

ANTHROPOLOGY *IN PRACTICE*

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President's Report

I join all the members of the Executive Committee of S.A.A.M. to wish you all a Happy and productive New Year! You all might feel very old, becoming centenarians and even millenarians, but this millennium is young. Even if we cannot make the world perfect in this millennium, there is much to be done to make it better than during the last: this is where applied anthropologists come in!

After the failure of the last meeting of the World Trade Organization in December, to which many concerned groups and concerned citizens contributed by expressing forcefully their opposition, many of us reflect on the implications of the globalization process which is overwhelming our economies, our institutions and our communities. You will not be surprised to note, therefore, when reading the Editor's corner and the book review in this issue of the Newsletter, that both of them deal with different aspects of globalization. By now, all of

you know that S.A.A.M is organizing a conference on Globalization and Community, that will take place on Saturday March 11, 2000. Like our successful conference on the Present Status of the Northern Flood Agreement last year, this one will also take place at the University of Winnipeg and last all day, from 9 am. to 5 pm. Anthropologists, economists, geographers and several interested parties will contribute presentations: we can promise you a sophisticated and fascinating debate.

Before that, we shall have the pleasure, on January 15, of listening to the presentation by Roy Dudgeon on indigenous knowledge. This is an occasion not to be missed to discuss issues that we have not yet covered. You can also plan ahead to attend our next meeting on February 26, when we shall have another fascinating report from Dr. Raj Dhruvarajan on his research and help programs for the children who are waste pickers in Bangalore. Our last meeting of this season will be on April 1. All meetings will take place at the Pembina Trail

Library conference room, except for the conference of March 11, at the University of Winnipeg.

Several of you who had put their name down to buy the book on last year's conference have not bought it yet! They will be available at our next meeting.

I look forward to the new year and all the activities of S.A.A.M, which will be made exciting and useful by your active participation.

Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz
President, S.A.A.M.

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S.A.A.M Presentation Summary (November 27, 1999)

*Dr. Emöke Szathmáry:
Lessons from a Subarctic People about the
Etiology of Type-2 Diabetes*

Dr. Emöke Szathmáry, President of the University of Manitoba, delivered a talk to the members of S.A.A.M. on the roles played by genes and environment in the onset of non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM, also known as type-2 diabetes). This type of diabetes occurs when there is too much insulin and glucose in the blood, and is associated with excessive levels of centrally deposited body fat. Among aboriginal peoples in the north, NIDDM seems to be caused by a combination of factors—an underlying set of genes, the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle, and a diet that includes the addition to traditional “country foods”, processed foods that are purchased in stores.

Dr. Szathmáry discussed research which she conducted between 1979–1986 among four Dogrib First Nations communities in the Northwest Territories. Until recently, most Dogrib people practised a “contact-traditional” subsistence economy based largely on caribou hunting, fishing and trapping. Traditional Dogrib practices such as periodic feasts and menstrual seclusion continue to be practised and the Dogrib language is still spoken by most community members. After providing some historical and ethnographic background about the people in the communities chosen to determine whether genes and/or environment factors were causally involved in diabetes onset, Dr. Szathmáry focussed on the findings from her research.

First, Dr. Szathmáry outlined the results of an oral glucose tolerance test which was administered to 158 adult Dogrib study participants in the first phase of her investigations, which was replicated six years later with 144 people, some of whom had participated

initially. Overall, she found that as an aggregate, individuals she tested had lower fasting blood glucose levels than are typical in most urban populations in the United States. However, contrary to claims that there were no diabetics among the Dogrib, Dr. Szathmáry identified 15 people in her first sample who were hyperglycemic: their levels of glucose two hours after the onset of their test, were diabetic. In the end, her field studies identified four cases of diabetes. Many of the hyperglycemic individuals were consanguineally related, suggesting that a genetic basis may be present. This was confirmed later, and analyses suggested that a complex model best explains the presence of diabetes among the Dogrib. The model includes many genes with additive, small effects, at least one that has a major effect, and there is an intragenerational environmental component. Dr. Szathmáry hypothesized that because glucose levels were significantly correlated among adult siblings—but not between elderly parents and their adult children—the environmental component may be the new practise of sedentism. Some 78% of her sample moved into settlements after adolescence, thus settlement-living was shared by sibling early in their lives in comparison to the age at which parents began settlement life.

