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ARTICLE

Repacking the Sacred Bundle: Suggestions for Teaching Four-Field Anthropology[1]

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Abstract

The four fields within American anthropology are periodically under discussion, especially when it comes to applying them in a holistic way. Various roadblocks, both institutional and personal, currently prevent greater development of holistic studies. This paper discusses new ideas for teaching anthropology holistically, based on a four-field model, as well as ways in which departments could be reorganized to foster a four-field approach in students.

Keywords: *four fields; holism; pedagogy; theory*

Introduction

Our title plays on the title of the anthology, *Unwrapping the Sacred Bundle* (Segal and Yanagisako 2005), whose authors generally argue for the opposite of what we argue here concerning the utility of a four-field approach to teaching and research (although our argument has the capacity to embrace both their point of view and ours without paradox). The articles in the anthology argue that contemporary anthropologists in general find Boasian four-field holism irrelevant in their current research and would rather get deeply involved in highly specialized topics rather than range over all that American anthropology embraces under its vast umbrella. For example, the editors comment in the Introduction (Segal and Yanagisako 2005, 36):

> We thus are brought to ask the following question of our colleagues in cultural-social anthropology who argue for holding on to holism: when was the last time

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that research on hominid evolution or primates was helpful to you in thinking about your ethnographic data?

This anthology represents only one thread in a long debate concerning whether a four-field approach to anthropology is useful, whether it is even possible, whether there are really only four fields, and whether or not the four fields will survive (e.g., Anderson 2003; Balée 2009; Borofsky 2002; Calcagno 2003; Hicks 2013; Hymes 1972; Shenk 2006; Stocking 1988 and 2001). For the time being, the idea (the "sacred bundle") that the four fields are the foundation of American anthropology is here to stay, even though many university departments do not offer rigorous training in all four fields, and the fields within those departments are often at odds with one another or walled off from one another in self-contained silos, with doctoral candidates expected to choose only one as a specialty. This status quo need not be the only option, however. Students, both undergraduate and graduate, could be introduced to a different way of learning anthropology – a four-field way – but to do so requires great changes in staffing, reading materials, and curricula. Most importantly, the change requires a sense on the part of a department that four-field anthropology is a worthwhile endeavor in the first place. In this paper we are concerned with arguing in favor of holism, and our argument takes the concept of holism well beyond the traditional four fields. Nonetheless, we primarily consider how to set up a department that is capable of teaching four-field anthropology and the benefits that accrue from such a transition.

As highlighted in *Unwrapping the Sacred Bundle*, academic journals and associations, introductory university courses, and textbooks in general anthropology, along with distribution requirements for undergraduates and graduate students, continue to repeat the mantra that anthropology takes a four-field approach to the study of humans. At the same time, there are constant critiques concerning the utility of the four-field approach and almost no application of this approach. It is much more accurate to say that anthropology is an umbrella term for four distinct fields that hold brief conversations once in a while. In truth, there rarely have been any genuine four-field anthropological studies for a number of reasons, but there could be if the intellectual and institutional will to foster them existed.

It is well known that while Boas championed the four-field approach to anthropology in North America, he was neither its founder (except, perhaps, in name and institutional structures), nor did he see any great future in four-field studies. In his famed 1904 paper "The History of Anthropology," Boas was not optimistic that the new academic discipline, which he had created out of the components of diverse disciplines with an interest in "man," would stay coalesced for long. He thought that biological anthropology, for example, would soon go back to being a branch of biology, and anthropological linguistics would, at some point, return to a focus on specific questions associated with language (Boas 1904, 523). Certainly, this happened to a degree, but also within anthropology the four fields became largely isolated units.

Boas accepted the fragmentation of the four fields into disjointed segments as an obvious consequence of the fact that the four fields were technically complex in themselves. As a result, no single individual could be competent in all four, and large segments of these fields involved interests and methodologies that were particular to them and not to the other three. This is unquestionably true, but not all topics within anthropology need, or should be, restricted to specialized study. Now and again, inquiry using resources across the fields has yielded tangible, if delimited, results (e.g., Darnell 2002; Goldschmidt 2006; Hockett 1985; Ingold 2020; Jones 2003; Parreñas 2018). These studies are typically (though not always) confined to quite specialized datasets, which is not surprising, but they could have a much wider scope and broader theoretical appeal if their potential to expand a segment of the discipline of anthropology beyond their particular topics, into a fully holistic enterprise, were exploited. To achieve this aim, training in holistic methodologies needs to begin as early as possible in an anthropologist's career and not be left as an afterthought to be tacked on to a mature research agenda that has been narrowly focused from the beginning.

