

PART **I**

Critique and Theory

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CHAPTER **I**

The Organization of Anthropology and Higher Education in the United States

Davydd J. Greenwood

Academic anthropology's separation from sociology, from organizational studies, and the profession's intellectual privileging of nonapplied work outside of the "West" together form an interrelated matrix of historical organizational choices, actions, and consequences that created US anthropology's current professional structures as well as its internal contradictions and current institutional dilemmas. In this chapter, I focus on a particular set of historical conditions and practices that separated anthropology from organizational studies using a combination of organizational behavior and organizational culture perspectives.¹

I argue that anthropology in the United States developed an institutionalized lack of professional self-awareness regarding organizational processes taking place in the discipline and its main professional association combined with what came to be historical inattention to industrialized societies. This provoked a set of internal contradictions between anthropology's stated holistic intellectual agenda and our professional/organizational practices. These contradictions have truncated US anthropology's theoretical and methodological development and, among other effects, have contributed to anthropology's unreflective and marginal role as a participant in the current reforms of higher education in the United States, despite the powerful tools it could offer for this task. This is not a chapter on organizational anthropology as a field of inquiry. Rather, it is a chapter on the organization of anthropology in the United States and some of the consequences that arise from it. To the extent these

perspectives are useful, they do argue, in practice, that anthropological perspectives can make important contributions to organizational studies in general.

These issues matter because I know from my own professional experience and that of others (e.g., Abelmann 2009; Greenwood 2007a, b, c, 2009a, b; Greenwood and Levin 1998, 2000, 2001a, b, 2007, 2008; Nathan 2005; Shore and Wright 2000; Shumar 1997; Strathern 2000; Thorkelson 2008, 2010; Wright 2003, 2004, 2005) that anthropological theories and methods can contribute significantly to organizational studies and to the analysis and execution of urgently needed reforms in higher education. This very slowly changing *status quo* will not change in deeper ways without an unflinching reappraisal of US anthropology's trajectory since the founding of the American Anthropological Association in 1902.

ANTHROPOLOGY'S UNEASY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INDUSTRIALIZED WORLD

Anthropology's academic disciplinary behavior in relation to organizations in the industrialized world (most particularly the West) has been paradoxical and self-destructive. In 1928, Franz Boas, the founder of professional anthropology in the United States, stated in *Anthropology and Modern Life* that

Anthropology is often considered a collection of curious facts, telling about the peculiar appearance of exotic people and describing their strange customs and beliefs. It is looked upon as an entertaining diversion, apparently without any bearing upon the conduct of life of civilized communities. This opinion is mistaken. More than that, I hope to demonstrate that a clear understanding of the principles of anthropology illuminates the social processes of our own times and may show us, if we are ready to listen to its teachings, what to do and what to avoid. (Boas 1928: 11)

This broad claim to worldwide scope and immediate social relevance is still echoed on the American Anthropological Association's web site where the association states that anthropology is "the study of all cultures including our own." Similar claims are made in most introductory courses and textbooks. These statements, however, do not match much of the historical trajectory of our discipline in the United States.

Conrad Arensberg (1937), Ruth Benedict (1934, [1946] 1954; Benedict and Weltfish 1943), Charlotte Gower Chapman ([1929] 1973), Margaret Mead (1949, 1965, 1970, [1928] 1971, [1930] 2001), Hortense Powdermaker (1950, [1939] 1993), W. Lloyd Warner (1941, 1949, 1952, [1953] 1962, 1962, [1947] 1976, [1961] 1976, Warner *et al.* (1944)), and a handful of others studied in the United States and in Europe anthropologically in the period between 1920 and the mid-1950s. Mead, Benedict, and Warner received a good deal of public attention for their work, to the point of Warner being parodied in a novel by John P. Marquand (1949), *Point of No Return*. However, by the mid-1950s, anthropology, as an academic profession, had radically delimited itself by abandoning the Western world to sociology, economics, political science, and psychology, and created the "mythological charter" that anthropology was and always had been the study of the "non-Western" world.

There always were exceptions to this non-Western rule, such as the work of Gregory Bateson (1972), Ray Birdwhistell (1970), George Devereaux (1978),

Edward T. Hall (1959, 1966, 1976), Oscar Lewis (1961, 1964, 1966), F.L.W. Richardson (1979), and others, but these scholars were marginalized by the discipline, even though they had important audiences outside of anthropology. Applied anthropologists did work extensively in the United States throughout this period, but their combination of social engagement and working in the industrialized West relegated them to a lower professional status in relation to academic anthropologists.²

Part of this historical trajectory can be explained by the dynamics of academic organizational competition to monopolize disciplinary spaces during the heyday of the founding of PhD programs in the United States. PhD programs were first created in the United States starting with those founded at Johns Hopkins in the 1890s (Cole 2010; Ross 1991). The organizational model used to create these graduate degrees and organizing academic appointments and units was appropriated directly from the mass production factory system that is summed up in the writing of Fredrick Winslow Taylor's (1911) *The Principles of Scientific Management* and was put into practice on the assembly lines of Henry Ford (Grandin 2009). Following the mass production factory model, postgraduate work in academia was organized by specialized disciplines set up as hermetic areas of professional specialization occupied by certified disciplinary experts (i.e., PhDs). These units of experts collectively reported upward to a dean who in turn reported to a provost, president, and board of trustees. They also reported outward to their national and international disciplinary associations. Direct collaboration between the academic units was discouraged; they were structured to compete for resources and attention, and this competition enhanced and still enhances the authority of the deans and other senior administrators over them.

A hallmark of Taylorism is specialized/segmented expertise orchestrated by hierarchical chains of command. This hierarchical, authoritarian system was and remains the core organizational imperative of academic life at research universities. It encouraged and consolidated the disciplinary boundaries that operate in all of US higher education (Newfield 2004). Despite the obvious successes of the physical and life sciences gained through collaborative, multidisciplinary research and teaching (e.g., nanotechnology, biophysics, genomics), and numerous attempts to overcome these internal boundaries in the social sciences (science and technology studies, gender studies, ethnic studies) and in the humanities (cultural studies, visual studies), the social sciences and humanities organizationally remain as Tayloristic as they always were when they were founded. And now, the new academic regulatory structures demanding increased accountability through counting publications and grants in central disciplinary venues and that rank the disciplinary departments nationally and internationally are actually deepening the Tayloristic practices of the social sciences and the humanities.

Fundamental to this Tayloristic design is an organizational imaginary that presumes that each discipline occupies a distinctive intellectual turf exclusively and demands that it define its turf in contrast to the turfs of other disciplines and that it actively fend off others who seek to trespass on its territory. Academic professionals are encouraged to "color inside the lines" set by their disciplines, publish in journals created and controlled by the senior members of their discipline, to police themselves internally through peer review, and to police their boundaries against invaders from other disciplines.

In the battle to lay claim to academic turf occasioned by the creation of doctoral programs in the social sciences in the United States between 1880 and 1905, political economy was quickly dismembered into history, economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Each of these fields then created a history that legitimated their independence and defined a turf belonging to them exclusively (Ross 1991).

This professional dream work had devastating intellectual consequences. Many social scientists ignored and continue to ignore the obvious intellectual bankruptcy caused by separating history from the social sciences. The presumption that social phenomena can be studied ahistorically has crippled the social sciences and was a fundamental “wrong turn” (Toulmin 1990). The falsity of unique disciplinary histories is transparent when anthropology, sociology, and political science all claim Marx, Weber, Durkheim, among others, as their founding inspirations and ignore the organizational implications of the competing claims for these patriarchs³ made by other disciplines.

