INTRODUCTION

Psychological anthropology has a long history of integrative, cross-disciplinary research within the social sciences. This holistic tradition has substantially contributed to understanding the relationships between individuals and their cultural environment and to developing more sophisticated models of human variation within and between cultures. Whereas these contributions have generally arisen from conversations between psychology and anthropology, research integrating biological and cultural anthropology has become an increasingly established part of other anthropological subfields, such as medical (Armelagos et al. 1992; Brown et al. 1998; Leatherman 1996; Oths 1998) and biological anthropology (Bogin 1997; Goodman and Leatherman 1998a). This special issue continues psychological anthropology’s commitment to holistic inquiry by examining how dialogues between biological and cultural perspectives can generate new insights when applied to key questions in psychological anthropology.

The articles in this volume tackle various issues including the effect of cultural consonance on well-being in Brazil, the biocultural roots of addiction among Colombian youth, the social and psychological factors implicated in becoming a Candomblé medium, the process of coping with political-ecological inequality in Peru, and the biocultural pathways to somatization and suffering in Nepal. Not surprisingly, the research presented here has direct links to the biocultural
approaches that have emerged in medical and biological anthropology. It also represents a broadening of the topics in psychological anthropology currently examined from a biocultural perspective. This article introduces these new research directions. Furthermore, it argues for the utility of psychological models in building biocultural frameworks, describes how biological and cultural anthropology can each benefit from conversations with the other, and addresses some of the theoretical, practical, and social challenges in developing and sustaining biocultural dialogues.

HOLISM AND BIOCULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind. No wise man ever acquired his wisdom in any mode but this.

—John Stuart Mill, On Liberty

One of American Anthropology’s defining features has been its commitment to the ideal of holism in research and theory. This holistic orientation has served the discipline well both in understanding how complex forces interact across biological, psychological, and sociocultural levels to shape human variation and as a unique and valuable contribution to the larger academic enterprise (Goodman and Leatherman 1998a; Hinton 1999; Worthman 1992). Nevertheless, this ideal has more often been advocated than adhered to in anthropological research practice, collaboration, and graduate training (Borofsky 2002). Numerous constraints, including internal politics, epistemological differences, and differing bodies of theory, work against the collaboration and conversation necessary to develop holistic research, as evidenced by the recent number of high-profile fissions in anthropology departments across the United States.

As a counterpoint to these political and theoretical divisions, however, the term biocultural has become a buzzword to many, referring to a nostalgic ideal similar to anthropology’s original commitment to holism. The term has also gained currency in larger academic circles as part of the broad interdisciplinary movement to bridge traditional divisions between fields and disciplines (Damasio et al. 2001; Kosslyn et al. 2002; Li 2003; Massimini and Delle Fave 2000). Like holism, however, the biocultural ideal is broadly defined and often does not refer either to a specific research agenda or to a clear plan for organizing a dialogue between subfields. Indeed, few models of biocultural research, graduate training, or professional collaboration currently exist. Since its inception in the 1970s, Emory’s Department of Anthropology has grappled with ways to
facilitate conversation between biological and cultural research programs. As the department has expanded and diversified, the biocultural mission statement has remained, but debates have arisen about the feasibility and desirability of Emory’s original commitment to biocultural dialogues and research programs.

For these reasons, we (Lende, Hruschka, and Worthman) organized the symposium, “Building Biocultural Anthropology,” to identify and describe models of current research and collaboration that have integrated biological and cultural approaches to answer key questions in anthropology. In this search, we focused on research in two subfields, psychological and medical anthropology, that have been crucial to the formulation of Emory’s biocultural approach. With generous support from the Burke Nicholson Interdisciplinary Forum Fund and Emory’s Department of Anthropology, the symposium took place in March 2003 at Emory University. Anthropologists engaged in biocultural research at Emory and other institutions were invited to present their research, and asked to respond to the following two questions:

1. How have I integrated perspectives and methods from biological and cultural fields in my own work?
2. How has this integration yielded a better overall understanding of the problem under study?

First, and most importantly, the invited speakers and core faculty at Emory confirmed that integrative approaches are a vibrant area of research in anthropology, dealing particularly well with problems involving factors that cut across traditional academic boundaries. This integrative work requires a significant focus on methods, and an openness to different, often competing theoretical paradigms. At the same time, given the specificity of research problems, the rich variety of theories and methods presented did not reduce to one single “biocultural approach.”

