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Independent Study and Mentorship - 3A

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Anthropology

Assessment 9

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Assessment:

The article used for research in this assessment is the second half of the article that I used for the last assessment. Areas detailed in this part of the article include museum anthropology, the study of education, the study of identity, urban anthropology, national and transnational studies, the study of gender, political and legal anthropology, medical anthropology, the anthropology of food, environmental anthropology, development anthropology, and applied anthropology. Out of these general topics, the ones that were of the most interest to me are urban anthropology, the study of gender, political and legal anthropology, development anthropology, and applied anthropology.

Urban anthropology focuses mainly on social problems and their many possible solutions. One large impact of modern urban anthropology has been the shift in conception of

urban areas from a negative view to one that is more positive. The topic of urban anthropology relates to my original work project, as homelessness is a major issue that is typically seen more often in urban areas and large cities than in less densely populated places. Urban anthropology sounds like an interesting subfield since there are so many cultural, social, political, and economic processes that occur in urban areas that do not take place in others or that take altered forms in different areas.

The study of gender in anthropology sounds interesting to me because of its categorization as a subfield, but also its being used as a lens to study most other areas of anthropology. Although subfields such as the anthropology of food and the study of identity are distinct from the study of gender, anthropologists can use gender to justify occurrences related to the topics. For example, the phenomenon surrounding women being more susceptible to eating disorders or gender-based identity and its impact on politics. Since knowledge of the study of gender in anthropology is important to multiple subfields, it seems to be an area that should be taught to all anthropologists and one that is crucial to understanding events in the sociocultural branch especially.

Political and legal anthropology in modern times mainly focus on the relationships and actions of those in power. This is interesting to me because of the unique position that anthropologists take when studying this topic. Most studies of people in power focus on aspects of leaders other than personal relationships and the reasons for and implications behind actions.

Development anthropology is intriguing to me due to the desire that I have to help others in my career. Providing aid based on anthropological findings and implementing theories to assist with growth sounds like a perfect way to accomplish this. Also, the guidelines that

anthropologists have set to achieve this development are interesting to me. These include maintaining environmental sustainability, equity, cultural pluralism, and social justice. Aiding a country in development seems like a difficult task to endure, and the way that anthropologists go about this process seems like a good way to achieve the goal of development.

Applied anthropology is considered a fifth branch of anthropology rather than a subfield like the other topics covered in the article. Applied anthropology basically entails discovering and sharing anthropological knowledge through hands-on experiences and field work. This seems to tie into archaeology in a way, but also seems to merge into other branches that archaeology cannot include. Applied anthropology is appealing to me because I enjoy learning in a more hands-on way and through experience.

Assessment 9:

Museum-based study

Museums—defined as places for the organized collection, study, and display of objects—began long before anthropology developed as an academic discipline. Since the 6th century bc at Ur, the 3rd century bc in Alexandria, and the 13th century ad in China, museums have collected objects illustrating daily life in diverse cultures, past and present. Today many of these broadly based collections are associated with the discipline of anthropology, especially those that include osteological specimens (human and prehuman remains) providing evidence of human evolution and diversity, archaeological artifacts providing evidence of past cultures, and ethnographic artifacts illustrating the lifeways of living people.

The collecting of artifacts from distant lands and possibly disappearing cultures began about the 15th century, during the age of exploration, with the travels of Western explorers, missionaries, colonial administrators, soldiers, scholars, traders, and tourists. Anthropological collections grew significantly in the 19th century as European and North American museums acquired artifacts from colonized peoples around the world. In the United Kingdom, the British Museum (1753), the University of Cambridge’s Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (1884), the University of Oxford’s Pitt Rivers Museum (1884), and the Victoria and Albert Museum (founded 1852), among others, acquired vast numbers of artifacts from colonies in Africa, Oceania, and Asia. Museums in virtually every European country, including the Ethnological Museum (1829; formerly the Museum für Völkerkunde) in Berlin, the Museum of Man (1878; formerly the Trocadéro Museum of Ethnography) in Paris, and museums of ethnography in Leiden (Netherlands), Stockholm, Rome, and elsewhere, were formed to preserve

utilitarian and exotic objects that were not considered to be part of the history of Western civilization itself.

In the United States most ethnographic artifacts were incorporated into natural history museums. Once the idea of natural selection validated ideas of evolution, in the mid-19th century, a theoretical justification developed for grouping the artifacts of anthropology with extinct animals and other natural history specimens. Ethnographic objects were seen as evidence of the gradual progression of human beings from “savagery” to civilization. Along with displays of living people at World’s Fairs and colonial expositions, they confirmed anthropology’s status as an empirical science and validated distinctions between Westerners and others. The Smithsonian Institution (1846) acquired the vast American Indian collections of the Bureau of Ethnology. Institutions such as the Milwaukee Public Museum (1882), the Peabody Museum of Natural History (1866) at Yale University, the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture (1885) at the University of Washington, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (1887) in Philadelphia all included artifacts considered anthropological from their beginnings. The country’s first museum devoted entirely to anthropology was the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (1866) at Harvard University, followed in 1901 by the Lowie Museum of Anthropology (now the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology) at the University of California. The Field Museum in Chicago (1893) was established (as the Columbian Museum of Chicago) to house the collections assembled for the World’s Columbian Exposition by Frederic W. Putnam, Harvard Peabody’s first director, and his assistant, Franz Boas.

