

## **Bad Relations? Cross-cultural Patterning in Water Sharing and Mental Ill-health**

Abstract: Anthropological theories of reciprocity suggest it enhances prestige, social solidarity, and material security. Yet, my early ethnographic research in Bolivia suggested that water sharing—a form of reciprocity newly gaining scholarly attention—might work in the opposite way, increasing conflict and emotional distress. Drawing from recent literature and my own collaborative cross-cultural research from twenty global sites ( $n = 4,267$ ), I discuss how household water reciprocity (giving and receiving) is associated with negative emotional and social outcomes. Our team's research shows that participation in water sharing as both givers and receivers is consistently associated with shame, upset, and conflict over water. I'll discuss why water sharing experiences largely do not align with predictions of classic reciprocity theories—and what the implications are for future water and economic policy reforms.