Indeed, what emphatically emerged from the presentations, symposium workshops, and subsequent discussions was an understanding that the term biocultural can carry a range of meanings and represent a variety of methods, research areas, and levels of analysis. The presentations addressed multiple areas, including human development, human evolution, psychological anthropology, health and disease, the biology of poverty, ecology and the environment, and modernization. As illustrated by the articles in this volume, some presentations focused on the benefits that biological anthropologists can gain from incorporating models from cultural anthropology and political economy into their work (Leatherman), others described how biological theories and indices may be used to show how culture makes a difference in everyday experience (Dressler). The
majority of presentations examined how psychological processes mediate
the effect of culture on individual bodies (Dressler, Kohrt, Seligman,
Lende), while one focused farther upstream at the political-ecologic forces
implicated in material inequality (Leatherman). The necessary focus on
specific levels—from distal to proximal, macro to micro—at times led to
animated discussion and conflict about what is “really biocultural” and
how to best explain a certain phenomenon.

The conference also revealed that various possibilities exist for the
social organization of a biocultural approach. In the initial symposium
proposal we had focused on research agendas that integrated biological
and cultural frameworks. In this paradigm, research aims to synthesize
biological and cultural perspectives and methods to generate a more holis-
tic view of humans. However, in conversations with a wide range of col-
leagues, it became apparent that this synthetic view produced a fairly
strict definition of a biocultural approach.

Emory’s approach to biocultural anthropology, for example, was origi-

nally conceived as a space for civil conversation and critique among col-
leagues from the various subfields who were interested in common an-
thropological questions (Paul 1987). This plan acknowledged that not all
anthropological questions were most fruitfully examined with a biocul-
tural lens, and not every faculty member or graduate student was ex-
pected to embark on research that was biocultural. The charter affirmed
an academic spirit of “organized diversity” similar to that which the an-
thropologist, Anthony F. C. Wallace, argued was the basis of dynamically
ordered societies (Wallace 1961).

We believe that both these approaches—one of synthesis and one
of open exchange—are necessary to develop a holistic anthropology that
addresses significant human issues. In such a light, we provide a broad
working definition of biocultural anthropology as “a critical and produc-
tive dialogue between biological and cultural theories and methods in
answering key questions in anthropology.”

THIS VOLUME

One key area where open dialogue and synthesis between biological
and cultural perspectives can make a contribution is psychological an-
thropology. Psychological anthropology has traditionally been concerned
with understanding patterns in human psychology across cultural environ-
ments (Bock 1994; Henrich et al. 2001; Shweder and Bourne 1984), and
in developing a more nuanced and experience-near view of the human ac-
tor (Hollan 2001; Levy 1994). Thus, relationships between the individual
and the environment are a core part of psychological anthropology, with
an understanding that processes happening inside the individual can both influence and be influenced by the environment.

Today, it is well understood that human psychology has a significant basis in neurobiology, and that our psychological functioning has been shaped during the course of human evolution (Boyer 1999; Henrich and Gil-White 2001; Henrich and McElreath 2003; Rozin 2000; Smith 2000). At the same time, the new focus on embodiment in anthropology has brought back a focus on how culture “gets inside” a person (an approach first raised by culture and personality), while providing a needed corrective to mind–body splits seen generally in psychology (Csordas 1994; Strathern 1996; Weiss and Haber 1999). Concurrently, research on human development and the epidemiology of mental health has brought an increasing awareness of the biocultural nature and impact of our lived environments (Desjarlais 1995; Super and Harkness 1986; Worthman 1993, 1999). Thus, today, both the individual and the environment are seen in increasingly synthetic terms. A biocultural approach offers one way for psychological anthropology to address the complex relationships between the individual and his or her sociocultural environment.

As noted by Shore (1996), a biocultural approach within psychological anthropology also offers the possibility of addressing the “muddle in the middle,” the reconciliation between the doctrines of psychic unity and cultural diversity. Specifically, it offers a framework for research on what connects us (recurrent features of our neuropsychology and our environment) and of what makes us different (specific sociocultural, linguistic, and biological environments that affect the processes that comprise human development).

