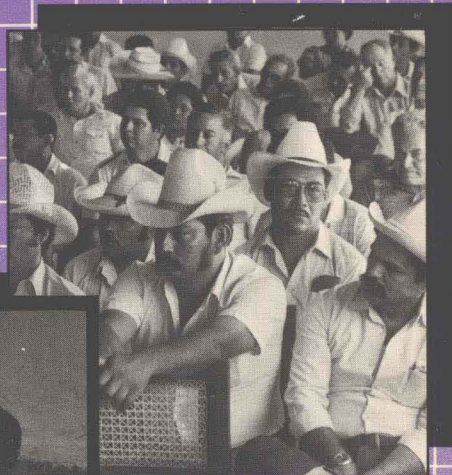
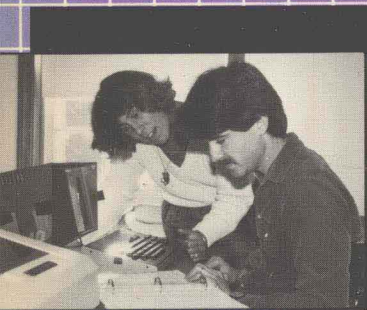


Applied ANTHROPOLOGY



n introduction

JOHN • VAN • **W** ILLIGEN

Applied Anthropology

AN INTRODUCTION

John van Willigen



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Preface

This is an introduction to the use of anthropology to solve human problems. Ever since anthropology has existed as a research discipline it has had a practical aspect, although this has attracted more attention in recent years. This aspect of anthropology typically has been called *applied anthropology*. As the number of anthropologists who apply their knowledge and skills to activities other than basic research and teaching increases, so do the number of different terms for practical activities increase. Besides applied anthropology, many other terms are used for the different forms of practice, these include: development anthropology, action anthropology, research and development anthropology, and advocacy anthropology. In addition to these, an increasing number of anthropologists engaged in practical employment call themselves "practicing anthropologists," while they may choose not to call what they do applied anthropology. This is an important contemporary development. All of these terms carry meanings appropriate to specific circumstances which are considered in this book. We will use *applied anthropology* as a general label for the entire array of situations and approaches for putting anthropology to use.

The text is based on four of the author's experiences dealing with applied anthropology. The first was special training in applied anthropology at the University of Arizona, including a practicum served with the tribal government of the Gila River Indian Reservation doing manpower research and other activities. The second consisted of experiences as a development adminis-

trator for the Papago Tribe of Arizona. This provided first-hand experience in community development as an intervention process. The third included ten years of experience teaching applied anthropology at the University of Kentucky. The fourth was the creation and ongoing management of the Applied Anthropology Documentation Project, an archive for applied anthropology technical literature. This activity brings the author in contact with the written products of applied anthropologists.

The view of applied anthropology expressed here has both research and intervention aspects. It provides anthropologists with a number of effective community action strategies that can be used to assist communities in reaching their goals within the context of self-determination. Applied anthropologists can draw upon experiences from the past as effective guides for work in both intervention and research; thus, knowledge of history is very useful. Activities done by anthropologists in both the past and present provide choices for problem solving. The foundation of all the techniques presented here is the ideology of self-determination by communities and individuals. The research techniques presented also have at their base the idea of systematically identifying local viewpoints and needs as these relate to development efforts or program functioning.

SHARING A TRADITION OF PRACTICE

While this book is intended to teach the reader how to put anthropology to use, reading it is not the best way to learn this skill. The way to learn it is to do it, especially, when possible, under the supervision of a qualified applied anthropologist. Basically, it is too much an art to convey efficiently through books, term papers, and other more traditional assignments: one needs direct experience. So why read this book? The answer is simple enough: most applied anthropologists work in isolation, operating in agencies or firms which hire few other anthropologists. They spend a great deal of time tracking over the same ground and solving many of the same problems in ways which seem to them unique. This book attempts to describe applied anthropology in its breadth and to build a shared tradition of practice as much as teaching some techniques of application. It is useful to grasp the breadth of activity found in applied anthropology because it helps us see the power of the ideas produced within the discipline. That discovery will enhance our own ability to be effective users of anthropological knowledge. Further, the knowledge presented in this book will help link the experiences associated with contemporary practices to those of the past. Too often, one hears applied anthropologists expressing the idea that applied anthropology is what they do and that alone. The basic point is a simple one: there are many kinds of applied anthropology, and knowledge of these different ways of practice is useful for the applied or practicing anthropologist.

ORIENTATION OF THE TEXT

Before we go on to consider the content of the book, it is useful to say something about its orientation. While this text presents approaches which are useful in many different settings and political traditions, it will be immediately clear that the tradition of application drawn upon and presented is that of anthropologists from the United States of America as well as their British counterparts. There are, however, other national traditions which also present useful experiences for us to consider. For example, contemporary Canadian applied anthropology is undergoing very rapid development, and application has been at the core of Mexican anthropology since the 1917 revolution. Certainly, one could consider other regional traditions as well.

