

APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

Improving Child Nutrition in Malawi

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is that branch of the U.S. federal government responsible for administering non-military foreign assistance for developing countries. Rather than giving cash to other countries to do with as they please, U.S. foreign aid programs provide technical expertise geared toward programs of sustainable development in areas such as education, agriculture, family planning, and health services. In recent decades USAID has relied on applied anthropologists to provide insights into the cultures of the people to whom these programs are directed. Sonia Patten (2003) provides an excellent example in the role she played as a medical anthropologist on a USAID-funded team involved in a nutritional program for children in Malawi.

The problem that Patten and her colleagues were attempting to address is widespread protein malnutrition among children in Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the



world. It is estimated that 60 percent of the children in Malawi are undernourished and that one out of every four children will die before age five. The most vulnerable group is the toddlers, who go from breast milk to a nutritionally inadequate substitute of gruel made of water and corn flour. Even if children survive on such a protein-deficient diet, they are susceptible to a number of diseases and often do not develop into robust adults. The challenge for Patten's group was to craft a pilot program that would address this problem of child malnutrition. They decided on a goat project that would give milk-producing goats to mothers with children under the age of five.

Although many families keep goats, they are non-milk-producing goats that are eaten for meat or sold as a source of needed cash. After developing a hearty breed of milk-producing goat, Patten and her colleagues were ready to introduce the program to local women. Patten's contribution to the group (composed of nutritionists, health specialists,

and animal husbandry experts) was to provide the cultural baseline information needed to ensure that local people participated in the project. She collected information on their daily activities, the traditional patterns of controlling livestock, dietary patterns, and gender roles, among other topics. Most of the local people were from the Chewa ethnic group, a matrilineal group that practiced matrilocal residence. As we saw in Chapter 10, it is men, not women, who are the chiefs and control property in matrilineal societies. Thus, among the Chewa, men routinely decided whether a goat would be slaughtered or sold. When it was proposed that women would be given control over the new milk goats, the Chewa men initially objected on the grounds that men had always controlled the use of livestock. Because she had studied gender relations between Chewa men and women, medical anthropologist Patten was able to predict the male objections and deal with them directly before the goats were distributed to families. Team members were able to convince the men that this project was designed to help their children eat better and live longer, not to increase the number of goats men were free to sell or slaughter. Eventually the men agreed to support the project, goats were distributed to mothers of small children, and the project began.

Once the project was under way, the team took periodic height and weight measurements of the children participating in the milk-goat project. The results showed that even small amounts of milk resulted in normal growth for children. The program has been so successful that it has been expanded to other parts of the country. Although anthropologist Patten was not an expert in either children's health or animal husbandry, she nevertheless played an important role in the success of this project. By understanding the everyday cultural patterns of the Chewa, and particularly the roles played by men and women, she was able to help the multidisciplinary team overcome potential problems and ensure that the program would reach those it was intended to help.

Questions for Further Thought

1. How would you describe the role Sonia Patten played in this interdisciplinary health team?
2. Why were Patten and her team so insistent on ensuring that the milk-goats remained in the hands of the mothers of small children?
3. What other types of projects might USAID fund in the country of Malawi?



Anthropology Applied

Advocacy for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Anthropologists are increasingly concerned about the rapid disappearance of the world's remaining indigenous peoples for a number of reasons, foremost being the basic issue of human rights. The world today is rushing to develop those parts of the planet that have so far escaped industrialization, or the extraction of resources regarded as vital to the well-being of developed economies. These development efforts are planned, financed, and carried out both by governments and businesses (generally the huge multinational corporations) as well as by international lending institutions. Unfortunately, the rights of native peoples generally have not been incorporated into the programs and concerns of these organizations, even where laws exist that are supposed to protect the rights of such peoples.

For example, the typical pattern for development of Brazil's Amazon basin has been for the government to build roads, along which it settles poor people from other parts of the country. This brings them into conflict with Indians already living there, who begin to die off in large numbers from diseases contracted from the new settlers. Before long, the neo-Brazilian settlers learn that the soils are not suited for their kind of farming; meanwhile, outside logging, mining, and agribusiness interests exert pressure to get them off the land. Ultimately, the neo-Brazilians wind up living in disease-ridden

slums, while the Indians are decimated by the diseases and violence unleashed upon them by the outsiders. Those who survive are usually relocated to places where resources are inadequate to support them.

In an attempt to do what they can to help indigenous peoples gain title to their lands and avoid exploitation by outsiders, anthropologists in various countries have formed advocacy groups. The major one in the United States is Cultural Survival, Inc., based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This organization's interest is not in preserving indigenous cultures in some sort of romantic, pristine condition, so that they will be there to study or to serve as "living museum exhibits." Rather, it is to provide the information and support to help endangered groups assess their situation, adapt to the changing circumstances, and practice self-determination in the face of outside political forces. Challenging dominant assumptions that indigenous peoples should be assimilated into mainstream societies, Cultural Survival advocates that they should have the freedom to make their own decisions about how they live. Working as a facilitator, the organization assists with projects initiated by indigenous groups to deal with problems defined by the groups themselves. It may suggest ways to help and has the capability to activate extensive networks of anthropologists, other indigenous peoples who

already have faced similar problems, and those government officials whose support can be critical to success. This organization's publications play an important role publicizing the distinct and shared challenges confronting indigenous peoples all around the world.

Cultural Survival funds and other forms of assistance have focused in particular on securing the land rights of indigenous peoples and organizing native federations. It has also identified and funded a number of locally designed experiments in sustainable development. Among these is the Turkmen Weaving Project (which helps Afghan refugees to make profitable income from traditional rug weaving) and the Ikwe Marketing Collective (which helps Minnesota Indians market wild rice and crafts). It also founded Cultural Survival Enterprises, which has developed and expanded markets for such indigenous products as the nuts used in the popular Rain Forest Crunch (itself a creation of Cultural Survival). The organization achieved a major accomplishment in 1982, spearheading a movement that convinced the World Bank to adopt a policy that *guaranteed* the rights and autonomy of tribal peoples and minorities in any project in which the bank is involved. Despite such successes, much remains to be done to secure the survival of indigenous peoples in all parts of the world. ■ ■ ■

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APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

The Ethnography of Homeless Youth in the United States

 It has been estimated that between 500,000 and 1.5 million youth in the United States either run away from home or are kicked out of their homes every year. Although most runaways eventually return home, a sizable percentage of young people never return home. Instead they separate themselves permanently from their parents and families and adopt a risky lifestyle of homelessness, vagrancy, and delinquency.