In this volume the articles provide concrete examples of how biocultural research can be done. Moreover, the set of articles demonstrates how this approach has direct implications for psychological anthropology, from broad models of person–environment interaction to a focus on specific psychological processes. By including one article (Leatherman) that comes out of a more critical perspective prevalent in previous biocultural research, we also hope to forge direct links between current biocultural approaches within anthropology.

**THE ARTICLES**

In “What’s Cultural about Biocultural Research?” William Dressler describes research that expands standard individual-oriented epidemiological models of risk by linking broadly shared cultural ideals with individual health outcomes. He outlines three important steps in doing
this: first, a method for measuring and characterizing shared cultural models (e.g., of the family); second, a method to examine the individual in relation to this culturally shared domain (e.g., how well I see my family living up to the model); and third, an analysis of how closely the perceived consonance with this model is associated with physiological and psychological outcomes. This approach has yielded consistent and interesting results in several settings (Dressler and Bindon 2000) in part because the methodological approach permits the identification of cultural models that are tailored to the cultural logic of specific populations. At a broader level, however, the article provides methods and perspectives potentially useful to both cultural and biological anthropologists. For biological anthropologists it provides ways of assessing cultural variation and of linking this variation to biological processes. For cultural anthropologists, the method provides ways to examine concepts such as identity, hegemony, and inequality and more importantly how these can be inscribed on individual bodies and physiologies. Perhaps most interesting are the numerous questions raised by Dressler’s analysis. What, for example, are the social mechanisms that maintain the sharing of certain cultural ideals across these diverse communities? Furthermore, what are the social structural and psychological constraints that prevent certain families from conforming to these ideals?

Thomas Leatherman’s article, “A Space of Vulnerability in Poverty and Health: Political-Ecology and Biocultural Analysis,” focuses more directly on the broad social-structural and political-economic forces that shape individual-level coping, understanding, and outcomes, and how these have a bearing on the distribution of (and inequalities in) human health. Specifically, Leatherman examines how history and political-economic structures in Nuñoa, Peru have created a “space of vulnerability” that shapes nutrition, growth and development, and behavior. The article further explores the room for action and strategizing that exists within this space of vulnerability, and how individual and group agency can reshape the space of vulnerability. In this way Leatherman lays a solid foundation for analyzing the complex interplay of broad socioeconomic constraints and transformative political actions.

In her article “Distress, Dissociation, and Embodied Experience: Reconsidering the Pathways to Mediumship and Mental Health,” Rebecca Seligman analyzes data from Candomblé devotees in Salvador, Brazil to explore the factors that lead some individuals to become spirit mediums. As Seligman describes, current models for the “etiology of mediumship” have serious weaknesses. The standard social structural approach identifies poverty, oppression, and marginality as key precursors to mediumship, but it cannot explain why relatively few individuals in these circumstances
actually become mediums. Similarly, Seligman argues that the biomedical model focuses too intently on dissociative tendencies as the primary cause in the etiology of mediumship, ignoring the possibility that social and cultural forces may shape an individual's dissociative tendencies only after a person moves into the role. Examining life histories and psychological surveys of Candomblé mediums and devotees, as well as non-Candomblé controls, Seligman integrates psychological, biomedical, and sociocultural perspectives to develop a more sophisticated model for why some individuals and not others eventually become mediums. At a broader level, the article provides a model for keeping both an eye on individual actors and another on the social and cultural structures that constrain and influence their actions.

In “Wanting and Drug Use: A Biocultural Approach to the Analysis of Addiction,” Daniel Lende focuses on the desire to use drugs among adolescents in Columbia, arguing that traditional attempts to understand drug use have relied too narrowly on either biomedical models of craving or contextual theories of drug use. Drawing on intensive ethnographic research and emerging neurobiological models of addiction, Lende describes the development of a scale for “wanting” that proves to be a significant predictor of addicted status in his sample, alongside already known factors such as delinquency and peer drug use. He then uses interview data with adolescent drug users to provide a richer description of how wanting is involved in drug-use behavior, highlighting the complementary contributions of quantitative and qualitative approaches in biocultural research.

