

# Southern Anthropologist



John Shelton Reed talks with Pat Beaver and others about the Three Souths (see page 14)

Volume 25, No. 1, Spring/Summer 1998

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David M Johnson, Editor in Chief  
Department of Sociology & Social Work  
North Carolina A & T State University  
Greensboro, N C 27411

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Spring/Summer 1998]

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Volume 25 Number 1

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David M Johnson

## Editor's Corner

Welcome to the Spring/Summer issue of the *Southern Anthropologist*. In addition to some new columns, some of the issue is devoted to material from the 1998 annual meetings, with continuing controversy from earlier issues thrown in for added excitement, and a special article written for this issue about community research.

### New columns

At the Society's Board of Directors meeting held in Wilmington, it was suggested that some new columns be added to the *Anthropologist*, one on Museum Anthropology and the other on Practicing Anthropology. I have been fortunate to find qualified people who are willing to be the columnists, and this issue starts a column on Museum Anthropology, by Mary Jane Berman, with the assistance of Beverlye Hancock, both of the Museum of Anthropology at Wake Forest University; their call for submissions is included here. In addition, Leigh Mills Hayden has agreed to author a column on Practicing Anthropology, which should debut in the Fall 1998



issue. Leigh asks those who have projects and information they would like to share with our readership to email her at: [<elmhayden@aol.com>](mailto:<elmhayden@aol.com>) so she can have it available for the fall column.

### Feature articles

The lead article in this issue is a continuation of the series dealing with the issue of "Exploitation in Academe," only this time I am privileged to reprint an article, "The New Captains of Information," from *Anthropology Today*. This article, by Stephen Gudeman, discusses the quantitative perspective that is increasingly being used by administrators and which has profound and unsettling implications for practicing academics. I am excited to have received permission to reprint it here, since I think it fits in with the previous articles in our series.

Another feature article is by John Shelton Reed, who gave a Keynote address about "The Three Souths" to the rapt multitudes at the 1998 meetings, and who has kindly provided me with a version of his paper that relies less on his many fine overhead transparency maps than did his oral presentation.

Over the past several years, a number of symposia and papers have been given at the SAS meetings by students and faculty at the University of Memphis, who have

been making use of the 'asset-based' approach to studying/building community that is discussed in *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, by John Kretzmann and John McKnight. John Parker, a graduate of the Memphis graduate program, has graciously consented to write a synthesis of the approach and illustrate it with some case studies from the series. At a time when there is increasing interest in practicing anthropology, I think that this article shows some usable ways that anthropology can be applied to studying and revitalizing communities, a topic that is currently being discussed from a number of vantage and political points.

There were so many outstanding undergraduate student papers entered into the Student Paper Competition this year that the judges awarded several prizes. I bring you a tasty confection from Jessica Swain as the first installment in the printing of these papers, in her "Devil's Food: Dessert in American Culture." Again, unfortunately, printing costs and processes do not allow for reproduction of her visuals, so she has tried to compensate with words.

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If you wish to submit materials to the Anthropologist, my preferences are (in rank order) and if possible in more than one form:

- (1) text of MS Word file on a Macintosh floppy, along with hard copy
- (2) text or word processor file on 3-1/2 " IBM (MS-DOS) disk with hard copy
- (3) e-mail to address above
- (4) fax and/or hard copy

Material that is sent already in electronic format is less likely to have my errors in it!

My deadline for the Fall 1998 issue of the Southern Anthropologist is tentatively October 15.

## President's Column

Daryl White

Spelman College

First, let me reiterate, "Thanks again to Past President Susan Keefe!" I'm not sure she knew what she was getting into at our Memphis meetings when she received the gavel. We were at a moment when some serious changes were needed, our participation in annual meetings was waning, our financial resources were diminishing, planning was haphazard, the morale of many followed suit. Susan acted. She set up a Planning Committee, chaired by Tim Wallace, which over the year explored a wide range of possible changes. The committee's report at the Wilmington meeting was full of good ideas, many of which are being implemented and all of which were worth considering. "Thanks, Susan," and "Thanks, Tim."

The Wilmington meetings were a great success. We had good attendance. Students made up half of our registrants. And financially we are likely to have come out on top. For those of us who hadn't been to Wilmington, North Carolina before, the city was a very pleasant surprise. Unmarred by an interstate and apparently unravished by urban renewal, Wilmington as an intact downtown. It was a pleasure to visit. Thanks to all involved—especially Jim Sabella's work on Local Arrangements. Of course,

everyone else who gave us their time organizing aspects of the meetings—from the registration desk, book exhibits, key symposia, student paper competitions, awards, the keynote address, and everything else—we are in your debt.

Decatur, Georgia in 1999. Our 1999 annual meetings will be held February 26-28 in Decatur, Georgia. Many expressed interest in meeting early to avoid conflicts with other meetings, especially the applied ones. We'll see how it works. Also notice that our dates cover Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We will schedule our sessions for all three days. Hopefully, this will make travel convenient for many. The hotel is the Atlanta-Decatur Holiday Inn Select Hotel and Conference Plaza and is only a few blocks from the Decatur MARTA station. The home of Agnes Scott College, Decatur is six miles east of downtown Atlanta and is virtually located at [www.decaturn-ga.com](http://www.decaturn-ga.com). It is a comfortable, walkable small town surrounding an old county courthouse and surrounded by metropolitan Atlanta. According to the founding myth hereabouts, in the 1830s Decatur residents did not want their quiet ten year old town to become the last stop on the new Western and Atlantic Railroad line, so the line continued several more

miles to the west. The settlement at the end of the line was called Terminus which later became Marthasville and ended up becoming Atlanta.

The Key Symposium, "Displaced in the New South," will explore recent immigration to the South and is being organized by Arthur Murphy at Georgia State University and Martha Reese at Agnes Scott College. Since the meetings are earlier than usual, and following the recommendations of the Planning Committee, please note our deadlines:

- September 15: Call for papers to be mailed out
- December 15: Deadline for receipt of Abstracts
- January 15: Preliminary Program posted at web site and mailed to the electronically impaired

Finally let me say I am honored to serve as President of the SAS. I like its size, its participatory nature, its student/faculty mix, the helpful, unrushed conversations that accompany presentations. I don't want us to ever lose this. The recent talk about dwindling participation and diminished

finances raises issues we do need to address. Here are a few ways we can all help:

- Encourage colleagues, faculty and students alike, to join and to come to our meetings.

- Ask your library to join; they will get our newsletter and annual proceedings.

- Invite practicing anthropologists to join, to organize sessions, panels and discussions at our meetings, and to contribute to the newsletter, to help post meetings, etc.

- Send items to the newsletter

- Student Paper Competition: Students, encourage each other to submit papers; faculty, encourage your students and mentor them. It is ironic that our student participation in meetings remains high, but submissions to the paper competition are very low. I imagine deadlines are part of the problem. This year will be difficult since our meetings are earlier than usual. So start planning possible entries NOW.

- Annual meetings. Consider hosting the meetings. Think way down the road. Where will we be in 2003? 2002? 2001? 2000?

- Key Symposia. Ditto

- Endowment. Help it grow.

## Museum Anthropology

**Mary Jane Berman**

Museum of Anthropology, Wake  
Forest University

### Beginning a new column on Museum Anthropology

Museums are the primary means by which anthropological knowledge is brought to the public. They are forums for public learning. Anthropology museums plan an important role in the public dialogue over issues that confront us locally, nationally, and globally. In recognition of this, the Southern Anthropologist is creating a column that will address issues related to the public presentation of anthropology and anthropology-related topics through museums.

Wake Forest University's Museum of Anthropology has agreed to serve as a clearinghouse for information about museum anthropology in the South. They welcome knowing your concerns and will discuss them in the column. The Museum also is soliciting announcements from various museums about upcoming exhibits, programs, workshops, and classes that pertain to anthropology and anthropology-

related topics which might be useful to you and your students. Their information will appear in the Southern Anthropologist. Additionally, if you are interested in placing your students in internships in museums, the Museum can put you in touch with the appropriate museum offices. This column also will publish internship announcements. Please contact the Museum of Anthropology at the following address:

Southern Anthropological Society  
Museum Anthropology Network  
C/o Museum of Anthropology  
P.O. Box 7267  
Wake Forest University  
Winston-Salem, NC 27109

Tel.: 336-758-5282

Fax: 336-758-5116

e-mail: moa@wfu.edu

### Ethnohistory Notes:

**American Society for Ethnohistory 1998 Annual Meeting** will be at the Radisson Metrodome / University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 12 - 15 November 1998.

Papers, Organized Sessions, Special Events, and Speakers that treat any world area are encouraged. Abstracts and fees were due by 12 June 1998. The organizers are: Jean O'Brien-Kehoe, Department of History and Brenda Child, Program in American Studies, University of Minnesota

The 1997 Awards Committees of the American Society for Ethnohistory are pleased to announce the recipients of the Society's Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin and Robert F. Heizer Awards

For the best book-length work in ethnohistory, the Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin Prize was awarded to Kathleen J. Bragdon (College of William and Mary), for her book, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650*, published by the University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, in 1996.

For the best article in the field of ethnohistory, the Robert F. Heizer Prize was awarded to Tamara Giles-Vernick (University of Virginia) for her article, "Na lege ti guiriri (On the Road of History): Mapping Out the Past and Present in M'Bres Region, Central African Republic" published in *Ethnohistory* 43(2):245-275 (1996).

For additional information, please contact Frederic W. Gleach, Secretary/Treasurer, American Society for Ethnohistory, Department of Anthropology, McGraw Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. Voice: (607)277-0109, EMail: FWG1@CORNELL.EDU

### Exploitation in Academic:

## The new Captains of Information\*

by Stephen Gudeman

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

Recently, while reading a new book on economic anthropology by Susana Narotzky, I was struck by the idea of social reproduction and its relevance for the university scene.<sup>1</sup> Narotzky argues that the unifying concept of economic anthropology is social reproduction, because it bridges the cultural and material, the macro and micro, economy and society. Not a separate domain defined by the logic of choice, economy refers to the social relations involved in the production and reproduction of material life as humans interact with nature.

