



General Anthropology

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Anthropology for All

Producing Anthropology: Culture of, by, and for the People

Gad Distinguished Lecture, 2014

By Richard Kurin

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The theme of the 2014 meeting of the American Anthropological Association—"producing anthropology"—couldn't be more appropriate for this lecture, which I'm honored to deliver. I've spent my career producing anthropology. We produce or reproduce anthropology when we teach a class, write a textbook, prepare articles or

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General Anthropology

What is General Anthropology? What is Its Future?

The following are papers read at a session sponsored by GAD at the 2014 meetings of the American Anthropological Association

INTRODUCTION

By Conrad Kottak, University of Michigan

I'm pleased to introduce these short discussions of general anthropology, originally presented at the 2014 annual meeting of the AAA. The papers that follow are iwere presented at that session, which I chaired.

I decided to study anthropology because of its breath, its generality. Three of the four subfields fascinated me immediately. It took me more time to warm up to linguistics, which I did when I discovered it could be linguistic *anthropology*, including historical linguistic relationships, language and culture, and particularly sociolinguistics. I still think of general anthropology as synonymous with four-field anthropology, indeed with "anthropology" itself, and I always identify myself first as an anthropologist, rather than by my subfield—sociocultural anthropology.

I particularly enjoyed some of the capsule definitions of anthropology in the papers that follow. For Pat Rice, anthropology is "the science of what it is to be human." For Sam Cook, it is "the study of human beings." For Chris Furlow, its goal is "trying to understand humankind." I usually describe it as "the scientific and humanistic study of biological and cultural similarities and dif-

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Resource Management

Tragedy of the Cows: A Classroom Exercise on Common Property

By Laurie Occhipinti
Clarion University

In understanding resource management, the scenario of the "tragedy of the commons" (Harding 1968) is well-known. It suggests that in a situation in which a resource is shared by multiple users, each individual user will seek to maximize his or her own self-interest, extracting as much value from that resource as he or she can. While this strategy is beneficial and rational for the individual, at the collective level the "tragic" result is that the resource will be over-exploited. In addition to serving as a justification for private property, the scenario is often applied to situations like fisheries, open grazing land, hunting territories, and other situations in which a resource is not easily partible to private owners.

Elinor Ostrom (1990), however, pointed out that in many traditional societies, resources that may appear to be "open" to all users are actually regulated by systems of local rules about appropriate use. Such resources are not in fact "open," but are better understood as "common property." In these cases, formal and informal rules govern the conditions under which individual users have access to the resource as well as consequences for violating the rules.

This exercise illustrates the difference between an open-access resource and a common property system by allowing students to make decisions about resource use under different tenure regimes. By exploring the constraints that different forms of land ten-

Cows *cont. on page 8*

Conclusion

Most anthropologists probably would agree that the discipline is devoted to advancing our knowledge of human life on the planet and how we live with each other over time. We certainly recognize the difficulties of defining culture and arguing over the varied, multi-paradigmatic character of our scholarly pursuits. I'm not convinced we will somehow resolve intellectual and theoretical differences among varied approach or even of the desirability of doing so. But I am convinced that anthropology has an ethical contribution to make, and that is in its meta-disciplinary focus on promoting the understanding and appreciation of culture. Surely people may create horrid traditions that cause great harm to themselves and others. Culture is not always uplifting. But, in the main, it represents how diverse conditions and forms of creativity have led to a diversity of ways of living and believing. Understanding, representation, and preservation are all means of producing anthropology, ways of investing in the value, and for the most part dignity, of different ways of being human. Advancing that effort is a way to advance tolerance, respect and human freedom—not a bad recipe for intellectual and practical work, and it sure beats the alternative!

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1998 *Smithsonian Folklife Festival: Culture of, by and for the People*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution.

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ferences in time and space.”

These papers all demonstrate a commitment to general anthropology, which Cook aptly describes as “the zone of practice in which the lines [between the subfields] become blurred.” Common to all the papers is an appreciation of interrelationships, connectivity, holism, and interdisciplinarity. Rice stresses the importance of studying interrelationships between the past and the present, and between biology and culture. Chris Furlow focuses on the anthropology of science, technology, and medicine. Carol Ember highlights the value of science and multidisciplinary team research. Holly Norton stresses the importance of broad anthropological training, cultural sensitivity, and community participation in CRM—Cultural Resource Management.

