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Recent Publications

- Read, D. (editor) 2004. Special Issue: Cultural Systems. *Cybernetics and Systems* 35(2-3)
- Read, D. 2001 What is Kinship? In *The Cultural Analysis of Kinship: The Legacy of David Schneider and Its Implications for Anthropological Relativism*, R. Feinberg and M. Ottenheimer eds. University of Illinois Press, Urbana.
- Read, D. 2003 From Behavior to Culture: An Assessment of Cultural Evolution and a New Synthesis *Complexity* 8(6):14-41.
- Read, D. 2004. Mathematical Modeling and Anthropology: Its Rationale, Past Successes and Future Directions. *Cybernetics and Systems (Special Issue)* 8:113-128
- Read, D. 2004 The Emergence of Order from Disorder as a Form of Self Organization *Computational & Mathematical Organization Theory* 9: 195-225.
- Read, D. 2005 Change in the Form of Evolution: Transition from Primate to Hominid Forms of Social Organization. *J. of Mathematical Sociology*

Research Focus

Integration of mathematical reasoning with anthropological theorizing. Areas of research include: application of statistical modeling to hominid evolution, development of a culture-based theory and method of classification in archaeology, and formal analysis of kinship systems. Current research explores use of multi-agent simulation for modeling of social and cultural systems.

The Evolution of Cultural Kinship: A Non-Darwinian Odyssey

The talk I will be giving in the October 28 Video Conference is based on a lecture I gave at the Center for the Study of the Evolution of Life (CSEOL) at UCLA last Fall (the power point for the talk may be found at <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/read/>). In this talk I take up the question of whether or not the evolution of human societies and cultural systems from a non-human primate ancestor can be accommodated within a Darwinian framework for evolution. I assume that for a non-human primate species, its social structure, form of social organization and kinds of social behavior evolved through Darwinian processes such as biological kin selection, inclusive fitness, reciprocal altruism between biological kin, and so on, including direct phenotypic transmittal of behavioral traits viewed as part of the phenotype of an individual organism. The fundamental question being addressed, then, is whether or not we can embed the evolution of human social and cultural systems within this framework and the conclusion I reach is that the evolution of human social and cultural systems cannot be adequately embedded within this biological framework for the evolution of social systems. I examine the question by considering how the culturally constructed kinship systems that are central to the structure and organization of human societies may have evolved from a non-human primate social system. I will argue that in the evolution of culturally constructed kinship systems from a social system centered around biological kin, the evolutionary process became decoupled from its biological underpinnings through a fundamental shift to a conceptual, rather than a behavioral, basis for the identification of kin. Time permitting, I will discuss a “barrier” that prevented any of the non-human primates from traversing a similar evolutionary pathway even though the time frame for the traversal was equally available to other non-human primate species; that is, a reason why culturally constructed social systems are uniquely human and did not arise in any of the other primate species.