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# Cultural phylogenetics: bringing anthropology, linguistics and biology together to understand cultural evolution

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## Abstract

Session: Exploring the evolution of culture and social behavior (Steve Downes, Patrick Forber, Matt Haber, Fiona Jordan, Elisabeth Lloyd, Rory Smead) Multiple disciplines have emerging interests at the productive interface of evolutionary science and human culture. In the last 20 years, evolutionary anthropologists interested in understanding cross-cultural patterns and processes have turned to the population histories afforded by linguistic relationships to reinvigorate comparative approaches. At the same time, language researchers have revolutionised how we infer linguistic relationships by using the quantitative computational tools developed in biology for inferring the trees and networks of species. Working at the language-family level where emic categories are likely to be genuinely comparable, the vast ethnographic record is now being put to good use asking questions about the patterns and processes of cultural and linguistic change. In particular, phylogenetic comparative methods allow us to test evolutionarily-motivated hypotheses about adaptive features of human behaviour and norms in a genuinely productive framework. In this talk I show how cultural phylogenetics allows us to answer a host of questions (old and new) about migration, kinship, and the coevolution of language and culture.

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