Among the topics mentioned as particularly amenable to study by general anthropology are the following: nutrition and diet, health, environment and culture, cognitive anthropology, and inequality. I would add to those topics a few others whose relevance to general anthropology cannot be overstated: race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Let's turn now to the papers.

TEACHING GENERAL ANTHROPOLOGY

By *Patricia Rice*, West Virginia University

Things change: the world changes, our personal lives change, but one thing does not change and that's the common thread of anthropology, the science of what it is to be human. As humans, we have a past and a present (and we hope a future); as humans we are biological creatures (animals) and we have culture. And to study humans properly, we must look at the relationship and interrelationships between the past and the present, culture and biology. That has not and will not change. And those of us who call ourselves generalists, firmly believe this.

To take just one example, and something in the recent news: paleodiets. Who better to analyze paleodiets than general anthropologists? By definition, a paleodiet involves both the past and present, usually the diet of prehistoric hunter-gatherers and what they ate and modern diets and what we

should eat. And by definition, paleodiets involve culture—food eaten by humans – and biology—what diets do to our bodies.

I would like to concentrate on teaching and learning this paradigm of anthropology: its generalness.

First, when I was an undergraduate, I did not know what I wanted to do with my life. So, I was a general education student until forced to declare a major. I was a journalism major for one term and that did not suit me; I was a psychology major for one term and that was even worse. So, I did a BA in International Studies as that allowed me to take a bit of everything. In my senior year, I was required to take a course titled Introduction to Anthropology. I suspect I said something to myself like “what the hell is that?” But, I lucked out as my professor was a generalist, even if I did not know that term at the time. Though he covered all of the essential aspects of four-field anthropology, the best AHA moments of that course were when he related the past to the present or when he talked about the interrelationship between biology and culture. That mesmerized me. When I went to graduate school in anthropology, I continued my interest in those interrelationships and when I started teaching, I concentrated on them.

Second, and still related to teaching, I am a firm believer that good teachers are made and not born. We all have good ideas about things, but so do others. And since I firmly believe we should all teach the generalness of anthropology, we need good examples of the relationships between culture and biology and the past with the present to give to our students. I remind you of paleodiets. In this mode, I am asking us to share those examples with each other. See the Box on page 15 below. If we can demonstrate the interrelationships, we are continuing the tradition of being generalists. Please share your examples with others.

GENERAL ANTHROPOLOGY: A HOLISTIC VISION OF CROSS DISCIPLINARY ENCOUNTERS

By *Christopher A. Furlow*, Sante Fe College

General Anthropology is at the heart of anthropology because of its emphasis on a holistic vision for our discipline. This holistic vision highlights connections rather

than divisions and legitimizes research that transcends boundaries rather than reifying them. Holistic, cross-disciplinary research has always been central to general anthropology and continues to increase in importance in anthropology.

General anthropology reminds us that, regardless of our individual sub-field, specialty, region of study, epistemological and methodological preferences, we anthropologists are all engaged in a common endeavor of trying to understand humankind. General anthropology encourages each of us to take the time to step back and think about some of the larger disciplinary questions like “What makes us human?” and “What does it mean to be human?” and explore how our own research addresses these questions and fits into anthropology, the human sciences, the social sciences, and the biological sciences. General anthropology encourages us to transcend what are often the all too rigid boundaries between subfields and between anthropology and other disciplines. General anthropology legitimizes research living in the spaces between subfields and disciplines that don’t obviously fit neatly into other disciplinary categories.

Cross-disciplinary research is becoming both prominent and more important as humanities problems increase in size and complexity. Issues such as global climate change, growing economic and identity-based inequalities, migration, conflict, human and cultural evolution, and scientific and technological change are subjects best approached from a cross-disciplinary perspective.

The anthropology of science, technology, and medicine is one area in which this cross-disciplinary perspective has taken root. Scholars in this specialty that emerged fully in the early 1990s have been exploring the social and cultural aspects of everything from early computing and high energy physics, to medical treatment and barriers to treatment, to the internet and social media.

