

CHAPTER



While visiting relatives with her husband in Boston for several weeks, Ngina Githongo, a twenty-three-year-old woman from Limuru, Kenya, was rushed to a local hospital for an emergency appendectomy. On the morning after the operation, the nurse brought Ngina a typical American breakfast consisting of two poached eggs, lightly buttered toast, and orange juice. When the nurse returned 35 minutes later, she noticed that Ngina had eaten everything except the two eggs, which were placed intentionally on the menu to ensure that Ngina received an adequate amount of protein needed for a speedy recuperation. The nurse commented that Ngina should eat her eggs if she wanted to leave the hospital as quickly as possible. Looking somewhat surprised, Ngina told the nurse, "Oh, I could never eat the eggs of a chicken!" After giving Ngina a less than friendly glare, the nurse picked up the breakfast tray and left the room.

Clearly the nurse was annoyed with Ngina for being either ungrateful for the food or too simple-minded to know that she needed a high-protein diet. But Ngina was neither ungrateful nor simple-minded. Rather, she was adhering to a widely held food taboo among the Kikuyu of East Africa. Kikuyu females grow up believing that they will be infertile if they ever eat the egg of a chicken. Moreover they believe this every bit as strongly as many Americans believe that bad things will happen to them if they sleep on the thirteenth floor of a hotel.

The nurse's response was both unprofessional and counterproductive. Rather than being offended, she should have learned

why Ngina did not eat the chicken eggs. Even though the nurse (in all likelihood) would not have shared Ngina's belief that chicken eggs cause infertility, it is not part of her job description as a nurse to talk patients out of their strongly held beliefs. The nurse's primary responsibility is to provide the best possible medical care for the patient. Consequently, the more professional response would have been for the nurse, equipped with cultural knowledge about the patient, to substitute a piece of cheese or meat for the eggs so that the patient gets the appropriate level of protein. Clearly this nurse is a prime candidate for a course in medical anthropology, a specialized subfield of applied cultural anthropology aimed at sensitizing medical professionals to the special features of their patients' cultures that can influence wellness and healing. ■

A distinguishing feature of cultural anthropology is its direct, experiential approach to research through the technique known as **participant-observation**. By and large, cultural anthropologists conduct field research among populations experiencing serious societal problems, such as poor health, inadequate food production, high infant mortality, political repression, or rampant

participant-observation A fieldwork method in which the cultural anthropologist lives with the people under study and observes their everyday activities.