With Putnam’s sponsorship, Boas joined the American Museum of Natural History (1869) in 1895. Before he began to devote all his time to work at Columbia University in 1905, Boas managed to shift the paradigm of museum anthropology from an evolutionary approach, in which objects from many cultures were grouped according to the evolution of specific technologies, to a culture area

approach that focused on local histories and environments. While at the American Museum, Boas established a broad research agenda for museum anthropology, linking the study of artifacts to texts, photographs, musical recordings, and other nonmaterial aspects of culture.

Over the next century, as museums with anthropological collections continued to develop as research institutions, many of the anthropologists who worked there turned away from collection-based work. Archaeologists and physical anthropologists continued to use collections for study, but, until a late 20th-century revival of interest in the history of anthropology and museums and in studies of material culture and the anthropology of art, few cultural anthropologists worked actively with collections. Exhibits developed in the mid-20th century continued to reflect the culture area approach of Boas or the structural-functional model that had developed in Britain, focusing on social institutions and using objects to illustrate abstract points.

The last quarter of the 20th century witnessed great change in the practice of anthropology in museums. The civil rights and decolonization movements of the 1960s increased awareness of the politics of collecting and representation. Ethical issues that had been ignored in the past began to influence museum practices. By the turn of the 21st century, most anthropologists working in museums had understood the need to incorporate diverse points of view in exhibitions and collections care and to rely on the expertise of people from the cultures represented as well as museum professionals. At the same time, many new museums—such as the U'mista Cultural Centre (1980) in Alert Bay, British Columbia, Canada—were established within the communities that created the objects on display. Anthropologists in museums also were concerned with issues such as the ethics of collecting, access to collections and associated data, and ownership and repatriation.

Starting in the 1930s, Western artists drew attention to the masks and carvings of non-Western cultures. These were admired not for their cultural meaning but for their form and aesthetic qualities. While museum anthropologists remain primarily concerned with the cultural context of artifacts, the boundary between art and artifact has begun to erode. Anthropology collections include the work of non-Western artists as well as artifacts from Western cultures. Artifacts representing the interaction of cultures throughout the world—including things made of recycled industrial materials or objects made for sale to tourists—are also part of the legitimate subject of museum anthropologists.

The anthropological study of education

From its inception, anthropology has been concerned with the processes that transform an infant with indefinite potential into an adult with a particular role in a particular group (family, society, class, nation). To achieve adulthood, an infant must learn, and much of that learning depends on how the adults around them organize themselves. A child's education takes place not only in schools and other formalized institutions but also through the unfocused processes that inform family and community life. Thus, anthropologists investigate the psychological processes of enculturation and the social processes involved in ensuring that the various human roles that form the web of a complex society are reproduced over the generations.

Learning is at the root of most definitions of culture. From the cultural perspective, learning activates human possibilities and shapes them to fit a particular human environment or "culture." This process has many facets, including, for example, who attends to a child (mother, older children, other caregivers), when (at various times in the day and over the years), and with what consequences (some organizations are better in allowing children to achieve particular possibilities—failure at school, romantic genius, sensitive husband and father—as these might be mentioned in a eulogy). Without extensive and

long-term interaction with adults, human infants cannot develop fully. Human reproduction is not solely a genetic or psychological process; it is also a sociocultural one that produces people with particular abilities specialized for particular positions (and often exhibiting particular disabilities when assuming positions to which they are not suited).

Interest in what is known as the “distribution of knowledge” has transformed enculturation studies and is beginning to converge with work in settings where education is formalized, particularly schools. Through these institutions complex societies reproduce their social organization. There are two vital issues in the field. The first is the need to clarify the processes through which children are placed in particular positions—who and what is involved in making some people janitors and others heads of corporations. The second concerns how to understand how certain processes—particularly those grounded in school examinations and psychological testing—have become the main legitimate means through which people are placed in positions. The democratic ideal that, through testing and examinations, personal merit can be identified and rewarded has seldom worked as hoped. Educational anthropologists point to the continuity between the education the children of the most prosperous receive at home and in their communities, the organization of schooling, and the pedagogical styles used in school. Thus, the children of poor or immigrant families are more likely to fail—whatever their individual merits—because of “cultural discontinuities,” the great dissimilarities between the cultures of their homes and neighborhoods and that of the school. Other studies focus on the structuring of schooling to show how the very concern with measuring merit continually reproduces failure on an ever-expanding scale, thereby devaluing the contributions each individual makes to the welfare of society.

These debates continue, producing ever more careful descriptions of everyday lives in classrooms and schools that reveal hidden processes—including processes of resistance, appropriation, and co-option. Each new description

confirms the usefulness of the core methodological choices of the field:
induction from ethnographic observation.

