAA 2012

Adam Howell Boyette

A Brief Review of Invited Sessions and Membership Business

This year's AAA meeting in San Francisco featured a strong showing from EAS, including two invited sessions, four sponsored paper sessions, and a sponsored poster session, as well as member contributions in a variety of other thematic sessions. Without room to mention all the excellent and diverse contributions, this column will review the invited sessions and broadcast EAS business conducted at the meeting.

In a much appreciated arrangement, EAS invited sessions were held back-to-back on Saturday afternoon. First was "The Behavioral Ecology of Modernization," organized by Siobhán M Mattison (U Auckland) and chaired by Mary K Shenk (U Missouri) due to Dawn B Neil's absence (Cal Poly San Luis Obispo). In their paper "Does Absence Matter? A comparison of Three Types of Father Absence In Rural Bangladesh," Katie Starkweather and Mary K Shenk (UM) reported women whose fathers worked as migrant laborers waited longer to marry and begin families than those having a divorced or deceased father, indicating father absence in and of itself does not predict earlier reproductive behavior in daughters, as previously claimed.

Lesley Newson and Peter J Richerson (UC Davis), in their paper "Understanding Change and Variation In Attitudes to Sexual Behavior," observed historical decreases in fertility coincide with less time with kin and, therefore, reduced familial pressure to reproduce. Proposing this could initiate cultural evolutionary trends toward greater openness to diverse family forms, they present supporting evidence that time since fertility rate decline positively correlates with acceptance of divorce and same-sex marriage across cultures.

In one of several excellent EAS presentations of research with the [Tsimane of Bolivia](#), Chris von Rueden (UC Santa Barbara), with co-authors Paul Hooper (U New Mexico), Daniel Cummings (UNM), Michael Gurven (UCSB), and Hillard Kaplan (UNM) found, in their paper "Why Does Status Inequality Increase with Exposure to Markets," living close to the market town of San Borja is associated with social changes linked to emergence of inequality, including larger social networks, patron-client relationships, centralized leadership and more conflict.

Also investigating status differentials in his paper "Men's Business: Bardi Status in a Changing World," James Coxworth (U Utah) demonstrated social status in one category (eg, hunting) is positively correlated with status in other categories (eg, leadership) among Aboriginal men in Northern Australia, including relatively novel avenues like "bureaucracy," concluding men's status seeking behavior is flexible, and success likely related to phenotypic differences.

Lastly, Jonathan Stieglitz (UNM), Michael Gurven (UCSB), Aaron D Blackwell (UCSB), Raul Quispe Gutierrez (Proyecto de Salud y Antropologia Tsimane) and Hillard Kaplan (UNM) also examined effects of market integration among Tsimane in their paper "Modernization, Sexual Risk-taking and Gynecological Morbidity Among Bolivian Forager-Horticulturalists," finding, in this community with infrequent contraceptive use, low literacy rates, and no norms against pre-marital sex, living closer to San Borja predicts more lifetime sexual partners for women, early age of sexual debut and more sexually transmitted infections. However, literacy was found to mediate the relationship with earlier sexual debut.

The second invited session, "Current Themes in Evolutionary Anthropology: Demographic Transition, Cooperation, and Cultural Transmission," was organized and chaired by Adam H Boyette (Washington State U, Vancouver), with Eric A Smith (U Washington) as discussant. In her paper, "The Potential for Excellence": Demographic Transition in Rural South India, Eleanor A Power (Stanford U) connected government family planning campaigns and population fertility decisions since the 1950s with increases in educational attainment and average wedding costs today, demonstrating families with reduced fertility are investing in children through at least two forms of embodied capital.

Jun-Hong Kim (U Washington), in his paper “Using Network Methods to Test Preferential Interaction Among Korean High School Students,” tested evolutionary models with empirical data finding prosocial students tended to be friends, and cooperativeness—not other similarities like social status—better explains network structure—supporting a role for friendship in stabilizing cooperation.

Shane Macfarlan (Oregon State U) and Robert Quinlan (Washington State U), in their paper “Land, Labor Contracts, and Wealth Accumulation in a Dominican Village,” showed inheriting land in rural Dominica is a function of having a reputation for competency in cooperative labor, not kinship, indicating one possible explanation for the limited entrenched economic inequality characteristic of horticultural societies.

In their paper “Teaching and the Life History of Cultural Transmission in Fijian Villages,” Michelle Kline (UC Los Angeles), Robert Boyd (Arizona State U) and Joseph Henrich (U British Columbia) found, contrary to some claims, teaching is an element of social learning in small-scale societies, especially for high-skill and highly important tasks. Additionally, Fijians report parents teach children when they are young and other older individuals teach later as children develop, in accordance with theory.

Finally, in “Children’s Strategic Learning and the ‘Vertical Default Hypothesis’”, Adam H Boyette (WSUV) also shows evidence teaching occurs during children’s daily social learning but, based on observations of Aka hunter-gatherer and Ngandu farmer children in the Central African Republic, observational learning is more frequent, often many-to-one, and teaching is more common among farmers than hunter-gatherers, indicating a role for culture in structuring transmission processes.

In EAS business, two awards were given for outstanding presentations by EAS members. Aaron D Blackwell received the Young Researcher Award for his elegant research on immune trade-offs among the Tsimane, co-authored with Hillard Kaplan (UNM), Ivan Maldonado Suarez (Proyecto Salud y Antropologia Tsimane), Jonathan Stieglitz (UNM) and Michael Gurven (UCSB). Adam H Boyette received the Student Presentation Award for his paper on children’s social learning. EAS President Frank Marlowe reports total membership has increased from past years to 302 current members. Additionally, *Human Nature* Editor Jane Lancaster reports the journal, a traditionally important venue for EAS member research, continues to grow in readership, maintain high rankings, and has been accepted for listing by PubMed.

In a final note, I assumed the role of interim contributing editor for 2013 during Siobhán Mattison’s hiatus. EAS members are encouraged to contact me if interested in writing a Section News column. I look forward to hearing from you.

Adam Howell Boyette conducts research on the role of childhood in human adaptation in the southwestern Central African Republic. He is interested in how social learning and child development influence cultural transmission. He is currently a PhD candidate at Washington State University, Vancouver.

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