In many ways, the very institutions that (superficially) claim that anthropology is a holistic, four-field discipline throw up stumbling blocks in the way of its execution. PhD candidates who wish to study a particular topic using all four fields may either be discouraged from doing so by dissertation directors who are unsympathetic to holistic approaches, or they may find few, or no, resources at their institutions for pursuing such a course of action. Both of us have had to deal with this situation at one time or another. Furthermore, practitioners of holistic approaches to topics such as martial arts or dance (our fields), which are in many respects especially amenable to broad research methodologies, may be marginalized because these areas of research are not seen as relevant or central to the main business of anthropology as it is defined at any one time. However, defining the "main business" of anthropology is quicksand indeed, shifting hither and yon according to the dictates of current theories, funding agencies, editorial policies of journals and presses, institutional resources, personal ambition, and the contemporary political climate.

The American Anthropological Association's statement of purpose (AAA 1983) begins with an overt declaration that American Anthropology is divided into four fields:

The purposes of the Association shall be

- to advance anthropology as the science that studies humankind in all its aspects, through archeological, biological, ethnological, and linguistic research;
- and to further the professional interests of American anthropologists, including the dissemination of anthropological knowledge and its use to solve human problems.

In other words, "anthropology" is really a catchall term for the study of "humankind in all its aspects," and there is no acknowledgement here that there is any unifying factor

other than the fact that humans are at the center. This is a fair statement given the current state of affairs, but the fragmentation is not so much a hardened theoretical stance as a pragmatic matter: the embodiment of Boas's original vision.

We are not suggesting that our approach to four-field, holistic studies in anthropology is the one true gospel and that all other approaches should fade into the background. That will not happen, nor should it, and our approach allows for a multiplicity of paths. We take the stance, as do many, that it is not necessary to choose between, for example, nomothetic and idiographic approaches to anthropology, nor that holistic studies are somehow better than narrowly-focused ones. Anthropology has certainly proven itself capacious enough to encompass all points of view. Our model allows for existing teaching and research to continue as is but proposes a new way of thinking that could shift some of the focus in future.

There are numerous roadblocks to four-field studies within American anthropology, some active, some passive. There is a dearth of anthropologists trained in the four fields and of institutions open to four-field research and teaching, in large part because contemporary anthropologists do not believe that it can be done (or is worth the effort). Our work shows that it can be done in the context of the study of human movement systems, and the resulting research benefits from this holistic agenda (Forrest 1984, 1996, 1999, and 2018; Forrest and Heaney 1991; Forrest and Forrest-Blincoe 2018). A fully holistic analysis of Korean martial arts, for example, involves the investigation of body structure and bio-mechanics, the archaeology of training halls (which may include visual representations that are open to multiple interpretations), the specific language used in instruction and descriptions (historical and contemporary), as well as socio-cultural data collection. Greg Downey in *Learning Capoeira* (2005) incorporates neurology and psychology as well as phenomenology and cultural anthropology into the study of human movement systems (fecund sources of holistic studies).

Four-field/holistic approaches to anthropology serve to break out of a strictly sociocultural mode of investigation (even though sociocultural questions may lie at the heart of the inquiry). As such, this kind of analysis could be a model for more general investigations in anthropology and may provide an avenue to overcoming the fragmentation in the discipline that has existed for over a century. Indeed, holistic teaching could be the crucible for a new kind of anthropologist, one who can escape the tunnel vision of professionalism and specialization. This is not to say that specialization needs to be replaced, but, rather, that a wider vision can help us ask new questions, and possibly generate new kinds of theory.

Four-field anthropology cannot develop as a significant component of the discipline without institutional and other forms of support. At present, the will to create such support is lacking for a variety of reasons – intellectual, financial, and historical. If holism does not exist as a choice for students studying anthropology at the graduate and undergraduate levels, then it cannot evolve as a framework within the discipline as a whole. The tough

question remains: How do you teach a new generation of four-field anthropologists, even if you have the desire and the resources? The answer is neither simple nor straightforward.

Proposal

As an intellectual exercise, consider the Venn diagram in Figure 1:

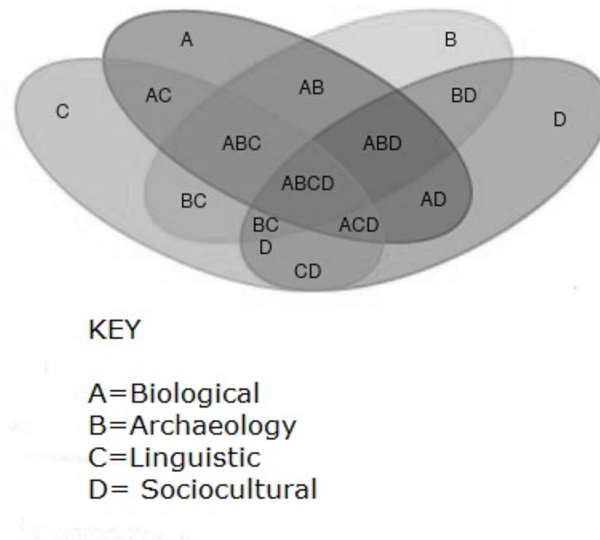

Figure 1. Intersections of the Four Fields

The diagram displays graphically possibilities for dialog within the four fields of anthropology; this includes possible combinations of the fields as well as options for each of the subdiscipline to be pursued independently. Because Venn diagrams are a tool of set theory, the first exercise is to list all the members of each set. For example, A (Biological) includes primate behavior, human evolution, human anatomy, and so forth, whereas D (Sociocultural) includes exchange, marriage, kinship, politics, etc. B denotes Archaeology and C denotes Linguistic topics. The individual members of each set make up the total set, but some of the members reside in more than one set. For example, the study of vocal production involves both biological anthropology and linguistic anthropology. Set theory calls the place where members reside in two (or more) sets the *intersection* and designates it with the symbol ∩ (usually pronounced as "cap"). Thus, vocal production would be in A∩C.

Reviewing current and previous research in anthropology, you will find that some of the locations on the diagram (e.g., A∩B and C∩D) are well represented by recent research (see, for example, Morwood and van Oosterzee 2007; Kawabata and Kaifu 2020; Bastardas-Boada 2019; and Hernández-Campoy 2016). Others (e.g., A∩B∩C and A∩D) are more sparsely populated. Yet, pick any research topic that fits under the general umbrella

of the American Anthropological Association and you can fit it somewhere on this diagram. Our purpose here is not to privilege any one location, but simply to argue that $A \cap B \cap C \cap D$ is a viable option for some research topics. This option is typically not pursued for a number of reasons, yet could be a significant departure for the field were it to be given more attention. By giving more consideration to $A \cap B \cap C \cap D$ studies institutionally, and by providing ABCD training for PhD candidates, a new breed of anthropologist could emerge. This departure ought to be fruitful for the discipline as a whole.

The critical point here is not to say that this new breed of four-field anthropologists should be trained in all aspects of each subdiscipline (although basic familiarity with the methods, theory, and history of all four is a necessary precursor). Rather, we are saying that certain topics within the vast field of human activity could profit from a four-field approach. The point of using a Venn diagram and set theory here is to point out that the intersections of sets contain only subjects/items that are common to both sets. Therefore, the question posed in *Unpacking the Sacred Bundle* – "when was the last time that research on hominin evolution or primates was helpful to you in thinking about your ethnographic data?" (Segal and Yanagisako 2005, 26) is a red herring according to our analysis. The intersection of the latest studies of *A. africanus* and the contemporary ethnography of the Penan probably does not exist – but $A \cap D$ in general certainly does. Take, for example the work of Agustín Fuentes, including *Why We Believe: Evolution and the Human Way of Being* (2019), or various researchers in the field of neuroanthropology (e.g., Lende and Downey 2012) who specifically work on the intersection of human biology and cultural behavior.

One significant point that several of the articles in *Unpacking the Sacred Bundle* make is that requiring PhD candidates in sociocultural anthropology to take at least one course in the other three sub-disciplines as a prerequisite for graduation is typically an utter waste of time because such courses are, more often than not, selected at random based on what is offered and what fits a tight class schedule. We agree. We have no interest in such an ad hoc, and potentially random, approach in which the integration of the four fields in a holistic manner is not the main purpose. Such an approach simply pays lip service to the existence of the four fields. At best, this "supermarket"-style endeavor equips graduate students to teach general anthropology introductory courses, which themselves do not present integrated subfields. At worst, the students dutifully check off each required course and then move on to their specific research topics without ever incorporating the course material from the other three subfields into their research.

Human Studies

Boas did both a service and a disservice to the discipline when he developed the four fields. His 1904 paper pointed out that while the old, nineteenth-century discipline of anthropology had a central paradigm, it was a worthless one. Instead of offering a new paradigm, he implied that there was not, nor could there ever be, a core theory that covered all humanity because the specialties needed to do so were so diverse

methodologically and epistemologically that they could not coalesce into grand theory. We beg to differ. It is certainly a fool's errand to collect diverse specialists together under one roof in the hope that a collective vision will emerge. You cannot put a random archaeologist, biological anthropologist, linguist, and cultural anthropologist together in one room and expect that a four-field anthropological theory of humanity will magically result. Two, possibly three, together may have interesting discussions, but these discussions will concern a tangible topic of mutual interest rather than some generally abstract theoretical area.

