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***Diagnosing America: Anthropology and Public Engagement*, edited by Shepard Forman. 1994. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. xii, 314 p.**

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The contributors to this volume skillfully identify and document issues of political participation, industrial work, downward social mobility, stress, and household functioning in the United States context. The data selected for discussion are drawn from historical and current sources including interviews, participant observation, surveys, the U.S. Census, and previously published work. Linking micro analyses to the larger macro political and economic environment enables the authors to develop powerful models of cultural behavior. Five detailed, largely empirical analyses are prefaced and followed by theoretical discussions concerning American cultural values and their relationship to societal disorders.

This volume is the result of a collaborative and interactive project funded by the Wenner Gren Foundation. Members of a panel on disorders in industrial society appointed by the American Anthropological Association met over a period of two years to exchange ideas, critique each other's work, and produce this value-oriented discussion. The authors not only describe how groups of people are affected by a variety of external forces, but aim to present "a theory as well as a practice of corrective action" for the difficult circumstances they face. Consequently, the writings also represent a call-to action for anthropologists to enter the public debate on topics where they have expertise.

Jim Peacock's chapter discusses the changing relationship between the historically grounded value of individualism and the increasingly pluralistic character of American society. Through a lengthy and careful review of ethnic, kinship, folkloric, and other studies on American soil, he reminds scholars and policy makers that the core cultural values are changing. His aim is to enrich our understanding of diversity, particularly in an examination of the relationships among multiple groups in society. Beyond such documentation, he argues for the prescription and creation of core values in order "to sustain diversity and [the] rights of individual groups."

Carol MacLennan reviews the scholarly work on political culture and democratic participation. Arguing that the questions of the 1990s are

focused on barriers to participation in formal political institutions, she proposes a dual-pronged approach to explore obstacles to citizen involvement and local responses to such exclusion. In particular, she advocates a research agenda that is inclusive of history, which describes powerful institutions and citizen counteractions to them.

Focusing on America's declining competitive position in the automotive industry, Frank Dubinskas proposes an explanation based on the social relations of work. He describes an industrial culture based on inequality, authoritarian control, and the subdivision of complex work into precisely defined individual tasks (i.e., Taylorism). Dubinskas argues that work and learning flexibility, along with cooperation and collective responsibility by all personnel, will characterize the successful firms of the future. In citing success cases from the United States and Scandinavian countries, he indicates that the values of democracy and egalitarian participation can be accessed in creating alternative organizational relationships.

Kathleen Newman's chapter addresses the social and cultural consequences of economic dislocation. Her discussion documents a variety of issues surrounding downward social mobility among the urban poor and within blue and white collar communities. Skepticism in the so-called "American Dream" is on the rise, while opportunities for employment, and for employment at the same level of income, decline. How individuals and households respond to this "deindustrialization" crisis is an area ripe for research.

The goal of Michael Blakey's piece is to formulate a biocultural theory of stress that integrates the physiological consequences for the individual with socioeconomic explanations. In one stress study, he found that income and "helplessness" were negatively correlated. He suggests that psychophysiological stress is linked with various forms of cultural adaptations, including the use of drugs and alcohol, the rise in revitalization movements, and the growing Afrocentric movement in the United States, to name a few. Such patterned and institutionalized behaviors, he claims, provide alternate "frames of reference" for those affected.

Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez documents key differences in values, social organization, and work between Mexican-American and "mainstream" American communities. He discusses the economic and cultural ramifications of "clustered households" multigenerational, extended family groupings that function to limit economic risk and create supportive and trusting environments for members. Ethnic identity and cooperation are valued, as is a proactive stance in the search for work. In his chapter he recommends a reexamination of broader policies that devalue cultural pluralism and assume an ethnic underclass.

The final chapter, by Roy Rappaport, offers a theoretical discussion of disorders in relation to the concepts of adaptation and maladaptation. He argues for the need to recognize maladaptations, or structural disorders, provide a critique of current policies and programs, and recommend alternative plans. Thus, he emphasizes "correctives" based on thorough and rigorous exploration of the particular social issue under discussion.

In addition to the substantive concerns facing a pluralistic and sometimes not-so-democratic United States today, the book emphasizes the importance and relevance of "engagement" in these issues with the broader American public. Although many disciplines have long been active in raising the public's consciousness and debating key social issues, anthropology has not been as visible at least since the days of Margaret Mead. Therefore, many of the individual chapters, as well as the introduction and ending section of the volume, emphasize the linkages between research and public policy. Taken as a whole, the volume illustrates a discipline in transition. Nevertheless, some of the points and recommendations made by these anthropologists might be helpful to other researchers.

The volume focuses on the topic of disorders pathologies and the barriers to full participation in American society. The authors' in-depth knowledge of the issues positions them to enter the public debate. Nevertheless, this a priori emphasis on pathology has the potential to bias data gathering and analysis. If one sets out to study a particular problem, one is likely to find it. By contrast, if one sets out to study a complex social phenomenon, including its extralocal linkages, there is a greater likelihood for an accurate and inclusive portrayal. Vélez-Ibáñez's criticism of the concept of underclass illustrates one aspect of this point. A related issue concerns the holism or overall balance of the research. MacLennan seems to overemphasize the obstacles to political participation. Yet, are there facilitators to political participation? Under what conditions is political behavior expressed? Are political energies ever channeled into nonpolitical activities that benefit the community? Similarly, Newman discusses the downside of deindustrialization. Yet, what about the relationship between the "disadvantaged" and the advantaged, the employee receiving a pink slip and the one who continues to work for the firm, and the residents of the ghetto and the worlds around them? Providing more context for the particular phenomenon under investigation should provide a more complete and holistic view of the phenomenon as it reverberates through society at large.

The anthropologists recommend broadening one's conceptual and methodological tool kit to be able to understand and converse with those from other disciplinary backgrounds. Knowledge of other disciplines was reflected in most of the chapters, although the authors neither proposed any cross-disciplinary collaboration on either research or implementation projects, nor suggested working alongside nonnative U.S. researchers on American social issues.

The anthropologists call for increased collaboration between the subjects of the research project and the investigators. This collaboration should be present during the data collection, in the eventual framing of the issues, and in the development of solutions. They argue that it is critical to work to solve problems in conjunction with community members. Translating the community's partnership into action is not explored in the volume. When the subjects represent opposing interests and hold multiple views of the same

issue and its potential solutions, application becomes very difficult and complicated. Learning to negotiate with all parties to implement a solution is critical for any practitioner to acquire.

The anthropologists also indicate the importance of moving beyond the particular findings to generalize their results and their applicability to society at large. With the exception of some broadly framed recommendations by Dubinskas, Velez-Ibanez, and Rappaport, the articles lack organizational or policy-level specificity required for action.

Developing actionable steps that organizational leaders, community leaders, and public officials can take is a skill the prerequisite of which is practical experience with the issues and context. The development of such a skill can be enhanced by observing and working with practitioners already "engaged" in application. Related skills involve learning to communicate the appropriate amount of information verbally and in writing to special audiences (e.g., radio listeners, magazine readers, television viewers) so that understanding is attained, debate enriched, and impact felt. This area is clearly one where the academic community can learn from those whose professions place them on the front-lines of organizational change, community initiatives, and public policy.