This world of homeless youth often operates below the radar of societal institutions that might provide them with needed social services.

In an effort to learn more about their hardships and adventures, anthropologist Marni Finkelstein (2005) conducted ethnographic research among a group of these nomadic street youth in the East Village of New York City. The researcher defined her subject group as people under the age of twenty-one who have separated themselves (either voluntarily or not) from their families and who do not live in homeless shelters. Previous studies of homeless youth have used their family backgrounds as the

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major explanatory variable of their behavior. By way of contrast, Finkelstein's more emic approach (see Chapter 1) describes the world of these homeless youth by observing and interviewing them about their own experiences on the streets. Allowing her informants to use their own words, Finkelstein describes the process of leaving home, developing functional social networks, finding sources of food and cash, and coping with the often violent and hostile world of the street.

Finkelstein uncovered a number of useful features of the culture of street kids. First, contrary to popular stereotypes, the homeless youth who congregated in the East Village did not come from wealthy homes in suburban New York and were not playing the role of street kids for the summer because it was a cool thing to do; rather these were kids from the South and the West Coast who had been on the streets for, in many cases, a number of years. Second, the lifestyle of these homeless youth was nomadic. They tended to glorify mobility while rejecting the notions of boundaries, territories, and conventional definitions of sedentary communities.

Not unlike European Roma (gypsies), the street kids romanticized their nomadism as a natural part of their life journey, in which they were free from the constraints of established society. Third, street kids have an extensive network of friends and companions, many of whom take on the character of fictive kin. These family-like relationships—which take the place of the real family relationships they have left behind—are important mechanisms for socializing the newly homeless to life on the street and enhancing access to resources, opportunities, and psychological support.

Finkelstein's unique study of traveling street youth has important implications for improving social services and health care resources. For example, an important finding from this study was that these homeless youth did not take advantage of conventional social service agencies because they were too restrictive and invasive of their privacy. These young migrants were less likely to sleep at youth shelters, preferring instead to sleep on the street and use "drop-in" centers that provide some basic services without asking many questions. Given this lifestyle preference, Finkelstein suggests that social service providers must become more proactive by going to where street kids congregate (such as known parks) to provide information and basic services. Another suggestion derived

from the study is that social service providers must "find a balance between not coming on too strong because of street kids' mistrust of adults, and not being too relaxed because of perceptions that adults don't care about them" (Finkelstein 2005: 134). And finally, Finkelstein learned that service providers tried to entice the street kids to use their services by offering food and condoms, commodities that were fairly easy to come by. What the homeless youth wanted most was to have their hygiene needs met, such as access to hot showers, clean socks, toothpaste, and tampons. If social service providers can follow the recommendations that emerged from this ethnographic study, perhaps these highly mobile street youth will more readily utilize the available services.

Questions for Further Thought

1. In what way(s) was Finkelstein's study of homeless youth in the East Village of New York City different from other studies?
2. How would some of the findings from the study be useful for law enforcement officials in New York City?
3. What do these homeless youth have in common with European Roma (gypsies)?

APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

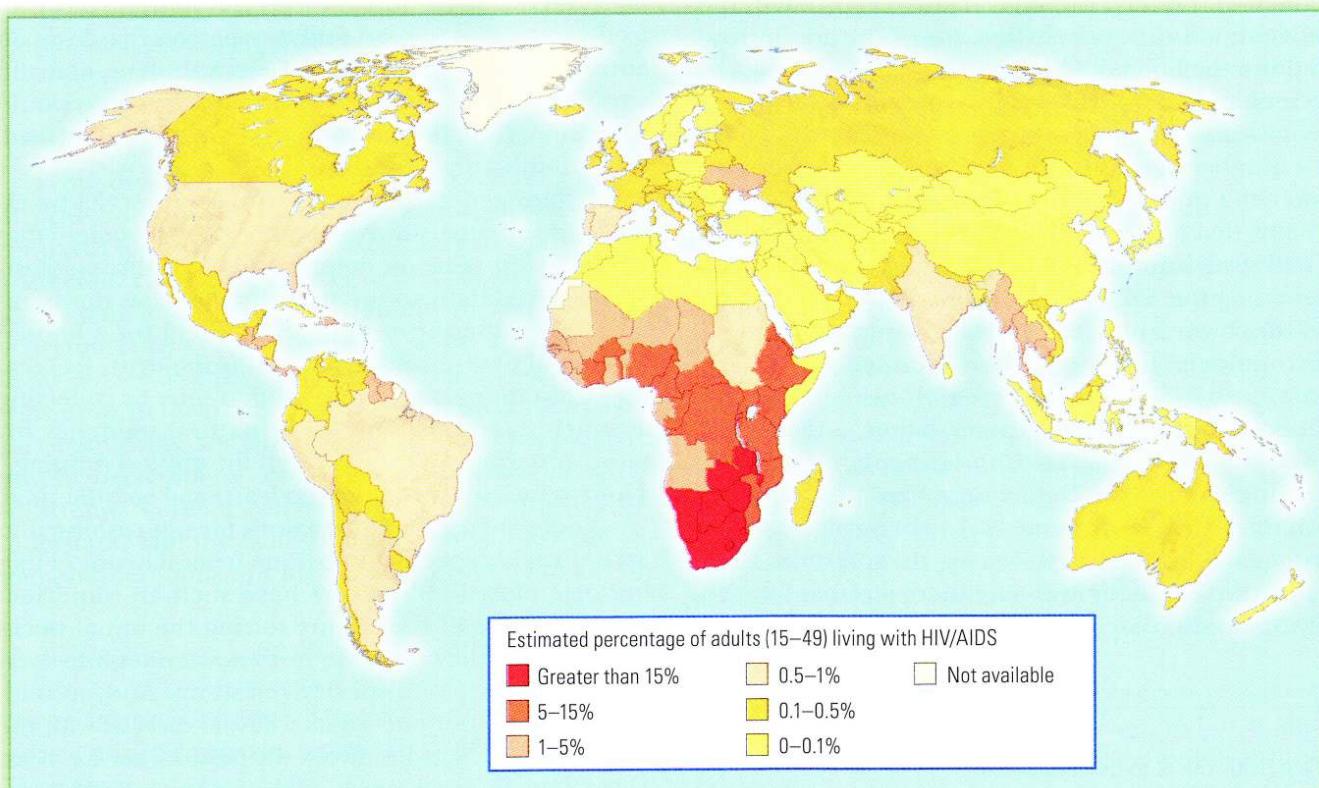
Anthropological Research and AIDS

In the early 1980s, very few Americans had ever heard of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). By the start of the new millennium, however, AIDS had become the leading infectious cause of death in the world. Since its inception several decades ago, more than sixty million people worldwide have been infected with HIV. In 2003 alone AIDS claimed three million lives, or more than 8,200 people each day. This death toll is equivalent to twenty fully loaded 747s crashing every day! Tragically, 95 percent of all new AIDS cases are occurring in the poorest countries that are least equipped to handle the epidemic. The situation is most grim on the continent of Africa, where AIDS is erasing decades of progress in life expectancy. For example, the life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa is currently forty-seven years, but without the AIDS epidemic, life expectancy would be sixty-two years. The future for many African countries is particularly bleak. It has been estimated by the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS that a person in Lesotho who turned fifteen years of age in 2000 has a 74 percent chance of contracting HIV before he or she turns fifty. And while the death rate from AIDS has slowed down in wealthy countries that can afford expensive drugs, the disease remains the fifth leading cause of death in the United States among people between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four.

The AIDS epidemic is particularly difficult to get under control for several reasons. First, the disease attacks the human immune system, one of the most complex and inadequately understood systems of the body. Second, the group of viruses thought to cause the disease is so poorly understood that a chemical cure is not likely to be found in the immediate future. Thus the biological factors in solving the AIDS threat are highly complex. Efforts to stem the epidemic are further complicated by cultural factors; that is, the high-risk populations (intravenous drug users and prostitutes) are not visible subcultures. This creates additional problems for programs of AIDS prevention.

Until a vaccine for AIDS is developed, education remains the best strategy for reducing the spread of the disease. Because AIDS is sexually transmitted, the world's populations must learn as much as possible about how to avoid contracting the disease. Yet before public health officials can design effective educational programs, they need a good deal of cultural and behavioral information on high-risk populations. Cultural anthropologists have made significant contributions to programs of preventive education by conducting ethnographic research on the cultural patterns of sexual behavior among these high-risk groups.

One such study was conducted by anthropologist Michelle Renaud (1993, 1997), who worked with registered (legal)



prostitutes in Kaolack, Senegal. Because Kaolack is a cross-roads town with a steady flow of truck drivers and rural migrants, it has a thriving sex trade and a correspondingly high rate of sexually transmitted diseases. It was estimated that approximately four of every ten of Kaolack's registered prostitutes were HIV positive, as compared to 10 percent of prostitutes nationally. Renaud worked out of a local health clinic where registered prostitutes came for their bimonthly examinations as well as for treatment of sexually transmitted diseases.

Drawing on structured and unstructured interviews, as well as participant-observation, Renaud gathered valuable data on the lifestyles, worldviews, and decision making of these legal prostitutes. A primary finding of the study was that almost all prostitutes enforced condom use among their clients. However, in their roles as girlfriends, these same prostitutes required their partners to use condoms only 71 percent of the time. Similarly, nonprostitutes in Renaud's sample were reluctant to insist that their sexual partners use condoms. Renaud concluded that both prostitutes and nonprostitutes did "not want to risk losing their partners by implying that one of them might be HIV positive" (1993: 28). Armed with this empirical finding, she could then recommend to Senegalese health officials that future AIDS education programs target groups other than just the prostitutes, including the clients of the prostitutes and particularly their boyfriends.

Applied anthropological studies such as Renaud's have limitations. Collecting behavioral data on sexual practices among any group of people will always be difficult because of its highly personal nature. When anthropologists seek such sensitive information from a subgroup often stigmatized by the wider society, problems of data validity are greatly magnified. Nevertheless cultural anthropologists such as Renaud have an important role to play in the monumental effort it will take to eradicate this disease; that is, they can contribute to the design of successful prevention programs by providing both attitudinal and behavioral data from the ethnographic study of at-risk communities at home and abroad. In fact a study released in March 2006 (Donnelly 2006: 8) suggests that new HIV infections have peaked in most areas of the world. Even though HIV has stabilized at very high levels, the findings raise hope that the types of preventive programs designed by anthropologists are having a positive impact on the fight against the pandemic.

Questions for Further Thought

1. Why is the AIDS epidemic so difficult to control?
2. How could culture be a factor in the spread of a disease such as AIDS?
3. What other areas concerning the AIDS epidemic must be investigated by anthropologists?

Ferraro, Gary and Susan Andreatta.
2010. Cultural Anthropology: An Applied Perspective. 8th Edition.
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APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

Hawaiian Children at School and at Home

A basic premise of educational anthropology is that the cultural patterns students bring with them into the classroom must be taken into account if these students are to be successfully integrated into the culture of the school. This is precisely the objective that educational anthropologist Cathie Jordan brought to her work with the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP), a privately funded educational research effort designed to develop more effective methods for teaching Hawaiian children in the public schools.

For decades children of Hawaiian ancestry, particularly those from low-income families, have been chronic underachievers in the public school system. Classroom teachers often describe these children as lazy, uncooperative, uninvolved, and disinterested in school. Differences do exist between their dialect, known as Hawaiian Creole English, and the Standard English used by teachers, but the linguistic differences are minimal. Thus Cathie Jordan and her colleagues at KEEP needed to look beyond linguistic differences to find



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an explanation for why Hawaiian children were not succeeding in school. Accordingly KEEP focuses on the wider Hawaiian culture—particularly interaction patterns within the family—in order to discover learning skills the children had developed at home that could be used and built upon in the classroom.

When dealing with parents and siblings at home, Hawaiian children behave very differently than when interacting with teachers and classmates. From a very early age, Hawaiian children contribute significantly to the everyday work of the household. Tasks that all children are expected to perform regularly include cleaning, cooking, laundry, yard work, caring for younger siblings, and (for male children) earning cash from outside employment. Working together in cooperative sibling groups, brothers and sisters organize their own household work routines with only minimal supervision from parents. Young children learn to perform their household tasks by observing their older siblings and adults. And, according to Jordan and her colleagues (1992: 6), these chores are performed willingly within

a "context of strong values of helping, cooperation, and contributing to the family."