This organizational story is complex and multidimensional, and it includes more than competition for professional territories to monopolize. Political oppression/social opprobrium also affected the contours of these academic disciplines (Furner 1975; Madoo Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998; Price 2004; Ross 1991). The story of the purposeful collaboration between scholars, academic administrators, and politicians in depoliticizing the academic social sciences has not been sufficiently worked through analytically. However, reading the above-cited works will leave readers astonished to hear the loose talk prevailing in academia about the “good old days” when academic freedom, tenure, and professional autonomy were the norm for everyone. They most certainly were not.⁴

I mention this issue to argue that the historical complexity and the rapidly changing organizational environment of higher education are not reflected in the work of the American Anthropological Association or of most of the other social science associations either. Rather, the Association assumes that the practices and ideologies of the elite anthropology departments at research universities are the hegemonic “models” used to think about key organizational issues in the profession, this despite the fact that most anthropologists are employed in other kinds of academic institutions and outside of academia.

The assumption that tenure and academic freedom has protected academic professionals and anthropologists in particular is mainly a fantasy. The political strife within the American Anthropological Association as it tried to dissociate itself from Franz Boas’s position against immigration quotas and other sensitive political issues and the purging of reformers from economics, sociology, and political science are well documented (Furner 1975; Madoo Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998; Price 2004). All the social science disciplines trace a trajectory that involves the systematic exclusion of socially conflictive issues and social reform efforts from their core professional agendas.

This move away from social relevance began with external censorship but has increasingly relied on internal self-censorship. Academic freedom was claimed to exist ideologically, but self-censorship kept it from becoming a live issue for most academics. Self-censorship involves writing on topics mainly of interest only to other members of the discipline (enforced by peer review and academic promotion criteria)

and writing in jargon not easily understood by outsiders. Jargon makes writing even on controversial subjects of little interest to nonspecialists and thus evades censorship while allowing social science professionals to maintain the fiction among themselves of writing critically about socially important matters. The passive and antireformist intellectualism of these disciplines is one of the principal critiques made of them now. Their social disengagement and irrelevance is used to justify reductions of federal and foundation funding for their work (Haney 2008).

The fates of reformist interdisciplinary initiatives have been similar. For example, in gender studies, Ellen Messer-Davidow documents the pacification and “disciplining” of gender studies quite effectively (Messer-Davidow 2002). Similar histories can be traced for science and technology studies and for ethnic and multicultural studies.

In addition to dehistoricizing the social science professions, the taken-for-grantedness of the disciplines, backed up by the hegemony of professional societies in the career development of individual academics, and self-censorship are powerful ways to forestall organization self-reflection. Many social scientists, despite occasional bows in the direction of interdisciplinarity, treat the current social science disciplines as if they were “natural” categories directly mirrored in the structures of college and university departments, rather than treat them for what they are: the self-interested organizational creations of generations of academic professionals and administrators and their national and international professional organizations. The histories of these disciplines show how arbitrary their boundaries are and how externally driven their agendas have been, but most professionals choose to treat their disciplinary identities as unproblematic.

For anthropologists in particular to treat these boundaries as given is inconsistent with the attention we have given to the role of humans in imagining and creating the social and cultural worlds we inhabit. To put it more bluntly, anthropologists happily study the contingent and constructed character of the structures, operations, and belief systems of the Nuer, the Tikopia, or the Tzotzil Maya but evade the application of the same perspectives to the behaviors of anthropologists in the United States and Europe. We rarely reflect on ourselves from organizational and ethnographic perspectives, preferring to operate within the confines of our own mythological charter that redefined anthropology as Westerners studying the “others.”

This matters for the present chapter because the relatively unstudied organizational trajectory of anthropology shows the discipline to have a set of self-contradictory missions. Anthropology claims to be the holistic study of humankind (biological, archaeological, linguistic, and cultural in all places and at all times). But it is organized in subfields that rarely communicate with each other on matters of intellectual substance and that are organized professionally into noninteracting units of the national professional society. Many departments are dominated completely by one of these subfields either to the exclusion of or with token appointments in the others. Despite much recent work in Europe and North America, anthropology remains dominated by non-European, non-North American research venues even as we claim the whole planet and the whole of human history as our territory and often treats nonanthropologists working outside the West as interlopers or amateurs.

Anthropology is structured around a deep organizational and intellectual commitment to a sharp distinction between “applied” anthropology and “academic” anthropology. This is one result of the purging of activism from the social sciences that was

already discussed above, but purges are not the only cause. This pure/applied distinction has been bridged at various times and in various places (e.g., Sol Tax's "action anthropology"; Stocking 2000; Tax *et al.* 1991 and Alan Holmberg's Vicos project; Holmberg [1964a, b] 1971a, b). Yet this organizational feature of academic anthropology is clear throughout our post – World War II history. That perhaps as many anthropologists are employed outside of academia as inside has little visible effect on national ranking or the self-image of academic anthropology departments or on the American Anthropological Association's self-presentation. The imagined model for a prestigious anthropology department remains the theoretically prominent, generally non-Western-oriented, nonapplied departments such as the University of Chicago, Columbia, Princeton, Yale, Michigan; that is, the model is based on the practices of the elite research university departments of anthropology.

Why has this happened? Competition for academic turf after the 1890 rush to create PhD fields in the social sciences is part of the explanation. As economics, sociology, psychology, political science, and anthropology struggled to professionalize, each asserted hegemony over subject matters and methods putatively unique to them. Like the colonial powers in the previous centuries, they divided the world into exclusive territories to be ruled by them only. In this process, the Western world eventually was left to economics, sociology, psychology, history, and political science. The non-Western world, mostly not wanted by the other disciplines, was taken over by anthropologists who then worked hard to drive the "amateurs," the "tourists," and the "explorers" out of the field and to gain control over the certification of professional competence in anthropology for their own doctoral programs.

The underlying presumption of this academic version of the Tayloristic model was that each discipline had a unique, nonoverlapping subject matter in which it was to be the expert and authority. This model led to arbitrary and intellectually indefensible decisions about their subject matters, theories, and methods (e.g., the separation of social science and history, the separation of culture and society, economics and society, and society and psychology). It also led to a competitive relationship among the disciplines and thus to the truncation of productive dialogues among them. This is not a unique failing of anthropology; it affected all the social science disciplines.

The overall organizational model of the Tayloristic university being founded after 1890 involved another, higher level set of categorical distinctions as well: those between the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. All knowledge was parceled out among these categories, and these were used to aggregate disciplines into larger structures for administrative organization and control.

However, anthropology, as imagined by the founders like Boas, did not fit this model at all. From the Boasian perspective, anthropology was a holistic (scientific, social scientific, humanistic) field of study with all of humanity and human history as its subject matter. This vision imposed very significant intellectual burdens on anthropologists who needed to be competent in many fields. It also ran directly counter to the Tayloristic compartmental model of academic organization. Anthropology held on to the ideology of holism as a mythological charter but behaved in practice to claim the sociocultural anthropology and archaeology of non-Western people as its unique academic territory and studiously avoided reflecting on the consequences of these choices.

The story of applied social science work is considerably more complicated. At the outset, political economy and its derivative disciplines of economics, sociology, political science, and anthropology all claimed to have both an academic and a social reform agenda, but this reform agenda was soon blunted in all fields. Reformers either left the academy entirely, accepted positions in applied fields (education, nursing, social work, etc.), or persisted as lower status members of increasingly nonapplied departments. This trajectory differed from institution to institution, but the basic eviction of the applied anthropologists from the elite graduate programs in anthropology is clear.

