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Whatever Happened to . . . ? An Analysis of the Generation of 1971-1972

By Robert V. Kemper, Southern Methodist University

INTRODUCTION

In a 1991 article about the funding of dissertation research in anthropology, Stuart Plattner and Christopher McIntyre concluded their analysis with the intriguing question: "What happens to the majority of cultural anthropology researchers when they receive their PhD?" (1991:208). This question stimulated the research underlying this brief paper, although I should add that the question has puzzled me for years -- usually rising to the point of conscious consideration on the occasion of the annual meetings of the AAA and the SfAA, where I always look forward to seeing old friends from graduate student days. Inevitably, as we would discuss the latest news about our respective professional doings and family affairs, someone would ask: "By the way, whatever happened to ...?" or in more recent years, "Did you hear that ... died?"

In 1991-1992, realizing that I was twenty years beyond the year of my doctorate, I decided to see if I could discover that had happened to members of my academic generation -- and, by inclusion, my classmates from the University of California at Berkeley. First, I compiled a list of all anthropology PhD recipients in the United States and Canada for the academic year 1971-1972. This involved comparing data in the annual Guide to Departments of Anthropology published by the AAA with similar data in Dissertation Abstracts (from University Microfilms International). The combined list contained a total of 325 individuals distributed among the sub-disciplines as follows: 207 in social-cultural anthropology, 61 in archaeology, 27 in physical anthropology, 16 in anthropological linguistics, and 14 in other/miscellaneous domains.

I then developed a computerized database (first using Paradox 3.5 ©, but recently converted to MS Excel 2003©) for the 207 social-cultural anthropologists. I have attempted to gather information about each person's current location and professional career development. In my initial efforts, my main information sources were the annual AAA Guides, the National Faculty Directory (from Gale Research), and other professional directories and membership lists. I also contacted the departments where individuals earned their degrees, called several alumni associations, communicated with former employers, and even contacted a few former spouses. Often, the research reminded me of the problems involved with my long-term fieldwork among the migrants from Tzintzuntzan, Mexico. In a sense, I was doing a longitudinal study of academic migrants from more than fifty origin points to nearly 200 destinations.

In the initial (1991-1992) phase of the study, I identified then current positions of 136 (65%) of the 207 cohort members and current addresses (without knowing professional positions) for an additional 29 persons (14%). During the current (2008-2009) phase of the study, I have lost track of some individuals and found others once unknown to me. The net effect is that I now have positional/location data on 170 (82.1%) of the 207 individuals. I acquired information from direct contacts with individuals, their colleagues, or their workplaces, as well as the Internet, using search engines such as Google™ and on-line information in AnthroSource, university catalogues, and person-centered databases (e.g., ZoomInfo and PublicRecordsPro.com).

Nonetheless, of two facts of life made it difficult to find all members of the cohort: first, some women changed their surnames through marriage (or divorce) after receiving their PhDs; second, some foreigners who received their degrees in the United States have returned home (or gone elsewhere). Consequently, the current analysis remains incomplete, but – like studies of migrant populations – is reaching its limits. In another fifteen years, when the Generation of 1971-1972 has become the “Golden” Generation of 1971-1972, the task will be easier. By then, nearly all of its members will have moved into the categories of “retired” or “deceased.”

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 1971-1972 GENERATION

Sources of PhD Degrees

The 207 social-cultural anthropologists received their doctorates from more than 50 institutions, of which two-thirds are public and one-third private. The proportion of degrees awarded by the public and private universities followed the same 2:1 ratio -- 138 vs. 69. Five universities accounted for 74 (35%) of the doctorates granted in 1971-2: the leading grantor was the University of California at Berkeley (24), followed by the University of Chicago (17), Columbia University (13), Harvard University (11), and the University of Pittsburgh (9). At the other extreme, nine schools gave just two doctorates and eighteen schools gave just a single PhD in sociocultural anthropology. The degree-granting institutions are located in 25 states as well as the District of Columbia and Canada. Five states accounted for 120 (57%) of the doctorates: the leader was California (40 degree recipients), followed by New York (27), Illinois (25), Pennsylvania (15), and Massachusetts (13).

THE 1971-1972 GENERATION IN 1991-1992 AND 2008-2009

Professional Positions: 1991-1992 and 2008-2009

Among the 136 individuals for whom I had been able to obtain career data in 1991-1992, 113 (83.1%) held academic positions, Only eight (5.9%) worked for governmental agencies (ranging from cities to states to the federal government to international agencies), five (3.7%) labored in the private sector, and just two (1.5%) were museum employees. Additionally, three (2.2%) persons were already retired and 5 (3.7%) were deceased. All but one of the retired and deceased individuals had previously been in academe.