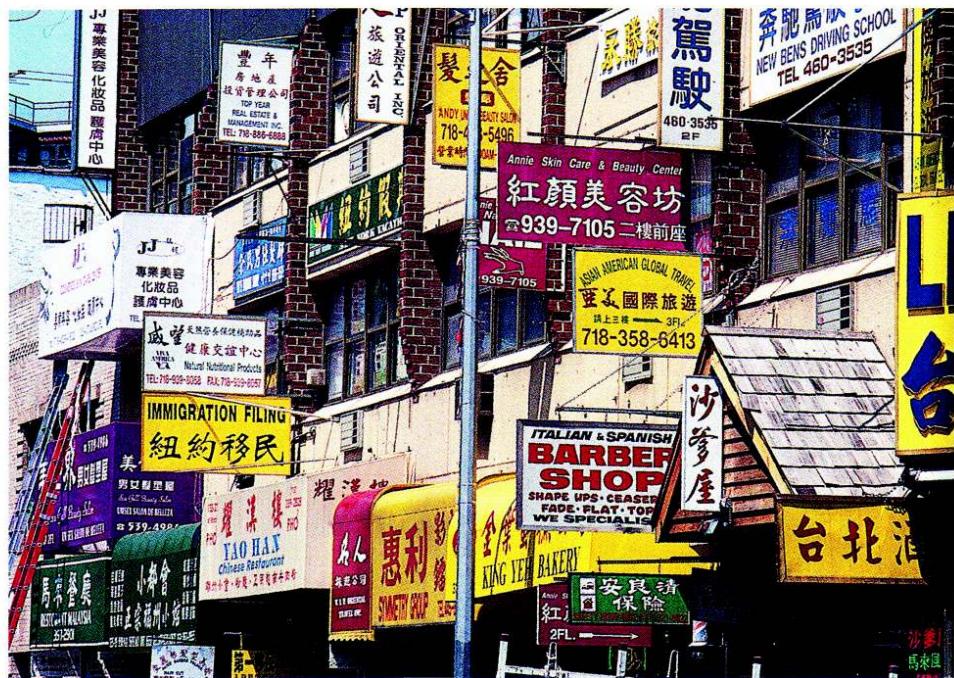
What We Will Learn

- How have cultural anthropologists applied their theories, methods, and insights to the solution of practical problems over the last century?
- What special contributions can cultural anthropology make as an applied science?
- How does applied anthropology differ from theoretical anthropology?
- What specialized roles do applied anthropologists play?

population growth, to mention but a few. The very nature of anthropological research—which involves living with people, sharing their lives, and often befriending them—makes it difficult for cultural anthropologists to ignore the enormity of the problems these societies face on an everyday basis. It should therefore come as no surprise that many cultural anthropologists feel a sense of responsibility for helping to solve—or at least alleviate—some of these pressing social problems.

Although, to some extent, anthropologists have always applied their findings to the solution of human problems, an increasing number of anthropologists

Applied cultural anthropologists study a wide variety of social settings, including this Chinese neighborhood in New York City.



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since the mid-twentieth century have conducted research aimed explicitly at practical applications. These practitioners represent a new and growing subdiscipline known as **applied anthropology**, which is characterized by **problem-oriented research** among the world's contemporary populations. These pragmatic anthropologists attempt to apply anthropological data, concepts, and strategies to the solution of social, economic, and technological problems, both at home and abroad. Specific examples of such applied projects include lowering the incidence of obesity in certain populations, ameliorating conflicts between police and immigrant populations in urban areas, and developing sustainable economies in third world countries. In recent decades a number of terms have been given to these attempts to use anthropological research for the improvement of human conditions: *action anthropology*, *development anthropology*, *practical anthropology*, and *advocacy anthropology*. For the purposes of this chapter, however, we will use the more widely accepted and generic term *applied anthropology*.

Our use of this term requires some delineation because applied anthropology cuts across all of the traditional four fields. Most anthropologists who would identify with an applied perspective are cultural

anthropologists, but the other three traditional subdisciplines are certainly involved in their share of applied activities. Some examples of applied physical anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics were discussed briefly in Chapter 1.

Much of the applied anthropology carried out in recent decades has been supported by large public and private organizations seeking to better understand the cultural dimension of their sponsored programs. These organizations include international agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Ford Foundation, and the Population Council; certain national organizations such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and on a more local level, various hospitals, private corporations, school systems, urban planning departments, substance abuse programs, facilities for the aged, and family planning clinics. (For a listing of the types of applied anthropological studies discussed in this text, see Table 3.1.)

APPLIED VERSUS PURE ANTHROPOLOGY

For much of the past century, many anthropologists have distinguished applied anthropology from pure or academic anthropology. So-called pure anthropology was seen as being concerned only with the advancement of the discipline in terms of refining its methods and theories and providing increasingly more valid and reliable data. Applied anthropology, on the other hand,

applied anthropology The application of anthropological knowledge, theory, and methods to the solution of specific societal problems.

problem-oriented research A type of anthropological research designed to solve a particular societal problem rather than to test a theoretical position.

Table 3.1 Types of Applied Anthropology

Forms of Applied Cultural Anthropology	Examples from Text (Chapter)
Agricultural anthropology	1. Development in Guinea (10) 2. Alternatives to poppies (7)
Architectural anthropology	1. Park restoration (12)
Business anthropology	1. Cross-cultural coaching (2) 2. New product research (cell phones) (8) 3. Baby formula controversy (3) 4. Nepotism (8)
Development anthropology	1. Trees in Haiti (4) 2. Economic development in Honduras (16)
Educational anthropology	1. Ebonics (6) 2. Schools in Hawaii (9) 3. Research in a freshman dorm (3)
Environmental anthropology	1. Water management in Mexico (7) 2. Radiation on the Marshall Islands (3)
Legal anthropology	1. Minority prison inmates (3) 2. Anthropologist-turned-detective (15)
Medical anthropology	1. Diabetes in Mexican Americans (12) 2. AIDS research (5) 3. Child nutrition in Malawi (11) 4. Family planning in Ecuador (11) 5. Public health among the Zulus (3) 6. Anthropology and medicine (14)
Political anthropology	1. Mediation with Trukese Villagers (3) 2. Ruth Benedict in postwar Japan (13)
Urban anthropology	1. Homeless youth (10) 2. New Hope antipoverty program (4) 3. Adolescent drug dealers in Florida (3)