Narotzky's approach is grounded in Marx and especially Polanyi who had argued that 'land' (natural resources) and labour are not produced in society but constitute its foundations, yet they are sold as (fictitious) commodities in the market sphere. Any market, therefore, is embedded in social formations that constitute humans in relation to nature, especially markets that deal in labour. Land and labour have a market and non-market, accounted and unaccounted, commensurable and incommensurable, dimension, and the dividing line often shifts under the impact of capital

accumulation. Ideological formations explain and constitute the commensurable side, but human resistance to the spread of markets is ever-present and not simply a moral response that draws on prior experience or tradition.

Narotzky is particularly compelling in her discussion of the relation between the counted and unaccounted as it enters practices and ideology in the informal economy, family business and home life. For example, activities crucial to the 'general well-being' of humans (p.38) or the functioning of the market may be elided in aggregate accounts of the market and remain unremunerated in the household or informal economy. Narotzky's encompassing focus on social reproduction and the means of livelihood impels us to explore material activities in both market and non-market contexts, and their changing cultural constructions and ideological justifications. What shifts the line between the uncounted and the counted, and who benefits by the changes?

This kind of economics brings anthropology home and bridges the dualism

\*Reprinted with permission from *Anthropology Today* Vol 14 No 1, February 1998, pp 1-3.

between 'us' and 'others'. But after reading the volume I wondered if we had fully included ourselves in the anthropological picture? At the University of Minnesota, I had just completed a year as department chair and had been involved in a struggle over the tenure system (our Regents wanted to dismantle important protections in order to achieve budgetary efficiencies; the faculty successfully fought to keep them). After dealing with governing boards, college administrators, and miscellaneous power seekers, I was avoiding the academic scene when Narotzky's book led me to reflect on the prior months.

I had spent much of the year looking at quantitative reports and receiving administrative requests for new numbers. As an economic anthropologist I should have enjoyed the flow of quantities, but most of the requested information seemed irrelevant; no-one explained why it was needed; the work of gathering it was time-consuming; and as the year progressed I became impatient, frustrated and then bored. I now see that the administrative elite at many universities increasingly seem driven to mediate human relations by numerical figures. This new fetishism of the numbers or management engineering is motivated by the desire to control, commensurate and reproduce or to expand the reach of the market and make faculty accountable in monetary terms. During the past year, for example, I learned to watch two bottom-line figures. The first,

which can be produced for a faculty member, class, department or larger unit, is a ratio:

S C H (Student Credit Hours)  
Cost per FTE

Once translated, it says, divide the paid student credit hours by the cost of teaching them (as gauged by a "full-time equivalent" teacher). The ratio measures the paid credits that students decide to allocate to a normalized teacher. Given my interests in economics, I realized that this calculation is a price! Student credit hours are demand, faculty cost is supply, their intersection is teacher value. High prices are good because they mean that lots of students want what is on offer. An efficiency ratio as well, the calculation shows how many student hours are being processed by every dollar an instructor costs. My department was producing high prices and high efficiencies, and that made me happy, for these are powerful numbers to cite when trying to persuade a dean to reproduce and expand the department's budget.

The second calculation with which I became familiar connects faculty to space. When the department was asked to consider moving to new quarters, I discovered the existence of a university norm specifying how many square feet of office space should be allocated to each faculty member. Quality of space, the special needs of a discipline,

and size of one's body are irrelevant. But I like this ratio for its socially embedded equalitarianism; it mandates that space per faculty elbow or jawbone is the same for everybody.

The two ratios together neatly illustrate the dialectic of market and morality in material life, for the first figure is a calculation; determined through a fair competition, whereas the second is set by a shared norm. Market and community, self-interest and social commitment, it fits together. As the year progressed, I even saw the dialectic in action: departments with a high student/faculty price laid claim to more teaching bodies and so accumulated space from others in the academic community.

I can try to ignore comparing myself jaw for jaw in the allocation of space, or cheap for cheap in the competition for funding, but the ideology of commensuration does affect one's sense of well being. By commensurability I mean that the values of things or acts can be arrayed on a single scale: sometimes the rule is money or time (as in labour time), but other measures are used as well. Extension of the market model depends on the assumption of commensurability, for without a common scale rational choice cannot be exercised.<sup>3</sup> Reducing teaching to a single measure, however, is an heroic act of abstraction (or reification) that requires selecting among plural features in order to emphasize some while obscuring others. In precommensuration times, I

thought good teaching might take place in an office or the halls, and over coffee or a meal off campus. It might happen in few moments or require hours of conversation. But those scenes and events are hard to measure, and no longer count in the distribution of funds (just as maintaining a salutary domestic life does not count in the new economics of the household). I keep in mind now that good teaching (or teaching as a good) only means paid credits divided by faculty cost, which is the expense of student demand.<sup>4</sup>

*Participation in the new numbers game requires little specific knowledge of disciplines or the exercise of burnished wisdom in making judgments. But it does provide space for the expression of power and, as the drive to commensurate spreads among university administrators, accumulating and producing numerical information becomes an act and mark of power itself.*

Once I grasped the new semantics, I tried to understand what determines student demand, so I undertook an informal survey of students only to find that they often select courses by hour of the day when offered, the number of classroom meetings per week and workload! These determinants of the demand schedule led me to realize that in

order to produce high ratios and achieve efficiencies a department should schedule easy courses in the late morning to increase demand, while substituting graduate students or part-time faculty for expensive professors in order to lower the cost of supply. But in one of those happy contradictions, administrators discourage such productive arrangements.

The new fetishism of the numbers surely must alienate faculty in several ways. A common wisdom once proclaimed that research and teaching are linked and provide the foundation for the academic venture. The scholarly identity has now been divided into the separate realms of teaching and research, because only teaching has market value inside the university. Research is valued when it draws external funding. I have even heard educators say that universities should not be in the 'business' of supporting research time, for faculty are free to secure external funds to release them from teaching, and universities have no obligation to support non-remunerative research. Part of my end of the year hibernation was due to this debasement of scholarship: anthropology may be doing well by the numbers in many places, but what are the new 'Captains of Information' doing to the mission of research?<sup>5</sup> (I was especially sensitive to this question because in the prior year I had been locked in a controversy with a large university press over an issue concerning free speech and the balance between community

commitment and market interest.)

The drive to commensurate produces a second alienation as well: between administrators and faculty. During the year I discovered that some administrators know departments more by their numbers than their members. I'll live with this fetishism, too, but I am intrigued by the speed with which former faculty members learn the ideology and discourse of administrative numbers when they ascend to the higher paid positions (that receive increasing proportions of the salary pool). They remain bilingual for a time, but the language of efficiency soon dominates. On my observation, the new class of administrators converses less and less directly with faculty and increasingly through the numbers.

Administrators and faculty have different class interests, for the change to numbers is really about control, reproduction, and the bottom line. The connection of university reproduction to power is central, and could be ominous for the future of the academic venture. One problem concerns the link between administrative tolerance of risk and shifting bodies of knowledge. The administrative systems of commensuration, embodying the market ideals of efficiency and engineering, codify a world of past choices and costs. But they are used to infer a future that sets the budgetary allocations. The numbers inscribe probabilities as if the world did not change. They do not inform us about serendipitous events or uncertainty,

and reveal nothing about dynamic change within a field or leadership of a local department. Administering by the numbers reproduces the past (like an 'iron cage') and banishes the possibility that faculty as agents may transform a university.

For university administrators everywhere, the measures of commensuration, that define their world, are surely a comfort, because the calculations provide the patina of rational choice, can be used to legitimate decisions taken on ad hoc grounds, absolve the new social engineers of personal responsibility and counter faculty resistance by appeal to the 'facts'. Participation in the new numbers game requires little specific knowledge of disciplines or the exercise of bur-nished wisdom in making judgments. But it does provide space for the expression of power and, as the drive to commensurate spreads among university administrators, accumulating and producing numerical information becomes an act and mark of power itself. No governors on this tendency to compile data and power exist, and since producing the required information requires faculty time, the rest of us are kept occupied and docile. The fetishism of numbers increasingly mediates relations within a university, and the captains of information are seizing the reins of the academy. Incommensurate scholars do have use value, but I suspect that their days of reproducing and multiplying are limited.

### References

1. Susana Narotzky, 1997, *New Directions in Economic Anthropology*. Pluto Press.
2. One recent discussion of the extension of corporate models to universities in the United States is provided by Larry Gerber, 1997, 'Reaffirming the Value of Shared Governance', *Academe* 83:14-18. Marilyn Strahern (1997) considers the runaway practices of auditing in the British University System, *European Review* 5:305-321
3. For a discussion of commensuration and its ethical and philosophical implications, see Margaret Jane Radin, 1996, *Contested Commodities*, Cambridge: Harvard U. P.
4. Jagna Sharff and Johanna Lessinger (1991) in an issue of *Anthropology Today* (10:12-15) explore some of the larger global and corporate pressures on universities today and their effect on part-time academics.
5. Veblen distinguished between financial capital and industrial or material capital. Likewise, he foresaw a tension between the Captains of Finance who focus on the bottom line and the engineers who design industrial processes and meet communal needs. For one version of the opposition, see Thorstein Veblen, 1983 (1921), *The Engineers and the Price System* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books).

*Stephen Gudeman is a leading economic anthropologist and professor of anthropology at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.*

## SAS Keynote Speech

### The Three Souths

by John Shelton Reed

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

You're in the American South now, a proud region with a distinctive history and culture.