The paradox facing KEEP was, How could children be so cooperative and responsible at home and yet so disengaged and lazy in school? A comparison of the home and school cultures revealed some major structural differences. When a mother wants her children to do a job around the house, she makes that known and then allows the children to organize how it will be done. In other words, she gives responsibility for the job to the children. In contrast, the classroom is almost totally teacher dominated. The teacher makes the assignments, sets the rules, and manages the resources of the classroom. Children are controlled by the classroom rather than being responsible for it. Once these cultural differences between home and school were revealed by anthropological fieldwork, the educational anthropologist was able to suggest some changes for improving student involvement in their own education. The solution was fairly straightforward: Have teachers run their classrooms in much the same way as Hawaiian mothers run their households. Specifically teachers should minimize verbal instructions, withdraw from direct supervision, and allow students to take responsibility for organizing and assigning specific tasks. When these

changes were made, Hawaiian students became more actively involved in their own education, and consequently their achievement levels improved.

Here, then, is an example of how educational anthropologists can apply their findings to improve the learning environment for Hawaiian children. Interestingly, this case of applied anthropology did not follow the traditional solution to problems of minority education, which involves trying to change the child's family culture to make it conform to the culture of the classroom. Rather Jordan and her colleagues at KEEP solved the problem by modifying the culture of the classroom to conform to the skills, abilities, and behaviors that Hawaiian students brought with them from their family culture.

Questions for Further Thought

1. What is educational anthropology?
2. Can you think of any subcultural group living in your area whose family patterns should be studied by the local school system?
3. What other types of educational problems might applied anthropologists be able to solve?

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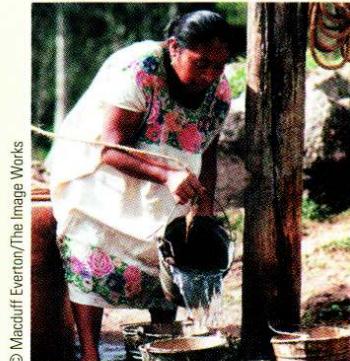
2010. *Cultural Anthropology: An Applied Perspective*. 8th Edition.
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APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

Community-Based Water Management in Mexico

 It is well known that waterborne diseases account for a significant number of deaths throughout the world, particularly in developing countries. Less well known perhaps is that many people struggle simply to gain access to enough water for their daily needs—regardless of whether the water is suitable for drinking. More than one billion of the world's people lack access to sufficient water for drinking, bathing, preparing food, doing laundry, and disposing of human waste. Many have access to less than the thirteen gallons of water recommended as the minimum daily need. Water scarcity can burden poor rural people who often spend considerable time, money, and labor ensuring that their households have adequate water supplies. Limited water also means people cannot follow preventive hygiene measures, which puts them at risk for cholera, skin and eye infections, and other health problems.

Attempts to improve household water supplies in developing countries have met with limited long-term success. Up to half of newly installed community drinking water and sanitation systems become inoperable within five years. Michael C. Ennis-McMillan (2001, 2002, 2005), an anthropologist who studies environmental health issues in Mexico, argues that part of the problem may be that international health and development programs have focused largely on the technical



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and administrative aspects of installing piped water systems. By studying a successful community-based water project, Ennis-McMillan demonstrates that cultural factors play an important role in the long-term success of such programs.

Ennis-McMillan carried out ethnographic research in La Purificación Tepetitla, a peasant community of about six thousand people in the foothills of the Valley of Mexico just outside of Mexico City. His case study examines the thirty-year history of a community-based structure for managing a piped water

system. By living in the community for more than a year and a half, Ennis-McMillan observed and participated in a wide range of activities related to the use of drinking water in daily life. He also collected data from interviews with more than one hundred local authorities who participated in managing the piped water system. He attended committee meetings, policy discussions, and water shutoffs, and he provided labor for drinking water projects.

La Purificación Tepetitla's form of water management emphasizes a long-standing tradition of distributing water resources in an equitable fashion, ensuring that each household receives about two hours of water every other day. Each household gains a right to the water by paying water fees and fulfilling community obligations. All households must provide a certain amount of unpaid labor to help dig ditches, lay water

pipes, build water tanks, and complete other construction tasks. The community also expects every resident to help oversee the water system and provide other community service when called upon. Failure to fulfill obligations results in the imposition of sanctions, including the withholding of piped water.

Ennis-McMillan also collected information on how people perceived and talked about suffering from water scarcity. People expressed less concern about waterborne diseases than about ongoing water shortages as well as attempts by outsiders to channel water away from rural communities to supply Mexico City's growing population. Residents linked their physical and emotional hardships with inadequate amounts of water and ongoing struggles to maintain a low-cost, equitable, and participatory piped water system.

La Purificación Tepetitla's case illustrates how traditional institutions allow communities to maintain equitable water management practices. The community maintains local control to set and collect water fees, resolve conflicts, and coordinate labor requirements for repair, maintenance, and operation of the system. In this way residents avoid less desirable alternatives for obtaining water, such as carrying water from streams, using polluted irrigation water, buying water in urban centers and carrying it home, requesting water from trucks, and allowing Mexico City to take irrigation water in exchange for treated and untreated urban wastewater.

This sort of research demonstrates the importance of incorporating a broader cultural perspective in water development programs. An anthropological approach takes into account how people link concerns about water quality with equally

pressing concerns about quantity and distribution. This work shows how the collective concern regarding water scarcity reinforces local interest in traditional nonmarket principles of natural resource management. The community maintains direct authority over water management and impresses upon all residents the need to participate in running the water system by paying fees, providing unpaid labor for projects, and supporting local policies.

Ennis-McMillan's research serves as a strong reminder to policy makers that water development projects risk failure if they do not adequately provide a fair distribution of household water to all residents. People living in poor communities throughout the world view water as part of a social contract between citizen and community rather than simply as a service for which one pays money. When water is a scarce and costly resource, community-based water management is more likely to succeed if it takes into account cultural principles of equity and fairness.

Questions for Further Thought

1. What are some of the consequences of inadequate water supplies for rural populations?
2. Why do you think the community members were more concerned about water scarcity than waterborne diseases?
3. How did the community get full participation in maintaining the water system?
4. Do you think such programs could or should be implemented in other parts of the world? What cultural information is important when considering water projects?