Table 3.2 Comparison of Theoretical and Applied Anthropology

	Theoretical Anthropology	Applied Anthropology
Primary Objective	Test hypotheses and describe ethnographic reality	Help solve societal problems
Research Methods	Participant-observation and interviewing	Rapid ethnographic assessment (see Chapter 5)
Time Frame	A year or longer	Several weeks to several months
Collaboration	Seldom collaborative	Usually collaborative

was characterized as being primarily aimed at changing human behavior in order to ameliorate contemporary problems. The two types of anthropology are not mutually exclusive enterprises, however. (For a comparison of theoretical and applied anthropology, see Table 3.2.)

In fact, unlike the traditional four subfields of anthropology, applied anthropology—which, some have argued, has become the fifth subfield—is considerably more difficult to define. Part of the difficulty of defining the applied subfield precisely is that it has always been a part of the discipline; in fact, applied and theoretical anthropology have developed alongside each other.

Throughout the history of anthropology, its practitioners have been concerned with the utility of their findings for solving social problems. For example, in the early 1930s the Applied Anthropology Unit of Indian Affairs was created by President Roosevelt's Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Collier (an anthropologist himself). The aim of this unit was to study the progress of self-governing organizations among some Native American groups as called for in the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act. As part of the Interdisciplinary Committee on Human Relations at the University of Chicago, anthropologists W. Lloyd Warner, Burleigh Gardner,

Participant-observation studies of homeless teenagers can lead to more realistic social programs to assist this misunderstood segment of the population.



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and others conducted applied research in the areas of industrial management, productivity, and working conditions. Moreover World War II provided vast opportunities for anthropologists to apply their skills and insights to the war effort (see, for example, the Applied Perspective on rebuilding Japan in Chapter 13). In the decades following World War II, cultural anthropologists conducted applied research in a wide variety of areas, including agriculture, medicine, criminal justice, alcohol and drug use, housing, tourism, geriatric services, education, and business, among many others. Thus, as we can see, many cultural anthropologists have very purposefully engaged in applied research throughout the twentieth century, others have applied secondary anthropological data to help solve certain social problems, and still others—engaging in the investigation of a theoretical problem—have taken the additional step of explaining the practical implications of their findings for policy makers.

If we take the pure/applied distinction too literally, we might conclude that applied anthropologists are devoid of any theoretical concerns and that academic purists have no concern for the practical implications of their work. In actual practice, neither of these is true. Applied anthropology, when it is done effectively, takes into account the theories, methods, and data that have been developed by the discipline as a whole. At the other polarity, the more theoretically oriented anthropologists are indebted to applied anthropologists for stimulating their interest in new areas of research and, in some cases, for contributing to the development of new theory. The beneficial consequences that can accrue from the interaction of theoretical and applied anthropologists have been well stated by Walter



Sometimes applied anthropologists serve as expert witnesses in court cases involving cultural issues.

Goldschmidt (1979: 5): “The more a field is engaged in practical affairs, the greater the intellectual ferment; for programmatic activities raise issues and often new approaches which would otherwise escape the attention of the discipline.”

Table 3.3 A Continuum of Theoretical and Applied Cultural Anthropology

Theoretical/ Pure Polarity	Pure Ethnography/Ethnology	Studies of Social Issues	Policy Studies	Applied Anthropology	Applied Polarity
	Pure Ethnography/Ethnology	Studies of Social Issues	Policy Studies	Applied Anthropology	Practicing Anthropology

It is not surprising that the line between pure and applied anthropology is so murky because both groups receive the same form of training and draw on the same methods—notably, participant-observation and ethnographic interviewing. The line is blurred still further by the fact that the two have experienced parallel development, have been mutually supportive, and often have claimed the same personnel. Thus, because of their common concerns and experiences, the task of distinguishing between applied and pure anthropologists is as elusive as trying to nail a custard pie to the wall.