I highlight the anthropology of science, technology, and medicine because this is the field I call home myself and it has helped inspire me to examine contemporary debates in Islamic science as well as the science, technology, and medicine of performance in cycling. Because I view my research as part of

general anthropology, I notice not only the little pictures inherent to any research project but also the big pictures framing my research. For example, how does it change the way Muslims think about what it means to be human by defining humanities as a creation of God? What are the boundaries of human limits, when psychologists argue that humans can’t produce more than 6.2 watts of power per kg of body mass without enhancement (doping) while some cycling coaches and trainers have said that it takes 6.6 watts/kgs to win the Tour de France?

In conclusion, general anthropology provides a vital, holistic perspective on humanity that enables insights difficult to see if we all stay within the easy confines of our own little corner of anthropology.

TOWARD AMORE GENERAL ANTHROPOLOGY

By *Carol R. Ember* (Human Relations Area Files at Yale University)

In the United States, general anthropology traditionally meant that anthropologists got grounded in the four sub-disciplines, required their students to do the same, and embraced a holistic picture in their fieldwork and research. It was much easier to be this kind of generalist when literature was relatively small and the profession had only a few hundred people. Specialization is not surprising in any developing field. But in anthropology, the movement away from general anthropology was not really about specialization. It was more about the rejection by many cultural anthropologists of science, which pretty much rejected biological anthropology, archaeology, and many within cultural anthropology who consider themselves scientists. For all its stress on tolerance of the “other,” many cultural anthropologists have shown relatively little tolerance of alternative intellectual points of view. However, general approaches have not disappeared, but the thrust is coming primarily from outside cultural anthropology.

I always thought that general anthropology was not general enough. I have always believed in the power of working across disciplinary lines. By that I mean not just the traditional four fields of anthropology, but also by encompassing research and guidance from psychology, sociology, political science, biology, ecology, or wherever one

might need to look for ideas. In the past I have followed the strategy of letting the research question guide the quest and I have tried to glean appropriate knowledge from other fields. However, that may not have been the best strategy. For example, Melvin Ember and I decided to do a cross-species study of mammals and birds to test theories about male-female bonding that might apply to humans. Even though we thought we came up with interesting results, it generated little attention. A better strategy would have been to interest a partner specializing in biological or evolutionary anthropology. Now, I am trying something different. In a recent NSF interdisciplinary grant looking at whether people living in unpredictable environments have developed similar cultural practices (compared with others in more predictable environments), I have put together a team of cultural anthropologists, an archaeologist, a cross-cultural psychologist, and a climatologist to work together. I think the team approach is the better way to go because each member of the team has discipline-specific knowledge. I am also working with an NSF-funded NESCent team that includes people trained in biology, ecology and environment, working with linguists and cultural anthropologists who are interested in cultural diversity.

To bolster general anthropology, I suggest some alliances between sections within the AAA that have broad interests that overlap with GAD. I am thinking in particular of the Society of Anthropological Sciences, of which I am now past president, but also of the Evolutionary Anthropology Society, for which I served on the board. As a Section Assembly Executive Committee member, I have suggested that the AAA allow the formation of umbrella groups to informally bolster connections between some like-minded groups. We all form attachments to our own little groups, but this is perhaps not the best way to try to bring back general anthropology.

GENERAL ANTHROPOLOGY: WHERE THE LINES BLUR

By *Samuel R. Cook* (Virginia Tech)

Anthropology, which I do not differentiate from *General Anthropology*, is necessarily holistic. If anthropology is the study of human beings, it must be so. The first professional anthropologists entered the

field with the most basic tools—physical and theoretical—but quickly found that they had to adapt to further their line of inquiry. They had to be creative lest they face dead ends. In this context, the lines between the four fields, and other disciplines for that matter, became blurred. That's what general anthropology is: the zone of practice in which the lines become blurred.