Anthropology Applied

A kind of policy research anthropologists frequently do is a social impact assessment, which entails collection of data about a community or neighborhood for planners of development projects. Such an assessment seeks to determine a project's effect by determining how and upon whom its impact will fall and whether the impact is likely to be positive or negative. In the United States, any project requiring a federal permit or license, or using federal funds, by law must be preceded by a social impact assessment as part of the environmental review process. Examples of such projects include highway construction, urban renewal, water diversion schemes, and land reclamation. Often, projects of these sorts are sited so that their impact falls most heavily on neighborhoods or communities inhabited by people in low socioeconomic strata, sometimes because the projects are seen as ways of improving the lives of poor people and sometimes because the poor people are seen as having less political power to block proposals that others conceive as (sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly) in "the public interest."

As an illustration of this kind of work, anthropologist Sue Ellen Jacobs was hired to do a social impact assessment of a water diversion project in New Mexico planned by the Bureau of Land Reclamation in cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This project proposed construction of a diversion

dam and an extensive canal system for irrigation on the Rio Grande. Affected by this would be twenty-two communities inhabited primarily by Spanish Americans, as well as two Indian Pueblos. In the region, unemployment was high and the project was seen as a way to promote a perceived trend to urbanism (which theoretically would be associated with industrial development), while bringing new land into production for intensive agriculture.

What the planners failed to take into account was that both the Hispanic and Indian populations were heavily committed to farming for household consumption, with some surpluses raised for the market, using a system of irrigation canals established as long as 300 years ago. These canals are maintained by elected supervisors who know the communities as well as the requirements of the land and crops, water laws, and ditch management skills. Such individuals can allocate water equitably in times of scarcity and can prevent and resolve conflict in the realm of water and land use, as well as in community life beyond the ditches. Under the proposed project, this system was to be given up in favor of one in which fewer people would control larger tracts of land, and water allocation would be in the hands of a government technocrat. One of the strongest measures of local government would be lost.

Not surprisingly, Jacobs discovered widespread community opposition to this project, and her report helped convince Congress that any positive impact was far outweighed by negative effects. One of the major objections to the construction of the project was that it would result in the obliteration of the 3 hundred-year-old irrigation system structures. Project planners did not seem to recognize the antiquity and cultural significance of the traditional irrigation system. These were referred to as "temporary diversion structures." The fact that the old dams associated with the ditches were attached to local descent groups was simply not recognized by the official documents.^a

Other negative effects of the project, besides loss of local control, would be problems associated with population growth and relocation, loss of fishing and other river-related resources, and new health hazards, including increased threat of drowning, insect breeding, and airborne dust. Finally, physical transformation of the communities' life space was likely to result in changes in the context of the informal processes of enculturation that take place within the communities. ■ ■ ■

^a Van Willigen, J. (1986). *Applied anthropology* (p. 169). South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.

APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

Redesigning an Agricultural Development Program in West Africa

 In much the same way that salvage archaeologists excavate sites threatened by the construction of dams, roads, or buildings, cultural anthropologists have been called on to help reformulate international development projects that are not working. When development programs are foundering due to an inadequate understanding of the sociocultural features of the target populations, cultural anthropologists have helped to analyze the program and recommend changes that will enable the program to meet its objectives more effectively.

One such case of "salvage anthropology" was the redesign of an agricultural development program in the West African country of Guinea by Robert Hecht (1986). Sponsored by USAID, the original project was a five-year, nearly \$5-million project aimed at improving farm production by training agricultural researchers, extension workers, and administrators. As originally conceived in the late 1970s, the project involved building an agricultural laboratory, teaching facilities at an agricultural college, and a research demonstration farm. The project's aim was to build these three facilities and equip them with U.S. technology. The original program designers assumed that improving the quality of research and the training of extension personnel



would increase national agricultural productivity. Because the initial emphasis was on technology and training, the original designers paid little attention to the sociocultural realities of the local farmers.

By 1981 it was apparent that the project had serious problems. First, the construction of the three facilities was running nearly two years behind schedule and the projected costs had escalated to \$15 million. Second, it became clear that the plans for using these facilities were inadequate. To address this inadequacy, USAID appointed a team composed of an anthropologist (Hecht), an economist, and an agronomist to study the programs and make recommendations for change.

The "salvage team" concluded that the project's most glaring weakness was that it totally ignored the cultural realities of most of the small farmers in Guinea. The original planners neither consulted the farmers nor provided for their participation in the program. There were no mechanisms for obtaining feedback from the farmers or for enabling them to become auxiliary extension agents. In short, the original project did not include the local farmers in designing, implementing, or evaluating the project.

To gain a better understanding of the problems facing the original project design, Hecht gathered data on the economic

and sociocultural features of the Malinke farmers who made up the majority of the local population. On the basis of participant-observation and interview data, Hecht (1986: 21–22) made some significant findings about the Malinke family and kinship system:

1. The average household is relatively large (approximately nine people), in part because of the high incidence of polygyny and in part because of the complex patrilineal structure. These large kin-based households have important implications for the project because of the potential for economic cooperation among corporate lineage members (e.g., forming producer groups or building communal storage facilities for fertilizer).
2. Because land in Malinke society is controlled by corporate lineages, a household had rights to land only by virtue of its membership in a particular lineage. Rank among lineages in the village determined the allocation of land, with chiefly and higher status lineages controlling more land than commoner lineages. Even within lineages, elders have more and better land than heads of more junior households. Given this hierarchy within the land tenure system, Hecht (1986: 22) recommended that the revised project should “be sensitive to the needs of those at the bottom of the distribution hierarchy, who possessed the smallest plots and least fertile land.”
3. Most (nonwage) farm labor among the Malinke was supplied largely by household members and supplemented by other kin outside the household.

The basic picture that emerged from Hecht’s research was a kin-based farming system, conducted on lineage-controlled land, and carried out by a kinship-based labor force. Only after this strong connection between kinship and farming had emerged through anthropological research could adequate changes be made to this multimillion-dollar agricultural project.

The traditional data-gathering techniques of household surveys, interviews, and participant-observation yielded the type of sociocultural data necessary for redesigning a successful program. As Hecht reminds us, “The multidisciplinary or holistic approach usually associated with anthropology, and the emphasis placed by anthropologists on learning from the local population, may even make the anthropologist an appropriate person to serve as a team leader” (1986: 25).

Questions for Further Thought

1. What erroneous assumptions had the original planners made that contributed to the near collapse of the program?
2. What data-gathering techniques did Hecht use in his applied anthropology research? Were these methods appropriate for the problem under investigation?
3. What is meant by the term *corporate lineage*? How was an understanding of this term instrumental in contributing to the success of the development project?