It would be misleading at best to think of cultural anthropology as being neatly divided into *pure/theoretical anthropology*, on the one hand, and *applied/practicing anthropology*, on the other. Rather, we should think more in terms of a continuum, with five different types of cultural anthropology ranging from most theoretical to most applied. Alexander Ervin (2005: 2–5) suggests such a model comprised of the following five types of cultural anthropology (see also Table 3.3):

1. *Pure ethnography/ethnology*: For the past century traditional ethnography (description) and ethnology (comparing/theorizing) have accounted for the bulk of the anthropological studies conducted on cultures and subcultures throughout the world. These wide-ranging studies have examined everything from nomadic pastoralists in Uganda to schoolchildren in New York City, and from subsistence farmers in New Guinea to an urban street gang in Chicago. The meticulousness with which these many and varied cultural groups have been described, analyzed, and compared has led to the development of the accumulated knowledge (cultural practices, behaviors, values, ideologies, and institutions) of cultural anthropology.
2. *Studies of social issues*: The ethnographic study of contemporary social issues often generates findings that have relevance to policy makers. For example, Elliot Liebow's ethnography of unemployed Black males in Washington, DC (entitled *Tally's Corner*), was both a first-rate ethnographic description and an illustration of how their urban culture was largely a rational response to a racist social structure. More recently, Rebekah Nathan's ethnography of the culture of university undergraduates, entitled *My Freshman Year* (2005),

conducted while living in a student dormitory, has a great deal to say to university administrators who are struggling to understand why many students fail to finish reading assignments or appear to be so uninterested in their formal coursework.

3. *Policy studies*: Moving further toward the applied pole of the continuum, anthropological studies of social policy focus on analyzing the values, social structure, and decision-making processes of those institutions that work to solving social problems. While ethnographic studies of powerful institutions in our own society can lead to beneficial changes, they are relatively rare for the simple reason that the influential policy setters are often unwilling to be studied (up close and personal) like a small-scale tribal society might be studied.
4. *Applied anthropology*: Applied cultural anthropology is most often commissioned by organizations (businesses, governments, and nonprofits) that are interested in receiving concrete recommendations for solving specific problems. For example, a foreign development program may be interested in knowing how a proposed dam-building project might negatively affect a local group of people displaced by the dam project, or a private company that manufactures and markets Hamburger Helper may commission a study of dietary habits in various parts of the world.
5. *Practicing anthropology*: The term *practicing anthropology* has become popular since the 1970s to refer to that group of professionally trained anthropologists (at the MA or PhD level) who work full time outside of academia by applying their cultural expertise to advance the goals of their employing organizations. Unlike their academically based counterparts, practicing anthropologists not only conduct needs assessments, program evaluations, and social impact studies, but frequently implement and administer the programs as well. Job surveys conducted by the American Anthropological Association suggest that about half of all new PhDs will become practicing anthropologists outside of academia.

Unlike theoretical anthropology, the work of applied/practicing anthropology involves (to varying degrees) three major products: information, policy,

and action. The first of these products is the collection of solid sociocultural *information* on the people under study—the so-called target population. This information, obtained by conducting research (see Chapter 5), can range from raw ethnographic data, through various levels of abstraction, to general anthropological theories. Using these research findings as a foundation, the applied anthropologist next develops *policy*, which can be used to help alleviate a problem or condition identified during the information-gathering phase. While anthropologists may, in fact, be involved in the policy-making process, it is more likely that they will include the policy implications in their findings, or even make policy recommendations. The final product of the applied anthropologist is a plan of *action*, or intervention, designed to correct the problem or undesirable condition. Thus, as John Van Willigen (2002: 11) reminds us, “information is obtained through research, information is used to formulate policy, and policy guides action.”

RECENT HISTORY OF APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY

Even though anthropologists have been applying their insights since the beginning of the twentieth century, the real stimulus came in the 1940s, when many of the leading cultural anthropologists were asked to participate in efforts related to World War II.

Anthropologists were recruited by the National Research Council to examine national morale during wartime, to learn about food preferences and wartime rationing, and to perform national character studies on our adversaries—the Germans, Italians, and Japanese. After the war many anthropologists left government



After World War II, many anthropologists left government service and returned to colleges and universities. This trend, which continued throughout the 1960s, accompanied a return to more theoretical concerns.

service and returned to positions in colleges and universities. This trend, with a return to more theoretical concerns, continued through the 1950s and 1960s. Any applied anthropology that was conducted during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s was carried out by academic anthropologists engaged in short-term projects outside the university setting.

