

Dysoc/NIMBioS Webinar Series on Cultural Evolution
Questions from *Cultural evolution in the field*
with Adrian Viliami Bell, October 27, 2020

1. Can you say something or reflect on how this (Cultural Evolution) outlook sits with the broader anthropology community, its values and traditions?
2. Do models support the classic saying that "necessity is the mother of invention," i.e. that individuals are more innovative in times of a crisis?
3. Can you say anything about the connection between this fieldwork approach and newer technological methods being used in various social science disciplines to carry out "experiments" (e.g. mechanical turk)? Are there people working on methods to take a mixture approach that uses both, or using one to estimate parameters in models and the other to evaluate the model results?
4. How does transmission explain the creation of innovations in the first place?
5. In a sense, any culture requires conformity if there is going to be any stability. But too much conformity fossilizes a culture so it will not be able to respond to new environmental conditions. Can you say something about cultural elements that encourage or at least allow for innovation (e.g., trickster legends)?
6. In terms of data collection in the field, what do you think are some of the biggest challenges for someone interested in understanding cultural change from an evolutionary perspective versus someone who does not subscribe to this framework? Do you have any advice for future fieldworkers on overcoming these challenges?
7. Can we say that a behavior is like an innovation? If so, can cultural evolution can be used to understand how behaviors arise, their modification and transmission?
8. Are modeling-driven questions in danger of leading to a neglect of social institutions? If not, how can they be handled appropriately?
9. The arrival of internet has been a classic and massive case of cultural evolution happening before our eyes. How can this be modeled or otherwise studied?