Currently, of the 170 individuals for whom I have data, only 67 (39.4%) are employed predominantly in academic institutions, 24 (14.1%) labor in the private sector, nine (5.3%) work for governmental agencies (ranging from cities to states to the federal government to international agencies), and only one (0.6%) has a museum position. By now, 54 (31.8%) of the persons are retired and 15 (8.8%) are deceased. All but two of the retired and deceased individuals had held academic positions.

Academic Positions: 1991-1992 and 2008-2009

In 1991-1992, the 113 persons with active academic positions worked in a wide range of institutions, from first rank research universities to two-year community colleges: 32 people (28.3%), worked in PhD-granting programs, 30 (26.5%) in MA-granting programs, 34 (30.1%) in BA-granting programs, and 6 (5.3%) in academic programs that either incorporated a minor in anthropology or had no type of concentration in the subject (such as in community colleges). In addition,

5 (7.5%) persons had jobs in graduate departments offering such advanced graduate degrees as the EdD, 5 (7.5%) worked at foreign universities, and one person (0.9%) held a university-based administrative appointment.

Currently, among the 67 persons with active academic positions, 18 (26.9%) persons have positions in PhD-granting programs, 10 (14.9%) in MA-granting programs, and 11 (16.4%) in BA-granting programs. In addition, another 5 (7.5%) persons have jobs in graduate departments offering advanced non-anthropological graduate degrees such as the EdD, and 5 (7.5%) work in academic programs allowing either a minor in anthropology or no form of specialization in it. Foreign academic institutions employ 8 (11.9%) individuals.

GENDER ISSUES: 1991-1992 and 2008-2009

Of the 207 persons in the 1971-1972 generation, 133 (64.3%) were male and 64 (30.9%) female; I was unable to identify 10 (4.8%) of them. Data were available for 113 individuals in academic positions in 1991-1992. Of the 66 full professors, 47 (71.2%) were male and 19 (28.8%) female. With regard to advancement to the rank of full professor, there were no gender differences: 59% of both men and women had achieved this rank. In addition, the proportion of men and women in public vs. private academic institutions was the same: 60 of 80 (75%) males and 24 of 32 (75%) females were in state-run institutions.

By 2008-2009, the gender distribution for full professors ($n = 47$) at all types of institutions, domestic and foreign, is as follows: 35 (74.5%) are males and only 12 (25.5%) are females. The differences from the profile fifteen years ago may be due to the different ages when men and women completed their Ph.D. degrees and entered the job market, different rates of retirement, and different rates of abandoning the academy for private sector positions.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT ISSUES

After thirty-seven years, most of the persons in the 1971-1972 generation who have remained in the academy have gained tenure and been promoted to full professor or serve in higher administrative positions. Still, only 10 persons currently serve at the rank of full professor in PhD-granting programs—5 in private institutions and 5 in public institutions—while 29 full professors work outside of anthropology doctoral programs.

In effect, the 1971-1972 generation has spread its members well beyond the PhD-granting programs which generated them. In several cases, individuals were hired (and have remained at or retired from) the same colleges where they had spent their undergraduate years. In these cases, at least, we can see how undergraduate anthropology programs are able to "reproduce" themselves from generation to generation.

The same cannot be said of doctoral programs in anthropology. One of the most striking findings to emerge from the present study is that only 10 of the 67 persons still in academic positions are in positions where they can "reproduce" themselves. Once all of these individuals have retired, we will be able to determine if the relatively small number of individuals at doctorate-granting institutions will have been able to turn out enough

new PhDs to replace the entire 1971-1972 generation.

SINGLE-INSTITUTION VS. MULTIPLE-INSTITUTION CAREER PATHS

The most common career path has been to remain at the same institution throughout one's career, often rising through the ranks from Assistant Professor to tenured Associate Professor to Professor. Numerous individuals have gone on to serve as department chairs, others have been honored with named chairs in recognition of their distinguished service and accomplishments, and a handful have become Deans, Provosts, and University Presidents. A number of persons have completed (or have retired after completing) 30+ years of consecutive service with the same academic employer; relatively few individuals have made many moves during their careers. This stability among the academic members of the 1971-1972 generation stands in contrast to the mobility and academic gamesmanship of anthropologists who received their doctorates during the 1960s, when jobs were more plentiful and new programs were blooming across the country (cf. van den Berghe 1970).