From the 1970s to the present, however, a new brand of applied anthropology has emerged. These new applied anthropologists are not university professors but full-time employees of the hiring agencies. Data from a recent survey conducted by the American Anthropological Association indicate that approximately 30 percent of all anthropology PhDs work outside an academic setting for government organizations or nonprofit or private-sector firms. This trend is largely the result of two factors essentially external to the discipline of anthropology. First, over the past three decades, the market for most academic jobs has declined dramatically. The abundance of jobs that marked the 1950s and 1960s turned into a shortage of jobs in the 1970s and afterward. Second, increased federal legislation has mandated policy research that can be accomplished effectively by cultural anthropologists. For example, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (aiming to preserve the historical and cultural foundations of the nation), the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (requiring impact assessments of federally funded construction projects on the cultural environment), and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (establishing USAID, the foreign aid arm of the federal government) all provide for policy research of a cultural nature. As a result of these two factors (fewer academic jobs and more applied research opportunities), more anthropology PhDs are finding permanent employment outside academia. This trend has been accompanied by increases in the number of MA programs in applied anthropology and growing membership in applied anthropology organizations, such as the Society for Applied Anthropology (SFAA) and the National Association of Practicing Anthropologists (NAPA).

SPECIAL FEATURES OF ANTHROPOLOGY

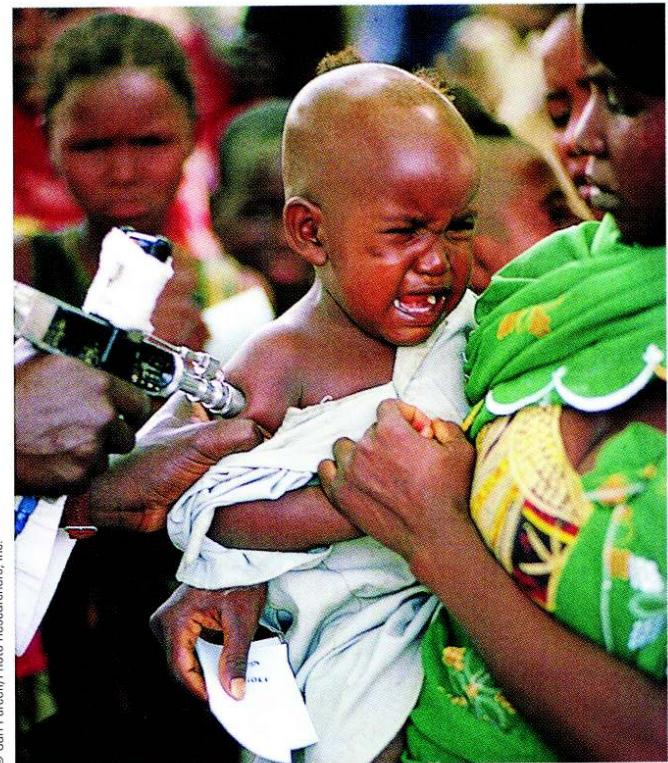
What does the discipline of anthropology have to offer as an applied science? What unique contributions can anthropology make to social programs and agencies?

The answers to these questions rest largely in the unique approach to the study of humans that anthropology has taken from its earliest beginnings. Among some of the special features of anthropology that contribute to its potential as a policy science are the following: participant-observation, the holistic perspective, the development of regional expertise, the emic view, the value orientation of cultural relativism, and topical expertise.



The understandings that emerge from applied anthropological studies of peasant farmers (such as these in Madagascar) can be helpful in agricultural development programs.