A combination of a desire to live a comfortably abstracted intellectual life on campuses, to do fieldwork without taking on obligations to those being studied, and to avoid being mired in public controversies encouraged anthropologists to reject responsibility for applying their work outside of academia. Those who persisted in their reformist intentions were often treated with derision in academic anthropology (e.g., Margaret Mead, Sol Tax, Oscar Lewis), particularly if their work gained public attention. Across the board, the social reformers were being driven out or underground in economics, sociology, political science, and anthropology through a combination of coercion, persecution (Price 2004), and exclusion (Madoo Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998; Stocking 2000). This issue came up again during the Cold War (Lewontin *et al.*, 1996), during the Vietnam protests, and is now on the agenda of the American Anthropological Association regarding anthropologists “embedded” with soldiers in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (<http://www.aaanet.org/issues/AAA-Opposes-Human-Terrain-System-Project.cfm>, last accessed March 20, 2010).

While applied anthropology is generally a fairly noncontroversial area involving development programs, social services, NGOs, and so on, the very fact of application provokes defensiveness among strictly academic anthropologists. They seem to fear applied anthropologists whose work threatens them with being branded either as irrelevant scholars for doing nothing in the so-called “real world” or as traitors for using their anthropological knowledge for military and intelligence purposes (i.e., as useful fools for the malign work of others). This fear is generally expressed in the form of intellectual dismissal.⁵

There are few detailed analyses of the historical tensions that have given rise to the contemporary organization of academic anthropology in the United States. Two interesting exceptions are George Stocking’s essay on Sol Tax (Stocking 2000) and David Price’s book on the intelligence and police attention given to anthropologists during the McCarthy era (Price 2004).

This legacy of unspoken, unacknowledged organizational and political choices has stood in the way of the development of a robust anthropology of organizations. The easiest path has been for anthropology to ignore the past and take the present state of play as a given. By not seeing itself as the product of a complex sociocultural, historical, and political context, anthropology trumps attempts at organizational analysis that logically start with an understanding of the organizational world anthropologists themselves operate in. I believe a significant organizational anthropology will not develop until anthropology comes to terms with its own organizational structures, choices, and history.

This lack of reflexivity at this point in history is no more true of anthropology than of the other social sciences. All the social sciences provide themselves with relatively unreflective and triumphalist self-narrations. However, this practice is more damaging to anthropology because anthropology in the United States started with a very different intellectual, ethical, and organizational frame of reference from the other social sciences. The holism and ethical universalism of American anthropology does not have easy analogies in the other social sciences. Franz Boas's claims for anthropology's holism were not based on abstract philosophical principles. Rather, Boas and his collaborators felt that anthropology had to respond to the particular problems of American society: the legacy of slavery, the genocide and ethnocide of American Indians, and the belief in the inherent cultural and intellectual superiority of Whites of European origin. Without physical anthropology, archeology, linguistics, and social and cultural anthropology working in tandem, the founders felt these questions could not be addressed persuasively. That is to say, what Boas called the "science of man" was not possible without these components.

This is different from the imperialism of disciplines like economics and political science that claim universality in a different way. These fields simply assert that their subject matter is a more fundamental dimension of human behavior than any other. They did not begin by attempting to synthesize the full scope of human biological, cultural, and historical life into a multidimensional framework. Fitting into the Tayloristic model of academic specialization was much easier for them than it was for anthropology though the consequences in terms of intellectual vitality, scope, and social relevance have been just as negative for them.

Anthropology's ambitious agenda ran directly afoul of the emergent organizational design of the American research university with its disciplinarily specialized programs, systems of peer review, and allocations of funding through competition among the disciplines. In accepting the disciplinary logic of emergent academic division of labor, academic anthropologists made an incoherent organizational, political, and intellectual choice: we accepted a role as just another social science department, a choice that directly contradicted the universalism at the center of US anthropology's unique contribution to academic life.

This matters to the present chapter because obfuscating the agenda of anthropology by inserting anthropology in the organization of academic life as just one more social science discipline also resulted in anthropologists obfuscating our own socio-cultural positioning as professionals. When we anthropologists excluded ourselves, our own cultures, social organizations, and histories from analysis through the discipline's core practices, we made anthropology intellectually duplicitous.

For example, anthropologists insist that humans are cultural animals only living and coming to full humanity as cultural beings. But when anthropologists then acted like other social scientists and claimed unmediated understandings of other cultures through their theories and methods, anthropologists were denying the impact of their own cultural contexts on themselves. When I began studying anthropology in the 1960s, it appeared that that only non-Western people had culture while anthropologists had a "science of man" growing out of the superiority of Western intellectual processes (Wagner 1981).

There has been much change since the 1960s, and most anthropologists now claim to understand that all their views are culturally mediated. However, the core practices

of anthropology, organizational structures, and the disciplinary self-justifications have long rested on situating professional anthropologists above the cultures we study and outside of the societies we live in.

Among other effects, this led to the use of the chilling language and behavior that long treated our non-Western interlocutors as “informants.” This term contains the clear implication that these informants were too limited by their cultures and education to be able to articulate and theorize their own conduct. Only professional anthropologists could do this. Thus, this terminology involves the imposition of the superiority of Western culture and science over all others.

Examples of the organizational consequences of these choices can and should be multiplied. Here I will give only a few from my own experience. In the 1960s and 1970s, being an anthropologist who studied Europe (as I am) or the United States was unacceptable or at least resulted in professional marginalization. Under the umbrella of the American Anthropological Association, the Society for the Anthropology of Europe and the Society for North American Anthropology were not founded until the 1980s. The organization of the American Anthropological Association and its journals together with the requests for proposals from granting agencies and foundations ruled Europe and the United States (other than American Indians) outside of anthropology for generations, overdetermined the non-Western focus of anthropology, and contributed to a lack of professional self-reflection about these boundaries and their consequences for the core premises of the discipline.

Anthropologists, despite our announced holistic intellectual mission, largely became conventional, self-engaged academic professionals who speak to and write for each other with little regard for the importance of these issues for other academic colleagues, students, or the general public. Despite this, anthropologists continue to claim a special place in intellectual life as a universalistic discipline with strong ethical commitments to peace and human understanding. Anthropologists do not behave organizationally as if these claims were true. The organizational self-studies that would reveal these contradictions understandably are not promoted actively.

This set of organizational processes also contributes to the still-rampant duplicity of calling field research in sociocultural anthropology “participant observation.” The concept of participant observation treats anthropologists as if we are research professionals uniquely capable of both being in another culture and retaining an independent intellectual stance as Western academics.⁶

Claims to be “participant observers” also have significant consequences for the way anthropologists approach or do not approach methodology and the teaching of methods. While at first a seemingly persuasive idea, participant observation is a perverse concept that tries to conciliate a meaning of participation as being a fellow human in relation to those we study in the field, with the term observation that implies distance, professionalism, and a certain kind of analytical superiority. Anthropologists have tried to have it both ways. We claim a kind of principled solidarity with our fellow humans while continuing to treat ourselves as Western intellectuals whose training and theories enable us to see deeper into local culture and behavior than our informants can.

As many natives and not a few anthropologists have pointed out, participant observers are generally richer and more powerful than those we observe. We have the money to spend time doing nothing but observing others who cannot come to

our own places of residence and observe us. We have the freedom to try to observe whatever we want to observe and to interpret it in whatever way makes sense to us or fits current intellectual vogues in the discipline. We participate more on our own terms than we often admit. And we then produce intellectual commodities out of these experiences that generally advance our own careers, are considered our own property, and rarely share these results with our informants. Given the ideological commitments of anthropology to the family of humankind, these are questionable operations, and many anthropologists have borne witness to the tensions they experience (Behar 2003; Froelich 1978).