Content is the glue that holds many "studies" departments together rather than overarching paradigms. For example, American Studies departments are typically a loose aggregate of specialists in history, literature, law, philosophy, anthropology, etc. who often hold primary appointments in their respective departments. These faculty may offer cross-listed courses in the American Studies curriculum, and students are expected to somehow come up with a workable synthesis on their own – perhaps with the aid of a foundational course at the outset. But in the long-run, doctoral candidates are going to settle for one specialty out of the vast array on offer to them under the umbrella American Studies because the subject has no theoretical center, no unifying paradigm. While broad generalizations can't be applied everywhere, PhDs often go on to posts in history, literature, or cultural studies (see Maddox 1998 and Pease and Wiegman 2002). If we conceive of American Anthropology as being "Human Studies," then Boas's vision for the discipline was correct. Lumping four diverse specialties together in one department, taught by separate specialists, will not create unity in the minds of the students by itself. But there are other ways to foster holism. After all, Biology was focused on content at one time and in the course of studying specific living things and their habits and environments, a number of theories developed concerning how and why species emerge and change, leading to the formulation of the principle of evolution by natural selection. Our most fundamental point is that this principle was not formulated by a committee or generated from interdisciplinary inquiry: it coalesced in one mind (admittedly twice).

If we can believe his post hoc rationalization, Darwin hit on his theory of natural selection as the driving force of evolution when he pondered the beaks of Galapagos finches. But his formal conclusions also rested on interviews with farmers and pigeon fanciers concerning selective breeding, along with his reading of Malthus. He drew information from neighbors, shipmates, the family butler, geologists, botanists, and anyone who sparked his interest, and then blended the kaleidoscopic data into one unifying theory: multiple perspectives, one brain. Thus, we are not assailing specialization in the slightest; just the opposite. Detailed, specialized datasets are the sine qua non of grand theory. Our argument is that a new paradigm in anthropology – should that be a laudable aim – is much more likely to emerge from the work of one person collecting diverse datasets together than from interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary studies by committee.

It is commonly argued that the fragmentation of anthropology, with no coherent central paradigm, is a fact of life created by the nature of our enormously diverse general domain – humanity. At best, this is a narrow-minded excuse. Biology covers all living things, past, present, and future; physics covers all motion and energy in the universe, also past, present, and future. Yet, those disciplines have overarching paradigms (to invoke Kuhn 1962). One immediate counterargument to this observation is that anthropology is not a physical science and does not strive to be: it is a hybrid. Point taken. Anthropology has a deeply split personality as a consequence of the creation and subsequent dispersal of the four-field model. Even the subfields are split into components that pursue different methodologies. Thus, it is not unreasonable to throw in the towel and give up seeking an overarching point of view. Or, we could try something ambitious. Even if training holists in the hopes of generating new grand theory is an illusory or unattainable goal, holism is still a worthy enterprise for numerous, more localized, questions such as: Why do incest taboos exist? Why do people sing? Why do people get married? Why do food taboos exist? All these questions can be deepened by looking at human bodies, history, language, and culture.

Pedagogy and the Future of Anthropology

Since Boas's day, anthropology has periodically taken stock and done some soul searching. We note, with some irony, that even as early as 1967, Donald Stanley Marshall called for the creation of a discipline of general anthropology on vaguely similar lines to our own; his call went unheard (Marshall 1967). In the same era, Dell Hymes produced the anthology *Reinventing Anthropology* (Hymes 1972) calling for a fresh look at what anthropology is and does, with similar echoing silence as a response. Hymes's work was read but largely not acted upon. For example, he called for the focus of attention in anthropology to shift from graduate to undergraduate teaching, but such change hasn't happened in influential programs like Harvard, Michigan, Berkeley, or Yale.

Apart from anything else, scholars in the vein of Marshall and Hymes could not weather the storms of the problematizing critics who, from the 1980s forward (e.g., Clifford and Marcus 1986), came up with all manner of reasons why what we had been doing up to that point was all wrong. Such voices continue to this day. Some would tear down the entire edifice because of its past sins and biases (for a history of the end of anthropology, see Holger Jebens on "The crisis of anthropology" and other essays in Jebens and Kohl 2011).

On the other hand, there are also those rare birds such as Marvin Harris or Claude Lévi-Strauss, who come along once in a while thinking that they can explain the welter of diversity in culture with an underlying paradigm, and they do incorporate some species of holism into their output. Such visionaries have their moment in the sun, and then the sun sets because the paradigms are not well enough defined to withstand the onslaught of cultural details that appear not to fit their frameworks. Still, such theorists throughout the

twentieth century were trying to answer questions that engage us periodically – especially, "What unites us all as humans?" or "Does 'human nature' exist?"

Grand theory of the past has usually fallen flat because it is too reductionist and too narrowly focused. Curiously, nineteenth-century theories of general cultural evolution did better than many, more recent, overarching paradigms at drawing together diverse topics, such as kinship, technology, and religion. But they failed when it comes to movement systems, such as dance and martial arts, as well as art and aesthetics, which simply cannot be made to fit a model of simple to complex, or abstract to realistic, or the like.