- *Participant-observation:* Direct field observation, a hallmark of twentieth-century anthropology, can lead to a fuller understanding of sociocultural realities than might be possible by relying on secondary sources alone. Also, the rapport developed while conducting participant-observation research can be drawn upon in the implementation stage of the applied project.
- *The holistic perspective:* This distinctive feature of anthropology forces us to look at multiple variables and see human problems in their historical, economic, and cultural contexts. This conceptual orientation reminds us that the various parts of a sociocultural system are interconnected and therefore a change in one part of the system is likely to cause changes in other parts. The holistic perspective also encourages us to look at problems in terms of both the short run and the long run.
- *Regional expertise:* Many anthropologists, despite recent trends toward specialization, continue to function as culture area specialists (such as Africanists and South Asianists). The cultural anthropologist who has conducted doctoral research in Zambia, for example, often returns to that country for subsequent field studies. Thus long-term association with a cultural region provides a depth of geographic coverage that most policy makers lack.
- *The emic view:* Whatever the setting of a particular project—be it an agricultural development scheme in Zimbabwe, an inner-city hospital in Detroit, or a classroom in rural Peru—the applied anthropologist brings to the project the perspective of the local people—what anthropologists call the emic view. By describing the emic view (using the mental categories and assumptions of the local people) rather than their own technical/professional view (the etic view), anthropologists can provide program



Applied anthropologists help medical personnel provide more efficient and culturally relevant services to people throughout the world.

planners and administrators with strategic information that can seriously affect the outcome of programs of planned change.

- *Cultural relativism:* The basic principle of cultural relativism (described in Chapter 1)—a vital part of every cultural anthropologist's training—tends to foster tolerance, which can be particularly relevant for applied anthropologists working in complex organizations. For example, tolerance stemming from the perspective of cultural

relativism can help anthropologists cross class lines and relate to a wide range of people within a complex organization (such as a hospital or school system) in which they are working.

- *Topical expertise:* It is generally recognized that the topical knowledge gleaned from fairly specific anthropological studies in one part of the world is likely to have policy relevance in other parts of the world. For example, cultural anthropologists who have studied pastoralism in East Africa have topical experience with and knowledge about pastoralism that can be applied not just elsewhere in Africa but also in the Middle East or Central Asia (Scudder 1999: 359).

These six features of anthropology can enhance the discipline's effectiveness as a policy science. Nevertheless, when compared with other disciplines, anthropology has some drawbacks that limit its effectiveness in solving societal problems. For example, anthropologists have not, by and large, developed many time-effective research methods; the premier anthropological data-gathering technique of participant-observation, which usually requires up to a year or longer, is not particularly well suited to the accelerated time schedules of applied programs of change. Moreover, with their strong tradition of qualitative research methods, anthropologists have been relatively unsophisticated in their use of quantitative data, although recently anthropologists have begun to use more quantitative approaches.

Although all cultural anthropology, both theoretical and applied, should be conducted with scientific rigor and intellectual honesty, most applied anthropologists agree that they are guided by a basic value assumption; that is, they have the interests of the *people under study* as their primary concern. This means that they insist on reporting their findings from the perspective of the people (emic approach) rather than from their own perspective

The program that employs these three HIV/AIDS counselors in Chennai, India, can profit from cultural data provided by medical anthropologists.

or that of the sponsoring organization (etic approach). Moreover, when implementing their recommendations, applied anthropologists want to make certain that the proposed programs are in compliance with the wishes of the people whose communities are being affected. Because they make recommendations for sociocultural change, applied anthropologists feel an ethical obligation to make sure that the local people agree with, and fully understand the consequences of, the proposed programs of change before implementing them.

Specialized Roles of Applied Anthropologists

Applied anthropologists also play a number of specialized roles, which are more thoroughly described by John Van Willigen (2002: 3–6):

Policy researcher: This role, perhaps the most common role for applied anthropologists, involves providing cultural data to policy makers so that they can make the most informed policy decisions.

Evaluator: In another role that is also quite common, evaluators use their research skills to determine how well a program or policy has succeeded in fulfilling its objectives.

Impact assessor: This role entails measuring the effects of a particular project, program, or policy on local peoples. For example, impact assessors may determine the consequences, both intended and unintended, that a federal highway construction project might have for the community through which the highway runs.

Planner: In this fairly common role, applied anthropologists actively participate in the design of various programs and policies.

Needs assessor: This role involves conducting research to determine ahead of time the need for a proposed program or project.



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Trainer: Adopting what is essentially a teaching role, the applied anthropologist imparts cultural knowledge about certain populations to different professional groups working in cross-cultural situations (such as Peace Corps volunteers or international businesspeople).