The study of ethnicity, minority groups, and identity

Ethnicity refers to the identification of a group based on a perceived cultural distinctiveness that makes the group into a “people.” This distinctiveness is believed to be expressed in language, music, values, art, styles, literature, family life, religion, ritual, food, naming, public life, and material culture. This cultural comprehensiveness—a unique set of cultural characteristics perceived as expressing themselves in commonly unique ways across the sociocultural life of a population—characterizes the concept of ethnicity. It revolves around not just a “population,” a numerical entity, but a “people,” a comprehensively unique cultural entity.

The concept of ethnicity contrasts with that of race, which refers to the perceived unique common physical and biogenetic characteristics of a population. The criteria used to characterize a group—whether comprehensive unique cultural characteristics or biogenetic ones—determine whether the group is regarded as an ethnic or a racial group. In the late 20th century and at the turn of the 21st century, “Irish” was considered an ethnic label, while “white” was a racial one.

A minority group is a group whose unique cultural characteristics are perceived to be different from those characterizing the dominant groups in society. In anthropology the term may refer to groups categorized by ethnicity, race, gender, or sexual orientation. The term is not without controversy: Many regard it as contradictory, for the relative population growth rate of subordinated ethnic groups in the United States, if continued, is such that after 2050 the “minority” could well be the numerical majority. Others regard the term as patronizing; by

emphasizing the purely numerical dimension, it evades issues of group powerlessness as well as the substantive values and interests that “minority” groups may uphold.

Anthropologists regard ethnicity, race, and minority groups as social and cultural constructs and not biological ones. In all cases the formation and perception of identities are to be explained as a result of the operation of specific social, cultural, political, and economic relationships over a long period of historical time.

Identity refers to both group self-awareness of common unique characteristics and individual self-awareness of inclusion in such a group. Self-awareness may be formulated in comprehensive cultural terms (ethnic identity), in biogenetic terms (racial identity), in terms of sexual orientation, and in terms of gender. Persons and groups often adhere to multiple and fluid identities, features of which may be selectively relevant in specific social situations.

Some anthropologists go further and call attention to the growth of “hybridity”—the dissolution of rigid cultural boundaries between groups hitherto perceived as separate, the intermixture of various identities, in effect the dissolution of identities themselves. Much anthropology in this field demonstrates how identities have been and are invented and reinvented for political and other purposes, out of disparate historical and cultural experiences. Other studies have repeatedly shown that—contrary to a group’s self-representation and assertion of an identity—identities are riven with contradictions and are not to be understood as seamlessly unified comprehensive cultural entities.

Identity in terms of ethnicity, race, minority group status, gender, and sexual orientation is often contrasted with class consciousness—group self-awareness in terms of belonging to the same socioeconomic group. Some anthropologists write of the emergence of a new “identity” politics as distinct from an older

“class” politics—the growth of what are called “new social movements.” The term *new social movements* refers to gay and lesbian, feminist, and civil rights and environmental movements and is used to distinguish these from trade union and other class-based movements. These distinctions sometimes suggest that persons have to choose between uniting for social and political action primarily on the grounds of common membership in perceived ethnic, racial, minority, gender, sexual orientation, or environmental groups rather than on the grounds of membership in a similar socioeconomic group.

Identities owe their formation and position in society to the operation of social, economic, cultural, and political forces that are inseparable from the forces that create and maintain socioeconomic groups. In this view, rather than being opposed, identity politics and class politics, while distinct, have the potential to be allied actors in a common political process.

Urban anthropology

Urban anthropology is the study of cultural systems and identities in cities as well as the various political, social, economic, and cultural forces that shape urban forms and processes. Although anthropologists have studied the city since the 1930s, the label *urban anthropology* became common only in the early 1960s. Interest in urban issues was originally an extension of the anthropological interest in peasants and rural areas. Using research methods developed for and through studies of small tribes and “primitive societies,” anthropologists studied spatially bounded communities such as ghettos, ethnic neighbourhoods, and “urban villages.” Social problems (especially poverty) were the focus of most urban anthropological research. In the 1960s and early '70s, Oscar Lewis’s controversial “culture of poverty” thesis generated intense debates on the meaning of culture, the need for historical contextualization, and the structural factors that produce urban inequalities. Anthropologists also debated the meanings of *city* and *urban*, which were initially informed by Western-biased

knowledge. To avoid this ethnocentrism, urban anthropologists used ethnographic methods, historical analysis, and cross-cultural comparisons to explore the social mechanisms and cultural institutions that differentiate cities from “primitive” societies and peasant communities as well as Western from non-Western cities. Unlike earlier views, which depicted the city as the site of fragmentation, alienation, and impersonal relationships, urban ethnography has been powerful in showing the strong friendships, kinship relations, and ethnic solidarities that may structure interactions in urban centres.