A place that echoes with names like Thomas Jefferson and Robert E. Lee, Scarlett O'Hara and Uncle Remus, Martin Luther King and William Faulkner, Billy Graham, Mahalia Jackson, Mohammed Ali, Elvis Presley. Home of the country blues and country music, bluegrass and Dixieland jazz, gospel music and rock-and-roll. Where menus offer both downhome biscuits-and-gravy and uptown shrimp-and-grits. Where churches preach against "cigarettes, whiskey, and wild, wild women" (all Southern products) and American football is a religion.

You're in the region that leads the nation in job creation, the most industrialized part of the country, a place of shining skyscrapers, sprawling suburbs, and boundless optimism. You're in a region where problems of rural poverty still defy easy solution, where many still live in the shadow of the plantation.

You're in the only part of America that ever fought the Stars and Stripes, the only one to suffer military defeat and occu-

pation. You're in the region that now supplies the biggest proportionate share of America's soldiers and wears its American patriotism most conspicuously.

You're in the part of America where slavery lasted longest and died hardest, where a system of virtual apartheid prevailed for decades, where only yesterday "white supremacy" was preached as a positive good. You're in a region that is now attracting black migrants by the hundreds of thousands, where schools are less segregated and more blacks hold public office than anywhere else in the country.

You're in what used to be called "the Solid South" — solid in support of the Democratic party and opposition to the party of Lincoln, the Union, and Reconstruction. You're in a region that cast most of its votes in 1992 against a Democratic ticket from Arkansas and Tennessee, and now dominates the leadership of the national Republican party.

You're in a region renowned for Southern hospitality, for its ladies and gentlemen, for its courtesy and gracious living; a region with the nation's highest rate

of church membership — and its highest homicide rate. A place whose name has evoked moonlight and magnolias, pellagra and poll taxes, now home to the Cable News Network and Compaq Computers.

You're below the Mason-Dixon Line. In the Cotton Kingdom, the Old Confederacy, Dixie. In the Bible Belt, the Sahara of Bozart. In the New South, the Sunbelt, the Southeast. In "Uncle Sam's other province." You're in a land of contradictions.

Welcome to the South. Confusing, ain't it?

#### The Three Souths

One source of confusion is that the phrase "the South" refers to at least three different regions. They overlap one another and all sometimes go by that same name, but their origins, their defining features, their prospects, and even their boundaries are quite distinct.

The old South — call it "Dixie" — came into being with the spread of cotton agriculture and slavery in the early 1800s. This South was an agricultural region, and after 1865 it was a poor agricultural region, with unique racial and economic problems. It lasted well into this century and some aspects of it still survive here and there, but it's less of a reality each decade, and in most respects it will soon be of interest only to historians.

Emerging as we watch, however, is a

quite different South that we can call (for reasons we'll get to) the "Southeast." This is a vibrant, dynamic, industrial region, a magnet for migration and investment from other parts of the nation and increasingly from abroad. It's a metropolitan region, its cities linked by innumerable ties of commerce and communication. It is in fact a nation in every

sense but the political.

At the same time, there is an

enduring cultural South, set off from the rest of the United States by its people's distinctive ways of doing things. This South is defined by things like religion, cuisine, family life, manners, musical styles, sports and recreation — all of the idioms and imponderables that make a population a people — and this is the South that evokes the pride and enlists the loyalties of Southerners.

In Atlanta or Wilmington, you're in all three of these Souths at once. Let's try to sort them out.

#### Dixie

"Let us begin by discussing the weather," wrote the distinguished historian Ulrich B. Phillips in 1929, "for that has been the chief agency in making the South distinctive." You will undoubtedly notice that the South can be hot and humid. Some

*You're in a land of contradictions. Welcome to the South. Confusing, ain't it?*

vegetable life loves that — a fact with fateful consequences.

In particular, much of the South is suited for the cultivation of cotton, and for nearly a century Southerners grew that crop everywhere they could grow it: everywhere with 200 or more frost-free days, annual precipitation of 23 inches or more, and soil that wasn't swamp. This created a peculiar region, defined in the early 1800s by plantation agriculture and slavery and distinguished ever since by the consequences of those institutions.

This is Dixie, the land of cotton, where (as Abe Lincoln's favorite Confederate song observed) old times are not forgotten. Even today a band of rural counties with substantial black populations trace the old cotton belt in a long arc from southeastern Virginia down and across to eastern Texas, with arms reaching north and south through the bottomlands along the Mississippi River. The cotton South is the Deep South: many "Southern" characteristics and phenomena have been concentrated here; some have been found only here.

Alabama calls itself "the heart of Dixie," but the real core of the Cotton Kingdom is probably the Mississippi Delta south of Memphis, "the most Southern place on earth" — if what you mean by Southern has to do with plantations, the blues, and the civil-rights movement.

For decades this was seen as what the South was all about, and rightly so.

This was the South that went to war in 1861, when South Carolina, "the cradle of secession," left the Union, joined by six other Deep South states that shared its commitment to the future of plantation agriculture and slavery. (Only later, and with some reluctance, did the states of the upper South add their stars to the Confederate flag.)

This was the South celebrated at Atlanta's great Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895. That the most memorable speech at that exposition was by Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee Institute reminds us that this was also the heartland of racial segregation.

For nearly a century after Reconstruction this was the political "Solid South," where whites didn't vote Republican and blacks didn't vote at all. In the 1930s its continuing poverty led President Franklin Roosevelt to call it "the nation's number-one economic problem."

During and after World War I millions fled Dixie, in one of the great mass migrations of human history, seeking opportunity in the North and West. In the 1960s it was the setting for the stirring events of the civil rights movement, events that captured the attention of the world.

The fossil remains of this South can still be found. If you want to define the South as a poor rural region with oppressive race relations and undemocratic politics you can still do it. But the South's problems are

increasingly the same as everyone else's. Dixie is a mere shadow of what it used to be; it has become a thing of shreds and patches— and most Southerners don't live there any more.

### The Southeast

Urbanization, industrialization, and the civil rights movement's successful assault on racial segregation have changed the South's economy and politics beyond recognition. The last fifty years have seen the emergence of a very different South. It occupies much of the same territory as Dixie, but that shouldn't blind us to the fact that it is an entirely new development — indeed, in many respects an entirely different region. Almost every unfavorable statistic that used to define the South has shown dramatic change.

Perhaps most striking have been the changes in Southern race relations. Only a generation ago the South's system of racial segregation was fixed in law, seemingly for all time; yet almost overnight it was dismantled by federal legislation and court decisions. With half of America's black population, the South elects two-thirds of the nation's black office-holders, and although black incomes in the South are still lower than white, they're approaching parity with black incomes elsewhere in the U.S.

Economic and demographic statistics have also shown startling improvement.

As late as the 1930s per capita income in the South was half of that elsewhere in the United States. Personal income is still lower in the South (only Virginia and Florida are above the national average), but the remaining difference is small enough that it's largely offset by a lower cost of living.

Two out of three Southerners

are now urban or suburban folk, and even most rural Southerners work in industry. The agricultural labor force has dropped from half of the total to under 5 percent, and Southern agriculture has increasingly become "agribusiness." (One telling statistic: 10 percent of the 1950 cotton crop was picked by machine; in 1970 the figure was 90 percent.) As the South has moved from agriculture to industry, its birth rate has declined; indeed, since the mid-1950s it has been slightly lower than the U.S. average.

*But the South has always been and still is set apart by its people. Whatever else it has been or is becoming, the South is the homeland of people who think of themselves as Southerners. Some have even suggested that Southerners ought to be viewed as an American ethnic group, like Italian- or Polish-Americans, a people with a sense of group identity based on a shared history and a common culture.*

The industrial development of the South is continuing. In the 1990s eight of the top ten states in the growth of manufacturing plants were in the South. In 1992-94 over half the nation's new jobs and ten of the top 13 states in jobs added per 100,000 population were Southern (the top three were North Carolina, Mississippi, and Kentucky).

Even in automobile manufacturing, the classic heavy industry, the South has been coming on strong since the 1980s. Tennessee now has Nissan and Saturn plants, Kentucky has Toyota, South Carolina BMW, and Alabama Mercedes-Benz. All told, these factories represent a \$7 billion investment to create some 20,000 well-paid jobs.

Foreign investment is increasingly important. There are 46 German-owned companies in Spartanburg County, South Carolina, alone: the nearby section of Interstate 95 is known locally as "the Autobahn." One out of every 11 South Carolinians now works for a foreign-owned company, nearly twice the U.S. average.

Inter-regional migration now flows into the South, not out of it, as the South's booming economy slows out-migration and attracts migrants from other regions. Shortly after 1960 more whites began moving to the South than were leaving it; a decade later, the same was true for blacks. Now more than one of every eight residents of the South was born outside it. In conse-

quence, the South's population has increased rapidly. New York will soon be replaced by Texas as the second most populous state, and Florida should knock it out of third place early in the next century.

When the South seceded in 1861, Karl Marx said scornfully of the Confederacy that it wasn't a nation at all, just a battle cry. He meant that the new country had no industrial base, no transportation network, no national press, no obvious capital city to tie it all together — none of what a real nation has to make it go. And Marx was right: one of the Confederacy's many problems was that it was trying to build these institutions while fighting for its very existence, and it never entirely succeeded.

But now there are dozens of regional publications, scores of regional trade and professional associations, hundreds of regional corporations. There's a sense — Marx's sense — in which the South is more of a nation now than when it was politically independent.

And Atlanta is its capital. Here's where regional trade associations have their annual conventions, where regional corporations are likely to be headquartered, where national corporations have their regional offices. Here's where the Southern correspondents of television networks and national publications are clustered. The Wall Street Journal's Atlanta office now publishes a regional supplement, and the Journal

Constitution is the nearest thing the South has to a national newspaper. Atlanta is at the center of the South's transportation grid as well: its airport is the second-busiest in the U.S., giving rise to the Southern joke that even if you're going to hell you'll have to change planes in Atlanta.

This is the South of the future. Call it the "Southeast." This region barely existed before World War II, but it's all around us now. And it seems to be unstoppable, as its booming economy and surging population are translated into political power (primarily through the medium of the Republican Party, Dixie's old adversary).

