

## Evolutionary Anthropology Society

Mary K. Shenk, Contributing Editor

[This is the fourth column in a series on graduate programs where training can be obtained in the many theoretical approaches of interest to the members of the Evolutionary Anthropology Society. Please contact me if you have information about an appropriate graduate program or if you would like to submit a piece for the series.]

### University of New Mexico's Graduate Program in Human Evolutionary Ecology

The University of New Mexico's graduate program in Human Evolutionary Ecology (HEE program) was started in the late 1980's when several like-minded faculty members decided to formalize an area of emphasis that had been an informal reality before.

The HEE program produced its first official Ph.D. in 1993. Since then, 21 students total have graduated from the program. Of these, nearly half have tenured or tenure-track positions at such schools as Connecticut, Texas A&M, SUNY Stony Brook, UC Santa Barbara, Cal State Fullerton, Montana and the University of Durham in the UK. The other half have jobs as research scientists working in a variety of health-related organizations. One works for the Indian Health Research Consortium as an epidemiologist studying diabetes among Native Americans, another works for UNM's Center for Injury Prevention Research and Education researching the causes of intimate partner assault, another is part of a neonatal intensive care program and examines the impact of pre-term birth on the life histories of both the parents and the children, and yet another is employed at the Behavioral Health Research Center of the Southwest working on male risk-taking behavior.

Dr. Lancaster opines that one of the reasons for the success of their graduates in getting jobs in research as well as academics is the HEE program's focus on research design, data analysis, and grant writing. In fact, many doctoral students find jobs at UNM's Medical School doing this type of work part-time while still in school. Further testament to this training comes from the fact that seven HEE graduate students have had NSF predoctoral fellowships, and 18 have had their dissertation research individually funded.

Current anthropology HEE program faculty include James Boone, Hillard Kaplan, and Jane Lancaster. Dr. Boone has a long-term interest in status competition and takes both archaeology and HEE graduate students. His fieldwork is in the late Roman and Medieval period in northern Morocco and southern Portugal, and his current research focuses on the development of economic and ecological models for the formation of social hierarchies and stratification. Dr. Lancaster chairs students in the HEE program as well as students who work with non-human primates, and has done research in Zambia and Albuquerque. Most of her students do projects related to life history strategies, one of her primary interests. Currently she focuses on reproductive behavior and parental investment among humans in the American Southwest. She also serves as the editor of the journal *Human Nature*. Dr. Kaplan has done fieldwork at many sites in South

America, mainly with foragers, as well as in New Mexico and South Africa. His theoretical interests include fertility, parental investment, and the evolution of human life histories. In collaboration with a former student, he is currently involved in a five-year field study in Bolivia on Tsimane forager-horticulturalists studying the interrelationships between health, fertility, growth and development, and aging.

When it was begun the HEE program was an independent group within anthropology with 6 faculty members. More recently, however, the program has been reformatted into the interdisciplinary Human Evolutionary and Behavioral Science Program, which links anthropology, biology, and psychology with core classes, students, and faculty coming from each department. Outside of anthropology, the faculty include Steven Gangestad and Geoffrey Miller from psychology as well as Eric Charnov and Randy Thornhill from biology.

Asked to name the HEE program's most important areas of emphasis, Dr. Lancaster lists (a) the evolution of general human life history traits such as lifespan, (b) human life history strategies in relation to differing environments, including such topics as parental investment, health, and disease, and (c) status, costly signaling and stratified social systems.

Of her colleagues, Dr. Lancaster says "We serve on each other's committees. We are all looking at the same things, just with different study populations; there is a lot of very natural crossover." Indeed, Kaplan and Lancaster have published extensively together as well as with former students on subjects such as the demographic transition, step-parenting, below-replacement fertility, and the evolution of the human life span, while Boone has also authored several collaborative papers with students.

Contributions to this column are welcomed and may be sent to Mary Shenk, University of Washington, Department of Anthropology, Box 353100, Seattle, WA 98195-3100 or to [mshenk@u.washington.edu](mailto:mshenk@u.washington.edu). Suggestions of or details on graduate programs related to the interests of the Evolutionary Anthropology Society are especially requested.