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APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

The New Hope Antipoverty Program

As pointed out in Chapter 3, it is misleading to think of all cultural anthropology as being either applied or pure. In reality applied anthropologists use theoretical propositions to guide their research, while pure or academic anthropologists are informed by practical studies. A particularly good example of the use of theory to guide an applied study was a research project conducted by Christina Gibson and Tom Weisner (2002) evaluating the New Hope antipoverty program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. [For a comprehensive look at the workings of the New Hope Poverty Program, see Duncan, Houston, and Weisner (2007)].

Based on the notion of "workfare" rather than "welfare," the New Hope program offered participants a package of benefits in exchange for a demonstrated work effort. If participants worked thirty hours per week, the program would make available to them wage subsidies, child care subsidies, health insurance, and even temporary community service jobs. Like many welfare programs established since the mid-1990s, the Milwaukee program was predicated on "rational choice theory," which stipulates that people make decisions based on an objective cost-benefit analysis. In other words, people will avail themselves of the benefits offered by the program if the



benefits outweigh the costs. Rational choice theory, however, rests on the assumptions of materialism, maximizing one's financial gain, and self-interest; that is, a person will opt for health insurance or a child care subsidy because it makes financial sense to do so. Gibson and Weisner, however, found that the extent to which program participants opted for the benefits package varied greatly from family to family. The purely economic incentives of the program were too narrow to motivate all of the participants.

Typically, evaluation research on social service programs such as New Hope is conducted by using survey methods. Although Gibson and Weisner used demographic and opinion surveys for both their experiment and control groups, they also used participant-observation as the basis for an ethnographic study of forty-six participating families. These urban ethnographers listened to parents tell their stories over meals, visited the children's schools, and accompanied the families to church, family visits, and shopping trips. By combining the quantitative survey data with the more qualitative information gained through participant-observation, Gibson and Weisner were able to use participants' own words to understand why they opted for some benefits and not others.

Testing of the rational choice theory in this program evaluation research led the researchers to suggest another theory to partially explain their findings, which they call an “ecocultural theory.” Rational choice theory does not take into account beliefs, emotions, or other cultural factors. Availing oneself of program benefits is not just a matter of maximizing one’s material benefits, as the rational choice theory would suggest. Instead, Gibson and Weisner found that some people made choices about program benefits based on whether they thought the benefit would sustain their daily routine. Others used a cost-benefit analysis but didn’t define costs in largely materialistic or financial terms. For them, costs included non-financial factors such as family well-being, their children’s mental health, or the effects on other social relationships. The researchers concluded that if we are to understand why participants opted for some program features and not others, it is imperative that we use a wider theoretical model than the rational choice theory. They acknowledge that rational choice is involved in the decision-making process of low-income families but argue that the rational choice model does not account for *all* of the choices made. What is needed, according to Gibson and Weisner, is both rational choice theory (based largely on financial cost-benefit analysis) and ecocultural theory (based on the need to sustain a familiar daily routine).

This study is significant on two levels: theoretical and applied. On the one hand, it tested the utility of the widely used

rational choice theory to explain behavioral choices in a social service program for low-income families. That the theory, although viable, did not explain all of the behavioral data provides us with an excellent example of how theories can be refined and reworked by means of applied anthropology. On the other hand, this research project demonstrates the utility of social theory for the applied enterprise of program evaluation. If the New Hope program (or others like it) is to continue to provide services to the poor, administrators will need to know why some people opt for program benefits and others do not. Program implementers should look beyond financial motivation and pay closer attention to the sociocultural circumstances of their target populations.

Questions for Further Thought

1. What data-gathering techniques did Gibson and Weisner use in their evaluation research of the New Hope project? In what ways did the different techniques yield different types of information for the researchers?
2. Compare and contrast the two theories used in this study: the rational choice theory and the ecocultural theory.
3. What other government-sponsored programs might benefit by using both theories to evaluate why some people participate and others do not?

APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

Using Family Planning Clinics in Ecuador

 For the past several decades, many development experts have identified high birthrates as the major obstacle to economic development. No matter how successful programs in health, education, and agriculture may be, any gains will be offset if the society is experiencing high annual population growth. Consequently many international development organizations have given top priority to programs designed to slow population growth by means of family planning.

A common method of evaluating the success of family planning programs is to measure the extent to which people actually use them. A number of significant factors may affect whether women initially attend (or return to) family planning clinics, including the women's attitudes toward contraception, the quality of the interaction with staff members, and the length of time they must wait to see a doctor. Susan Scrimshaw (1976), an applied anthropologist studying family planning clinics in Ecuador, identified another significant factor—women's modesty—that had important implications for how women felt about using family planning clinics.

Using traditional anthropological methods, Scrimshaw collected data on sixty-five families living in Guayaquil, Ecuador, a tropical port city of approximately a million people. Scrimshaw found that small girls in Guayaquil—as



in South America generally—are taught the virtues of modesty at a very early age. Even though boys are often seen without pants until the age of four or five, little girls always have their genitals covered. Because girls usually reach puberty without any prior knowledge of menstruation, their first menstruation is both frightening and embarrassing. In general, Scrimshaw found that girls and women in Guayaquil do not have very positive attitudes about their bodies, their sexuality, or natural bodily processes such as menstruation, all of which are associated with the word *vergüenza* (shame or embarrassment).

Given this strong sense of modesty about their bodies, their sexuality, and reproduction, it is not surprising that these Ecuadorian women would feel uncomfortable even talking about contraceptives, let alone submitting to gynecological examinations.

Scrimshaw also conducted a survey on the use of family planning clinics among 2,936 women. She found that although 74 percent of the respondents wanted more information on birth control methods, only 20 percent of them had actually taken the initiative to obtain the information, and less than 5 percent had ever been to a family planning clinic. When the women who had been to a clinic were asked why they had never returned, nearly half (48 percent) said they had been influenced by *vergüenza*.

Information gained through participant-observation at a number of these family planning clinics helped explain why women were so reluctant to return to the clinics. Screening questions were asked by an intake worker, usually within earshot of other patients. Doctors gave patients very little explanatory information while requesting a large amount of information from them, much of which was never used. The clinics provided no private place for women to undress and did not supply the women with gowns, nor were the women properly draped during their physical exams. Even for women in the United States, who are usually afforded these courtesies, gynecological exams are often uncomfortable and embarrassing. Submitting to a physical exam under conditions of minimal privacy, however, was even more difficult for these Ecuadorian women because of their strong cultural emphasis on feminine modesty.