One particularly damaging consequence of the contradictions inherent in the notion of participant observation is that academic anthropologists in the United States have been generally adverse to teaching and discussing methodologies in anthropology at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Most elite anthropology departments in the United States do not teach a sociocultural anthropology methods course as part of their graduate or undergraduate curricula, though the archaeologists and biological anthropologists treat methods as a central subject matter for their students. The obsessive teaching and rehearsal of methods found in economics, sociology, psychology, and political science is absent in anthropology, and asking these colleagues to imagine teaching their PhD programs without methods courses results in reactions of utter incredulity.

This creates a problem for would-be anthropologists who would like to know what methodological options they have, what the consequences of different methodological choices would be, and would like to have an opportunity to try out different methods before engaging in their doctoral research. Elite graduate programs instead feed them a heavy diet of theory courses and generally involve them in the reading of “classical” anthropological monographs as models for their work (see Thorkelson’s first essay in Thorkelson 2010). However, the students are rarely encouraged to inquire of their professors how those professors did their research, what choices they made, which choices worked well, and which did not.

In my own academic experience, when graduate students pressed hard for this training, a methods course was created for them and then shut down within 2 years. The students were then given a course on how to write proposals for funding and a course on anecdotes about individual faculty’s professional interests as substitutes. When the graduate students were not satisfied with this and pressed harder, they were basically told that if they had what it takes to be an anthropologist, they would figure out how to do fieldwork on their own. The implication was that, if they could not figure it out on their own, they were not suited to become anthropologists, an abdication of educational responsibility by their professors.

Why this happens requires a study of its own, but surely, it is a significant topic for organizational research in anthropology. Anticipating the outcome of such research, I would guess that there are three dimensions to the issue. First, professors cannot teach what they do not know. Many cultural anthropologists now are too methodologically illiterate to teach a reasonable methods course. Second, students who have examined a variety of methods and models are in a position to hold not only the anthropologists they read accountable for methodological choices but also to hold those who teach them accountable for the decisions they made in their own work. This kind of questioning often is not welcome, and it threatens the local status system. Many cultural anthropologists have come to believe that their own field-

work and methods are an entirely private matter, not a question for public analysis. Third, learning about methods would lead to the uncomfortable questions about the notion of participant observation I have already raised and the larger agenda of anthropology as a discipline. Obviously, research needs to be done to understand this phenomenon.

To summarize the overall argument, the lack of development of the anthropology of organizations is one of the negative consequences of anthropology's withdrawal from its original broad intellectual, geographical, and historical view of anthropology as a field and of its accepting an unjustifiably limited place in a conventional Tayloristic division of academic labor alongside other social sciences that were very differently delimited. In other words, a key lesson from the anthropology of organizations is about the contours and practices of anthropology itself as a discipline.

It is worth mentioning that those fields that have fought against the Tayloristic structures of academia in recent years – genomics, ecology, cultural studies, operations research, systems science, and so on – are now the intellectual vanguard of academia, a role that anthropology has not played for a generation or more. This saddens me because, on the basis of my four decades of experience in working in multidisciplinary fields (science and technology studies, international studies, action research), as an individual anthropologist, I have found that I am both welcome and effective in bringing unique perspectives and approaches to complex, multidisciplinary problems. Therefore, I do not question the potential value of anthropological perspectives in inter- or multidisciplinary work. Rather, I see that the field of anthropology's relationship to multidisciplinary work is deeply ambivalent and uncertain.

Can anthropology now reinvent itself and its training of future anthropologists as multidisciplinary anthropologists? Some of these contradictions and evasions can be resolved and should be. Having an academic anthropology that is self-conscious about its own organizational history and dynamics could result in significant contributions to the study of organizations in general and to the study and reform of universities in particular. Effective deployment of anthropological frameworks developed in other locations throughout the history of the field can be a powerful tool for organizational analysis in the future. However, this is impossible without the process setting off unsettling restructurings and revaluations within the professional structures of anthropology themselves. Those invested and successful in the current structures are unlikely to want to see their positions threatened.

There are anthropologists now engaged in fruitful and difficult studies of the organizational structures of advanced capitalism (Abélès 2002; Bellier and Wilson 2002; Brenneis 1994, 2009; Greenwood 2009a, b; Holmes 2000; Miyazaki 2004; Riles 2001; Shore and Wright 2000; Strathern 2000; Taussig 1997; Thorkelson 2008, 2010; Wright 2003, 2004, 2005). This work deserves attention because it shows how theories and methods developed in anthropology (and other fields) can yield exciting perspectives on complex and important contemporary issues.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Rather than making an inventory of the above-mentioned works, I turn now to making another kind of case for the anthropological study of organizations by focusing an anthropological lens on academia itself. A few other anthropologists have

applied their professional skills to the analysis of academic institutions. Among them are Abelmann (2009); Brenneis (1994, 2009); Moffat (1989); Nathan (2005); Shore and Wright (2000); Shumar (1997); Strathern (2000); Thorkelson (2008, 2010); and Wright (2003, 2004, 2005). There is related work in ethnographic sociology including important works by Bourdieu (1994); Bourdieu *et al.* (1996); Fuller (2002); Lamont (2009); Stevens (2007); and Willis (1982). These works are quite valuable and thought-provoking, but they remain exceptions to the general foci of both disciplines.

In what follows, I support my argument for the value of a comparative organizational anthropology by using the example of ethnographic research on academia to illuminate academic institutions in useful ways. Approaching organizational studies this way would require a new commitment by anthropologists to anthropology as a comprehensive framework for understanding how humans, including anthropologists, operate organizationally. What follows is an incomplete set of short examples intended to entice the reader to think of more and to consider this agenda.

ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY/POLITICAL ECONOMY

Economic anthropology, a field I worked in for decades, offers perspectives and techniques of potential value in the analysis of academia. In what follows, I have selected a few of the many ways approaches from economic anthropology can be applied to academia.

Big Men⁸

Seen from the vantage point of economic anthropology, the Tayloristic organization of academic life automatically creates a redistributive economy run by “big men” (we call them deans, provosts, and presidents). I am aware that calling such administrators “big men” risks parody and this is not my intention. I mean that analytically, certain elements of what we learned in studying “big men” in Melanesia are valuable in understanding how academic Taylorism works. Since there are many varieties of big men and views of them, I should clarify that I am viewing big men primarily as *primus inter pares* who enact group agreements by collecting resources from the members of the group and redistributing them to members of the group according to principles that are widely understood and accepted.

Universities, despite the ongoing neoliberal marketizing ideologies and practices that attempt to run them as markets, have many elements in common with these redistributive economies. Department chairs, except in institutions that have turned them into direct administrative appointees of the dean, are generally tenured faculty, *primus inter pares*, whose power is limited but based on the ability to distribute and redistribute resources according to principles understood and more or less accepted by department members. Hierarchy exists obviously, but it is hierarchy controlled by a broadly understood and accepted set of norms/rules, as is the case in most redistributive systems (Polanyi 1966; Sahlins 1963, 1972). Corrective social pressures are quickly mounted if departmental “big men” overstep their authority. In these organi-

zational systems, there remains much consensus-based activity, and the redistributive pressures often control the actions of the department chairs.

Department chairs report to their deans, even if individual faculty members go around them to the deans from time to time. The physical and social distance between deans and department chairs enables deans, backed up by bigger “big men” further up the hierarchy, to impose their will, within limits, on departments, mainly through the distribution and redistribution of key resources such as budgets, space, and faculty and staff positions. However, deans occasionally can be stymied by departmental faculty members. This often happens when deans repeatedly behave in the idiom of “bosses” rather than operating as “big men.” This kind of big man structure cascades upward to vice presidents, provosts, presidents, and boards of trustees. Academic issues of hierarchy, solidarity, control from below, and limits to authority are all better understood through the lens of these anthropological comparisons than through rational choice market models of organizational behavior.