During the 1970s, urban anthropologists also shifted attention from studies in the city (i.e., viewing the city as merely a site for research) to studies of the city (i.e., making the urban dimension central to the analysis of relationships and symbols). Some argued that only the latter should be considered “urban anthropology.” Typologies continued to be formulated to map diverse urban forms. One common typology was based on a distinction between industrial and preindustrial cities. Within these two categories, other classifications were presented. Focusing on historical articulations between economic and political structures, Richard Fox, for example, distinguished among regal-ritual, administrative, mercantile, colonial, and industrial cities. Others have added types such as postcolonial, modernist, and postmodern cities.

Research in cities posed several methodological and conceptual challenges to anthropology. In particular, urban anthropologists were pioneers in questioning emphasis on holism and synchronic analysis. Political economy became useful in analyzing historical and contemporary forces that produce inequalities within and between cities. In addition, urban anthropologists tried to find other methods (such as network analysis and extended case studies) to research the city. By the early 1980s they also drew on methods and theoretical insights from other fields to grasp the complexity of urban life and to account for the multiple actors that shape the city and its spaces. Current studies are careful not to homogenize urban types and are sensitive to diversity between and within cities. Since the

early 1990s, urban anthropologists have been studying a broad range of practical and theoretical issues such as homelessness, spatial practices, popular culture, social movements and citizenship, gender and racial inequalities, global processes, and transnational connections.

National and transnational studies

With anthropology's historical orientation toward non-European societies, after the end of World War II many anthropologists were confronted with successful national movements, as the old colonial empires of Asia and Africa gave way to newly independent states.

The new states gave rise to new questions in anthropology: What are the cultural dimensions of political movements in general? Do national movements, does nationalism, have particular cultural dimensions? Are national movements constituted culturally? To answer these questions, anthropologists borrowed the idea of "modernization" from political science and linked it to familiar anthropological objects, such as family and kin groups. In the 1960s the University of Chicago's Committee on the Comparative Study of New Nations, which was composed of sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists, published *Old Societies, New States*, a collection of essays examining case studies of old cultural forms blending with new political institutions.

Modernization theory, however, was an intellectual project that developed in the shadow of the Cold War, and it was often more prescriptive of what might be than analytically descriptive of what was. Debates in later years focused on the shortcomings of the theory, and then the study of nationalism moved to the discipline of history, where the 19th-century roots of national movements were examined.

In the early 1980s Benedict Anderson, a political scientist, made the extremely influential move of analyzing nations as "imagined communities." His argument

that nations, like religions, are based on the relation of this world to the next allowed anthropologists to relate ideas of meaning and solidarity or culture and community to political movements. The 1980s then become a very productive time for the anthropological studies of nations. Yet these studies were formulated around ideas of a national culture, and this concept, other scholars argued, needed to be questioned. Ranajith Guha and the anticolonial historiographers of the subaltern studies collective argued on the one hand that nonelite groups share neither the political space nor the cultural world of national elites, and other anthropologists argued on the other hand that the idea that culture could be tied to a place such as a country was conceptually flawed.

Arjun Appadurai, a pioneer in the latter argument, went on to develop in a series of influential essays the anthropological field of transnational studies, which is based on an idea of culture not tied to a place but rather in flow. By thinking of these flows as making up “scapes” such as “mediascapes,” these works allow anthropologists to understand the relationship between, say, satellite TV or the World Wide Web and a country’s national development. This approach also enables new anthropological inquiries into a rather old phenomenon, that of diasporas. Interconnections in the 21st century work in new ways radically different from the old, and the study of diasporic groups and the countries they call home highlights for anthropologists another fascinating 21st-century question: What are the boundaries of the nation?

The study of gender

Gender has always been a topic of anthropological investigation, but the 1970s brought about a critical rethinking of assumptions about gender, spurred in part by the women’s movement and in part by the entrance of large numbers of women into academic careers. During the next quarter century, this rethinking opened up new conceptual pathways for considering not only the relationships between sex and gender, kinship and procreation, men’s work and women’s

work, and public and private spheres but also the significance of gender to language, primatology, archaeology, religion, and cosmology. At first many studies of gender focused primarily on women since they had been underrepresented in the anthropological record, but the result was that *gender* came to stand for *women*. A primary question in these early studies was how and why women were subordinated in patriarchal social systems. Soon, however, the awareness that men, too, have gender sparked a much deeper analysis of the ways in which definitions of gender were mutually constructed. Rather than assuming that gender is a natural given, therefore universal, based on an extension of animal mating behaviour, new studies demonstrated that, just as different societies produce a variety of religious, kinship, and economic systems, they also vary in terms of gender systems. While it was often assumed that sex was the natural given and gender the cultural definition built upon that natural base, some studies have raised questions about the relation between sex and sexual orientation and, thus, whether there might be more than two genders and whether sex itself may, to a large extent, be culturally constructed. Studies of primates, long thought to hold the key to human behaviour, have shown that results depend to a significant extent on the theoretical lens through which scientists view their behaviour as well as on which primates are the object of study; this discovery has destabilized the ground on which many assumptions about gender were based. When the critical gender lens has been focused on the archaeological record, old biases and assumptions—for example, about “man the hunter, woman the gatherer”—have been overturned or significantly modified, new approaches to the study of the past and material culture have emerged, and origin stories have been changed.

