

DySoC Webinar Series on Human Origins and Cultural Evolution

What is Homo sapiens?



Date: 11:45 a.m. EST Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Speaker: [Chris Stringer](#) (Human Evolution, Natural History Museum, London, UK)

Topic: What is *Homo sapiens*?

Questions from seminar:

1. How does nutrition impact morphology in modern and archaic *H. sapiens*. Would nutrition resources and glaciation cycles impact on resources produce signals in the morphology in a region.
2. When you talk about an 'unsuccessful' early dispersal ~200ka, what exactly are the implied events? It seems unlikely that every single one of the arrivers in Eurasia went extinct without 'interbreeding' with other hominins? Maybe earlier hominins should indeed not be classified into as many species as they are? Maybe they were just more variable (if genetic data doesn't suggest otherwise)?
3. What is the likelihood that we will find *Homo sapiens* remains with more than 2% Neanderthal DNA?
4. Thank you for the fascinating talk. What do you think about the 'braided stream' metaphor? Should it replace more tree-like phylogenies or is the web-thinking a little overstated in the case of recent human evolution? Thank you!
5. What does the fact that sapiens and 'Neas' seem to have shared parasites tell us about their relative separation?
6. Thank you for the great talk! In the example of the 65.000 years old Australian site, you mentioned that they used advanced technology and pigments, so it must have been modern humans. But there was no findings of human fossils and it has been proven for neanderthal to use pigments and advanced technology. So isn't it possible for the site to be the result of activities of another human species than modern humans?
7. Regarding those Asian early Late Pleistocene dental remains with 'modern' features, how would you argue an early dispersal of sapiens out of Africa to be a more plausible interpretation than 'modern' features evolving autochthonously in Asia, like the Chinese multiregionalists have argued for decades? What about other features like the flat, shovel-shaped incisor which was

deemed by this school to be a linkage between Asian archaic humans and modern populations of East Asia?

8. But so if Neanderthals also had language in your opinion, does that push the origin of language back at least to the sapiens-Neanderthal MRCA? Or can you imagine language involving convergently in sapiens and Neanderthals?
9. Thanks Chris, great talk. Do you think it possible that the neanderthal brain might be fundamentally the same to the human brain in its internal structure and organisation, and the surface shape difference reflects what you get when you mold essentially the same brain inside different shaped skulls?
10. (where by 'human' I mean us living humans!)
11. In your view is global cultural evolution making humans more or less resilient to future environmental change
12. Could incest and minimal contact, and the variance of birth defects that arise from that, be a cause of small, remote populations being replaced/wiped out?