In “‘Somatization’ and ‘Comorbidity’: A Study of Jhum-Jhum and Depression in Rural Nepal,” Kohrt et al. examine the role of comorbidity and somatization in complaints of extremity numbness in a western Nepalese community. Using a biocultural approach, they question the common anthropological observation that somatization—the manifestation of psychological distress through physical complaints—occurs more frequently in non-Western than in Western cultural settings. Specifically, the authors marshal both biological and cultural data to argue that high rates of jhum-jhum, or subjective numbness or tingling, among depressed individuals in Nepal is as likely a result of a high physical burden of disease among participants as an indication of high rates of somatization. This observation raises serious questions about the degree to which somatic symptoms in some non-Western contexts are due to a cultural propensity for somatization or rather are related simply to a higher burden of physical disease. At a broader level, the article demonstrates that a combined attention to the cultural meaning and the biological antecedents of illness is necessary in understanding the distribution of suffering and distress in diverse populations.
MINDING THE GAP

A unique contribution of the articles in this volume is their use of psychological processes and individual actors as a hinge for biocultural theory and research. In a previous review of biocultural research, Goodman and Leatherman (1998) developed a framework that focuses on how broad political-economic, ideological, and sociocultural contexts shape human biologies. This approach provides a necessary antidote to myopic, body-centered models of human biological variation. However, it often brackets the proximal psychological processes that mediate the influences of broader forces on individual bodies. Although sociocultural or political-economic forces do act directly on bodies (i.e., via war, genocide, or torture), their “force” generally comes in the form of perceived constraints, persuasive messages, or threats that are mediated by a culturally conditioned mind. Only after this mediation do individuals act in ways that may influence their own biological processes or the biology of others (via feeding decisions, hypothalamo-pituitary-adrenal axis activation, anger, verbal and gestural responses, etc.). Therefore, we argue that biocultural models will be incomplete unless they take into account the role of the mind in linking sociocultural context and individual biologies. In other words, a necessary step in mending the gap between biological and cultural theory is to understand the role of mind as a link between cultural processes and individual bodies.

As one example of “minding the gap,” at least two of the central issues proposed by Goodman and Leatherman (1998) would benefit from complementary attention to more proximal psychological processes. Consider:

1. “Importance of links between the local and the global (macro-micro interconnections).”
   As Dressler shows, the mind is a key construct in tracing the paths by which global processes, such as culture, influence the local, such as individual health outcomes. Specifically, much of the mediation between the larger sociopolitical world and local groups of individuals takes place through individual perception, symbolic communication, and small-scale decision making (Anderson-Fye 2003). Without models describing these local processes, the links we draw between the local and global are likely to be static, and as Seligman points out with social structural models of mediumship, largely inadequate.

2. “Humans are active agents in constructing their environments.”
   The understanding of human agency can be enhanced through a focus on psychology. As Seligman argues, humans are not passive
reflections of their social environment. In the case of Candomblé, for example, not all socially marginalized individuals become spirit mediums. Rather, a complex amalgamation of social, psychological and physiological factors seems to play a role. To understand why certain individuals or groups resist what they perceive to be unjust social conditions, while others do not, it is important to understand the culturally conditioned psychological processes by which individuals accommodate, adapt or adjust to a situation or by which they attempt to resist or change it.

Thus, as a necessary complement to the model proposed by Goodman and Leatherman (1998), the articles in this volume emphasize research on the psychological processes involved in mediating links between human bodies and the sociocultural milieu. In analyses of somatization (Kohrt), paths to mediumship (Seligman), cultural consonance and health (Dressler), and decisions to use drugs (Lende), the contributors present their approach to getting at the mind, a construct essential to understanding how culture gets into the body and how the body influences cultural action.

The Actor

The contributions in this volume further consider the mind as it provokes action in its sociocultural context, and thus “the actor” seems a key unifying concern in these articles. For example, Lende and Seligman both describe how individual actors come to occupy certain types of “categories” (substance abusers, mediums) within a sociocultural system, and how psychological processes and broader sociocultural forces are implicated in these moves. Kohrt examines how actors come to manifest a culturally defined symptom, by looking at how biological, psychological, and social forces converge to shape individuals’ perceptions of their bodies. Dressler describes how actors’ differential achievement of culturally shared norms are related to individual differences in health outcomes, while Leatherman focuses on how actors negotiate and cope within the often tightly woven web of relationships imposed by larger social, political, and economic structures. As each of the articles in this volume suggest, biological and cultural forces will often take on their synergistic qualities at the level of the actor and of the actor’s interaction with its biocultural milieu.

