

Social Change, Human Biology and Shifting Biocultural Perspectives in the Andes

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Abstract

My research focuses on processes linking social change and health inequalities within the theoretical context of what has come to be called critical biocultural anthropology (AH Goodman and TL Leatherman, eds., 1998, *Building a Biocultural Synthesis: Political Economic Perspectives in Biological Anthropology*). Beginning with dissertation work on the relationships between poverty and poor health in highland Peru, I have sought to integrate perspectives from human adaptability and political economy to examine how global processes impact local biologies. In this talk I will trace three generations of research over a 40-year period in the southern Peruvian Andes. I reflect on social changes and their biological impacts and the shift in biocultural perspectives guiding research from earlier work on adaptations to environmental stressors, to how biology and health is shaped by the political-economic and social dimensions of Andean life. Newer theory and methods in human biology and anthropology that build on the foundational work of Geoffrey Harrison and his colleagues enhance possibilities for ever broader and deeper links between inequalities and health, and future expansions of biocultural anthropology.