Anthropology is coming to terms with its explicit and implicit colonial and ethnocentric foundations, but the welter of objections to the biases of the past that fatally restricted a fully comprehensive view of human culture is more of a cacophony of voices than a clear vision for the future of the discipline. To soften the noise, we are advocating holistic methodologies – which can encompass all manner of fields, such as, genetics, consciousness, dynamic embodiment, memory, language acquisition, and so forth – in the pursuit of anthropological inquiry. Remember, we are not talking about interdisciplinary investigation, we are suggesting the cultivation of a new kind of anthropologist. There is, however, a chicken-and-egg problem: what comes first, holistic departments or holistic anthropologists? The "simple" answer is that the first step is the restructuring of the teaching of anthropology, and from there flows a synergy of teaching and research.

It is unrealistic to imagine that building a department made up of specialists from all across the four fields and offering selected doctoral students – chosen because they have an interest in holistic research – a wide array of courses to choose from in the hope that if they pick an assortment from all the subdisciplines, some sort of synthesis will spontaneously appear in their dissertations. That is the fundamental weakness of "studies" departments. Have American Studies departments ever come up with a coherent theory or paradigm of what it means to be "American," as was once their goal (Spiller 1973). Are they even trying at this point? The same questions could be asked of anthropology (a.k.a. Human Studies). But if four-field, holistic anthropology is a worthy goal, you have to start somewhere. The problem can be approached in at least two ways: at the doctoral level and in undergraduate introductory instruction.

Leaving aside for the moment the immense practical problems – financial, intellectual, and structural – in creating a new kind of anthropology department geared towards holism, we can begin by simply using our imaginations. Let us imagine that a university decides to build a program offering holistic anthropology at the graduate and undergraduate level. The first step would be to recruit appropriate faculty to teach and lead research, as well as to administer the program. You cannot staff such a program with seasoned professionals well-trained in all four fields, and working holistically on their individual research agendas, because they do not exist. You have to solve this chicken-and-egg problem in the same way that biological evolution works: in slow, incremental steps. You begin by hiring a range of anthropologists whose research topics collectively cover all the bases (or as many as

possible), and, in the process, you select those whose work spans some of the subdisciplines, and who are open to holistic ideas. They then train the first generation of doctoral students.

There would need to be a symbiosis between a faculty that is open to teaching holistic methods and a body of students that is receptive to learning them. Let's say a student enters the program with an interest in transnationalism and identity or in migrant workers' issues. The task initially is to spread as wide a disciplinary net as possible to show how all four fields have a bearing on the topic at hand. With the problems that migrant workers face, for example, anthropologists have pulled together resources from cultural and biological anthropology (e.g., De León 2015 and 2019) as well as history, archaeology, demographics, and anthropology (e.g., Bansal et al. 2018), to deepen their analysis. Biology, history, language, and culture are easy partners in complex research topics if the desire to embrace them all in the pursuit of analysis exists at the outset.

At this stage, we should also be clear that the old four-field model of anthropology, as well as our discussion of it in set-theoretic terms, is simplistic. If we are thinking in terms of "human studies" then we could just as easily have invoked a 7- 11- 13- or 17- set Venn diagram to include all the possible disciplines that might be incorporated in research, as opposed to simply settling for the basic 4-set model we initially proposed. Our purpose is to provoke discussion and not limit possibilities. The problem is that when you start drawing a Venn diagram with 7 or more sets, the whole point becomes murky unless you bear in mind that we are trying to focus on the intersection of all the sets rather than all the myriad combinatorial possibilities. Here is a Venn diagram that displays the numerous intersections of 7 sets which you can sort out any way you wish for a Human Studies holistic enterprise. One possible combination of topics for a project involving dance might be:

1. Human anatomy and physiology
2. Art
3. Written history
4. Archaeology and prehistory
5. Language and culture
6. Sociocultural variables
7. Philosophy

These 7 areas of "human studies" include the former four fields but teases them apart a little more. These are precisely the areas that Forrest has used in his analysis of dance and Forrest-Blincoe has worked with in the study of martial arts. You could quite easily pull apart the relevant intellectual domains even more, making larger and more bewildering Venn diagrams. But such an exercise is visually exhausting and is best done mentally. The point is that our desire for holism is not merely an intellectual exercise in seeing which ways the traditional four fields can be stitched together, but showing that you can break up the study of humans in a variety of ways (not simply in Boasian fashion). Nonetheless, no matter how you divide up the study of humans, there will always be an area that is the intersection

of all the myriad ways that they can be and have been studied. That intersection is the intellectual space where teaching and research in holistic anthropology resides.