But there's a reason to call it the Southeast. This is a smaller region than Dixie. We can see plainly now a development that regional sociologists were predicting fifty years ago: Atlanta isn't the capital of all of the historic South. The post-agricultural South has split down the middle into a southeastern region centered on Atlanta and a southwestern one that is essentially greater Texas. Dallas and Houston don't report to Atlanta the way Charlotte and Nashville and Jacksonville do. The western South has its own regional institutions, its own magazines and corporate headquarters, even its own edition of the Wall Street Journal.

To complicate matters still further, most of Virginia is now tied into the economy of the mid-Atlantic states to its north, much of Kentucky now looks to the

Midwest, and Miami is becoming the de facto capital of a Caribbean region all its own.

### Down Home

So there's an old, agricultural South that is fading and a new, industrial South that is coming apart at the seams. Put that way, is there any reason, any more, to talk about the South as the South?

Well, of course there is. Dixie was rooted in the cotton economy and the institutions that grew out of that. The Southeast, too, is defined by its institutions, most of them economic. But the South has always been as much a cultural region as an economic one. We speak of commercial activity in the Southeast, but not of Southeastern religion, Southeastern music, the Southeastern gentleman, or Southeastern fried chicken. The Southeast's future is as bright as Dixie's is bleak, but (as one historian has put it) the South is a region with more than a future, and its past lives on in its culture.

From the start the South has been the home of peoples whose intertwined cultures have set them off from other Americans. And where the economic and political story has been largely one of conflict, division, and separation, the tale of the cultural South is one of blending, sharing, mutual influence — and of continuing unity and distinctiveness.

Start with the fact that the South was settled primarily from Great Britain (espe-

cially from its "Celtic fringe" of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) and from West Africa. To be sure, the native Indians made early and lasting contributions. It's impossible to ignore the French influence in Louisiana — and who would want to? Germans were an early and important presence in Texas and in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. There are noticeable concentrations of Greeks in Florida, Chinese in Mississippi, and so forth. Acknowledge all that.

Still, Southern culture has been largely a matter of African-Americans and Protestant whites of British descent borrowing from each other, imitating each other, shaping one another's attitudes, tastes, and values in ways both obvious and subtle. Black and white Southerners have created distinct but related cultures that are usually recognizable variations on a shared Southern culture. In the process, together, they have made the South a great seedbed — possibly the great seedbed — of distinctively American culture, inventing and exporting everything from Coca-Cola to rock and roll.

Here is where cultural differences persist in America. If you're looking for how the South is different these days, don't look at what people do from 9:00 to 5:00 on weekdays. During those hours Southerners now do pretty much the same things everyone else does. Look instead at what people do in the evenings, on Sunday morning, Saturday night, and weekend afternoons.

Look at tastes and cultural patterns that don't simply reflect how people make their livings, or how good a living they make. Look at things that are passed on from generation to generation within families, things that people take with them when they move on geographically, or move up economically. Look at things like manners, religion, cuisine, sports, and music.

When you do, you find a cultural South that's bigger than the Cotton Kingdom, one that encompasses both the Southeast and the Southwest (if not south Florida). Southern values and habits and practices are found in the Appalachian and Ozark mountains, in Texas and Oklahoma, in a great many areas marginal to the plantation South but settled by Southerners. Mapping cultural patterns makes it easy to figure out who settled most of Kentucky and Missouri, as well as the southern parts of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. Indeed, many of the same features can be found in scattered enclaves of Southern migrants throughout the U.S. — among Michigan auto workers, Southern blacks in Chicago and Harlem, or the children and grandchildren of Okies in California.

In nearly all of the South, for example, religious life is dominated by evangelical Protestant denominations (which makes the South unique not just in the U.S. but in the world). A religious

solid South preceded the political one and seems to be outlasting it, because in this respect the South may be becoming even more different from the rest of the country. Almost nine out of ten Southerners are Protestant, more than half of those are Baptists, and the region is more Baptist now than it was at the turn of the century.

And the South's fastest-growing denominations are even more unusual. Consider the Church of God in Christ, for instance, a black pentecostal group with its origins in the Mississippi Delta. As COGIC approached its centenary in 1997, it claimed some four million members, making it perhaps the least well-known of America's major religious groups.

The religious life of the Southern highlands and the Southwest is every bit as Southern as that of the Deep South. Early on, evangelical Protestants established their dominance in the Southern backcountry; as Southerners moved on to the west and south, they took their religion with them. Not many people live in West Texas, but those who do are likely to be Baptist or Methodist or Church of Christ. The mountain South, too, is virtually indistinguishable from the rest of the region.

And when it comes to Southern music, the mountains and the Southwest are right at the heart of things. Although black musicians in the Deep South gave us jazz and the blues, the white songwriters and performers of country music mostly hail

from a fertile crescent extending from the mountains of southwest Virginia through Kentucky and Tennessee to Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. (Nashville's role in country music is well known, but the country-music center of Branson, Missouri — in the Ozarks just across the Arkansas line — has recently become second only to Las Vegas as a destination for American tourists.) And when black music from the Deep South met white music from the Southern uplands, in and around Memphis, rock and roll was born.

Both country music and traditional black music reveal in their lyrics another persisting cultural trait: a propensity for several sorts of violence. The FBI's crime statistics show that this isn't just talk. The South has had a higher homicide rate than the rest of the U.S. for as long as reliable records have been kept, and the mountains and Southwest share fully in this pattern. But Southern violence isn't random (it tends to be the kind of vengeance those songs are about) and it's usually directed outward (the South has the nation's lowest suicide rates).

Southerners have also displayed relatively conservative family and sex-role attitudes. These differences have surfaced in the legal system: Southern states were slow to enact women's suffrage; most never did ratify the Equal Rights Amendment; until recently few had state laws against sex discrimination. Although Southern women have actually been more likely than other

American women to work outside the home (they've needed the money more), most often they've worked in "women's jobs" — as textile operatives or domestic servants, for example — and the percentage of women who work in predominantly male occupations remains lower in the South than elsewhere.

Some of these Southern characteristics go back to the early days of Dixie, if not to the British isles and African savannahs from which so many of the South's people came. Many were mentioned by travelers in the antebellum South. But other regional folkways are of quite recent origin.

Occasionally Southerners have just appropriated pastimes invented somewhere else. American football, for instance, had its origins in New England, and it wasn't until Alabama beat Washington in the 1926 Rose Bowl that Americans were persuaded that Southerners could play the game competitively. Now, of course, the South provides far more than its share of players in the National Football League, and the tail-gate party has become a Southern institution.

More often, however, new differences have emerged as Southerners have used their new resources and opportunities to express traditional values and tastes in new ways. Country music draws on old musical forms, but it took its modern form only after radio and the phonograph turned

isolated rural folk into a mass audience. Similarly, stockcar racing reflects a historic admiration for daring and grace under pressure, but it appeared only after the whiskey-distillers of the upland South met the automobile.

Notice that the persistence of the cultural South doesn't require that Southerners stay poor and rural. Indeed, poor folks can't afford some of its trappings: new Southern phenomena from high-tech competitive bass-fishing to Southern Living magazine require technology, affluence, and mobility that simply didn't exist in the South even a half-century ago.

No, mass society has made some inroads, but Southerners still do many things differently — and they keep inventing new ways to do things differently. In the past two decades the culture of the South has had to adapt to migration into the region of Northerners, Hispanics, and Asians in unprecedented numbers. How these newcomers will be assimilated and how they will enrich the culture of the South are interesting questions, but that they will seem hardly in doubt. The cultural South has always shown remarkable resilience, and it will no doubt continue to do so.

#### **"American by Birth, Southern by the Grace of God"**

The South is no longer defined by an economic system that exports raw materials and surplus population, while generating a

variety of social and economic problems for itself. Some aspects of Dixie still linger, and a few of its legacies (notably a substantial black population) will be with us for the foreseeable future. But that South is largely — well, gone with the wind. And, for the most part, good riddance.

The South is now, more than ever, defined by its commercial and industrial economy, by the network of institutions that have emerged to serve it, and by the ever-increasing number of people who have an interest in making sure that it continues to exist. Here, however, the brute facts of distance and diversity conspire to reduce the South to a southeastern core, with the Southwest and south Florida and various borderlands taking their natural place with other regions or as regions in their own right.

But the South has always been and still is set apart by its people. Whatever else it has been or is becoming, the South is the homeland of people who think of themselves

as Southerners. Some have even suggested that Southerners ought to be viewed as an American ethnic group, like Italian- or Polish-Americans, a people with a sense of group identity based on a shared history and a common culture. This is what W. J. Cash had in mind when he wrote in *The Mind of the South* that the South is "not quite a nation within a nation, but the next thing to it."

Geographers have come up with scores of criteria for locating the South, mapping everything from the kudzu vine to where people name their businesses "Southern" this and "Southern" that. But maybe the best way to define the South is with what Hamilton Horton calls the "Hell, yes!" line: you know you're in the South if that's what people say when you ask if they're Southerners.

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**Winning Entry 1998 SAS Undergraduate Student Paper Competition**

**Devil's Food: Dessert In American Culture**

by Jessica Swain

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**Abstract**

*This paper examines the association between sweets, and ideas of temptation, sin, and self-indulgence. A symbolic analysis of printed advertisements for sweets provides evidence to support the concept of food morality, and the relationship between food and sex. Through the deliberate use of religious metaphor and sexual imagery, these advertisements reflect a cultural conflict between body image and health, and the relentless pursuit of that which we cannot have.*

**Introduction**

Through symbolic images we express deep-rooted beliefs and values. We can discover a symbol's meaning by looking at its occurrence in more than one cultural context. Today, one of the best sources for shared meaning is the printed advertisement.