Another area creatively affected by the focus on gender is that of linguistic anthropology: these researchers now note not just the gendered aspects of linguistic structure—pronouns, for example—but also the different ways in which women and men use language, asking to what extent gender is culturally

constituted through linguistic practice over the life cycle. Other researchers have studied the way in which language lends connotations of gender to conceptual fields, for example, “soft” versus “hard” sciences, and how these labels may affect the women and men working in those fields.

Still others have raised questions about gender in topics that seem to have little connection to gender, such as colonialism and “Orientalism,” and in much broader systems including worldviews, theology, and cosmology; these researchers ask, for example, about the consequences for men and women when the deity is symbolically male and the earth is symbolically female. And some have even asked about the notions of gender implicit in the idea of the anthropologist and the anthropological endeavour itself. In short, the proliferation of anthropological studies of gender during the last quarter of the 20th century opened up new paths to yet unexplored areas in the 21st.

Political and legal anthropology

While the intellectual and methodological roots of political anthropology can be traced to Montesquieu and Alexis de Tocqueville, who viewed politics and governance as cultural constructs, Elizabeth Colson dated the modern field of political anthropology to 1940 and the publication of *African Political Systems* (1940), edited by Meyer Fortes and Edward Evans-Pritchard. Edmund R. Leach’s *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954) and Michael G. Smith’s *Government in Zazzau* (1960) were landmark studies that contributed significantly to more refined conceptual approaches. Max Gluckman made a singular contribution to the development of the field both as the founder of the influential Manchester school and through his focus on the role of conflict, which provided an explanation for political change within the dominant functionalist paradigm then prevailing in anthropology. (The functionalist approach conceptualized societies as existing in a state of equilibrium.) From the traditional study of “stateless” societies to the contemporary analysis of complex state-society relations in an

age of globalization, the central theoretical focus of political anthropology, as identified by Abner Cohen in *Two-Dimensional Man* (1974), has been the dialectical relations between symbolic action and power relationships.

Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) and *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (1980) were two major works employing a semiotic/hermeneutic approach. In *Stratagems and Spoils* (1969), F.G. Bailey illustrated an alternate approach, which applied game theory to the analysis of actor-driven politics. Problems of legitimacy are a central concern of political anthropology. This concern is seen in such works as David Kertzer's *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (1988), which analyzes the role of ritual in maintaining and undermining regimes. In addition, the political role of symbols, myths, and rhetorical strategies are central foci of analysis. The essays in *The Frailty of Authority* (1986), a central volume of the *Political Anthropology* series edited by Myron J. Aronoff in the 1980s and '90s, deal with attempts to transform power into authority and to challenge the legitimacy of established authority in a wide variety of cultural contexts. If Émile Durkheim's functionalism dominated the early stages of the development of political anthropology, the intellectual influences of Max Weber and Karl Marx were more apparent during this phase of the field's development. Contemporary political anthropologists, having abandoned their predecessors' emphasis on cohesion and consensus, tend to focus more on political and cultural contestation.

Self-reflexive critical analyses of traditional fieldwork methods and the concept of culture and theoretical influences from feminist, postmodern, critical legal, and cultural studies (among others) have had a considerable impact on the development of the field. These trends are exemplified by *PoLAR (Political and Legal Anthropology Review)*; published by the Association for Political and Legal Anthropology, a unit of the American Anthropological Association) and in several series focusing on the field that have been published by several major university presses. Informing much contemporary analysis are the intellectual influence of

Benedict Anderson's formulation of imagined community; Pierre Bourdieu's notions of *habitus*, *doxa*, and cultural capital, which reveal how power is inscribed in the scripts of everyday life; Michel Foucault's discourse analysis and concern with the multiple ways in which power is implicated in the constitution of all areas of social life; Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony; and Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere and emphasis on aspects of gender in politics and culture.

Among the many areas of interest to contemporary political anthropologists are the politics of collective identity (class, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and nationalism), collective memory (invention of tradition, commemoration, and memorialization), civil society, collective action (particularly political protest), democracy (and democratization), globalization and localization, and legal studies (among others). The blurring of disciplinary boundaries has resulted in a fruitful cross-fertilization of scholarship from anthropology, cultural studies, history, political science, sociology, and women's studies to produce a richly diverse field of study.

Medical anthropology

Medical anthropology emerged as a special field of research and training after World War II, when senior American anthropologists were brought in as consultants on health care projects in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. In the Cold War rhetoric of the time, aid to friendly "Third World countries" would strengthen their governments and forestall revolutionary discontent. In these countries—in stark contrast to countries with advanced economies—infectious diseases were the main cause of illness and death, and in many regions 50 percent or more of the infants born every year died before their fifth birthday. From 1945 through the 1960s, antibiotics were transforming the treatment of infectious diseases. Their

use, combined with immunization of children, sanitation, and improved nutrition, was in the forefront of large-scale foreign aid programs.