Disciplines and Professions

Were this the whole story, academic life would be relatively simple. However, there is another redistributive system at work emanating from outside of individual institutions. Anthropologists, like other academics, are members of national and international professional societies. These societies are also redistributive systems in key ways. From among the members of these societies are drawn the peer reviewers who decide what will and what will not be published. These societies and their professional journals set the terms by which “excellence” in the discipline is measured. Publication rates in these journals are a key part of the ways individual anthropologists and departments are evaluated and ranked nationally and internationally. Anthropologists rise to prominence in the association through a combination of scholarly reputation and intense work within the structures of the professional association itself.

The association leaders are elected to be sure, but they also understand that they are not bosses but big men. They mainly act to promote the welfare of all their members and attempt to move their associations along through consensus-based decisions in committees, commissions, and annual business meetings. These associations have a great deal to do with the communication about academic jobs and are sites in which many elements of academic employment are determined. Thus, they have real clout at all levels of the profession. Academic anthropologists cannot operate without being members of these associations, at least not in their early careers.

The upshot is that individual anthropologists participate in two different but not separate redistributive systems: the institutionally based system and the national/international professional system. Success in the institutional economy does not guarantee prestige in the national/international professional system. However, individual success in the national/international system puts powerful cards in the hands of individual anthropologists who can use this success to get jobs at more prestigious institutions and to make salary, promotion, and work condition demands of their local big men, demands that cannot easily be ignored.

Collective success in the national/international professional structures of anthropology is measured in the ranking of departments. Gaining a high national ranking gives department chairs power to negotiate with their deans and gives the deans

power to negotiate for more resources with their superiors. So the external redistributive economy affects the internal economy directly, creating both inflationary and deflationary pressures on the internal redistributive systems. Solidarity is not the only result of this influence. While department members may strategize and work together to improve their ranking, this external economy also creates significant fractures as well. When successful individuals get better salaries and more honor from local big men, and when successful departments get resources that have been withdrawn from less successful ones, conflict and ill will are often the result.

As a result of the interplay of these redistributive systems, there is a complex relationship between solidarity and individualism at work always in academic organizational life. Those anthropologists who are either unambitious or not entrepreneurial drag their colleagues down in the campus and national/international hierarchies. Those who are extremely ambitious often gain resources at the expense of their colleagues and break up the solidarity that is an important part of the daily functioning of academic institutions.

Marketizing Mixed Economies

Thus far, I have been writing as if academic institutions were simply redistributive economies. The redistributive analysis is helpful but quite incomplete. Another way to understand academic life with the help of economic anthropology is to view universities as “mixed” economies in which reciprocity, redistribution, and market allocation processes compete. The large literature on the transitions from precapitalist to capitalist economic formations has dealt extensively with this subject (Cook 2004; Greenwood 1976; Hill 1970; Mintz 1974; Ortiz 1973). Using this work can help us understand better what is happening to universities at the moment.

We know that higher education, under the financial pressures created by neoliberal economic policy and practices with its globalization of economic cycles, has moved quickly into the application of pseudo-business models that assume that colleges and universities should operate as fully as possible on the basis of market logics under the control of entrepreneurial managers. The discourses of these corporatizing academic leaders sound very much like the discourses we have heard historically from the colonial administrators and economic development policymakers from the 1950s through the present. In effect, these leaders and policymakers are trying to impose market discipline on what is basically a set of reciprocal and redistributive systems, a subject anthropologists have dealt with for decades.

Karl Polanyi asserted that the market ideology in such situations is deployed as a solvent to break up social bonds by converting labor and land into “fictitious commodities.” The academic equivalents of this commoditization process are everywhere to be seen now. The language and practices of accountability, transparency, value for the dollar, and objective “excellence” seeks to convert academic labor into a fictional commodity and education and research into fee-for-service enterprises catering to student, private, and public sector “customers” (Kirp 2003; Newfield 2004; Washburn 2005).

Administrators, boards of trustees, and state and national policymakers are enamored of the market ideology. Whatever else it does, it appears to give them simple formulas for making very complex decisions without having to know much of any-

thing about the actual value production processes at the locus of production (the library, classroom, the academic office, and research lab or group), and without having to deal with students, faculty, and staff as complex and dynamic human beings (Cole 2010; Nathan 2005; Shumar 1997). These technologies also seek to legitimate their decisions by cloaking them in spreadsheets, budget forecasts, and strategic planning exercises that, when examined analytically, make a great number of indefensible analytical leaps.

The linkage between this and the anthropological critiques of economic development projects is direct. Anthropologists who looked closely at the major economic development projects in the “Third World” quickly saw that the marketization of non- or partly monetized economics was tantamount to the destruction of their principles of operation and their ability to provide livelihoods for most people. To mention only a few, the works of Paul and Laura Bohannan (Bohannan and Bohannan 1968); Scott Cook (2004); T. Scarlett Epstein (1962); Raymond Firth (1929, 1939, 1946); Polly Hill (1970); Sidney Mintz (1974); Richard Salisbury (1962); and Michael Taussig (1997) all show that crushing the multiple logics of reciprocity and redistribution with market demands disorganized economies and resulted in landlessness, migration, poverty, starvation, and millenarian movements.

The imposition of such market logics on the mixed economies of academia also destroy the reciprocal and redistributive logics by which they are centrally constituted and are leading to the same results. We now see massive increases in inequality within and between institutions, an ongoing increase in nontenure track and part-time academic appointments (the academic equivalent of landlessness), the imposition of corporatist management and nonconsultative power structures of the sort familiar to us from colonial regimes, the World Bank, and USAID in place of big man systems, and the conversion of students and funders into consumers.

That this is a pseudo-business model is demonstrated by the rapid and dizzying administrative bloat that is occurring at higher education institutions. The size of the administrative staff is increasing at a far greater rate than the size of the faculty and the student body. For example, between 1987 and 2007, the ratio of staff to students increased 34% while the ratio of instructors to students increased only 10% (Chronicle of Higher Education 2009, <http://chronicle.com/article/Support-Staff-Jobs-Double-in/32284/>). Real markets do not require so many controllers and regulators. Where managers and foremen outnumber workers, the market is not at work.

As Karl Polanyi showed us long ago (Polanyi [1944] 2001), this use of the market ideology actually obscures the emergence of increasingly authoritarian and corporatist management and an increasing maldistribution of wealth and opportunities, precisely as is happening now in much of higher education. While various justifications are made for these changes and the staff increases are justified by appealing to new legal mandates such as affirmative action, environmental sustainability, health and safety, risk management, enrollment management that institutions must respond to, the history of organizations makes it reasonably clear centralized corporatist economic systems are both administratively inefficient and very poorly connected to the real conditions of production. Top-down management of the economy generates armies of bureaucrats to regulate organizational behavior according to their unjustified and unjustifiable claims to superior understanding of “what the market wants or needs.”

The consequences of these approaches are visible in the cases in Marilyn Strathern's 2000 *Audit Cultures* and David Rhind's study of the devastating impact of such regulatory regimes on the social sciences in Great Britain (Rhind 2003). They do produce, however, predictable organizational outcomes: increased overhead costs, occasionalization of the labor force, increased bifurcation between the best paid and worst paid employees, and so on.

Ironically, these corporatist administrative designs have little to do with what is happening in the private sector. Many successful private sector firms engaged in the production of goods and services are moving in the opposite direction. They are flattening hierarchies, multiskilling the workforce, eliminating administrative positions, decreasing inventories, and moving decision making down as close to the point of production as possible (Greenwood 2009a; Levin 2002).