The deduction that NIDDM among Dogribs is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors challenges theories that suggest this type of diabetes is caused by a single gene. In response to the question that asked why natural selection had not weeded our deleterious genes responsible to type-2 diabetes, Dr. Szathmáry said that the common view is that a pattern of feasting and fasting was adaptive, rather than maladaptive. Further, the “gene” became deleterious only when food became plentiful—that is, recently. However, she thinks this explanation may not be the best one regarding genes that in the old days were

adaptive, and now may predispose the bearers to diabetes-onset in a specific environment. Dr. Szathmáry thinks that adaption to a low carbohydrate milieu, which characterized the arctic and subarctic, is more likely than the favoured “feasting-fasting, quick insulin trigger” hypothesis, because the brain is absolutely dependent on glucose for functioning. Supporting this possibility is the fact that Dogribs and other Dene (e.g., Navajos) have a different insulin response to orally ingested glucose than do Euro-Americans (e.g., Amish). The fact that carbohydrate is not found in caribou, fish and wildfowl (the main items in the traditional Dogrib diet) may also explain why older Dogribs who eat mainly country food, and had led physically active lives when young, are less affected by hyperglycemia.

Overall, Dene people have a lower propensity of NIDDM than do other aboriginal groups. High risk populations include Algonquian, Siouan, and Iroquoian peoples. Inuit are the least likely to develop diabetes, but since type-2 diabetes is associated with acculturation, it is not surprising that Inuit in the western arctic have more cases than do Inuit in the central and eastern arctic.

Dr. Szathmáry observed that life-long regular exercise in combination with a normal Dogrib diet (more protein and less carbohydrate than Euro-Canadians ingest) is the best way to prevent the onset of NIDDM. She noted that results of studies like hers are of value in formulating social and health care policy for Aboriginal peoples. Dr. Szathmáry co-chaired, with Grand Chief Francis Flett, the Manitoba Diabetes Strategy Steering Committee, which was comprised of physicians, research scientists, and nurses, some of whom were First Nations people. The Committee was charged with developing solutions to the burgeoning problem of diabetes among Aboriginal people. Dr. Szathmáry now chairs the Manitoba Diabetes Strategy Implementation Committee.

Editor's Corner

The turning of the century has brought many people to reflect not only upon the major technological innovations of the twentieth century but also the transformations in social and cultural patterns and power distribution. For some, the new millennium brings hope of a construction of grand, interconnected communities—a global village. For those concerned with local identity and integrity and global fairness and equality, this vision provokes an ambivalent, if not negative response. Among the latter are many anthropologists, including those involved with S.A.A.M., who are becoming increasingly concerned by the neoliberal policies that propel globalization and the creation of the so-called ‘global village’. The determination to carry out the 1999 ‘millennium round’ meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle demonstrates the relentless manner in which its proponents continue to pursue their vision of THEIR utopia. Nonetheless, the criticism by third world country envoys which led to the meetings’ disintegration and the disruptive effect of the demonstrations highlight the contentious nature of the WTO’s neoliberal practices.

Rachel's Environment & Health Weekly has a series of issues explaining the objectives of the WTO and its role in asserting corporations’ rights. It has been demonstrated that the objectives of the WTO—and the large corporations who can afford to appeal to the WTO—have been achieved at the expense of many democratic principles a government might carry out; when the WTO pursues a ruling, its muscle serves to undermine government policies that are aimed at protecting the environment, local industry, labour, and health. According to *Rachel's Weekly* (#679), the supporters of the WTO oppose any government involvement and aspire for a *laissez-faire* economy in which