The physicians who planned and directed health care projects at that time were almost immediately confronted with failure when townspeople underutilized their clinics, ignored instructions to boil water, or in other ways failed to comply with professional advice. Project workers were convinced that local cultural traditions formed a superstitious barrier to the rational behaviour that they advocated. In this early period the anthropologists they consulted usually accepted their formulation of the problem, but they encouraged a degree of cultural relativism by suggesting ways that programs could acknowledge local customs and use traditional concepts to explain desirable new practices. This approach was illustrated in *Health, Culture, and Community* (1955; edited by Benjamin D. Paul), a collection of case studies first presented at the Harvard School of Public Health. The volume became a basic text among teachers who in the 1960s were encouraged, by private foundations and by the availability of research funding through the rapidly expanding National Institutes of Health, to initiate graduate programs in medical anthropology.

Shamanism and other forms of ritual curing had been a major topic in anthropology from the beginning of the discipline, but the first studies of the whole repertoire of illness concepts and therapeutic practices available to members of a community began in the 1960s and '70s. These years were a time of political turmoil in which anthropology was criticized as an artifact of European and American colonialism. Thus, students were alert to historical conflicts and injustice in the communities they studied, many of which were undergoing processes of decolonization. In addition, the tradition-modernity dichotomy, which then dominated research on cultural change, seemed to have little analytic value for understanding folk practitioners who were adding antibiotic injections to their repertoire of ritual curing and herbal remedies. Indeed, in their own society the rationality of modern Western medicine was challenged by scholars

who faulted its epistemology—in particular, its positivist separation of mind and body, its dehumanizing focus on body parts, malfunctions, and lesions, and its treatment of pregnancy, birthing, and homosexuality as pathological rather than normal conditions.

The consulting work that originally focused anthropological attention on issues of health care was often ad hoc, but it did draw upon previous functionalist studies of acculturation. The second generation of scholars, who brought medical anthropology to maturity as a special field of research, considered functionalism to be a tautological and politically conservative set of theories. Their work, which began to be published in the 1970s, was inspired by socialist thought, French structuralism, dynamic theories in psychological anthropology, and interpretive studies of cultural symbolism.

Americans took the lead in developing medical anthropology as a distinctive field of scholarship and practical work, but European scholars and practitioners have also founded specialist societies, journals, and monograph series. As the field expanded, subspecialties focused on issues such as infectious diseases, aging, and nutrition emerged.

The label *critical medical anthropology* was created by Marxist scholars who faulted much work in the field for neglecting inequities in the political economy. A textbook by Hans A. Baer, Merrill Singer, and Ida Susser, *Medical Anthropology and the World System: A Critical Perspective* (1997), presents the Marxist critique. This approach has been assimilated in an ecumenical and philosophically complex approach set forth in Byron Good's *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective* (1994). Paul Farmer's *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (2003) is a major work of this kind.

The anthropology of food, nutrition, and agriculture

Examinations of the topics of food, nutrition, and agriculture illustrate the intersection of different subfields of anthropology, particularly physical anthropology, archaeology, and social and cultural anthropology.

Anthropologists have contributed to the specialized fields of nutrition and agriculture a more holistic perspective based on the use of history, direct observation, and documentary accounts; the examination of nutrition and agriculture within households and communities; and the interconnections between different parts of the food system—including markets, cuisine, farming systems, international regulations, and trade, for example. Distinct theoretical perspectives such as the materialist, evolutionary, symbolic, and ecological are reflected in anthropological work in these areas (including, for example, symbolic theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas, as well as materialist theories of Marvin Harris and Sidney Mintz).

The specialized field of nutritional anthropology was defined in North America in the mid-1970s, although anthropologists have been interested in food since the late 19th century. Food is the foundation of every economy and plays a key part of the ethnographic description of every people, their society and culture.

Both anthropologists and archaeologists have researched the evolution of subsistence systems and how farming emerged (with many attendant changes in technology) from food gathering about 10,000 years ago. Concern with the time and place of the first appearance of domesticated plants and animals has given way to questions about how domestication occurred under a variety of ecological conditions at different times and places. Hunting and gathering, horticulture, pastoralism, and the development of agriculture demonstrate different ways in which people have adapted to their environment to feed themselves. The past

hundred years have seen the rapid development of industrial agriculture and industrial food systems. Anthropologists have documented how processes such as colonialism, industrial capitalism, and agribusiness have radically changed food production and people's diets, often through the favouring of cash crops over food crops. Detailed ethnographic fieldwork exposes the health consequences of dietary change, including increased or decreased rates of malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies.

Some anthropologists have concentrated on food's ability to convey meaning. Food is a marker of ethnicity, gender, and class. Anthropologists have shown how different social groups create and maintain relationships through the sharing of food. Food figures prominently in studies of religion where the symbolic importance of bread, corn, or rice, for example, is emphasized through ritual.