Another source of relevance of what anthropologists have learned about the marketization of mixed economies and societies centers on the social goals served by the mixed economies. A difference between a big man system and a chiefdom with its principles of redistribution and higher education institutions is that most higher education institutions do not have clear and specific missions to guide their administrative conduct. With the exception of some liberal arts colleges that have a clear mission statements and follow them, sectarian colleges with their theological and ethical missions, community colleges with their job training programs in response to local needs, and for-profit colleges and universities with their attention to student consumer demand, most other higher education mission statements are generally vague, nonoperational idealizations without practical value. These mission statements are rarely even known to the faculty and students. No one, other than institutional publicists, would confuse them with the real behavior of the institutions.

For example, Cornell University's mission statement is as follows:

Cornell is a private, Ivy League university and the land-grant university for New York State. Cornell's mission is to discover, preserve, and disseminate knowledge; produce creative work; and promote a culture of broad inquiry throughout and beyond the Cornell community. Cornell also aims, through public service, to enhance the lives and livelihoods of our students, the people of New York, and others around the world. (<http://www.cornell.edu/about/mission/>, last accessed March 20, 2010)

Such a statement provides no guidance or accountability whatsoever for the conduct of the institution, not for administrators, faculty, or students, nor is it intended to.

By contrast, big man systems operate in accord with a generally understood set of social principles and visions of the positive goals of life. These are their "mission," and a set of rules of acceptable social conduct derive from those goals and their cultural understandings of the good life well lived. It is not possible to distribute resources in a big man system without a clear set of shared goals and rules of conduct that drive the system. By contrast, what we generally experience in higher education is a combination of vague hortatory rhetoric about notions such as education for the knowledge society of the twenty-first century, excuses about budget constraints and hard choices, meticulous examinations of the national ranking of particular departments, and out-and-out favoritism and persecution of those who are not favored.

The absence of collectively agreed-on goals and conduct makes academic big man systems impossible to manage practically or ethically. The ranking systems increasingly used by academic managers as the basis for allocating resources do not resolve this problem. These rankings are not about rank in relation to the local institutional goals but link the local institution to the competitive national or international prestige system in each of the academic disciplines. The rankings are then used by administrators, often cynically, to justify local decisions, and by academic units to question those decisions. However, these rankings are essentially beauty contests and are heavily influenced by the size of institutions (bigger nearly always is ranked better because rankings are made by peer referencing regarding prestige). As examples of social research, the ranking systems embody incompetent and indefensible social science practices.

Using the ranking system locally may mean that a highly ranked department may get more resources from the big men, but this ranking may have nothing to do with the mission of the institution or the performance of the department in relation to that mission. For example, a land-grant university may have a highly ranked program in philology, but the connection between this and the legal mission of the land-grant university to provide research, teaching, and service to the people of its state is non-existent except by means of quasi-theological arguments.

Some institutions now have altered their *de facto* missions to confront this problem and have shifted their institutional aims to having more nationally and internationally high ranked departments regardless of the areas they are in or of their educational or research value to any constituency the institution serves. This is a classic example of trying to heat a room by boiling the thermometer, and it further degrades any attempts to have coherent and actionable institutional missions.

What anthropologists know about mixed economies is that they are extremely complex (Hill 1970) precisely because they are mixed and because their multiple logics cannot be reduced into one another. This is made vividly clear in Bohannan and Bohannan's (1968) *Tiv Economy*, Salisbury's (1962) *From Stone to Steel*, Hill's (1963) *Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana*, Ortiz's (1973) *Uncertainties in Peasant Farming*, and Greenwood's (1976) *Unrewarding Wealth*. There are elaborate and somewhat separate circuits of exchange operating according to different principles. Conversion of one kind of exchange into another within these systems risks the collapse of the whole system.

Managing a mixed economy means conciliating diverse systems of production and valuation into an overall structure that manages to take care of the welfare of everyone, a system in which no one starves until everyone goes hungry, as Karl Polanyi ([1944] 2001) put it. The lack of clear, shared, and complexly integrated missions in research universities and rules and practices that support the integrity of the reciprocal and redistributive systems in nonmarket terms is strongly highlighted by anthropological analysis. The contrast between current higher education administrative fads and the socially and culturally controlled operations of these mixed economies is clear. Higher education and research are being converted into fictional commodities. What we already know about the transitions from mixed economies to marketized systems is that when the reciprocal and redistributive circuits and the mutual obligations people had to one another are disrupted or destroyed, a few are enriched, and the many are impoverished and marginalized, precisely as is happening in higher education now.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE/SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

From the heyday of sociocultural anthropology's studies of kinship and social organization, we also have other tools of analysis relevant to understanding academic life. How departments organize their work and decision making, studied from this vantage point, yields interesting results.

In some senses, a department is a solidary unit of professionals in the same discipline who often try to make decisions by consensus and without exclusions. This usually involves lengthy and occasionally frustratingly pointless deliberations. On another level, the senior faculty are clearly superior to the junior faculty, control their appointments, reappointments, and tenure reviews, evaluate the quality of their work, and so on, often without any other legitimation than being senior faculty. Every so often, as in a disputed appointment a sharp factional conflict among senior faculty, the junior faculty are forced to align themselves openly, and these hierarchical dimensions, generally hidden under the cloak of collegiality, come to the fore. Thus, we have elements of collective, almost leaderless decision making and the kinds of seniority-based hierarchies documented in enormous detail in kinship and social organizational studies done around the world.

This internally contradictory organizational system is situated within the hierarchical, bureaucratic, and authoritarian structures of colleges, central administrations, boards of trustees, and increasingly controlled by the now ever-present watchdogs of academic accountability. Sometimes, the external pressures cause the solidary and collective elements in a department to emerge. At other times, the department is divided, and colleagues treat each other treacherously to gain favor with those above while they are subjected to the social opprobrium and ostracism of their departmental colleagues. What these perspectives demonstrate is the considerable complexity and shifting dynamic balances among the many forces that make up academic organizations.

Another way of using anthropological perspectives and to understand academic leadership is to analyze the problems department chairs, deans, and other administrators face by analogy with the problems faced by local leaders in particular colonial systems, a subject studied particularly by Africanist anthropologists such as Max Gluckman (1963) and Lloyd Fallers (1965), and scholars of the Dutch empire such as Furnivall (1939). Gluckman and Fallers, among many others, pointed to the leadership/articulation problems created by the imposition of a colonial hierarchical and authoritarian system of rule on tribes whose chiefs and other leaders were not bosses but rather either clan leaders or *primus inter pares*. Gluckman named this leadership role an "intercalary role," and Fallers (1965), in *Bantu Bureaucracy*, gave a telling portrait of trying to manage the link between two completely different kinds of sociopolitical systems.

While overstating the analogy is a mistake, there is something to be learned from these anthropologists about the changing roles and dilemmas of department chairs and deans. In my own interviews on campus, one of the themes that has struck me is that everyone I interviewed, from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy, feels that they do not have real power and their sense of powerlessness is, I believe, authentic. This is not because senior administrators ignore the fact that they have some real

power. Rather, it seems that they find the tasks they are given incompatible with the structure of the positions they hold and the authority they actually can wield. They are aware of constantly trying to reconcile incompatible organizational logics through their own actions and in their own persons. This experience of incompatible logics makes them feel powerless and frustrated and gives them no guidance about how to perform their roles competently.

Many other administrative roles yield very interesting information when subjected to ethnographic analysis, as in the case of an organizational sociologist expert in higher education, Mitchell Stevens (2007). Stevens conducted a long period of field research working as an admissions officer at a liberal arts college in the United States and put together a fascinating book on the multiplicity of forces that combine to “create” the admitted class of students in a competitive national college admissions system. Such analyses are not only enlightening to read but provide information that most faculty, students, administrators, and policymakers basically do not know or it puts together things they know in ways that make very different sense. Such work strongly resists simpleminded administrative and policy panaceas and more is needed.