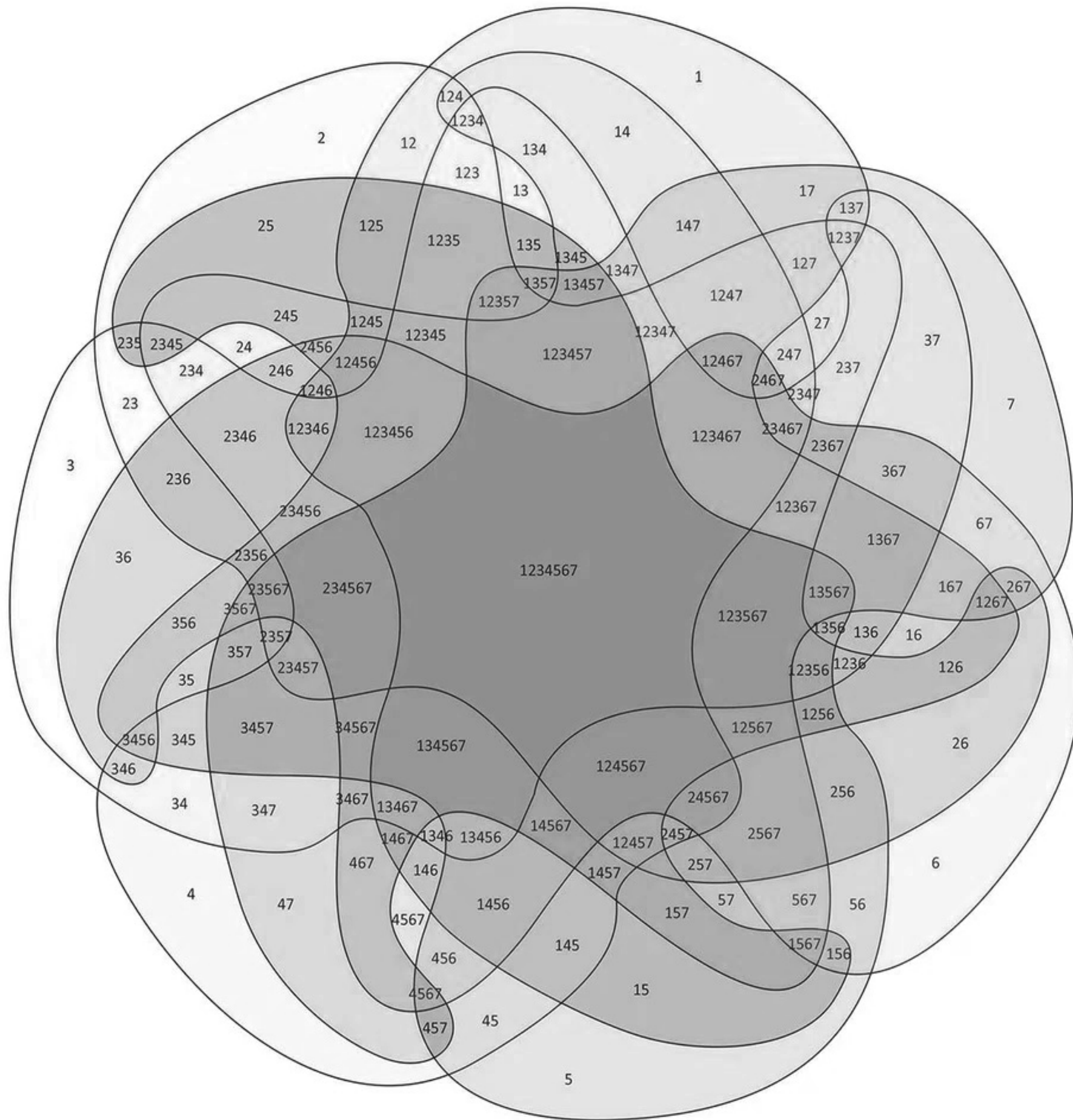

Figure 2. 7-set Venn diagram

Finding suitable teaching materials for holistic courses that bring together research from multiple spheres might be a shortfall at the outset but there are some promising starting points outside of the conventional realms of anthropology. Some branches of archaeology, for example, have taken a turn towards holism in recent decades. For example, although the exploration of the relationship between the human genome and culture has had a complex and checkered history, in part because the nature/nurture

debate has evolved in complex ways, there are now some promising (and controversial) steps forward in the analysis (see e.g., Creanza et al. 2017; Descola 2013; Richerson and Boyd 2005). There is also more than a handful of contemporary sociocultural anthropologists whose work sprawls across the conventional subfields (e.g., Ingold 2017 and 2018 and Parreñas 2018).

In addition, under the rubric of historical ecology, a number of scholars from diverse fields, including environmental studies, history, biology, and archaeology, have sought to transcend conventional disciplinary boundaries to widen the vision of traditional archaeology (see e.g., Ray and Fernández-Götz 2019). Carole Crumley (2014) writes:

> The term historical ecology draws attention to a definition of ecology that includes humans as a component of all ecosystems and to a definition of history that goes beyond the written record to encompass both the history of the Earth system and the social and physical past of our species. Historical ecology provides tools to construct an evidence-validated, open-ended narrative of the evolution and transformation of specific landscapes, based on records of human activity and changing environments. Historical ecology offers insights, models, and ideas for the sustainable future of contemporary landscapes based upon a comprehensive understanding of their past.