 Interestingly, Paul (1987) outlines how the actor also formed a focal point for initial biocultural conversations at Emory: “It gradually dawned on us—whether we worked in the field of primate behavior within a more or less modified Darwinian paradigm, in psychological anthropology, or in ecological or economic anthropology—that we had parallel interests in the
question of how individual actors make decisions, and in the goals that
guide their strategizing and goal-choosing actions” (Paul 1987:7). This
focus on the actor provided a unifying approach, especially when coupled
with agreement that there were no a priori answers. In this way, “the way
was opened, not for consensus by any means, but at least for an earnest
dialogue in which there was a shared understanding of the terms and
stakes of the argument, and of the kinds of facts, cases, or demonstrations
that might provide meaningful answers to our questions” (Paul 1987:7).

THE PROMISE OF RECIPROCITY

A review of the research outlined in this volume also makes it dif-
ficult to sustain the commonly cited reason for a split in biological and
cultural anthropology—that one “has very little to offer” the other (Holden
1993). In each of these articles, biological and cultural perspectives made
unique contributions to tackling questions of interest in both biological
and cultural anthropology—inequality, oppression, embodiment, identity,
structure and agency, human development and human variation. Without
biological measures as both outcomes and potential confounders it would
have been difficult for Dressler to argue that cultural consonance actually
makes a difference in physical health. Conversely, culturally sensitive
instruments and appropriate analytical tools for characterizing cultural
similarities were essential to capturing intracultural agreement and vari-
ation. Without biomedical assessment the cases of jhum-jhum in Kohrt
et al.’s analysis may have been incorrectly classified as somatizers. On
the other hand, cultural analysis was necessary to understand the mean-
ing of jhum-jhum and psychological distress in his Nepalese population.
Lende’s study of addiction in Colombia derived inspiration from both cur-
rent biological models of drug use and grounded ethnographic observa-
tion. Consequently, both perspectives informed his construction of scales
for assessing personal and cultural models of drug use. As illustrated by
Seligman’s and Lende’s articles, one can draw on biological theory to in-
terpret ethnographic results (without necessarily having biological mea-
sures). Similarly, Dressler and Leatherman illustrate how the use of cul-
tural theory advances our understanding of biological well-being.

More broadly, biological and cultural anthropology offer expertise in
complementary analytic and methodological approaches. Biological an-
thropology currently encourages and has developed a scientific approach
based on testing hypotheses in theories of human development and evo-
lution. It consequently provides a base for the experience and skills re-
quired to identify and frame hypotheses from a body of theory, to define
relevant and measurable theoretical constructs, to collect data on these
constructs, and to test the original hypotheses. In the last few decades, training in cultural anthropology has focused on honing critical and interpretive skills, on understanding the social processes and biases involved in research, and on developing local theories based on rich ethnographic evidence. Consequently, the subfield provides experience and skills in critically evaluating existing theoretical constructs, in identifying social aspects of research that may limit the validity or generalizability of findings, and in interpreting results in their local context. We believe that the biocultural approach will succeed as anthropologists learn how to draw from the complementary skills and experience offered by these two fields.

In addition to complementary analytic approaches, methodological advances in each field have much to offer investigations in the other. For example, measures of biological functioning (i.e., circulating hormone concentrations, blood pressure, cardiac reactivity, Epstein-Barr virus antibodies) have reached a level of sophistication and ease of use which is driving a revolution in the study of human biology worldwide. These portable measures provide a complementary means for understanding how individuals can be affected by culture change, social inequality, modernization, cultural oppression, and sociopolitical violence (Dressler and Bindon 2000; McDade et al. 2000; Panter-Brick and Worthman 1999; Rilling 1996; Stallings et al. 1998; Worthman and Stallings 1997). As individual biologies can embody cultural processes, these biological measures can also serve as an alternative (though not sufficient) means to “record” the action of culture. These, of course, are not new insights. Even Boas used biological data to illustrate the role of culture in his studies of cranial shapes and physical development (Boas 1912). The crucial difference between the possibilities now and in the early 20th century lies in the increased range of biological processes potentially observed, in the cross-cultural portability of measures, and in the elaboration of theory to interpret these measures.