This stability was probably due to the reduced availability of positions at the associate and full professorial ranks from the early 1970s through the decade of the 1980s (D'Andrade et al. 1975). During that period of economic difficulties, anthropology departments in both public and private institutions had difficulty in convincing their administrations to open new positions at ranks above assistant professor, and it was hard to replace retiring senior faculty members with anyone other than a beginning assistant professor.

ACADEMIC VS. NON-ACADEMIC CAREER TRACKS

Following the models of their mentors, most members of the 1971-1972 generation sought to sustain academic careers; few went into full-time work in the private sector or took government jobs. Early in their careers, many academically-based scholars did stints of applied work through contracts with government agencies or NGOs. As time passed, some scholars left the safety of the groves of North American academe for the risks and rewards of the rest of the world. Some took positions at universities beyond the Americas. Others joined for-profit or non-profit organizations. A few started their own consulting firms.

TENSIONS BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Many members of the 1971-1972 generation have played important roles in building anthropology programs, whether at the PhD, MA, or BA levels. Some have had heavy teaching responsibilities (as many as four or five different courses each semester) and some have labored as the only anthropologist on their campus. By contrast, individuals fortunate enough to obtain jobs in the more "elite" anthropology departments often have had lighter teaching loads (usually two courses per term). The effects of these different institutional settings on an individual's professional recognition by anthropologists beyond the local campus has been significant in defining individuals as "locals," "cosmopolitans," or some combination of the two (cf. Merton 1957:387-420).

For instance, a few of the 1971-1972 anthropologists have had campus buildings named for them, while others have had local-level academic awards and prizes created in their honor. Within the profession as a whole, numerous members of the 1971-1972 generation of sociocultural anthropologists have held important elected offices in professional societies or have been appointed as editors of journals and book series, but so far no one among them has been recognized by election to the National Academy of Sciences. The Association of Feminist Anthropology (a unit of the AAA) is now preparing to award its annual "Sylvia Forman Prize, named for Sylvia Helen Forman [who died in 1992], one of the founders of [the] AFA, whose dedication to both her students and feminist principles contributed to the growth of feminist anthropology."

CONCLUSION

Becoming an anthropologist does not end with completion of one's PhD. This is merely the credential for beginning a career. Becoming an anthropologist is a continuing, life-long process in which professional involvement, research, study, teaching (for those in the academic track), publications/reports provide measures of progress as well as personal satisfaction. For most persons in the 1971-1972 generation, the academic career model has been favored over alternative models. Advancement through the traditional stages—from assistant professor to associate professor to full professor to emeritus or emerita status in retirement—offers evidence to other members of the profession and to members of one's own institution about an individual's success over time. (Appendix 1).

However, if success is narrowly defined as having achieved the rank of full professor at a PhD-granting institution of equivalent prestige to that in which one's PhD was earned, then very few have enjoyed success. Among the 90 anthropologists within the generation of 1971-1972 who so far have become full professors and remained in the academy or already have retired at this rank, only 16 (17.8%), finished their careers or continue to work at institutions granting the PhD in anthropology.