Thus, the past meets the present in terms of contemporary land usage planning and the ways in which management systems impact populations culturally.

In *The Dawn of Everything* David Graeber (Forrest's student as an undergraduate) and David Wengrow (2021) point out that ancient delta wetlands – especially in the Middle East – were (literal) fertile lands for recession planting of seeds in flood plains enriched annually by alluvium. The archaeology and biology of such practices have completely upended classic theories of the transition from foraging to domestication. Furthermore, Forrest has argued, based on twentieth century ethnographies of gathering and horticultural communities, that in regions where flood recession farming was practiced it was likely the women who were the primary instigators and practitioners because they were the local plant experts (Nelson and Forrest, forthcoming). Graeber and Wengrow, based on data from numerous fields, also argue that the conventional model of cultural evolution that has stood firm for a century or more, which reasons that human cultures develop from foraging through farming to urbanism and state formation, is not supported by the evidence. Foraging is perfectly capable of sustaining urbanism and proto-empires (Graeber and Wengrow 2021, 120).

At some point there also needs to be an introductory holistic textbook written entirely from a four-field/holistic perspective. General anthropology textbooks are mostly out of fashion these days because teaching all four fields in one semester has always been a tall order in itself, and it was quite common for specialists in one field to feel uncomfortable teaching the other three. Textbooks in general anthropology (e.g., Kottak 2019; Ember, Ember, and Peregrine 2015; and Miller, Mercader, and Panger 2008) are typically divided

up into four more or less discrete sections – commonly in the order, biological, archaeology, linguistics, culture – not necessarily each of equal length – and with only the sparsest sense that these divisions have much to say to one another.

It would be a radical new departure to build an introduction to anthropology textbook that was fully holistic from the outset. Such a text would take a sequence of well-established topics – e.g., social organization, trade, marriage, aesthetics, etc. – and treat each as a complex mix of features from the four fields from the outset. Thus, kinship, for example, could be examined as the intersection of biology (including genetics and DNA), archaeology/history (using a variety of databases to reconstruct patterns), and linguistics (naming systems, etymology, and cross-cultural cognates), as well as exploring the conventional cultural insights. In this way, the relevance of the subdisciplines to each topic would be patent – that is, $A \cap B \cap C \cap D$ made feasible in practice, topic by topic.[2]

This model for an introductory text could expand into the teaching of specialized topics, especially at the graduate level. The teaching strategy could involve team teaching, and, as important, could incorporate a series of guest lecturers in different fields – both within and outside anthropology. For example, there could be a seminar on social organization, taught by, at minimum, a cultural anthropologist teamed with an archaeologist, but with guest speakers from all manner of fields, such as a biologist concerned with social insects, a primatologist, a political scientist, a sociologist, and so on. Students would then be asked to develop research questions on social organization that drew on as many themes as possible presented in the seminar. As such, considerable weight would be placed on their shoulders to develop a workable synthesis, but one might expect that the team teachers would be working on a synthesis of their own. As such there would be a necessary collaboration between teaching and learning; the teachers would have to be both students and instructors. This role is important because it is unrealistic (as shown in other "Studies" curricula) to expect the students to come up with a synthesis on their own without some guidance.

Or consider a course called "Nature & Nurture" (or something similar), taught at either the undergraduate or graduate level, that considers the enduring question of how innate qualities and learning intertwine in behavior. The topic can spiral outwards along numerous paths – memory, consciousness, genetics, history, language, cognition, psychology, etc. The class can take a series of topics in turn – sharing, marriage, art, ritual, religion, government, etc. – and probe them all from multiple angles to see if a synthesis can be arrived at. This approach allows commonly used terms, such as "instinct" and "human nature," to be examined and problematized in challenging ways.

We envisage the possibility of teaching, both at the undergraduate or graduate level, being directed at cohorts of students who are encouraged to work as a team in discussion, even though their research topics would be their own. The cohort would need to be

[2] At time of writing, John Forrest and Katie Nelson are preparing just such a textbook for introductory students.

recruited carefully so that a wide mix of interests was represented. The cohort might have a permanent weekly seminar throughout their degree courses to discuss their progress, and it might be salutary to have them take all of their classes as a cohort. At the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Forrest taught an Introduction to Anthropology course to a cohort of engineering students who entered together and take all of their courses together for two years. The cohort has one classroom in the STEM building where they take all their classes and meet to study between classes. While this is one of the many pedagogic wrinkles to be ironed out in practice, cohort cohesion is conducive to mutual support and exchange of ideas.