Roland Barthes' structural analysis of food and advertising resulted in a model based on the shared meanings of food. Barthes concludes that within every culture, food is a signifying agent. Of importance to Barthes, as well as to this argument, is that food alone does not signify or symbolize anything: "Rather, it is the subdivisions of general food categories and the preparation of food and the uses to which it is put that create meaning" (Barthes quoted in Wood 1995:14-15).

The social and symbolic meanings attached to desserts have their origin in our attitudes concerning "proper" diets and foods, and the ideal body image, especially that of women. Yet, the advertisements for sweets suggest that there are other cultural and moral ideas influencing our relationship to certain foods.

**Food of the Gods**

Throughout history, sweets and naturally sweet foods such as honey, appear to possess a kind of power that other foods lack. The distinction between sweets and non-sweet food is apparent in American culture; examples of this can be found in the metaphorical language used in advertisements of sweets.

Some examples of the descriptive

words used in advertisements for sweets are: divine, dreamy, ethereal, fantastic, heavenly, and blissful. Other words used within the text of these advertisements include: soul, creation, faith, and magic (see Appendix, 1, for an example).

These symbolic messages help to reinforce an image of such "delectables" that is extraordinary; cakes and truffles are not in the realm of ordinary food; they have qualities that transcend every-day foods. From this perspective, foods can be separated into categories; one group consisting of "non-sweet foods", such as meat and vegetables, and another group consisting of "sweets", such as chocolates and desserts.

Mary Douglas takes a structuralist approach to food, claiming that "food categories encode social events" (1971:61). In our own culture, serving desserts and sweets helps to define and give meaning to both special occasions and everyday secular rituals.

The use of sweets as a comfort, reward, punishment, or bribe is probably familiar to most of us. Foods that are nutritional and necessary for our health and survival cannot be used in the same way. The manipulative powers of sweets comes from their non-essential character (Charles and Kerr 1988:103). This idea is reinforced by the ritual of eating dessert after the meal: dessert has to be earned.

Sometimes sweets are used to control children's behavior, as this statement

from a mother illustrates: "Sweets are one of those awful things, you use sweets for such a lot of things and perhaps don't realise it at the time...to shut them up sometimes" (Charles and Kerr 1988:100).

Sweets signify a treat or reward for adults as well. Some advertisements invite us to take a break from a hectic and stressful day to reward ourselves with a sweet treat. The jingle for Kit-Kat declares; "Gimme a break, Gimme a break, break me off a piece of that Kit-Kat bar", or the ad for Nips candy; "Need a break? Have a Nips". This idea is also familiar to us through stereotypes like the policeman "busy" eating doughnuts, or the depressed woman eating an entire quart of ice cream (see the Appendix, 2).

There are advertisements for sweets that depict subjects (usually female) who appear to be in their own world, detached from everything around them. These ads, such as the one for Dove chocolates, suggest that sweets have the power to transform or transport (see the Appendix, 3).

One of the significant aspects of sweets is that they are held in a kind of sacred position over other foods by a culture that is obsessed with body image and health. Our culture responds to this dichotomy with concepts of food morality.

**Forbidden Fruit and Mom's Apple Pie**

Desserts have become eroticized in our culture. Yet there are some desserts that

are never symbolically linked to sex, romance, and self-indulgence. These are the desserts made of ingredients that we consider natural and healthy, like fruits, vegetables, and nuts. This grouping provides a symbolic counterpart to the sexier desserts that contain rich ingredients like chocolate, cream, and butter.

Such desserts are often associated with traditional and domestic themes; and many belong to the "comfort foods" category. We serve these desserts on the holidays that center around the family, rather than couples and lovers.

The most convincing evidence for this opposition comes from the terminology associated with these kinds of desserts: wholesome, old-fashioned, and home-made. When these desserts are represented in an advertisement, cookbook, or magazine, the colors are very neutral and warm: soft, muted browns, yellows, and greens. Nothing stands out or excites, the image creates a mood that is very calm and soothing. Symbolically, the so-called "comfort foods" take us back to a safe and happy childhood; a time when home-made pies were made by loving hands.

By this distinction, we can classify desserts into two groups: "good" and "bad", which symbolically reflect the concept of food morality. Those familial and traditional desserts are good, while the fattening, sexier desserts are bad. The distinction is understood because our culture reinforces food

morality by the value placed on health and body image. Good foods are believed to benefit one's health, while bad foods have negative effects on health. Yet the distinction between good and bad food goes beyond the concern for health. The morality theme comes into play when certain foods cause feelings of guilt when they are eaten. Although the guilt is in many ways related to body image, there is an underlying reason why some desserts are considered so "bad"

Anthropologists have recognized the relationship between food and sex; such as the taboos concerned with eating certain foods, sex, and the body. Through culture, humans are able to fulfill basic needs in an infinite variety of ways; when these activities are stripped of their ascribed meaning and material culture, we are left with those activities common to all humans. And there is nothing more basic or essential than acquiring food and reproducing; which may be the reason why cultural ideas and meanings surrounding food and sex often parallel each other.

In our own culture, the concept of food morality and the guilt which some foods inspire is analogous to certain ideas surrounding sexual activity. This food/sex analogy exists as the result of the values sanctioned by the institution of marriage, and also by the current sociocultural attitudes concerning body image, diet, and health. As already noted, "good" foods are regarded as so because they serve a purpose:

they nourish, and are essential to sustaining life (or, we eat them just to get dessert!).

The so-called "bad" foods are regarded as bad because they are believed to serve no purpose other than pleasure. Cheese curls and chocolate eclairs cannot nourish or sustain life. These foods are associated with gluttony and self-indulgence, and are even considered by some to be damaging to our bodies. Desserts may be regarded as really bad food because they are consumed after our hunger has already been satisfied.

The guilty feelings one might experience after gorging themselves with a fattening dessert are associated with the social stigmatizing of overweight people, and by the reputation of bad food as serving no purpose other than pure pleasure. This shared cultural attitude is reflected in the phrase "I cheated on my diet". As we will see, the link between certain foods and sex is linked symbolically, by issues of morality and by feelings of guilt.

Traditional Christian values and the institution of marriage have attempted to define proper sexual conduct. Despite the current state of affairs, a central function of our institution of marriage is to sustain and nurture human life by the promotion of another institution- the family. Within this context, we can identify categories of "good", or moral sexual activity, and "bad", or immoral sexual activity. Sex before and outside of one's marriage fits into our "bad"

category; and just like dessert, indulging in such behavior serves no purpose other than pleasure. Sexual intercourse is considered "moral" and "good" only under specific circumstances (e.g., procreation with one's spouse). Symbolically, sex and food fall under similar moral standards: there is "proper" sexual conduct and there is "proper" food and diet. Social taboos help to reinforce these ideas, as well as inspire feelings of guilt.

We are probably all familiar with these phrases: "If it tastes good it must be bad for you", "No pain no gain", or (a marketing favorite): "This tastes too good to be fat-free!". Although Americans are obsessed with the latest age-defying and fat-defying products and trends, we still hold those good-old American values like freedom of choice, and the pursuit of happiness sacred. Nike's "Just do it" ad campaign captures this spirit, along with the ad for Candy's shoes that parodies Nike: "Just screw it". This ties into what might be called our "death-defying" or rebellious nature, our fascination with risk, danger, and excitement, or what Barthes would call "That great anthropological theme of annihilation by pleasure" (1988:177).

Americans must contend with conflicting values concerning the foods we eat and our sexual behavior. The advertisers of fattening sweets must also contend with these opposing themes. What the advertisements don't do is try to convince us that

their product really is "good for you". Instead, they draw us in by seduction, tempting us with sexual symbolism, and tapping into those deep-rooted anxieties over the sins of carnal pleasure.

### The Fine Art of Seduction

In a culture where fat has become the enemy, why are chocolates and other sweets so prevalent and in demand? There is a simple answer: The more we consider something forbidden, the more we desire it. Following Christian symbolism, this is the age-old dilemma we blame on human nature. American popular culture, as represented in our sitcoms, movies, magazines, and by music and literature, overflow with this theme.

Can we blame human nature when we succumb to that offering of a third piece of chocolate cheesecake? The advertisers hope so, and they claim that we won't be sorry if we just give in. Through verbal and visual seduction, the advertisers accomplish their mission (Coward 1985:156).

Sexual imagery and descriptive words work together to convey the guilty pleasure you (the consumer) could experience, if you gave into temptation. The ad is not selling a product anymore because the product has been transformed into an experience (Barthes 1988:128).

A romantic and ornate cursive lettering is almost always used in the advertisements. This style is suggestive of flow-

ing and fluid motion, and also of the female body— rounded and curved. The word luscious is used most often in association with desserts and sweets in advertising; it means "highly pleasing to the taste or smell", or "arousing physical, or sexual, desire" (Webster's 1983).

Through visual imagery and descriptive language advertisers convey the texture and "feel" of the desserts. The consistency and texture used to describe sweets are very feminine and sexual. The most common descriptive words are: smooth, creamy, and silky. These are culturally defined and stereotypical characteristics of a sexually attractive woman, which women respond to by shaving their body hair and using beauty products to achieve smooth skin, a creamy complexion, and silky hair. The symbolic linking of the female body to food, especially sweets, is apparent in the following examples: a children's nursery rhyme: "What are little girls made of? Sugar and spice and everything nice"; or, semi-nude women "jumping" out of a giant cake at a bachelor's party. From each of these examples we are left with the conceptual image that women are "edible".

As we have seen, advertisers rely on some of the same elements that define poetry to convey a specific message or mood. (Barthes 1988:177). Some of these elements include pun, metaphor, and the use of a rich rhetorical style.

It is interesting that advertisements

for non-dessert products will sometimes borrow the same stylistic elements found in the dessert advertisements (see the Appendix, 4-7). This is significant because it shows that those symbolic associations hold true even when removed from their original context.