corporations are free to make anybody and anything their business without any 'legitimate' obstructions (i.e. government, protest groups, etc.). To enforce an unencumbered global economy (aka the global free trade), the WTO has established several rules that embody little regard for humanity and much for corporate interests. According to *Rachel's Weekly*, the WTO disallows government policies that: favour local industry over foreign-owned corporations; prevent foreign nationals from buying or controlling local companies; prohibit domestic industry subsidies; or favour any particular trading partners. Furthermore, the WTO's new tariff schedules incorporate rising rates as value is added to a product. This means that it is more economical to import raw materials from resource rich (usually the so-called third world) countries into manufacturing countries who have depleted many of their own natural resources (the so-called developed countries). This policy "can be viewed as way of 'recolonizing' nations that had won political freedom in past decades" (#679). In effect, the WTO functions to immobilize any attempts by ordinary citizens to pressure their own governments by challenging—and in the appeal process, frequently prevailing over—the power of the nation-state. The utopian vision of the WTO and the implementation of its agenda are non-democratic and indifferent to the integrity of the environment and human experiences.

In Seattle, ordinary citizens from all over the world strove to have the WTO listen to their diverse concerns about the impact of a 'global free market'; their message was loud and clear that such a reality is detrimental to the lives of people, their communities and ecosystems. While global trade is not a new phenomenon, the intensification of asymmetrical power relations both globally and locally is a consequence of a current implementation of capitalist tenets (rather than a "natural" consequence of global trade). As such, the adverse reaction of many organized groups, from labour to environmental, signifies that applied anthropologists concerned with

current issues take a strong interest in the process of globalization. Interpreting, documenting, and representing the lives of a group of people through ethnography, social impact assessments, or advocacy will provide insights into the local-global interface.

Regardless of the approach taken, be it research or political action, anthropologists need to be able to communicate their findings to research subjects, policy makers and 'marketeers' in a responsible and relevant manner; this requires understanding of not only the culture the groups represented but also that of the rule makers. While there are many valid concerns surrounding the issue of representation, it is undeniable that communities and nations are differentially affected by globalization. As such, it is critical to understand the particular ways in which peoples resist the free market system and transform their lives (or how their lives are transformed) when confronted with neoliberal politics and practices. If knowledge and action—components of applied anthropology—are capable to reconstruct reality, then it is possible that anthropologists can contribute to realizing a truly democratic society by communicating with both the proponents of a global free market and those who also seek to question and challenge it.

Monica Wiest

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Rachel's Environment & Health Weekly,
Issue #'s 673, 674, 677, and 679.
<http://www.rachel.org>

Find out more about S.A.A.M. at our Web site:

<http://www.umantioba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/saam>

Book Review

In *Something's Wrong Somewhere: Globalization, Community, and the Moral Economy of the Farm Crisis* (Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, 1995, 109 pp.) Christopher Lind examines the impact of globalization on Saskatchewan farmers. He succinctly, informatively, and at times eloquently relates macroeconomic phenomena at the global level with the farm crisis in Saskatchewan. Lind argues that the farm crisis is not the result of poor management by individual farmers but that the primary cause is the integration of national capital markets.

According to Lind, the major reason for the income crisis faced by Saskatchewan grain farmers is the trade war between Europe and the United States. With 35-40 percent of the world wheat market, the United States is the world's largest wheat exporter. The European Community, with over 20 percent, is second largest. With almost 20 percent, Canada is third. When the United States' market share decreases the European Community's share increases. Conversely, when the United States' market share increases, the European Community's share decreases. The bid for market share occurs through price competition in which wheat is sold below the cost paid to the domestic producer.

In Europe, countries operate under the Common Agricultural Program, which is designed to provide food security for European countries and a secure economic base for rural areas. The overproduction of foodstuffs, including wheat, has been the result. To clear this oversupply, the European Community has been selling their wheat on the international market for whatever price they can get. This has resulted in a low world price for wheat and an increase in the European Community's market share. In 1985, when the United States's market share was declining, their government introduced the Export Enhancement Program. The net effects of this program were a

further depression of the world price of wheat and a stoppage of the slide of the United States' market share.

The fact that Canada exports 75 percent of the wheat it produces makes Canada much more vulnerable to international market forces than other participants in the market. As well, the Canadian treasury cannot afford to subsidize export prices to compete with the United States and the European Community. These two large exporters are prepared to subsidize the export price to whatever level it takes to gain market share. The result for Saskatchewan farmers, as well as farmers in other areas of Canada, is a very low price for what some farmers consider the best wheat in the world.