Advocate: This rare role involves becoming an active supporter of a particular group of people. Usually involving political action, this role is most often combined with other roles.

Expert witness: This role involves the presentation of culturally relevant research findings as part of judicial proceedings through legal briefs, depositions, or direct testimony.

Administrator/manager: An applied anthropologist who assumes direct administrative responsibility for a particular project is working in this specialized role.

Cultural broker: This role may involve serving as a liaison between the program planner and administrators on one hand and local ethnic communities on the other, or between mainstream hospital personnel and their ethnically distinct patients.

These specialized roles are not mutually exclusive. In many cases, applied anthropologists play two or more of these roles as part of the same job. For example, an applied anthropologist who is working as a policy researcher may also conduct research as a needs assessor before a program is initiated and carry out an impact assessment and evaluation after the program has concluded.

Read about Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedures below

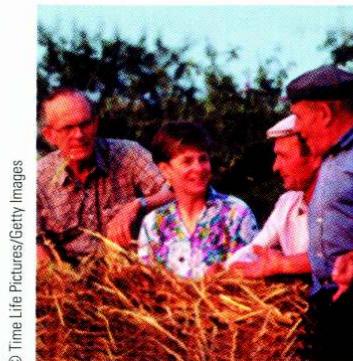


CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedures: How Rapid Is Too Rapid?

As this chapter on methods points out, conducting fieldwork in cultural anthropology is not completed in a matter of days—or even weeks. Ethnographic fieldwork typically lasts at least a year and often longer. Although fieldwork findings have utility for formulating public policy, policy makers often do not have the luxury of waiting several years for the findings. In an attempt to resolve this dilemma—and to ensure that research data are actually used for policy making—some anthropologists have developed rapid ethnographic assessment procedures (REAP).

Rapid assessment techniques originated in two areas of applied anthropology: rural agricultural development programs in third world countries (Hildebrand 1982) and public health programs (Scrimshaw and Hurtado 1987). Since the early 1980s, rapid research techniques have been used in the field of social forestry, irrigation projects, and even historic restoration of parklands. Rapid assessment is typically collaborative and multidisciplinary, including researchers, service providers, and local people. It is applied rather than theoretical research because it is not aimed at generating new theories but rather at assisting with a rational decision-making process for policy makers. Rapid assessment concentrates on delivering timely, focused, and qualitative information at the expense of more laborious and time-consuming scientific research with large probability samples. Specific research strategies are selected from a wide range of data-gathering techniques (for example, semi-structured interviews, group interviews, focus groups, and participant-observation) and adapted to the local situation. Research findings are constantly reevaluated as new data come in and, in fact, incoming data may lead to the formulation of new research questions during the course of the research. Because policy makers need cultural information quickly, REAP is conducted in two to six weeks rather than twelve to twenty-four months.



Because rapid assessment procedures are compressed into a relatively short period of time, they raise issues concerning the quality of the information generated. For example, how accurate are the data in comparison with data collected by more traditional ethnographers? How much social and cultural context is overlooked in the interest of saving time? Do the observations accurately measure the cultural realities? Whose reality is being measured: that of the researcher or that of the local people? Can the research findings be replicated and generalized beyond the local community?

Beyond questions involving validity and reliability of data, REAP need to be evaluated on the basis of other criteria. For example, how useful are the findings for all of the stakeholders? If informants are not selected from all segments of the population, then the findings will not be representative of the total community and, as such, will sacrifice some of their usefulness. Also, are the rapid assessment procedures feasible in terms of cost effectiveness? And do the assessment procedures create any ethical problems, such as violation of confidentiality or any other rights of the human subjects involved? To be certain, these questions need to be asked when any type of research method is used. But, given the compression of time from several years to several months, these questions become more critical when dealing with rapid assessment techniques.

Some anthropologists have questioned whether REAP has any place in the fieldworker's toolkit. Rapid appraisal methods efficiently combine a number of data-gathering strategies and can be useful in situations when information is needed quickly to help solve problems that cannot wait. But, in many other situations, REAP is not a substitute for in-depth, long-term studies drawing on considerably larger samples. To quote James Beebe (1995), "Rapid appraisal provides relatively quick qualitative results that are likely to be vaguely right, [and] . . . when applied with care and caution, it can help a decision maker avoid being precisely wrong."