On the cultural side, Dressler illustrates a sophisticated method for determining broadly shared cultural ideals and for assessing intracultural variation in the capacity to meet them. Other work in this vein is represented by Handwerker (2002) and Demers et al. (1996), where an understanding of cultural representations (or models) is derived from structured interviews and then incorporated into sophisticated examinations of behavioral and biological outcomes. Researchers in human behavioral ecology have fruitfully employed systematic ethnographic fieldwork to assess hypotheses derived from evolutionary theory (Cronk et al. 2000), while Lende’s article illustrates how research grounded in an ethnographic exploration of adolescent experiences can be used to bring novel understanding of the neuropsychology underlying drug addiction. In general, the ethnographic approach—by taking seriously what informants say and
do and by matching this with an understanding of the characteristics of a given culture—provides a much needed reality check on deterministic or reductionist models. Documenting an ethnographic reality and then taking this reality as what needs to be explained will be central to the further development of biocultural anthropology.

While describing ways that biological and cultural anthropology can usefully incorporate perspectives and methods from one other, the articles in this issue also overcome dichotomies that have traditionally mirrored the biological–cultural divide in anthropology: nature versus nurture, mind versus body, qualitative versus quantitative, materialist versus interpretive. Specifically, the authors in this issue have found it useful to discard or ignore these artificial divisions whether their question concerns addiction, mediumship, suffering, the status quest, or coping in the face of structural inequalities. Overall, by being committed to simultaneous biological and cultural perspectives and doing research that is problem driven and pragmatic, biocultural anthropology can focus on human phenomena as they present themselves, rather than dividing them into a priori dichotomies. The capacity to transcend these tired yet recurring dichotomies is perhaps the most promising outcome of continued conversations between biological and cultural anthropologists.

**THE SOCIAL IN BIOCULTURAL**

Calls for a biocultural perspective have generally emphasized the development of theoretical models and research strategies (Goodman and Leatherman 1998b; Hinton 1999; Worthman 1993). Less attention, however, has focused on highlighting practical models by which departments, collaborations, or professional associations might organize (or have successfully organized) to facilitate biocultural research or dialogue. This is an interesting lacuna considering that biocultural research is almost necessarily social. In most cases no single researcher can cover the breadth of knowledge, master the variety of research techniques, or collect the diversity of data often necessary for a biocultural project.

Although none of the following proposals are sufficient to facilitate communication and collaboration across subfields, they appear to be key ingredients in departments and collaborations that have succeeded in producing cross-field dialogue, research, and publications.

1. **Common goals and research questions.**

   Holism, for Boas, was a means to approaching questions about human variation and history. A hundred years later, it is tempting to assume that holism, and by extension biocultural research, is important on the weight of tradition alone. This is not enough.
Generating dialogue between biological and cultural perspectives is not an end in itself, but rather a proposed means to pursuing tough issues in anthropology, such as the nature of emotions (Hinton 1999), the individual health consequences of oppression and inequality (Farmer 1999; Goodman and Leatherman 1998b; Strickland and Shetty 1998; Wilkinson 2000), the psychological and evolutionary roots of culture (Deacon 1997; Dunbar et al. 1999; Henrich and Gil-White 2001; Henrich and McElreath 2003; Tomasello 1999), the manifestation of suffering across cultures (Kohrt et al. 2004; Oths 1999), influences on feeding, nutrition and growth (Goodman et al. 1999; McDade and Worthman 1998; Sellen 2002), the nature of addiction (Lende, this issue), pathways of human development (Harkness 1992; Worthman 1993), and the role of cultural dissonance in stress and disease (Dressler and Bindon 2000; McDade 2002). As an entrée to productive and motivated dialogue, it seems necessary for participants to have framed common goals and research questions. Without such common goals, the cross-field conversation serves little purpose other than to maintain a hallowed yet ultimately hollow holistic tradition.

2. Balanced representation and active dialogue.
A key ingredient in promoting dialogue between subfields, and a core commitment in Emory’s departmental development, is ensuring that members of each subfield are present. Nonetheless, simply committing to balance in hiring, publication, graduate student selection, and the availability of training courses does not guarantee dialogue (Borofsky 2002). Humans have a notorious capacity to self-segregate, and social structural fixes in the form of course requirements, biocultural seminars, and department-wide intellectual events such as dissertation proposal defenses may go some way to curbing this tendency. Moreover, an appreciation of biological or cultural approaches does not come simply from exposure to one or two graduate survey courses. To understand the relevant ideas and how to use them, individuals often need to be exposed to them multiple times. Like ethnographic research, with its active immersion, one understands better the local logic and context by being there.