Women's special relation to food is highlighted in studies of food production and provisioning and is also reflected in the prevalence of eating disorders among women (anorexia nervosa, bulimia, obesity, addiction to dieting, etc.). Women, as gatekeepers of household food provisioning, are not always able to control their own dietary intake.

Access to food is perhaps the most basic human right, bringing together work on food, nutrition, and agriculture from an applied anthropology perspective.

Anthropologists regularly enter into policy debates on food security, exploring how nutrition and agricultural interventions in developing countries may result in increased food insecurity. They critique government officials, development workers, and local elites who try to rationalize peasant farming systems based on Western farming systems. Research at the turn of the 21st century explored how farmers in different parts of the world maintain genetic diversity as a strategy to ensure food security; anthropologists and others examined how biotechnology and genetically modified food may influence food diversity and food security in the future.

Environmental and ecological studies in anthropology

Analysis of the relations between human societies and their environments is much older than the discipline of anthropology, but from the start anthropologists have had an abiding interest in the topic. A view known as environmental determinism, which holds that environmental features directly determine aspects of human behaviour and society, was propounded by many Enlightenment philosophers, who argued that differences among peoples were not innate but were due to climate, landscape, and other environmental factors. By the early 20th century, however, environmental determinism was under attack by influential anthropologists such as A.L. Kroeber. These critics argued that the environment might limit the spread of certain sociocultural features (making agriculture impossible in the Arctic, for example) but that it cannot explain why features such as agriculture originated and spread in other areas.

This latter view, known as “possibilism,” is still dominant in anthropology and many other social sciences and humanities, but possibilism itself has limitations. First, historical, archaeological, and ethnographic evidence indicates that the patterned associations between environmental features and sociocultural ones cannot be viewed in possibilist terms; for example, agriculture was not practiced by Native Americans in California, even though it was environmentally possible, while in North America’s arid Southwest, other Indian peoples transformed the environment through irrigation agriculture.

In reaction to the determinist-possibilist debate, Julian Steward in 1955 developed an approach he termed cultural ecology. Steward proposed that cultures interact with their environmental settings by adapting features of technology, economic organization, and even kinship or religion to allow people to best pursue their livelihoods. Thus, cultural ecology views the environment as

presenting problems and opportunities, not just limits or simple determinants, while recognizing that the resulting cultural adaptations depend as much on the sociocultural features at hand as on the environment. For example, a population with stone tools and relying on wild foods will adapt to the Australian bush in very different ways than one with domesticated sheep, metal, and fossil fuels.

Steward developed cultural ecology in influential studies of Great Basin American Indians and other hunter-gatherers and of the rise of complex societies in arid valleys scattered around the globe. Prominent studies that followed in Steward's footsteps include Richard Lee's work on the !Kung San of Africa's Kalahari desert and Robert Netting's work on household agricultural production. The cultural ecology approach has also been very influential within archaeology.

One of the most famous works in ecological anthropology is Roy Rappaport's study of the Tsembaga Maring of highland New Guinea. In it he argued that Tsembaga ritual regulated pig husbandry and the incidence of warfare and thereby responded to environmental "feedback" by adjusting human population densities, work effort, food production, and a host of other factors. Rappaport's study exemplifies the very popular notion that premodern human-environment systems are closely regulated to maintain a balance or equilibrium through complex, often unrecognized feedback mechanisms that maintain population below environmental "carrying capacity."

This equilibrium-centred view was widely challenged within anthropology beginning in the 1970s, however. The approach known as *political ecology* criticizes it for portraying premodern societies as timeless and outside of history. Other anthropologists, working under the label *historical ecology*, reject not only the equilibrium approach but also the notion of static nonhuman environments, stressing that all environments inhabited by human societies in the past 50,000 years are "anthropogenic" (that is, modified or engineered by activities such as controlled burning, irrigation, terracing, etc.). Taking another approach,

behavioral ecologists guided by modern evolutionary theory argue that humans, like all species, are designed to efficiently convert resources into offspring and that any group-level phenomenon such as population equilibrium is a by-product of individual adaptation. Increasingly, research guided by these three approaches is replacing or at least transforming the legacy of Stewardian cultural ecology.

The field of ethno-ecology focuses on the ways people conceptualize elements of the natural environment and human activity within it and investigates how these concepts vary culturally as well as reveal universal aspects of human cognition. Another trend in contemporary environmental studies at the turn of the 21st century was the growing importance of applied research, focused on such issues as environmental justice and sustainable development (*see below*).

Development anthropology

The final quarter of the 20th century saw an increasing involvement of social anthropologists with the process of accelerated incorporation of formerly colonial countries into the world economic system. Referred to as *development*, the process of incorporation involves the transfer to poor countries of technology, funding, and expertise from countries of the industrial north through multinational, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations and increasingly by private-sector corporations. Although some anthropologists were involved in the immediate post-World War II period of decolonization, the emergence of development anthropology as an academically acceptable subfield dates only from the 1980s. At the turn of the 21st century, most graduate departments of anthropology in the United States, Great Britain, and France included at least one specialist in the application of anthropological theory and methods, particularly those of political ecology, to the achievement of an economic development that is also equitable, environmentally sustainable, culturally pluralistic, and socially just. A perhaps larger number of development anthropologists are employed outside of academia, by government aid agencies,

the World Bank, United Nations agencies, and various nongovernmental organizations such as OXFAM, World Union for the Conservation of Nature, and CARE. Over time, anthropologists have moved from being peripheral members of the teams to being team leaders, responsible for assuring that the work of all technical specialists is socially sound.