On the basis of these findings on women's modesty, Scrimshaw (1976: 177–78) made the following practical recommendations for maximizing the utility of family planning clinics in Guayaquil:

- 1. Discreetness:** Women in clinics should not be interviewed within the hearing of anyone but the parties directly involved. Questions should be kept to a minimum.
- 2. Privacy:** Wherever possible, a woman should be given privacy to undress. The examining room should ensure security and privacy.
- 3. Awareness of modesty:** A drape should be provided for a woman's legs.
- 4. Talk during the examination:** Talking during the examination both between the doctor and other staff and between

the doctor and the patient should be confined to the examination. Trivial talk should be avoided.

- 5. Frequency of visits to the clinic and examination:** Many clinics require monthly visits for examinations and supplies. In most cases, such frequent examinations are unnecessary, and supplies can be picked up every three months.
- 6. Male versus female physicians:** All women questioned said they preferred female physicians. Thus women doctors need to be actively recruited.

These types of recommendations can be useful to those in charge of administering family planning clinics in Ecuador. None of the proposed changes alone will make or break a family planning program, but this case study does point to the need for the clinical staff to understand and acknowledge the modesty of Ecuadorian women and the role that cultural anthropologists can play in bringing this important social value to the attention of the clinical staff.

Questions for Further Thought

1. In what ways can applied anthropologists contribute to family planning programs in developing nations?
2. How does female modesty in Guayaquil shape attitudes about family planning clinics and gynecological examinations?
3. Do you think that the gender of the researcher studying family planning clinics affects the types of information that can be gathered?

APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

World's Drug Companies Rely on "Primitive Medicine"

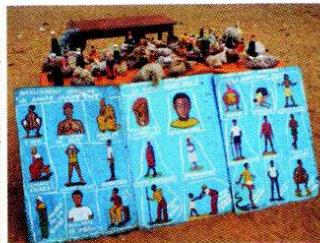
 Over the centuries indigenous peoples have accumulated vast amounts of scientific data that could contribute to the solution of contemporary societal problems. They have learned to use their knowledge of ocean currents to navigate long distances in the Pacific, they have cultivated numerous strains of crops useful to Western botanists, and they have exploited a wide variety of food sources without damaging their delicate ecosystems. However, much of this scientific knowledge is being lost as these indigenous peoples lose their land, their languages, and their cultures.

The South American tropical rain forest is the home of about one-quarter (sixty thousand) of all plant species on the planet. Of those, only a small fraction have been studied to determine their chemical properties or their therapeutic potential. In other words, there are tens of thousands of plant species in the Amazon jungle that could hold a key to solving pressing medical problems, including AIDS and various forms of cancer. Western medical science is just beginning to realize that local tribal people know more about these plants and their healing properties than we do. Cultural anthropologists specializing in ethnobotany (the study of how tribal societies use local plant life) are now studying tribal pharmacology so that Western medicine can use this knowledge.

About one-quarter of all prescription drugs sold in the United States are derived from plants, and half of these come from the tropical rain forest of South America. Mark Plotkin (1995) estimated that people in the United States alone spend more than \$6 billion per year on drugs derived from tropical plants. Among the many tropical plants used in Western medicine (which have been used to treat precisely the same maladies among indigenous rain forest cultures) are the following (Maybury-Lewis 1992: 50):

Plant	Use
Horse chestnuts	Anti-inflammatory
Lily of the valley	Heart stimulant
Common foxglove	Heart stimulant
Turmeric	Heart stimulant
May apple	Anticancer agent
Goldenseal	Astringent
Toothpick plant	Aid for breathing
Rattlebox	Antitumor agent
False hellebore	Tranquilizer
Yellow azalea	Tranquilizer
Quinine	Antimalarial
Cocoa	Diuretic
Kuntze	Diuretic

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The pink-flowered periwinkle plant is an example of the impact of tribal pharmacology on Western medicine. Although native to Madagascar, the pink-flowered periwinkle was transported throughout the tropical world by European explorers who valued it for its beautiful flowers. They did not realize that the plant had been used by native cultures of Asia, Africa, and the New World for its therapeutic properties. When researchers noticed that healers in Jamaica used the plant to treat diabetes, they decided to test the chemical properties of periwinkle on rats. Due to the plant's ability to lower white blood cell counts, it is now used to treat leukemia.

Ethnobotanists such as Plotkin are collecting specimens of plant life that indigenous peoples of the rain forest have used for medicinal purposes. Thousands of such species await discovery by Western scientists. The important contribution that these cultural anthropologists are making is collecting the folk knowledge from the local medicinal practitioners as to how (and for what purposes) these medicines are used. The challenge is to collect this information before the rain forest, the traditional cultures, and their systems of drug use are lost forever. The rain forest is being destroyed at such an alarming rate that as of 2000, 10 percent of the rain forest's plant species became extinct (Plotkin 1995). As David Maybury-Lewis (1992: 49) warned, "What we are witnessing makes the burning of the library of Ancient Alexandria look insignificant by comparison. It is as if the greatest medical library in the world is burning faster than we can read its contents, which we have just begun to catalogue."

Questions for Further Thought

1. In addition to the medicinal properties of certain plants, what other things might the industrialized world learn from inhabitants of the rain forest?
2. Why are the Amazon rain forests disappearing so rapidly? What suggestions can you offer that would prevent the destruction of the rain forest and the cultures that inhabit it?
3. If anthropologists collect plants and knowledge regarding their use from rain forest medical experts, and then have the plants produced commercially by Western drug companies, should the local tribes benefit from the profits of the sale of these drugs? Explain your reasoning.

ANTHROPOLOGY works

What's for Breakfast in California?

Cultural anthropologist Susan Squires is one of the brains behind the General Mills breakfast food Go-Gurt®. During its first year of production in 1991, Go-Gurt generated sales of \$37 million.

Squires, who earned a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from Boston University, is a pioneer in *consumer anthropology*, or the use of anthropological research methods to identify what people do and say in their everyday lives in order to inform product development and design.

In contrast to traditional anthropological methods that involve long-term participant observation, consumer research relies on short-term, drop-in visits, often of a small sample of people who are representative of a larger population. Typically, an anthropologist and a designer work as a team in the field.