3. Mutual trust and respect.
Perhaps the most difficult task, given the often aggressive pursuit of academic status and research funding, is the generation of a culture of trust and respect within and across subfield boundaries. It would be a futile task to search for a department with no academic infighting or interpersonal grudges, but a self-reflective
assessment of the stereotypes with which we assess, judge, and classify cross-field colleagues is essential for the maintenance of dialogue (Goodman and Leatherman 1998:8). How else can biological anthropologists approach cultural anthropologists without giving the impression that they are engaged in “a form of cognitive colonialism” (Holden 1993:1641)? Or cultural anthropologists work with biological anthropologists without reducing them to caricatures of something like theoretical Neanderthals? By interacting with openness, rather than reacting dismissively, anthropologists will be able to find common ground on which they respect what each subfield has to offer to the larger anthropological endeavor and to a new wave of synthetic research.

4. Graduate training.

The future of a holistic, biocultural anthropology will be largely determined by the career activities and collaborations of the current cohort of graduate students. Anthropology has traditionally emphasized integrative training, but with many departments splitting, and others no longer requiring classes that span the breadth of anthropological inquiry, it is becoming increasingly possible to become an anthropologist having had little contact with other subfields. This lack of interaction is likely one source of the observation that the stereotypes held by cultural and biological anthropologists of the “other” may be strongest among the younger generations of anthropologists (Goodman and Leatherman 1998:8). Without opportunities and at times requirements to interact, young anthropologists may only see those of the opposite persuasion from afar. In a split view, the grass is not greener on the other side, but rather looks like a landscape of bad assumptions and flawed research, with nothing to add to one’s developing ideas. Without exposure, it is easy to assume the worst, rather than develop a fair and balanced view of the strengths and weakness of the different types of approaches offered by anthropology.

Even when following these proposals, there will always be pitfalls in developing a more integrated anthropology. Practice often diverges from the ideal at Emory. At times, graduate biocultural seminars can devolve into an uneasy, unintegrated mix of presentations based on individual subfields. A commitment to equal hiring or graduate selection can occasionally move from discussions of equity to infighting over tit for tat. The emphasis on fusion can reify existing subfield categories (Borofsky 2002), as exemplified by the common question asked between Emory graduate students, “are you biological or cultural?”
The presence of these pitfalls does not mean, however, that attempts to facilitate exchange across subfield boundaries are not worth an effort. As any field worker knows, cross-cultural communication is fraught with heated exchanges, cool welcomes, and recuperative retreats. The rewards in understanding, however, far outweigh the tensions caused during moments of misunderstanding. Our own research and intellectual trajectories have been heavily influenced and enriched by biocultural dialogues. Given the two general models of biocultural dialogue and biocultural synthesis we have presented, we might say that as a whole, a department needs to both talk the talk and walk the walk. By having open conversations and active attempts at integration, anthropology as a whole can regain a vital holism.

Most telling about these ideals, and the overall ideas of dialogue and synthesis, has been a reformulation at Emory of the departmental ethos and vision statement. Originally identified as a biocultural program, the department has grown in terms of faculty, research institutes, and integrative paradigms. Although the biocultural model of both dialogue and synthesis still forms one core of the department, the ideals have spread to open dialogue between competing ideas in cultural anthropology, engagement with other fields, and a commitment to a critical empiricism.

Overall, we believe that the biocultural approach is one way to bring new dynamism to anthropology, and thus a way to respond to then AAA president (and psychological anthropologist) James Peacock’s 1994 observation: “. . . poised for victory, we retreat, turn within, luxuriate in ourselves, squander our resources in silly arguments, [and] shrink our vision to the smallest world.” As Hinton (1999) argues in reference to studies of emotions, no single perspective whether social constructionist or universalist holds the truth. Rather, better understandings arise from comparison between these perspectives. That is the biocultural approach we are arguing for. [Keywords: biocultural, psychological anthropology]

NOTES

Acknowledgments. We gratefully acknowledge Emory University’s Burke Nicholson Interdisciplinary Forum Fund and Department of Anthropology for their support of the conference “Building Biocultural Anthropology” held in March 2003. We also thank conference participants for their past and ongoing contributions to biocultural dialogues.
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Weiss, Gail, and Honi Fern Haber


Wilkinson, Richard


Worthman, Carol M.


Worthman, Carol M., and Joy F. Stallings