Evolving holistic anthropology using these and many other teaching strategies would take time and would require a number of other support systems, including at least one peer-reviewed journal dedicated to holistic research and funding agencies sympathetic to the agenda. There would also need to be some acknowledgement within the discipline that holism was a worthy direction to take, such that entry positions opened up for assistant professors with a leaning towards holism. Otherwise, training in holism is professional suicide. In the 1970s (into the 1980s), when Forrest was looking for employment after completing the PhD, not a single job was advertised for an assistant professor in the anthropology of art and aesthetics (his doctoral specialty) – not one. Nowadays, although not thick underfoot, the discipline recognizes aesthetics, art, and visual anthropology as viable options, because of the ways in which the discipline has continued to evolve.

The change to include holistic studies must begin with the teaching end of the spectrum, and there will inevitably be some negative consequences as a result of the shift in emphasis in research from depth to breadth. No doubt the majority of anthropologists will continue in their own individual specialties using familiar research tools, and we see no intrinsic fault in this scenario. But we also recognize a general malaise within the discipline particularly when it comes to formulating theory within the study of cultures; and this state of affairs has been growing for several decades. The "post-" world – post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, post-everything – has some intellectual strengths, but it is more a philosophy of rejection of past endeavors than a positive move in a new direction, leaving us without a clear map to chart our course, and not even a clear sense of the territory for which we need a map in the first place. We hope our proposal is a new course. At the moment, it is no more than an academic proposal when it comes to creating a whole new department with a focus on holism, but we know from our own experience that holistic research can be done with identifiable advantages over traditional methods.

Tunnel vision can be fatal to academic creativity. One of the obvious features of students in PhD programs in anthropology is that many (perhaps the majority) took undergraduate degrees in subjects other than anthropology, and their experiences in that regard paid dividends as they pursued their careers. Clifford Geertz, for example, was an undergraduate philosophy major, and it was this training, via Gilbert Ryle, that led him to the notion of thick description. Claude Lévi-Strauss studied law and philosophy with

designs towards becoming a lawyer before he switched to anthropology; James Peacock's first degree was in psychology; Gregory Bateson, following in his father's footsteps, started his career in biology . . . and so on. Bringing multiple perspectives to anthropology creates a type of hybrid vigor that is beneficial to the field in general. Fostering holism is good for the discipline overall.

In the same way that many luminaries in anthropology entered the field from various disciplines, it is also a valuable selling point of the discipline that its undergraduates, especially if trained holistically, are well suited to go from their first degrees to an enormous range of professions. As Dell Hymes (1972, 6-7) urged 40 years ago (to deafening silence):

> The future of anthropology in the United States is . . . a question of whether its present institutional context, especially the graduate department, will prove to have been chrysalis or coffin. If anthropology remains confined there, it may wax as an instrument of domination, wane into irrelevance, or – more likely – combine both fates. It is unlikely to contribute much to the liberation of mankind.

Hymes continued (1972, 56-57):

> [W]ithin the academy, a redistribution of attention and prestige from graduate to undergraduate training of anthropologists is important. Given the opportunity, undergraduates could be trained in anthropological work as well as graduate students, perhaps better; much graduate time is spent on activities required, not for training, but for induction into the hegemony of a particular department and a prospective profession. . . . Undergraduates would be freer to acquire relevant training and do good work, having in mind long-range plans not under the control of their teachers. The greatest contribution of anthropology departments might be to send into the world many lawyers, historians, activists, workers for various institutions and agencies, well trained in anthropological work.

In the intervening years this pronouncement has proven to be surprisingly prescient and could be yet more effective were a percentage of anthropology undergraduates holistically trained. Nowadays, a great many anthropology majors go on to pursue careers in medicine, law, social work, and allied professions, and they take their expertise in cultural analysis with them. This turn of events, while admirable in itself, could be magnified were these students more fully conversant with the whole range of modes of analysis from the four fields. ER doctors who sometimes treat patients from abroad, or lawyers whose practices occasionally engage them in settling legal issues concerning undocumented workers, are going to be sensitive to cultural issues, as a matter of course, if they took anthropology classes as undergraduates, but they will have a more comprehensively rich background to use to deal with them if they have been instructed holistically in the multiple ways in which bodies and minds intersect with history, language, and culture.

Every year we face new and complex social problems. In the U.S. alone, vaccine hesitancy is slowing the fight against a fatal pandemic; gun-related deaths peaked at nearly

20,000 in 2020; racist rhetoric and actions, including violence (and accompanied by vehement denial of racism) are on the rise; and income and wealth inequality is trending ever higher. These and similar issues globally can be tackled in numerous ways – economically, politically, scientifically – and activist anthropology can, and does, play a key role both in terms of public education and direct action. It is our conviction that holistically trained anthropologists are better equipped to confront such issues than traditionally trained ones, because they have more arrows in their quiver. It is one thing to argue publicly that, for example, race and gender are social constructs which can be altered if the social desire for change exists, but such arguments may easily fall on deaf ears. It is a great deal harder to counter arguments against racism and sexism that are mounted by public advocates trained to speak out on multiple fronts – cultural, biological, historical and linguistic – all at once, especially when these multiple perspectives are presented by one voice.

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