The legitimacy of a specifically development-oriented anthropology has been challenged by persons fundamentally wedded to cultural relativism, who argue that anthropologists might describe social change but should never participate in causing it. Increasingly, though, the profession has acknowledged the moral necessity of rejecting those who hold to an inviolability of local culture, even when this position results in poverty, infant mortality, child labour, gender hierarchies, and the general exclusion of the poor from democratic participation in government. This commitment to improving the well-being and the political power of the poor has been challenged also by some other development specialists, particularly neoliberal economists, for whom the prime measure of national development is not increasing equity but growth in gross national product (GNP) per capita.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of development anthropologists has been the demonstration to economists and technical specialists that the “beneficiaries” of development, the low-income majorities in poor countries, must be active participants at all levels of the process if it is to be successful. This means that their expertise as resource managers must be acknowledged and fully incorporated in the identification, design, implementation, and evaluation of development projects. Anthropologists have also demonstrated the internal complexity and socioeconomic differentiation (by class, age, gender, ethnicity, education, etc.) of local communities that were assumed by outside “experts” to be homogeneous. Development anthropologists have repeatedly demonstrated

that projects assumed to be broadly beneficial have too often created more losers than winners.

Among the areas where anthropologists have had a substantial impact on development thinking are river basin interventions, especially involving population resettlement upstream and downstream from large hydropower dams; pastoral production systems on semiarid rangelands; community environmental management and social forestry; the gender dimensions of development; ethno-medicine and the incorporation of indigenous practitioners within health delivery systems; and indigenous knowledge and biodiversity.

Applied anthropology

Applied anthropology is the aspect of anthropology that serves practical community or organizational needs. In Europe this subfield started in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when ethnographic information was collected and used by colonial Belgian, French, British, Dutch, and Russian administrators. In North America the Mexican government in 1917 was the first to officially recognize its usefulness.

All branches of anthropology have applied aspects. Physical anthropologists work in forensics and industrial design. Archaeologists support historic preservation. Anthropological linguists have designed educational programs and whole writing systems. Some degree of identification with other disciplines, especially sociology, is frequent. Practitioners may have supplementary credentials in fields such as public health or law.

Among the many professional groups associated with applied anthropology are Anthropology in Action (in Britain), the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) and the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (in the United States), and the Society of Applied Anthropology (in Canada). France, Russia, and India have government departments devoted to anthropological research,

some of which has applied value. Since the 1980s anthropologists working outside of research institutions at times have been called “practicing anthropologists.” Applied or practicing anthropologists are almost never licensed or certified. They may, however, perform legally mandated studies, such as environmental impact assessments or gender analyses, for governments or international agencies.

The support of policy-related decision making is common to much of applied social or cultural anthropology. The typical approach is holistic and gives attention to context. Flexible research methodologies often combine statistical techniques with participatory, qualitative methods such as participant observation, case studies, focus groups, key informant interviews, or rapid appraisal. The work may entail service as a “culture broker” or even conflict mediation. Some practitioners become advocates promoting specific groups’ interests. “Action anthropologists” work as insiders to help manage change and build self-sufficiency. Applied activities are rarely documented in widely accessible publications.

Applied anthropology has made positive contributions to public life. Industrial research in the 1930s and ’40s influenced modern business administration and management techniques and theories. In many countries, including Australia, Canada, India, Mexico, Russia, and the United States, anthropologists have helped to negotiate or implement policies strengthening indigenous peoples’ rights. On a global scale, Franz Boas deserves credit for stimulating the research that proved, as a 1963 United Nations declaration states, “that any doctrine of racial differentiation or superiority is scientifically false.”

Present-day employment of applied anthropologists by industries such as mining (e.g., in Western Australia) shows, on the other hand, that practitioners may work against indigenous peoples’ interests rather than for them. Anthropologists working on behalf of governments (e.g., Mexico or China) have at times promoted

an approach to “acculturation” that disregards indigenous peoples’ social needs and values.

Applied anthropology tends to be a controversial pursuit. Early anthropologists’ claims of “ethical neutrality” vis-à-vis colonial policies were challenged in France and Great Britain. Conflicts about involvement in the Vietnam War and other Cold War projects created deep rifts in American anthropology during the 1960s and ’70s. In the 1980s American, British, and Canadian professional associations responded to such conflicts by writing codes of ethics establishing minimum (but non-enforceable) standards for professional conduct. Ongoing debates sustain a wholesome concern about moral and political dilemmas posed by some applied projects. Some of the most vigorous critiques are written by applied anthropologists themselves.