The development of the current crisis stems back to the 1970's, which was a time of rising income for farmers. The price of farm land rose as farmers competed to expand their operations, and profit from efficiencies promised by the federal government and agricultural experts. These were the necessary conditions for the accumulation of debt and precipitated what Lind refers to as an expense crisis. It was also believed that fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides would increase production (what Lind refers to as agriculture on steroids) and, hence, compensate for the increased costs. However, the cost of these chemicals and borrowed money resulted in almost 30 percent of net farm expenses. The expense crisis, combined with the income crisis, led to an increase in the number of farm bankruptcies. The human costs were farm suicides, drug abuse, alcoholism, family breakdown, and domestic violence.

Lind attempts to reclaim the moral dimension of the farm crisis by interviewing fifteen Saskatchewan farmers involved in farm protest in 1991/92. From these interviews four categories

or themes emerged: (1) the significance of agriculture for national sovereignty; (2) the need for cooperation and community (farmers were genuinely concerned about the eroding base of their communities; they recognized they have failed to work together in the past, and they called on each other to show the level of cooperation that would be required to survive); (3) the crisis in the family who farms; and (4) an increasing sense of powerlessness (farmers interpret the crisis as arising primarily out of the international trade war and this, combined with their knowledge about how important farming is to the world, makes their powerlessness more difficult to bear).

The effects of globalization are numerous. The deregulation and integration of international capital markets has led to a significant erosion of power of any single government to independent control of monetary policy, and an exaggeration of differences between these governments. Globalization also generates political conflict among groups with contending economic interests. As well, it has endangered the interests of groups (such as the grain farmers of Saskatchewan) whose well-being is threatened by international competition for capital or markets. Significant financial instability, the erosion of national power and sovereignty, defensive movements toward regional trading arrangements, and a need to reassert sovereignty at a supranational level characterize this new world order.

According to Lind, globalization is a human creation and a social rather than a natural fact. As it lies within the realm of human choice we can support, resist, approve, or condemn it. This implies that globalization is a moral concern. Also, the protests the Saskatchewan farmers engage in are occasions when the moral norms and practices of the community are revealed. These norms are always operative but may not be articulated in the absence of any need to do so. The dangers inherent in the recent economic transformation call these values into the

public realm. As well, farmers are attempting to reintegrate the economic aspect of food production within the cultural process known as agriculture and rural life.

Lind places the expense crisis in the context of environmental degradation, powerlessness, and community. The crisis of the prairie environment involves soil erosion by wind and water, loss of soil fertility, soil acidification and salination, loss of genetic diversity, and the destruction of wildlife. The increased use of chemicals masks the alarming drop in soil fertility. As far as powerlessness is concerned, the farm "community" is no longer in charge of its own destiny. The farmers are being farmed. Most farmers realize the trade war between European countries and the United States has caused many of these problems. However, they feel they are blamed for these problems, which they want to solve but cannot. According to Richard H. Robbins in *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*, an understanding of global events requires recognition that no culture or society is independent of the world system, and that each society is either in the core or periphery of that system. Lind's research reveals that farmers do have this understanding and are angry that, even though they perform the important function of supplying the world with food, they are considered part of the periphery.

As far as community is concerned, according to Aldo Leopold, land must be included. This implies that humans must change their role from conqueror of the community to citizen of the community. A community of the land involves replacing mechanical and organic metaphors of community with a relational metaphor. This approach does justice to the human members of a community while allowing for inclusion of both the material and organic approach. Friendship

becomes a moral norm, which presupposes freedom and describes a mutual relationship. What is required is a new moral economy based on the norm of friendship.

