In a world in which inter-continental travel and mass electronic communication are becoming routine for a large proportion of the human population, the study of similarities and differences between groups has considerable academic and practical value. By applying conceptual and methodological tools from the biological sciences it is possible to explore factors that influence standing levels of cultural variation and what cultural forms present in a particular region. In this talk I'll review recent advances in the field of cultural evolutionary studies, including aspects of my dissertation research that test predictions stemming from multilevel selection theory, and discuss how evolutionary theory provides a general framework for organising cultural studies writ large.

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