### The Original Sin

When Westerners come across the words sin and temptation, even in a non-religious context, the immediate association is most likely Adam and Eve's fall from grace. As discussed earlier, ideas about food and sex are influenced by outside forces— moral, and cultural. These forces compete with what we call human nature. By its name, this force is considered natural, and inherent in all of us. When the Puritans arrived in the New World they brought with them a guilt-ridden religion. Since then, a less extreme Judeo-Christian culture has evolved, but still holds onto a creation story based on the imperfection and disobedience of the human race.

Why would an ad for liqueur want to be associated with our creation myth? (See the Appendix, 8). This ad is addressing our inherent imperfection: we are like children destined to do wrong. An image in the same ad depicts a wedding ring that is being forced onto a women's swollen finger. The man tries in vain to get the ring on her finger. This ad, along with the rest of the advertisements used in this paper, reflect not

human nature, but an interpretation of ourselves: our cultural nature. Bob Weir captures the true spirit of this self-realization when he sang: "I may be going to hell in a bucket, but at least I'm enjoyin' the ride" (1987).

As mentioned earlier, advertisements for sweets sell us pleasurable experiences, but the price of our indulgence is supposed to be GUILT. The advertisements try to convey this sense of guilt and sin. It is morally wrong to want to eat something that: will result in an unattractive figure, has no benefit to our health, and is for pure enjoyment and pleasure only. After all, gluttony is a sin. But what we know, and what the advertisers know, is that if it causes guilt, it must be worth it.

In this sense, people know what's "good for them". It means: doctor's orders, mother's advice, "settling down", and obeying the speed limit. The negativity associated with such good behavior seems to account for an endless source of entertainment in American popular culture. The concept is often related to ideas of the ordinary, necessary, boring, every-day, and old-fashioned. It is not surprising then, to find that such ideas are often portrayed symbolically in the context of married sexual relations; for example: "ball and chain", "my old lady", and the notion of same-old sex versus "exotic" sex.

We may know what is good for us, but we don't want it. The advertisers use

this to their advantage by attaching a kind of symbolic taboo onto sweets, making them even more desirable and appealing.

### Conclusion: Death by Chocolate

Advertisements have been referred to as "the consumer culture's version of mythology" (Grow 1994:175). The advertisements for sweets function on a very narrative and dramatic level. These advertisements represent a moral struggle between "human nature" and the culturally constructed body image, and our beliefs concerning good and bad foods.

The underlying theme present within the imagery and text of the advertisements is sexuality (see the Appendix, 9). In combination, these conflicting cultural ideas are based on one common idea:

*Henceforth, the evil infinite of human desire- always something else, always something more- which animates the movement of civilizations, the appetite for pleasure, for possessions, for power, for knowledge-seems to constitute the reality of man (Ricoer 1983:254).*

As if expecting our downfall and our weakness in the face of temptation, the advertisements attempt to seduce the consumer, as the serpent did Eve. The proverbial "forbidden fruit" is transformed into a fattening, naughty treat. The consumer represents the tempted and beguiled Eve, and the advertisers become the Devil. And

the advertisements themselves take on the form of a crafty and conniving Serpent.

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### Appendix

1) An advertisement for Godiva chocolates shows the silhouette of a man and a woman kissing, with three heart shaped candies located below this image; it reads: "Not only absence makes the heart grow fonder. Sometimes all it takes is a little something sublimely delicious and rapturously wrapped to bring out the passion in a certain someone's soul". (*Gourmet*; May 1995 p103).

2) An advertisement for Hershey's Nuggets shows several of the candy's gold wrappers with different phrases under them— e.g., "I didn't sleep late", "I didn't buy it", "I didn't get upset", "I didn't call him" (mentioned more than once), and finally, "He called". The bottom of the ad reads, "Hershey's nuggets, one of life's little rewards". (*People Magazine*; March 1998, n.p.)

3) The advertisement for Dove Promises depicts a woman reclining on a couch, and she has just consumed a piece of chocolate (she is smiling and sucking on her finger). In the background there is a bus and two people walking down the street, but

these images are hazy and blurred, as if whizzing by. The ad reads: "PUT THE WORLD ON HOLD. *Introducing Dove Promises...the lusciousness of a deep and lingering chocolate wrapped in an involving message...a chocolate and a message too rich to be rushed. You can't hurry DOVE*". (*Bon Appetit*; May 1996, p207).

4) Many advertisements use the same stylistic elements found in the ads for sweets, but they may be selling cars, make-up, or healthy products. For example, to persuade consumers to buy a cereal bar (healthy, "good" food), *SnackWell's* plays with the concept of food morality: The ad reads: "*Trapped inside this wholesome rolled oats crust is a sultry little French pastry struggling to get out.; Snackwell's Hearty Fruit'n Grain Cereal Bars; Loaded with rolled oats, whole wheat and real, honest-to- goodness fruit. With a scandalously luscious, I-can't-believe-his-is-good-for-me taste. It's the soul of a French pastry. In the body of a cereal bar. Passion. Desire. Devotion. Nah, it goes way beyond that.*" (*People Magazine*; April 1998 p95).

5) Breyer's had the same idea with its advertisement for Light yogurt. Set against a black background, a very romantic cursive lettering reads: "Tastes naughty." Below this in smaller regular print is "{But it's not.}; *Introducing rich, creamy, BREYER'S Light. The deliciously indulgent non-fat yogurt inspired by your favorite desserts. Available in a variety of*

decadent flavors". At the bottom of the ad are images of several different containers of the yogurt and rich, colorful, but shadowed fruits (mostly red). (Summertime; 1996 p15).6) A Mary Kay advertisement for Moisturizing lipstick depicts a close-up image of a woman's face which is so pale it fades into the background, except for her mouth- full lips, slightly parted and colored violet. There are names for different shades of the lipstick written across the top of the ad in cursive: Black Raspberry, Cherries Jubilee, Chocolate Mousse. The text reads: "MMMM. Twenty-four new mouth-watering shades. Sinfully indulgent but fabulously fat-free. Signature Color Moisturizing Lipstick. Tempted? Go ahead and give in". (Martha Stewart's Living; November 1997 p101).

7) And finally, an advertisement for Chrysler that uses a "dessert theme" to sell its car: The color scheme of this ad is dark and shadowed— deep reds (used for the convertible pictured in the ad), black, and dark violets. A cursive text reads: "The seats are vanilla almond. The stereo is double dutch chocolate. And the suspension is definitely not rocky-road. There are some things best measured, not by the intellect, but by the senses. A philosophy adhered to by Chrysler engineers. A convertible built to be more than a convertible. Built to be

complete indulgence. With or without the topping". (Summertime; 1996 p6).

8) This is an advertisement for Grand Marnier; it is brightly colored with both cartoon and "real" images. The top image shows Adam and Eve standing in front of a tree with a giant, grinning red snake wrapped around its trunk. There are bottles of Grand Marnier and oranges in the foliage instead of apples. Eve is tempting Adam with an orange from the tree. Another image in the same ad is suggestive of a temptation theme: a woman (her mouth parted, very full red lips- the rest of the image is black, white, grays, and blues) is whispering into a man's ear (only his ear and very little of the side of his head is shown). We are to assume she is like Eve, tempting/ seducing the man. The only text reads: "Grand Marnier, slightly less mysterious than love". (Martha Stewart's Living; February 1996 p33)

9) A Milky Way Dark advertisement shows a close-up of the candy bar (cut in half, being pulled apart so that the filling can be seen; oozing caramel) against an all-black background. A cursive text/proposition at the bottom reads: "Ever done it in the dark?". An image of a wrapped candy bar is placed below this, and underneath reads "Pure pleasure in the dark". (People Magazine; October 1997 p11).

## Asset-Based Community Development and Applied Anthropology: Personal Perspectives of Community Empowerment and Cultural Survival

by John D. Parker

Parker Community Enterprises

Asset-based community development is an appropriate "bottom-up" approach for practicing anthropologists to utilize and combine with other methods to cultivate community involvement and empower a comprehensive agenda for social change. Jody Kretzmann and John McKnight's book, *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (1993) illustrates the shortcomings of relying solely on a needs perspective when working with communities and describes the strengths of working from an asset-based orientation. This paper presents the asset-based "community capacity building" approach and explains how it can help anthropologists help communities move towards empowering a culturally appropriate practice of community development.

The results and details of my ethnographic research, community work, and observations in the American South and Central America over the past six years show that many people need to have greater control over their changing environments and communities in order to improve the

quality of life of their people. However, in the realm of traditional community development, people and communities are identified as needy and problematic. Communities are seen as a list of needs, without any respect for cultural and community wisdom. People are perceived as voiceless and powerless. Kretzmann and McKnight explain that viewing a community as a set of deficiencies fragments problem solving efforts.

In response, institutions target resources and solutions for people, directing attention to service providers without recognizing community residents as effective problem-solvers. This cultivates a dependency relationship between communities and institutions, with a goal of survival, not growth. As a result, some people, rather than being encouraged and equipped to know, understand, and respond to opportunities, live in a world which makes critical awareness and action impossible (Freire 1968; Kretzmann and McKnight 1993).

Traditionally, community development can be defined as a process of social action in which people of a community

organize themselves for planning and action. Community development can also be described as a social process by which human beings can become more competent to live with and gain some control over local aspects of a frustrating and changing world (van Willigen 1993). Yet, what are some objectives of community development? Community development specialists typically work to achieve the community's goals and the improvement of the community's capacity to create positive social change. Many "professionals" may think of the comprehensive revitalization of communities in order to improve such issues as education, health, safety, housing, commercial development, public transportation, social services, and job opportunities.

The issues are not that black and white, that clear cut, or pragmatic. For context, some institutions with good intentions and their "business as usual" nine-to-five approach to development utilize experts with "professional" training. They are guilty of focusing on community deficiencies while indirectly devaluing community strengths. Furthermore, international development initiatives sometimes have a one-sided focus, such as only influencing the financial and economic variables or only introducing new technologies or commodities, therefore underestimating the integrated social organization in communities (Cernea 1995).

