

Evolutionary Anthropology Society

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[This is the fifth 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 California—Santa Barbara, Biosocial Anthropology Specialization

UCSB's Department of Anthropology has a long tradition of cultural evolutionary and empirical work going back to Elman Service, Leslie White, and Thomas Harding in the mid-20th century. This tradition became evolutionary in focus with the addition of faculty such as Donald Brown, Donald Symons, and Napoleon Chagnon, all currently Emeritus, as well as Philip Walker. However, while related research had been ongoing for decades, UCSB's Biosocial Anthropology Specialization (BAS program) was only formalized in the early 1990's after John Tooby joined the faculty.

The BAS program currently has four full-time faculty members whose research falls into three major topical categories including evolutionary psychology, human behavioral ecology, and bioarchaeology. Philip Walker, who has been at UCSB since 1974, is a bioarchaeologist whose work focuses on "the relationship between the natural and social environments and human health and behavior" (UCSB Biosocial Anthropology webpage). He is currently the President of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. John Tooby, one of the founders of the field of Evolutionary Psychology, joined the faculty of UCSB in 1990. His work uses techniques of experimentation, cross-cultural comparison, and neuroscience to define and study specific cognitive specializations for cooperation, coalition-forming, and other human cultural behaviors. Dr. Tooby is co-director, with Leda Cosmides, of UCSB's Center for Evolutionary Psychology. More recent additions to the faculty include Michael Gurven, a human behavioral ecologist trained at the University of New Mexico, who specializes in cooperative behavior in small-scale traditional populations. He has conducted field research among the Ache of Paraguay and has a new five-year project focusing on the interaction of life history, social cooperation, and food production behavior among the Tsimane of Bolivia. Finally, Steven Gaulin recently joined the faculty at UCSB after many years at the University of Pittsburgh. His research primarily falls within the rubric of evolutionary psychology and focuses on the evolution of cognitive-behavioral adaptations that differ by sex, such as spatial cognition and mate choice. He has done fieldwork in Panama and Colombia, but much of his recent work is experimental in nature and based in the U.S.

The BAS program's focus on bioarchaeology centers on the expertise of Dr. Walker, who is currently collaborating on two major international projects. The first of these aims to "construct a comprehensive picture of human adaptation and environmental change" in southwest Iceland since Viking times (Mosfell Archaeological Project website). He is

also principal investigator on the Global History of Health Project which involves researchers from many different European countries in an effort to analyze the evolution of skeletal health in recent centuries. BAS program bioarchaeology students not only have access to these types of learning experiences, however, but are also work closely with other archaeologists at UCSB, whose interests include relevant topics such as the archaeology of hunter-gatherers, the origins of complex societies, and archaeological methods, and who work in many parts of the world.

The BAS program's focus on evolutionary psychology is exemplified by the research of Drs. Gaulin, Tooby and Symons (Emeritus). This research focus is also bolstered by the presence of the Center for Evolutionary Psychology (CEP), an interdisciplinary research group which involves both faculty and graduate students from Anthropology, Psychology, and Evolutionary Biology. The goals of CEP are to "promote the discovery and systematic mapping of the adaptations that compromise the evolved species-typical architecture of the human mind and brain," and "to explore how cultural and social phenomena can be explained as the output of such...psychological adaptations" (CEP website). Many and diverse research projects take place under the auspices of CEP, including research on social exchange, inbreeding avoidance, gossip, and the evolution of human emotions. Dr. Gaulin reports that one of the most dynamic aspects of CEP is its weekly graduate seminar, at which students present research ideas or results and receive feedback both from their peers and from faculty.

The BAS program's focus on human behavioral ecology is of more recent origin. While Dr. Gurven was hired for his expertise in this perspective, the approach is also taken by ecological anthropologist Shankar Aswani, whose work focuses on indigenous ecological knowledge, common property resources, exchange, and social stratification in various parts of the Pacific. Work in human behavioral ecology is also fostered by the presence on campus of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Human Development (IGPHD), a group which includes faculty and students from Anthropology, Communication, Education, Linguistics, Psychology, and Sociology. Students from any of the participating graduate programs can join IGPHD, choosing to focus on social-emotional development, cognitive development, or the development/acquisition of complex communication systems such as language. Affiliated students can take offered courses as well as participate in a cross-disciplinary Proseminar which exposes them to new research in related fields.

Dr. Gaulin reports that BAS program students are of very high quality and often receive five-year fellowships from the University, for which they compete with students from many other disciplines. He also points out that as most faculty members only take one student per year, it can be quite competitive to gain admission. While departmental information only indicates six BAS program Ph.D.s, there are at least 16 others who were mentored by BAS faculty (many of them prior to the formation of the BAS program). Members of both groups include a significant number of tenured or tenure-track faculty at universities including the U of Oregon, Washington State U, Cal State Fullerton, Colorado College, and UCLA. Recent Ph.D.s also hold postdocs with

institutions such as the Institute for Theoretical Biology, Berlin, and the Santa Fe Institute.

Several members of the faculty commented that the name of the BAS program might change as part of a reorganization which is under consideration. Dr. Walker explained that “the academic structure [of anthropology] is in flux” and that therefore the BAS program is trying to find a departmental structure that “best fits the direction in which the discipline is going”. Of his department, Dr. Walker adds that “we are fighting against the schism in Anthropology, trying to find connections between the subdisciplines.”

Contributions to this column are welcomed and may be sent to Mary Shenk, Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology, University of Washington, 206 Raitt Hall, Box 353412, Seattle, WA 98195-3412 or to mshenk@u.washington.edu. Suggestions of or details on graduate programs related to the interests of the Evolutionary Anthropology Society are especially requested.