

BA STUDENT, ANTHROPOLOGY, UNITED KINGDOM

I spent a large portion of my undergraduate studies trying to understand ethical international development policy. I worked in the United States and abroad for both top-down development projects and development projects organized by the recipients of aid themselves. I researched international policy in my courses at Temple University and at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., and I attended many conferences on policy and policymaking. During these experiences, I was constantly confronted with a discourse on development that largely eliminated the voices and participation of the people affected by development policies. After reading about the many historical failures of US development programs, I became convinced that any policymaker that does not incorporate the concerns and knowledge of the communities they seek to help would never succeed in their endeavor. This revelation convinced me that a background in political science, or any single discipline, was not sufficient to understand the needs of communities in the developing world, or to translate those needs into constructive policy.

Recently, I started to read more works in anthropology, and I have come to regard anthropological inquiry and ethnography as essential skills for individuals interested in issues of ethical development. Initially, my readings in anthropology were limited to works published in the United States, largely in cultural anthropology. However, I was often frustrated by the abstraction of culture from social relations and found the aversion to comparative anthropological approaches disappointing. At a friend's suggestion I began to read British social anthropologist, including Radcliffe-Brown. The Modern British School was highly engaged in development issues throughout the world and did not shy away from useful comparisons. I also found their commitment to Malinowkian intensive fieldwork appealing.

My proposal is to complete option A (the advanced taught course) in the first instance (with the intention of continuing on to do a Ph.D.) in Developmental Anthropology at Cambridge University. This course is intended for students who have studied anthropology in the context of a more general degree and provides an intensive grounding in social anthropology. Moreover, the curriculum focuses on development-related themes from a global perspective. The seminar format will allow me to address my theoretical and methodological questions and prepare for my dissertation fieldwork, which I plan to begin in September _____ in Cochabamba, Bolivia (The Truman Scholarship Foundation will provide the funds for my doctoral research). The required 12,000-word thesis will give me the opportunity to complete an extensive literature review on topics related to my dissertation, mainly kinship and patterns of migration in regard to development policy. The Cambridge program in Development Anthropology will not only provide a rigorous education in British anthropology but will also lay the foundation for future research. This research will examine the breakdown of kinship structures in Bolivia in relation to government counter-narcotics policy.

The collapse of the global tin market and stagnation of Bolivia's economy in the 1980s left few economic opportunities for laborers in the Chapare region. The situation was further depressed by structural adjustment policies imposed by the IMF, which undermined union influence, cutback public spending and eliminated social safety nets. Bolivia's colonization programs, which had stimulated the migration of many small farmers to the Chapare, no longer supported them. They had no **way to earn a living**. Many laborers in the Chapare began to cultivate coca, which is the plant used to make coca paste and cocaine. Coca soon drove the local economy. Young men from the highlands migrated to work as pisadores, wage laborers that processed the coca leaves into coca paste. The transition from traditional farming to the cultivation of coca dramatically changed the structure of the family and the nature of kinship. Studies of the region documented the economic and political implications for communities but they largely ignored the transformation of the family structure and relationships. Generally, the discourse on the drug trade, which is plagued by economic reductionism, systematically ignored family stories. I hope to change that by writing my dissertation on the adaptation of the family and kinship among coca farmers. However, to research the complexity of social relations in the Chapare. The development anthropology programme at Cambridge would train me in methodological approaches to kinship and family.

I want to use a comparative anthropological approach to my research on the Chapare. I want to illustrate the similarities in the breakdown of kinship among coca producers as compared with the breakdown of kinship structures among the consumers of coca products in the West. This type of comparative cross-cultural study is rarely done in the cultural anthropology of the United States. But such a study could add to the discourse on narcotics, which rarely talks about the cross-cultural maladaptation of social relationships. I am hoping to provide a new

perspective and extend the dialogue on drugs, and drug policy, beyond the binary rhetoric of supply-side and demand-side solutions. There are a few scholars at Cambridge working on projects that involve the cross-cultural kinship studies but I want to work with _____.

Professor _____ researched kinship in Melanesia and in the United Kingdom. She drew comparisons between the ethnographic data from the two regions in her book *After Nature*. She also worked with Professor _____, chair of the department of social anthropology at Cambridge University, to articulate a "comparative method, or set of methods, that would be universalistic at some level and yet respectful of the many contingencies that have produced variation within and between regions." _____ has suggested that "the most fruitful lines of comparison might lie not, between things, but between culturally embedded, and sometimes physically embodied, relations." She has published widely on comparative methodology, ethnography, gender relations, problems of migration and feminist scholarship. She is also the leader of the British movement to do comparative studies of gender. She is fully engaged in contemporary debates in Britain and America. In her recent book, *An Audit Culture*, she discussed professional accountability as it related to ethnographic encounters.

Drawing any sophisticated comparisons between kinship structures of the rural producers of coca and the kinship structures of the largely urban consumers of coca products will prove extremely challenging. I will need to develop a conceptual framework and methodological approach that acknowledges a wide variety of terms and issues, including "the nature of family," relations of production and reproduction in different socio-economic contexts, the construction of gender, and production and consumption of commodities in contemporary economics. However, a cross-cultural study on kinship as it relates to the drug trade would be extremely useful in understanding the social costs of drug related policies. I am convinced that the faculty at Cambridge is a necessary part of constructing that study.