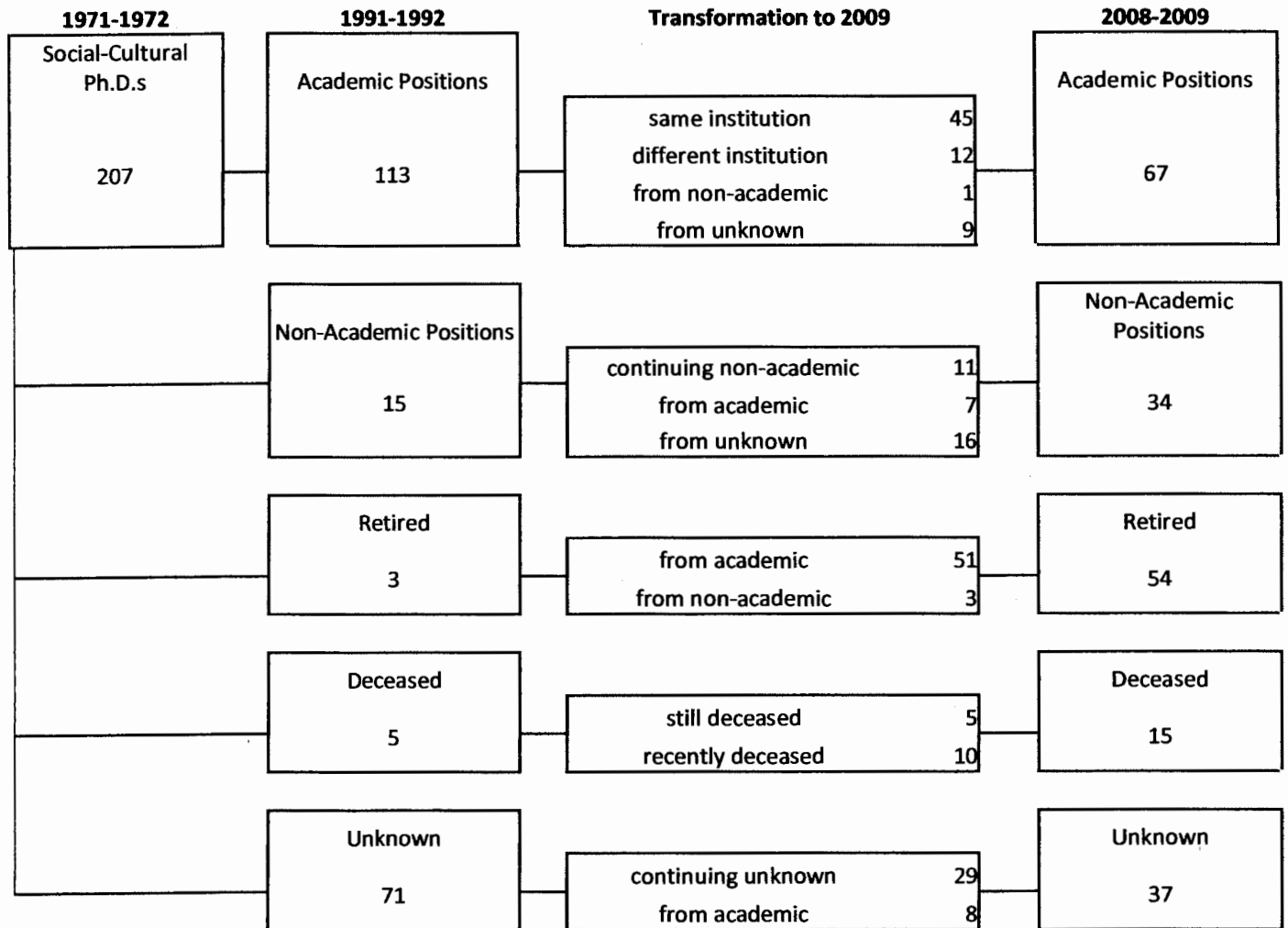
Far more common was the pattern of moving "down and out." After reading a draft of this paper, one member of the 1971-1972 academic generation wrote to me, "Let me note in regard to your down and out thesis, that I was the "father of anthropology" in Walla Walla after coming from the Dept. at Arizona which had a faculty roughly the same size as the whole of Whitman College." I can add that he spent his career building up anthropology at this well-known liberal arts institution, which currently has an Anthropology Department with three full-time faculty teaching 29 majors.

In like manner, other members of the 1971-1972 generation played key roles in the expansion of the discipline to many campuses across the United States and Canada, and even to foreign countries – including Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Germany, Great Britain, Korea, New Zealand, Qatar, Sweden, Thailand. We have enabled a new generation of students to become familiar with key anthropological concepts. Moreover, members of the generation of 1971-1972 have also made important contributions beyond the academy. Some have become active in the private sector, others have built on their doctorates in anthropology to go on to success in medicine, law, finance, and the like.

It is not yet possible to measure the full impact of the contributions of the 1971-1972

generation on anthropology as a discipline, as a profession, and as an academic enterprise, as well as on society at large. We also need comparative data on other cohorts from earlier and more recent decades to judge better the experiences of the members of this generation, as well information on those whom I have not been able to locate or contact. I hope that this brief paper will encourage other anthropologists to examine their own cohorts as I have examined my own generation. I look forward to reconsidering the issues raised in this paper in 2022--when the generation of 1971-1972 reaches its 50th year. (Appendix 2)

Appendix 1 – The Generation of 1971-1972 – Career Transformations



Appendix 2 – The Generation of 1971-1972 – In Memoriam

Name	University of Ph.D.
Donald E. Christie	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Rosemary Cochran (Sharp)	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Abdel-Hamid Mohamed El-Zein	University of Chicago
Sylvia H. Forman	University of California, Berkeley
Anthony H. Galt	University of California, Riverside
Frances H. Harwood	University of Chicago
Linda J. M. Hubbell	University of California, Berkeley
Ronald J. Maduro	University of California, Berkeley
Frank E. Manning	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Keith L. Morton	University of Oregon
John G. Peck	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
P. David Price	University of Chicago
Michael Salovesh	University of Chicago
Michael Sozan	Syracuse University
Nancy Tanner	University of California, Berkeley

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