Other aspects of campus life are receiving some ethnographic attention, but the subject is barely acknowledged professionally. The daily lives of students turn out to reveal a great deal about campus life that most faculty members and a significant portion of the administrators know very little about. The study and work habits of the current generation of students (Nathan 2005), the impact of greater cultural diversity (Abelmann 2009), residential living and its consequences (Moffat, 1989; Nathan 2005), and age diversity (Nathan 2005) yield intriguing pictures of campus life that match up quite poorly with the way we teach and our understanding of the campus programs we have to promote diversity.

I have said enough to justify my claim that many of the principles of social organization studied by anthropologists (and some organizational sociologists) as well as the impacts of transitions from one kind of social organization to another under the spread of market capitalism are present in contemporary academic life and that analyzing academia through these lenses is revealing and potentially useful. The vast anthropological literature on these subjects can provide a great many more suggestive lines of analysis, if it were inventoried and deployed for this purpose.

Ritual behavior is another subject on which anthropology has a long track record mainly in non-Western contexts. Academic life is replete with ritual activities including convocations, installations of leaders, memorials, initiations, various celebrations for graduating students, and commencement ceremonies. The rich complexity of these public rituals has rarely been tapped and interpreted by anthropologists, despite generations of work on the meaning, social functions, and structuring of rituals in non-Western contexts. A wonderful exception to this blanket statement is the work of Kathleen Manning (a PhD in Higher Education and Student Affairs with a minor in Anthropology). Her book, *Rituals, Ceremonies, and Cultural Meaning in Higher Education* (Manning 2000), is a rich analysis of the multiplicity of public rituals and their meanings as rites of passage.

There are other, more subtle forms of ritual behavior that are rarely captured in ethnographic analyses. The ways departmental meetings are managed, who takes minutes, how votes are taken and counted, and so on, all form part of an

organizational environment that new faculty have to learn. College faculty meetings with their rules, systems for recognizing speakers, creation of committees, proposing of and voting on policies also have idiosyncratic structures, and yet the occasions when someone violates the unspoken protocols are often long remembered, suggesting that these practices have some kind of important traction within groups.

In recent decades, the degree to which e-mail has taken over many of the functions of these meetings in a non-face-to-face context is widely noted, but its effect on the ritualized organization of deliberation and decision making is little studied in academic settings. It is a rich field for linguistic anthropology, political anthropology, and general constructivist analyses.

NATURE AND CULTURE, CLASSIFICATION, WORLDVIEW

The work of generations of anthropologists on the structure and dynamics of systems of classification, on the endless variation and complexity of distinctions between nature and culture, and on the impact of worldviews on the organization of everyday life is also relevant to higher education.

Taylorism as a Worldview

Taylorism is not just a form of social organization for the production of goods, it is also a worldview based on a complex set of cultural premises (Banta 1993). Among its premises are that all tasks can be broken down into one right way of doing them and that the most time-efficient way is always the right way. Further, doing things the right way will always be rewarded by the economy with profits. So the world is a deterministic machine run by principles of machine efficiency. The cultural and political utopianism of Henry Ford is well known and recently dealt with extensively in the book on his Amazonian dream community, *Fordlandia* (Grandin 2009). Despite its apparent determinism, Taylorism actually can be deployed in multiple ways, depending on the visions and models the designers have. There is no one Tayloristic solution to any organizational problem, and so models and images of organizations play a central role in their development. A comparative examination of higher education systems across the country and around the world makes it clear that the Tayloristic organization of research universities in current use is only one of the possible Tayloristic models that could have been used.

If we look at the way higher education campuses work as classificatory systems, the unspoken power of the nature/culture distinction becomes evident. The disciplines are laid out in three broad categories from the physical sciences to the natural sciences to the social sciences and finally to the humanities. At one end, there is “nature,” the realm of physical and biological laws and, at the other end, there is “culture,” the realm of symbols, meanings, and the domain of the will and human choice. Of course, there are already outliers such as engineering, law, business, education, and so on, but mostly the inconsistencies such a model generates are ignored. Within the various subdivisions of the three master categories, the same nature to culture logic is used: biophysics being more “natural” and “scientific” than “ecology” or “ethology”; economics and psychology are more “scientific” than anthropology; and so on.

Anthropologists have long known that all nature/culture schemes do not “work” in some clearly functional sense. They are, as Lévi-Strauss put it, good to think but not good to eat (Lévi-Strauss 1963). We also know that systems of classification have moral and political consequences and that they often have a “taken-for-granted” status that does not invite close analysis. Only when they fail too obviously does a flurry of activity to deal with the threat posed by incoherence emerge.

Given the above, anthropologists could usefully spend time analyzing and questioning these taken-for-granted dimensions of the classificatory ordering of higher education. In my experience, deans, provosts, presidents, and trustees are very much at a loss when confronted with an analysis of their organizational assumptions based on anthropological studies of classification. Their notions about business as usual and the proper distribution of resources rely on such taken-for-granted classifications far more than they realize and so they are unable to explain their rational choice models of administration when the very units of analysis turn out to be products of symbolic activity.

Beyond their impact on administrators, location within the academic classificatory system is practically important as well. Being closer to the “nature” pole of the classification pays better in salary, institutional resources, and teaching loads than being at the “culture” end. Subjecting this fact to anthropological analysis opens up some quite revealing justificatory problems for deans and provosts and a set of unsavory political realities that are not the exception but the rule in academia. Generally, academic leaders claim that all disciplines are important, but they pay and support some much more fully than others and are rarely called to account. When such questions are broached and the campus classification logic is questioned, the defensive response of administrators is to refer to external markets. We are told that economists command higher salaries, and if we want to keep them, we have to pay the going salaries. Language teachers do not have this kind of external clout and thus are paid less. Yet if pressed, it would be very unusual to have an academic administrator say that economics is, in principle, more important than language even though economists generally are paid more than language teachers and everything in the institution’s operations reveal that economics is much more highly rewarded.

In addition, on a broader cultural level, worldview both external and internal to academia support the claim that the sciences are more important somehow than the humanities, that economics is more valuable than political science, and so on. These beliefs and classifications, based on the expectations about the value of the results of these fields in our society, reinforce the internal classificatory logics of academic institutions and the existing power and distributional structures.

This creates an interesting tension between a Tayloristic system of putatively equal silos of rationally divided academic expertise and the clear fact that salaries, teaching loads, and infrastructures are much better in some silos than others. The campus classificatory system equalizes all silos like siblings in a segmentary lineage system while the external market principles prioritize some sibling sets over others. The administrators are left to resolve the tension. This is much easier to do if no anthropologist comes along to challenge the meaningfulness of the overall system of academic classification and the presumption that “nature” is more important than “culture” in the world at large.

Another way these classificatory schemes work is nicely captured in Mary Douglas's analysis of purity and danger (Douglas 1966). If the disciplines/departments are taken to be "natural" classificatory structures, then anything that does not fit is "dirt" in Douglas's classic analysis. Dirt is a challenge to the sense the system makes because it challenges the clarity of the categories. Dirt is thus something to be swept up and removed from the system as quickly as possible. This janitorial activity actually sheds light on the hegemony of disciplines/departments whose history and self-definitions are unjustifiable in logical, substantive, and historical terms but whose janitorial activities are constant.