In chapter four, Lind analyses the mechanism by which globalization erodes community. He proposes a new mechanism by which the process can be reversed. Globalization erodes community by changing the material reality that communities rely on as a framework for their common action. The power shift away from the nation state and towards global capital creates benefits for transnational corporations and costs for national governments. This process, according to Gary Teeple's insightful and comprehensive analysis in *Globalization and the Decline of Social Reform*, is characterized by a contradiction. Prior to the globalized economy, the governments of nation-states supported and facilitated the development of capital. Now, the capital market, in large part due to the assistance of nation-states, has become a powerful global force. Rather than reciprocate by giving back support to the nation-states of the world, a capitalist response has been rhetoric such as social welfare and helping governments bring about economic efficiency and "we need freedom from government regulation to be efficient". The result is that governments restructure by eliminating or reducing the agencies and social programs communities rely upon. According to Lind, the response to restructuring has been a "politics of resistance" with the aim of slowing down or stopping the erosion of communities. Lind proposes intentionally building community as a response to globalization. The process of erosion can be reversed. To form a community, people must be willing to cooperate for a common purpose. In the course of working out the purpose, a community may be formed.

Ordinary people may reclaim their freedom by saying no to the ethics of globalization—no to competitiveness, no to the domination of their

neighbour, and no to being indifferent to the strangers in their midst. Ordinary people must say yes to a history of cooperation for the common good, yes to the challenges of solidarity with people who are suffering injustice, and yes to the call for compassion. To intentionally build community, democratic coalitions must be formed across previous divisions. Coalitions are required as we need new allies in this struggle and because we cannot be in solidarity without acting in solidarity. They must be democratic as only democratic coalitions can foster the liberty and equality necessary for community.

The purpose of these democratic coalitions would be to redesign or rebuild institutions. Our existing institutions were built on the basis of certain assumptions, like the power of central banks to regulate exchange rates. Some institutions will need to be refashioned on the basis of revised assumptions. After all, central banks no longer regulate exchange rates. Some of these institutions do not yet exist and will need to be invented. Others will need to be made responsive to the wishes of citizens. These new and changed institutions will provide the material reality we require for the communities we intend to build. A new political and social framework is required within which we can re-embed the global market.

Allan Suchan

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1999 *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
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Hot off the Press
(and ready to be reviewed!)

Edelman, Marc

1999 *Peasants Against Globalization: Rural Social Movements in Costa Rica*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Ervin, Alexander M.

2000 *Applied Anthropology: Tools and Perspectives for Contemporary Practice*, MA., Allyn & Bacon.

Smith, Gavin

1999 *Confronting the Present: Towards a Politically Engaged Anthropology*, New York: New York University Press.

If you are interested in reviewing any of these books for the S.A.A.M. newsletter, contact Monica at umwiestm@cc.umanitoba.ca

Membership Profile

S.A.A.M. is a rich base of innovative and constructive thinkers. Many members are forging new fields and/or blurring the boundaries of disciplines. Among those is Janalee Morris, who is a second year student in the Anthropology M.A. program at the University of Manitoba. She is currently completing her thesis in Disability Research through her employment at the Canadian Centre of Disabilities. In Winnipeg, she became involved with the "Disability Consumer Movement" through a practicum experience at the Independent Resource Centre, which was a requirement for an Applied Anthropology course. The disability consumer movement has a long history in Winnipeg, and has included the demands of people with disabilities to full social participation in Canadian society. One component of this movement includes Disabilities Studies.

Disability Studies, which is relatively new to the field of anthropology, is a discipline which examines

disability from a social perspective. That is, rather than viewing disability as an individual physical or mental impairment, the social model focuses on the impact of environmental economic, political, and cultural bearers on the ability of people with disabilities to participate as active members in society.

For the past 8 months, Janalee has been working as a Research Assistant at the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS). CCDS is a consumer-directed, university-affiliated centre dedicated to research, education and information dissemination on disability issues. CCDS conducts disability research on a variety of social, economic and political issues. As a Research Assistant at CCDS, she has been involved in research on employment, technology, health issues, emergency services, service and information needs, and history and the historical contribution of people with disabilities. CCDS is committed to the use of Participatory Action Research Methodology and is currently exploring innovative ways to build partnerships between consumers and researchers interested in disability studies.

While at CCDS she has also been responsible for organizing the CCDS Seminar Series, a monthly forum for the exchange of research results between community and academic researchers. She has organized a series of community-researcher consultations in order to prioritize the research interests of the community. She has also been asked to give presentations to several community and corporate groups regarding the research conducted through CCDS.

If you would like to contact Janalee for more information about the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies, please call her at 287-8411, or e-mail her at karenb@escape.ca.