Research into the development of Go-Gurt took Squires and an industrial designer into the homes of middle-class families in suburban California to observe their breakfast behavior and food choices. On their first day of research, they arrived at a residence at 6:30 a.m. laden with video cameras and other equipment, prepared to have breakfast with a family they had never met. They repeated this process with more families at breakfast time and were able to build up a picture of habits and preferences.

Squires found that a major factor shaping breakfast food choice was the need to leave home early for work or school. Breakfast time is often a rushed



A middle-class family breakfast in California. Recent studies claim that multitasking involving telephone conversations and being on the Internet detracts from the quality of social relationships and the ability to concentrate. Whether or not such claims are true, a media-saturated lifestyle does affect eating in terms of the kind of food consumed and social interaction at mealtime.

affair, cut short by the need to get in the car or meet the bus. At the same time, she learned that parents want their children to eat healthy food for breakfast, while children are frequently uninterested in eating anything so early in the morning.

Squires realized that the ideal breakfast food for such busy families should be portable, healthy, fun, and come in a disposable container. The answer: yogurt packaged so that it can be eaten by squeezing it out of the package, bypassing the need for a spoon. One

mother said that her daughter thinks she is eating a popsicle when she has Go-Gurt for breakfast.

The work of Susan Squires demonstrates how cultural anthropology can benefit business and the everyday lives of consumers. Two assets of consumer anthropology are its attention to people's behavior and preferences in everyday life and its ability to describe cultural variation and similarities that can translate to effective product design.

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APPLIED PERSPECTIVE

Anthropology and New Product Research in the Developing World

For decades large multinational corporations have hired cultural anthropologists to apply their traditional techniques of data gathering to marketing and new product research. The purpose is to learn as much as possible (through participant-observation) about how people actually use, or don't use, the products companies produce. In Chapter 1 we saw how one anthropologist's (Susan Squires)

research on U.S. families at breakfast time led to both a better understanding of dietary habits in the morning and the development of a highly successful breakfast food product.

More recently studying consumer habits at close range has become popular in the high-tech arena, where the time pressures, stakes, and failure rates for new products are high. Jan Chipchase, a British native employed by Finnish cell phone giant Nokia, refers to himself as a "human behavior researcher" or a "user anthropologist" (Corbett 2008: 36). Chipchase travels the world peering into the lives of everyday people in hopes of providing relevant sociocultural data to the Nokia design labs so they can design new useful and user-friendly communications technology such as cell phones. But technology companies like Nokia are not conducting research in the major urban centers of the world. Instead they are focusing their attention on shantytowns in such developing areas as Accra (Ghana), Mumbai (India), and Nairobi (Kenya). Even though there are approximately 3.3 billion cell phones in use today, there are another three billion people who don't own a cell phone, located largely in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

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It is tempting to interpret "user anthropologists" in third world cities as little more than a cynical use of anthropology to sell more cell phones. But, whereas cell phones and Blackberries are mostly a convenience in industrialized societies, these devices can have life-altering effects on improving the lives of people who make less than two dollars a day. A mother in rural Kenya with access to a cell phone, for example, would be able to call

and confirm the availability of a doctor before carrying a sick child to a medical facility located seven miles away. Or a day laborer with a cell phone in Salvador, Brazil, would be able to learn early in the morning where the jobs are, rather than wasting most of the day at a location that offers no day labor. In fact Chipchase and his associates have found that most people who are trying to survive in poor countries as shopkeepers, small farmers, rickshaw drivers, housekeepers, and other service providers agree that their businesses improve when they have access to a cell phone.

Because cell phone technology has the potential to stimulate economic growth, it has caught the eye of economic development agencies in poor countries. For example, Harvard economist, Robert Jensen, in a study of fisherman in southern India, found that those who had cell phones were able to increase their profits by 8 percent while still reducing the cost of fish to the customer by 4 percent. Cell phones gave these "high-tech fisherman" the advantage of being able to contact their buyers before they ever pulled back into port (Corbett 2008: 38). Cell phone technology is also appealing to development agencies such as the World Bank and USAID because it allows for

grass-roots (bottom-up) economic development rather than the more traditional and inefficient bureaucratic (top-down) approach. Cell phone technology in the developing world enables local farmers or fishermen to grow their businesses and small-scale service providers to connect with a wider client base.

This type of market/product research conducted by Chipchase and his colleagues (which draws heavily on traditional anthropological methods and insights) is an excellent example of how cultural anthropology is making useful contributions to the private sector. Clearly high-tech companies like Nokia will be able to use these anthropological findings to develop and market culturally appropriate cell phones to billions of people in developing countries. To be certain, companies like Nokia will make shiploads of money. But it is also possible that cell phone technology can be an effective tool for economic development among the world's poorer nations.

Anthropologist John Sherry, who years ago studied communications technology among the Navajo, is now a member of an interdisciplinary team of design ethnographers with Intel Corporation. Their purpose is to learn as much as possible (by using anthropological methods) about how people work and use high-tech tools so that Intel can design more efficient tools in the future. Sherry and his teammates venture out to homes, businesses, public spaces, and any other places where they can observe people interacting with technology.

Anthropologists are trained to patiently observe human behavior for hours on end while recording those behaviors in minute detail. Intel (along with other high-tech firms such as IBM, Hewlett-Packard, Motorola, and Xerox) is betting that useful insights will emerge from those minute details. Because technology design always carries with it a number of assumptions about the people who eventually use it, Sherry and his

band of high-tech ethnographers frequently must determine the degree to which those design assumptions actually match those of real end users.

As one example of this application of anthropology, Sherry and his fellow design ethnographers spent large amounts of time hanging out in teenagers' bedrooms (Takahashi 1998). They talked to more than a hundred teenagers, analyzed still photos, and studied hours of videotapes that catalogued how teenagers used their bedrooms. The team concluded that teenagers would like to be able to send photos to one another by transmitting images over telephone lines that would enter a friend's computer and then be displayed in a bedside electronic picture frame. Such a product is now available for mass consumption.

With traditional academic positions in anthropology becoming more scarce, some anthropologists will need to look to alternative professional venues. Sherry provides an excellent role model of someone interested in applying the methods, theories, and insights of cultural anthropology to the growing field of technology design and development.

Questions for Further Thought

1. Why have anthropologists become so important to the market research industry in recent years?
2. What major data-gathering techniques could anthropologists use to assist in market research?
3. How many different subcultural groups in your society can you identify that a company should research before marketing a product such as a light beer? What do you know about these groups that might affect how an advertising campaign might be structured?