If the colonial heritage of anthropology is seemingly more salient than other disciplines, it is because we own up to our past and learn from our shortcomings. If we have worked in service to colonial agents, we have also explicated the problems with such processes, sometimes to the detriment of our careers. As an anthropologist working in the Southeastern United States, I am keenly aware of such historical cases that have formed the bedrock of our profession. James Mooney, who entered the field as a salvage ethnologist, was ultimately banished by the US government for standing as a stark advocate of Indian religious freedom and land claims. He was also an innovator in the field of survey research, sending our general questionnaires to postmasters throughout Virginia to identify indigenous communities in that state in the late 19th century (Moses 2002). Shortly thereafter, archaeologist David Bushnell (also in the service of the Bureau of American Ethnology) digressed from his chosen field to pursue linguistic evidence on enduring Monacan presence in Virginia, this at a time when state eugenic policies denied the existence of Indians but threatened those who claimed that indigenous peoples remained in the state (Bushnell 1914).

The point is that general anthropology, or anthropology in general, is a science in as much as we seek the truth but we not only expand the parameters of science but open the canon of other knowledge systems by pursuing anomalies. Our only constraints in the pursuit of knowledge is ethical, not methodological. I am reminded of Margaret Mead who dared to embrace the theories of psychoanalysis, ultimately laying the foundation of cognitive anthropology. I'm also reminded of Robert K. Thomas who resorted to tracking surnames in local phone books in seeking out possible indigenous communities in the Southeast, and Richard Lee who retooled with a rudimentary knowledge of nutrition science in order to explicate the

health of peoples of the Kalahari Desert and to scrutinize our basic understanding of affluence. This is general anthropology.

Our future is our past. The late Tony Paredes lamented that the postmodern revolution had turned anthropology into third-rate philosophers (Cook 2011). Yet, we must see that trend as part of our growing pains in the process of addressing our shortcomings. Now we are emerging triumphant because interdisciplinarity has never been a novel idea to our profession, although the term itself resounded like a major incantation in other disciplines beginning in the 1990s. Yet as I write this I have just submitted a proposal to reintroduce anthropology to my institution. I have done so not merely of my own volition, but because student interest is waxing and they are *demanding* it. The global age is one of blurring lines; anthropologists are sexy again.

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ANTHROPOLOGY, ARCHAEOLOGY, AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By Holly Kathryn Norton, History Colorado

Statistics differ, but between 60 and 80 percent of archaeologists in the United States work in Cultural Resource Management (CRM). The majority of these individuals work for private firms while the rest work for a variety of local, state, and federal agencies, museums, non-profit organizations, etc. While this seems very specific, there are a number of reasons that we can consider the emphasis on CRM as “General Anthropology.” Often, those employed in CRM are a “jack-of-all-trades:” field archaeologists, lab technicians, historians, archivists. CRM professionals are called upon to consult with a

variety of publics and stake holders, understand the sub-cultures not only of descent populations of the sites that they study but the business communities such as oil and gas or developers who may be impacting those very sites. CRM archaeologists also work closely with Native American groups and other historically marginalized communities.

There are many great programs around the United States¹ that focus on CRM, but often it is the students that are already interested in archaeology that find themselves drawn or encouraged toward such programs. In my time in the field, I often work with individuals who did not “focus” on archaeology as undergraduates or who even have master's degrees in one of the other four fields². In fact, the United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics projects that over the next decade (2012 to 2022), the number of jobs will increase by 19%³. (A quick caveat before everyone urges their students to become CRM professionals: that percentage amounts to an estimated 1400 jobs over the same period. However, based on the numbers, salaries, and projections of the BLS, I assume this does not include technicians, the position where people with bachelor's degrees in anthropology, most often find themselves.)

What does this have to do with General Anthropology? Everything. First of all, it is our best students in all four fields who do well in this industry, not just or only the archaeologists. The students who are educated to communicate well, who understand basic anthropological principles, and who know that they must be sensitive to local cultural beliefs, whether those are traditional ethnic, corporate, or institutional, can be taught to survey and map. When our students have all of these skills, and have an education grounded in general anthropology, they are more likely to find employment in our discipline, whether it be CRM or elsewhere. As we are living in a society increasingly concerned with measureable economic outcomes of higher education, we can increasingly point to non-academic fields as assessable career opportunities.

Notes

¹I know that there are also many wonderful programs in other locales, such as