

Department of Anthropology
Colloquium Speaker Series, Spring 2019
Thursday, February 7, 2019 @ 2:00-4:00pm
Carolyn and Kem Gardner Commons (GC), Room 5490

Jeremy Koster, PhD.

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***“The Life History of Foraging Skill: Cross-Cultural and
Individual Variation”***



Abstract:

Compared to other apes, humans begin reproducing at later ages and they have longer lifespans overall. Anthropologists have hypothesized that the evolution of human life histories is the result of selection for age-related variation in foraging proficiency. To refine estimates of foraging skill across the lifespan, we compiled a cross-cultural database of 23,000 records of subsistence hunting by 1,800 individuals at 40 locations around the world. adaptation, clarifying needs for future empirical research. Our statistical model reveals

an average age of peak productivity around 30 years of age, but with substantial heterogeneity among individuals and across study sites. Heterogeneity among individuals depends more upon variation in rates of decline with age than variation in rates of increase, implying that older hunters exhibit more heterogeneity in skill than younger hunters. This analysis sharpens questions about the co-evolution of human life history and cultural adaptation, clarifying needs for future empirical research.



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