If we question these classifications, we immediately challenge the institution itself. Why, after all, is history a discipline separate from anthropology, anthropology from sociology, and so on? Revealing disciplinary divisions for the arbitrary cultural constructions that they are (institutionalized with budgets and infrastructures) rather than for the "realities" they pretend to embody reveals a whole hidden infrastructure of disciplines, miccartels, and social control systems in higher education.

The constant ideological battle between disciplinary "excellence" and multidisciplinary work is illuminated by an understanding of these classificatory strategies as the work of a group of academic janitors and policemen who spend their lives constantly trying to neaten up the system by removing the dirt. This also helps explain that despite the overwhelming arguments in favor of interdisciplinary work, it rarely survives long organizationally.

Interdisciplinary work does exist, and it goes through cycles. It is currently in an "up" cycle with the prominence of linkages among the biological and physical sciences, with operations research and other systems approaches, and multiperspective attempts to manage environmental problems. But this kind of interdisciplinary energy has existed before during the heyday of programs such as science, technology, and society, bioethics, and gender studies of the 1970s and the ethnic studies programs of the 1980s and later (and in the founding of anthropology in the United States). These efforts rarely result in permanent changes in the basic classificatory logic of academia. They create lots of energy, often result in fascinating work for a while, but they eventually decay and evaporate, victims of the academic janitors and the dominant Tayloristic organizational structures.

In my own professional career, I have worked as an anthropologist on the organizational structures, cultures, and dynamics of a variety of organizations in the Western world including the labor-managed cooperatives of Mondragón in Spain, large and small manufacturing and service organizations in Spain, Norway, and the United States, and more recently on academic organizations. Throughout this process, I have mainly interacted with nonanthropologists, since only a few anthropologists have done this kind of work while remaining in academia. In my ongoing interactions with organizational sociologists, planners, educationists, political scientists, operations researchers, extension agents, and others like them, I have always been impressed by the value anthropological perspectives bring to these interactions, value noted and requested by these collaborators. The extensive and fascinating literatures in the sociology of organizations, planning, and systems science all contain elements of great interest to anthropologists, but my experience is that these frameworks, as good as they are, remain limited by cultural/historical preconceptions that continue to take some forms of Western modernity as paradigmatic for the analysis of the human condition. Thus, anthropology continues to have something valuable to offer.

But being interesting, important, and even useful is no guarantee of academic survival. The disciplinary departments constantly complain about the resources given to interdisciplinary work that would be better spent on their own pet projects. And now, with the neoliberal accountability movement taking over much of the thinking in higher education management, the future of interdisciplinary studies looks worse than before. Accountability requires stable units and clear boundaries in order to determine inputs and outcomes. It thus freezes existing structures for the purpose of counting, further ossifying the existing Tayloristic system.

This issue bears particular relevance to anthropology because it was founded in the United States as a comprehensive approach to the historical, evolutionary, linguistic, and cultural dimensions of human life worldwide. This framing is directly contradictory to the classificatory system used to manage/control higher education. Despite occasional bows in the direction of anthropology as a “four-field” discipline, anthropology has gradually been either split up into its historical, natural science, social science, and humanities components. The cost of accepting the imposition of this Tayloristic logic was that the larger universalizing project of anthropology became impossible. Where departments have members from more than one subfield of anthropology present, there is generally very little substantive intellectual interaction among them. In effect, large anthropology departments have reproduced the university’s Tayloristic model within their own boundaries and pursue an internally competitive logic that further strengthens the hand of deans and other administrators.

Thus, the imposition of metrics on academic activities takes the conventional disciplinary classifications almost completely for granted. Faculty members are measured against statistical standards set by their discipline: how many publications, how many in the top journals, how many grants, and so on? These scores are summed up to a departmental score, and the department is then compared against other similarly treated departments around the country to arrive at a measure of “excellence.” It should be clear that this kind of excellence is not substantive and that measuring it and allocating resources according to its logic reinforces the most conservative, boundary-limited characteristics of the disciplines.

This analysis reveals that supposed management innovations in higher education to promote excellence, transparency, and accountability actually promote the most conservative and maladaptive features of existing academic organizations, drive out the innovative and creative work at the borders of disciplines, and actively discourage the interdisciplinary work that is needed to apply the knowledge in higher education to the analysis and solution of our most significant and necessarily multi-dimensional societal problems.

Many more anthropological contributions from the past hundred years of anthropological research could be deployed usefully in the spirit of the preceding sections. I believe this would be a productive and exciting task that would benefit both academia and anthropology.

CONCLUSION

As anthropologists, if we are willing to accept organizational self-awareness as a way of life, we certainly have materials from a hundred years of field research that provide valuable and even startling insights into the current dilemmas of all forms of

organization, including higher education. However, a consequence of accepting this perspective is that we anthropologists would have to be prepared to remake our own field and reinstitutionalize it in accordance with a new set of premises rather than following the dictates of our currently unambitious and increasingly irrelevant professional organizational structures. We would also have to be willing to accept the discomfort reflection and critique creates, something we have done to other people and other cultures for generations. As the financial and administrative stresses on anthropology increase, there soon will be no choice but to address this change project as a matter of disciplinary survival in an increasingly hostile and competitive environment.

NOTES

- 1 Late in the development of this chapter, I received a wonderful and comprehensive critique from Susan Wright. Given the limitations of time and space, I was not able to address many of her good points in detail. However, one point from her critique needs to be emphasized. Her experience as a British anthropologist who also works and lives in Denmark makes it clear that the national histories of higher education systems make a great deal of difference in the organizational trajectories of academic fields. My story is even more a US story than I initially realized. While there are similarities in the issues that arise, there are also fundamental organizational differences and a number of the tensions that I remark on for US anthropology either do not exist or exist in a different form in Europe. The relations between applied and theoretical anthropology resemble each other, but the teaching of methodology is a widespread and accepted practice in Europe. This ultimately means the history and organization really do matter and that the comparative anthropology of organizations is a necessary component in the overall future development of our field.
- 2 The story of the applied/pure split in anthropology deserves attention in its own right since as many as 50% of all anthropologists work outside of academia and are highly regarded and sought after for this work. However, this subject extends beyond the scope of the present chapter.
- 3 While many women were central to the early history of anthropology, the other social sciences were much more male monopolies. This history is well told for sociology in Madoo Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (1998).
- 4 This is not the place to develop the argument, but the institutional health of research universities depends on developing an intentional and clearly understood balance between ongoing deep specialization that generates expertise and collaborative cross-disciplinary topical collaborative projects that mobilize that kind of expertise to address the complex, dynamic, and multidimensional problems of our world. This challenge is ignored by the ranking systems institutions are subjected to while policymakers claim to want the multi-disciplinary and relevant work to be done. Enhancing incentives for narrow disciplinary specialism while demanding the opposite behavior is a core contradiction of university life now.
- 5 I do not wish to imply that applied anthropology is somehow superior to nonapplied anthropology. Rather I am calling attention to the way these two approaches to anthropology treat each other with both disdain and a level of mutual misunderstanding that promotes the welfare of neither side (Greenwood, 1999, 2008).
- 6 For extended essays on this topic, see Fabian (1990) and Greenwood (2000).
- 7 I have been engaged in efforts at understanding higher education and in higher education reform for about 15 years. Some of this work has been my solo effort, but a significant part of it has been done in collaboration with my coauthor, Morten Levin, a sociologist/

action researcher in the Department of Technology Management at the Norwegian Technical University in Trondheim. See Greenwood (2007a, b, c, 2009a, b) and Greenwood and Levin (1998, 2000, 2001a, b, 2007, 2008).

- 8 The term comes from the early part of the twentieth century and, in ethnographic context, referred to males. However, in its academic incarnation, it involves “big women” as much as it involves “big men.”

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