Due to the modern world context, the

networks of communication, ethnicity, and ideology, there is an increase in politically mobile groups. The politics of identity give people adaptable identities that build on diversity, history, and modernization for adaptation and power (Tambiah 1994). These types of activities do not translate well into community development initiatives, nor are the majority of today's community development professionals prepared to tackle these multicultural complexities.

Instead of viewing communities as needy victims, Kretzmann and McKnight explain that we must see communities as capable actors. The asset-based community development approach shows that communities possess the capacities to shape social change and achieve greater self-sufficiency. Kretzmann and McKnight's "community building" approach urges local community associations and residents to collaborate, forming a network which acts as a catalyst, facilitator, and agent for social change. In this approach, there is a strong emphasis on a broad and diverse leadership, local knowledge, and community control (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993).

Specifically, asset-based community development begins with the capacities, assets, abilities, skills, resources, opportunities, talents, gifts, and strengths present within a community. Second, these assets come from within. Community residents play the most crucial role by accessing their wisdom, using their problem-solving abili-

ties, documenting their strengths, and working toward a shared vision. This is a serious commitment which requires personal creativity and involvement. In short, this community "power" is defined and invested locally. The third principle in the asset-based approach is that the community development process is not only based on community strengths and internally focused, but it is driven by the relationships among residents, local associations, and local institutions (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). As anthropologists, this community building approach to community development should seem more "cultural" and closer to the people than the traditional "top-down", agency-driven development agendas.

#### Community Connections and Local Knowledge

Community building cannot exist without social networks. This work is driven by meaningful relationships that challenge people to build and strengthen connections between individuals, associations, and institutions. Through the networks, neighbors and friends can mutually support one another. Through meaningful networks and relationships, people can improve the quality of life in their communities. Lessons can be learned from communities and cultures and applied to our social problems. In a sense, by revisiting community, people can use their abilities, knowl-

edge, relationships, and resources to improve their lives and surroundings for community empowerment and cultural survival (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993; Mayberry-Lewis 1992, 1997; Medoff and Sklar 1994).

People have identities that reflect diverse backgrounds and experiences. By bringing together people that represent diverse perspectives, they can collaborate and negotiate a shared vision. The vision represents meaningful relationships and connections that are built by identifying and organizing around community and cultural knowledge - what people know, what they can do, what they care about, and what lifts their spirits (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). As an empowering social force, this local knowledge can mobilize communities to social action by cultivating participatory involvement and reinforcing community spirit. Expressing identity, creating rituals, organizing forums, and celebrating suc-

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cesses generates and renews cultural knowledge.

### Illustrations of Asset-Based Community Development

Jody Kretzmann and John McKnight's book, *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (1993) describes and points to many stories that readers can turn to for greater detail and history of individual journeys through the asset-based community building approach. The following brief stories describe projects and programs I observed or participated in that involve the asset-based approach to community development or work to build community by utilizing peoples' strengths.

The Community Foundation of Greater Memphis' Community Partnership Fund is dedicated to strengthening neighborhoods and other identifiable "communities" by investing in activities that mobilize community assets and increase the capacity of individuals, organizations, and institutions to build on the community's strengths. This community work is driven by meaningful relationships which challenges people to build and strengthen connections between individuals, associations, and institutions. The development of this grantmaking vision came from partnering with Jody Kretzmann and John McKnight from the Asset-Based Community Development Institute in Chicago.

The Community Foundation of Greater Memphis was one of nine community foundations selected by the Pew Charitable Trusts to participate in the Neighborhood Preservation Initiative. The Community Foundation worked with the Vollentine-Evergreen neighborhood as a partner in this national initiative. The diverse Vollentine-Evergreen neighborhood has a history of progressive community activity and since January of 1995, it has been implementing neighborhood preservation strategies which focus on building a sense of connectedness and ownership in the community. Through the pursuit of nine different strategies — ranging from fostering resident involvement by developing block clubs on every block to stabilizing the physical infrastructure through the renovation of neighborhood housing—the Vollentine-Evergreen community is demonstrating the considerable impact that a community driven effort can make in increasing neighborhood stability and vitality.

In south Memphis, a comprehensive neighborhood initiative worked with residents in four diverse census tracts to coordinate a community capacity building inventory of the assets, resources, and capacities of the residents, associations, and businesses in the area. The most important part of this comprehensive community initiative is that the "core group" included community residents from the four census tracts, representatives from community-based agencies,

Memphis universities, and the Community Foundation. In the beginning, the "core group" met weekly, sometimes twice weekly, to guide and plan the direction and approach the initiative would take.

Residents representing the various census tracts worked with the "core group" to create the interview schedule. Those same residents were trained how to interview and approach their neighbors by staff from a community-based agency and a local college. These residents and ultimately all residents that became involved in the process became stakeholders. They owned and controlled the process. By interviewing their neighbors, residents are strengthening relationships within their neighborhood.

Through this process, there is great potential for the community to be discovered again for the first time by neighbors and residents dialoguing on how to improve the quality of life in the area. Through the power of the people, old relationships are strengthening and new ones will be created through the process.

In another example, the Latino-Memphis Conexion, is a collaborative that is over two years in the making. Latinos, service providers from area agencies, several anthropologists, and concerned citizens came together through a linkage, a meeting of interested people who explore and discuss information surrounding a particular issue in order to possibly use that knowledge to collaborate in the future. A core group came

from this linkage that changed and evolved over time. Specifically, the collaborative works to coordinate interested agencies, institutions, businesses, organizations, and individuals in order to build relationships between Spanish speakers and the larger Memphis community.

Through a collaborative grant from the Community Foundation and the Grant Information Center, the Latino-Memphis Conexion stepped up the participation and the visioning process. Through the assistance of a VISTA volunteer and community involvement, this group grew and strengthened significantly over its first year and a half. Temporary task forces and standing committees carry out the work and build community between the Latinos and the larger Memphis community.

Most importantly, the Latino-Memphis Conexion is working hard to use the community capacity building approach in their efforts. They realize that identifying and mobilizing the assets of the community, Latino and non-Latino, promise greater chances for long-term community control and partnership rather than simply cultivating service provider-client relationships.

Other community efforts I have witnessed or participated in include numerous grassroots organizations and initiatives working to build community. Some of the topics people have organized around include nonviolence, local history, spirituality, youth safety, leadership development, and commu-

nity empowerment. For example, in North Carolina, a statewide credit union helped city and suburban church congregations establish a common pool of resources which was used to renovate church buildings and expand church space for community-based development projects such as child care. In addition, a community center in the Piedmont of North Carolina has been organizing and bringing people together over divisive community issues to build a long-term grassroots movement for social, economic, and political change. The center's diverse constituency has been supportive and instrumental in cultivating this people's movement.

Through these examples, we see that to build community, each group must discover and cultivate their own path to mobilize their local networks and assets.

### Working Together

As we can see, connecting to outside institutions and associations in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors enhances the community network and involves more stakeholders. These connections can include the federal and local government, non-governmental organizations, foundations, nonprofits, schools, libraries, associations, cultural groups, businesses, universities, community colleges, churches, banks, media, community development corporations, neighborhood leaders, wise elders, and gifted citizens. However, working together

may also create more potential for conflict of interest. But in essence, this is the discovery process - the partnerships, the collaboration (Kretzmann and McKight 1993).

Examples of collaborating to inventory and mobilize community assets include exploring market opportunities or developing businesses. Skilled people can be linked to employers. Job, resume, and skill banks are resources. Barter systems have great potential for bringing communities together to share resources and services. Create a learning exchange. Trade skills. Finally, voluntary and community associations always want people with talents and creativity.

### Organizing for Empowerment

From an anthropological perspective, strengthening grassroots power and community building is connected to cultivating a renewed spirit of participatory democracy, civic engagement, and hope in our lives and communities. Part of our work as community members should be to help cultivate inclusive environments for people to bridge different backgrounds and work together for strong communities and cultural survival (Barth 1994).

For a community building process to be inclusive and inspire action, it must be culturally appropriate and empowering. People must come together to synthesize knowledge, organization, and practices by

organizing around diversity and history for adaptation and power. People must be empowered to take a role. They must become shapers of their community and work for the benefit of the whole - to make sure no one is left behind. From my experiences, this process of organizing for empowerment should:

- be culturally appropriate and maintain or strengthen cultural integrity for cultural survival
- be community controlled to address the perceived community issues
- organize and strengthen local relationships, capacity, and resources
- cultivate environments where people feel safe to participate to tell their story, share knowledge, and express their beliefs
- be aware of oppression and work to remove social and environmental barriers
- start small

When organizing for community empowerment and cultural survival, anthropologists must struggle with distrust, fear of the unknown, language and linguistic barriers, lack of awareness and understanding, apathy, and indifference in order to discover resilience and resourcefulness. We must tackle how abstract values such as "learning a better way," progress, improving efficiency and self-sufficiency, and adopting

"modern" techniques are difficult to grasp, not cross-cultural, and value-laden. We must address the cultural and community orientations toward change, their beliefs and values, and locus of control. We must see the processes of change and discover how they are linked to power, individual choice,

organization, "fit", inequalities, innovation, adaptation, duration and intensity of contact, and social mobility (Foster 1973). We must attempt to track how policy is linked to public investment, interest, politics, community involvement, and global trends. We must discuss and hear how people must work and navigate their own culture, the dominant culture, classism, racism, sexism, and other systems that are embedded in complex and evolving histories (Stout 1996). We must discuss how social evolution and change occurs in increments, how innovative projects that maintain a system can play a major role in changing the system, and how motives for change come from their immediate cultural environment and

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the small concerns of ordinary life (Barth 1994; Cernea 1995; Foster 1973).

Many key concepts that are important to community building, such as vision, community, and identity need to be hashed out in a framework that cultivates sharing, cooperation, and empowerment. We must work with the people to understand their meanings and significance. From my experience, a group's power, whether symbolic or real, is largely grounded in the interpretations of their local knowledge and history, adaptable identities, and their vision for change for their community.

Through my community work, I see that community voices and involvement are products of complex associations, histories, and experiences. Dialogues can bring out the context and the community, figuratively and literally. Anthropologists must explore being able to describe how people share and reproduce culture. We should explore the complex layers of culture rather than glossing over details by describing social actions as "negotiating" cultural variables. We need to go further by describing the specific processes and actions that show actual engagement among the cultural meanings.

How do you cultivate belonging, connectedness, hope, trust, understanding, and acceptance during the process of community building? Pieces of answers lie in cultivating mutual aid associations, a sense of place, history, spirit, and cultural activity - exchange networks, learning, sharing,

mobilizing the natural skills within people such as competitiveness, bartering, dreaming, visioning, planning, and curiosity. It involves kinship, friendship, and religion. Many times this includes tapping into the intangible, the ties that bind community together, such as what we cannot always identify and articulate - the spirit.

In the end, anthropologists need to help show communities that through their vision of what they seek to accomplish, they are carriers of meaning and shapers of thought and experience. Local knowledge and stories of struggle, adaptation, hope and success can illuminate the processes and choices in everyday life. To echo earlier statements, we must bring people together and cultivate stewardship. A synthesis of knowledge, organizing, and practice can empower community voices for planning and action.

#### **The Power of Relationships**

At this point, what are some of the "lessons learned"? Strong networks of trusting communication build meaningful relationships. These relationships can lead to creative ideas and shared vision. A shared vision helps people organize their knowledge, capacities, and resources. Through their collective voice, leadership, and organization, residents can and must keep institutions accountable to the communities and families they serve.

When leadership is supposed to

represent all people, and policy decisions affect families and communities, it is important to bring a diverse cross-section of citizens to the decision making table. Leadership is everywhere, but some voices are easily heard, while others do not have the opportunity to speak. An environment must be created where people feel safe and choose to participate to tell their story and express their beliefs. People need to feel they will be heard and respected. Leadership for all communities is only possible with inclusiveness and representation.

Therefore, organizations and agencies can change their way of doing business by moving from dependency to empowerment by involving residents in the governing process. Service agencies, nonprofits, and local institutions can invite community people to govern on their board of directors, work on their program planning committees, and share their wisdom and abilities. The bottom line is that through collaboration and community building, we can create and push for policies that focus on the well-being of people, communities, and the environment, not commodities or technology (Cernea 1995).

Specifically, I am addressing issues of community, diversity, identity, and power. For example, what groups receive the most benefits as illustrated by the current distribution of resources and income? What groups govern by occupying or controlling positions of authority? What groups win in

disputes over policy (Tambiah 1994)?

Many times power is described as a one-way, intimidating and controlling force derived

mostly from laws, status, force, and money. Instead, we can

*In the end, anthropologists need to help show communities that through their vision of what they seek to accomplish, they are carriers of meaning and shapers of thought and experience.*

view power from a bottom-up, grassroots perspective. Power is then creative, offering new resources, opportunities, and possibilities. It's collaborative and dynamic (Wolf 1994).

This kind of power is derived from many sources: relationships, knowledge, experience, networks, creativity, vision, confidence, and humor. Building this grassroots power is a process of building organized groups and demystifying the "experts" by discovering the strength of local knowledge and action. There is power in discipline, organization, and finding the "win-win" situations. There is power in community networks and cultural knowledge. There is power in tapping human compassion, cultivating hope, and utilizing creativity. And ultimately, future community power is a continuing process of building meaningful relationships (Kahn 1991; Lappe and DuBois 1994; Shields 1994; Stout 1996).

### The World System - The Global Challenge

Since the industrial revolution, we have witnessed the most rapid and comprehensive cultural changes in human history. Global, historic, technological, and economic forces have shaped the present. If unmanaged, these forces may contribute more to community breakdown, making the community building process more challenging. The global linkages that involve and tie local communities and cultures to large-scale systems such as regional, national, or global forces, destabilize rather than maintain local social organization over time. In many cases, linkages enlarge networks and erase boundaries and categories. Linkages transform organizations and communities, and are crucial to identify and analyze, over time (Kottak and Colson 1994). For example, the global restructuring of regional and international economic systems influences communities through systematic changes such as the growth of the finance and specialized service markets, the transnationalization of labor and capital, and the decentralization of industry and government (Bodley 1990, 1996; Cernea 1995; Kottak 1994; Mayberry-Lewis 1992, 1994; Wolf 1992).

Within this world system, challenges to vibrant and strong communities are familiar: ethnic, gender, and class inequality, discrimination, consumerism, environ-

mental degradation, unmonitored urbanization, deteriorating infrastructure, and increasing accounts of war, crime, violence, conflict, terrorism, and poverty around the globe. In addition, just when people seem to have access to information about virtually everything, including public affairs, they seem to be losing faith in their problem-solving abilities. Whether it is television, newspapers, electronic databases, or other sources, many citizens are plugged into the information and may know the problems, but they don't know what to do about them.

Specifically, citizens are disengaging from public affairs and civic activities. One private foundation examined the situation and documented countless reasons for the rising cultural rootlessness and weakening civic life. Specifically, there are few organized opportunities for civic engagement. The idea of a public life repels people. The majority of citizens feel they lack the necessary skills. Citizens generally feel they lack vision. The role of the citizen is devalued due to institutional decision making, yet our institutions also don't seem to function effectively. The concentration of wealth and power, money in politics, and corporate control of the media oppresses people. For many people, population movements and cultural pluralism create confusion and fear, not enrich our lives with diversity. Finally, many people believe globalism is weakening America's position in the international economy and decreasing our standard of

living.

Many citizens' groups do not excel because they lack the financial resources, skills, or participation. The associations may have underdeveloped objectives or are fronts for someone to advance personal agendas. A centralization of decision-making and overbearing egos can inhibit meaningful involvement and participation. Community groups and organizations can be weakened by having a loss of direction or focus. Leadership struggles, poor planning, burn-out, unrealistic demands, bureaucracy, turf battles, negative publicity, and competition weaken and sap energy from the association.

The implications of community breakdown and civic disengagement are profound. These challenges must be addressed by building and empowering community.

### Pathfinding

However, despite the challenges to building community, local conversations are sowing the seeds for future communities to grow. Foundations, institutions of higher learning, research centers, community institutions, and grassroots organizations are encouraging civic participation and creating new forums to address community renewal. These organizational changes, resulting from historical and global shifts in the international political economy, provide opportunities for people to collaborate with

grassroots organizations, volunteer associations, and local institutions to find common ground for future community building. The asset-based community development process is growing to be a significant part of this innovative and progressive agenda for positive social, economic, and political change in communities.

On the path to greater self-determination and self-sufficiency, people must begin to build community at home. Organizing around local knowledge and resources reinforces a sense of belonging and builds meaningful relationships. These meaningful relationships, based on community assets, serve as a basis for empowering people on their quest for stronger and healthier communities.

### Author

John Parker is an applied cultural anthropologist. He obtained a Bachelors (BA) in Anthropology from Wake Forest University and a Masters (MA) in Anthropology from the University of Memphis with concentrations in applied urban and medical anthropology. Parker directs Parker Community Enterprises, a consulting and research group that focuses on community empowerment and cultural survival in North American communities. He is also an organizer, coordinator, and volunteer for several community development organizations and initiatives in North Carolina.

Over the past three years, Parker has integrated applied anthropology with community economic development, community building, community organizing, philanthropy, and nonprofit management. His past experiences include community building and program work for a private and a

community foundation, collaborative community work on issues related to refugees and immigrants, and consulting or volunteer relationships with a variety of nonprofits.

Over the past six years, Parker has researched issues surrounding community empowerment, cultural survival, ethnicity, identity, organizational and community development, health strategies, folklore, and religion in the United States and Central America. His methods and approaches range from ethnography and advocacy to asset-based community development and community organizing.

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[Editor's note: the following letter was found by investigative reporter Wally Balloo when he was researching some archival material dealing with the history of the SAS.]

Raymond F Dewey Enterprises  
Expedition Outfitters and Guides  
New York, New York

21st April 1911

President  
Southern Entthropological Society  
Atlanta, Georgia USA

Dear Honored Sir,

It is with greatest anticipation that I write you with hopes that your wisdom and generosity, and the support of your Society, will enable me to pursue a lifelong dream.

I am an accomplished outdoorsman and fearless naturalist, and have been lately taken with the desire to further knowledge about exotic and unknown peoples for the advancement of science as it applied to members of our own Species.

Hence I am proposing an expedition to explore a little known area and bring back information and photographs about the manners and customs of some peoples who are at present almost unknown to western science.

The peoples I have in mind are the inhabitants of one of the Pacific Islands, only recently brought under contact with the civilizing influences of the West. The island I have in mind is, I believe, called "Samoah" or something such and I propose to visit it early next year.

I am led to believe that members of your Society are experts in the scientific Study and description of human peoples, and will rely upon them for methods and approaches to gathering the requisite knowledge from those peoples I find on the island.

I understand that there will be a voyage of the new liner, RMS Titanic, early next year, and I would, given your consent to this enterprise, book passage on it for the first leg of my expedition.

The final details of the expedition, and the costs, can be easily discussed once I have your assent for the sponsorship and the backing of your magnificent scientific society, about which I have heard nothing but the most wondrous reports.

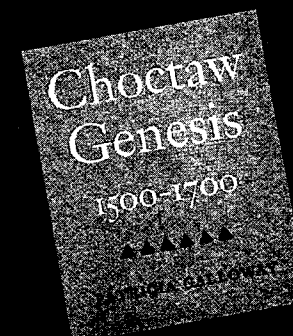
I look forward to a prompt reply.

Yours in Science,

  
Raymond F Dewey, Esq

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