The value orientation of the applied anthropology described in this text is consistent with the political culture within which it developed, that is, it is pragmatic and democratic. It is pragmatic in that it stresses practices which work to achieve people's goals. It is democratic in that all the approaches, whether they are for research or intervention, have at their core the commitment to discover and communicate the community's perspective. A function of the democratic orientation is a consistent regard for interests of the local community. You will see these attributes manifested continually throughout the text. You may find it useful to regard these features as a kind of bias.

Depending on the circumstances, the approaches can be both radical and conservative. In some cases, these different kinds of applied anthropology can be used to slow and redirect change which political authorities are advocating. In other cases, the practices discussed here can be used to transform communities into more powerful organizations, giving control where none existed previously. It is important for you, the reader, to realize these features are at the core of all the approaches to using anthropology discussed here. It is not about getting people to change against their will, it is about helping people express their will. Yet the framework for action which we discuss here is practical; it has to do with the job market, and it has to do with politics, power, and will.

Although most of the technique chapters have to do with change-producing strategies, this book is also about cultural persistence. You will notice that even in the more explicit change-producing approaches there is a strenuous commitment to identifying the community perspective in the development process. None of the approaches involve unilateral imposition of development goals from outside the community. The basic task is to foster acceleration of the adaptation process. Sometimes expressed simply as "getting more" for the community, the process involves creating a better adaptation for the people of the community. Adaptation questions are ultimately survival questions. Therefore, we should recognize that community-defined development aided by the applied anthropologist is basically a culture-conserving activity.

IS IT ANTHROPOLOGY?

This book does not ask the question, "Is this anthropology?" The question itself is viewed as basically destructive from both intellectual and action perspectives in that it generally limits competition and protects vested intellectual interests. In the case of applied anthropology the question is particularly problematic. Further, if we look at the effect of applied anthropological work on the rest of the field through time we can see that applied work often functioned as the cutting edge of the discipline. Consequently, applied anthropologists have always been the targets of the "but is it. . . ." refrain. As we permanently set aside the "but is it anthropology?" question, we should be reminded of more relevant questions: "What is the problem?," "What are the solutions to it?," and most importantly, "What are the skills and knowledge necessary to implement the solution?"

CONTENT OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into four parts. Part I, "Introduction and Overview," includes chapters intended to provide background for better understanding the core of the text, as presented in Parts II and III. Part IV deals with some issues of the professional's role.

The first chapter, entitled "Domain of Application," will consider both the relationship between theoretical and applied anthropology and the content of contemporary anthropologists' work situations. An explicit definition of applied anthropology is presented to give the reader more systematic and comprehensive understanding of what applied anthropologists do. The relationship between application and theory is seen as poorly understood within the discipline. Two aspects of the relationship between theory and application are stressed. First, good knowledge of theory is a necessity for the applied anthropologist because it guides research and increases the scope of applicability of the information obtained. Second, theory which is useful to the applied anthropologist will concern variables which can be acted upon. The chapter maps out a strategy for self-instruction concerning potential employment situations.

The second chapter, entitled "The Development of Applied Anthropology," provides a synthesis of the history of applied anthropology from the standpoint of developments in the United States. This synthesis is based on work the author has done in conjunction with the Applied Anthropology Documentation Project at the University of Kentucky. There are a number of fundamental points made in this chapter, among them 1) that the theoretical and applied aspects of anthropology developed simultaneously, and 2) to a large extent activities in the academic realm were often motivated or

at least rationalized by the information needs of governments, research funding organizations, and other policy research consumers.

The "Introduction and Overview" section of this book is concluded with a chapter on ethics organized around fundamental principles for ethical professional behavior. These principles are derived from the "Statement of Ethical and Professional Responsibilities" of the Society for Applied Anthropology. The research component of this chapter discusses the core of ethical research practice: informed consent, voluntary participation by informants, and the issue of risk. The discussion of ethics is expanded to include consideration of the conflicts which may exist between the different groups with which anthropologists work. Although most research or action situations can be carried out without facing overly difficult dilemmas, even very simple situations can turn into a labyrinth of apparently insoluble conflicts. While it is best to be prepared for these problems, they cannot all be anticipated because learning requires experience. Situations of irreconcilable conflict are easy to read about, and can even be discussed around seminar tables with some benefit, but being faced with harmed communities, betrayed colleagues, and unfulfilled contracts is quite another thing. All these complexities aside, it is important to understand that standards of ethical practice need not be viewed solely as constraints; they can be seen as good guides for effective professional action. Indeed, ethical behavior is more often than not the most effective action.

Part II of this book, "Interventions in Anthropology," contains chapters descriptive of five intervention techniques which have been developed within anthropology or with substantial participation by anthropologists. These intervention techniques are reflected in the titles to these chapters, which are, in order: "Action Anthropology," "Research and Development Anthropology," "Community Development," "Advocacy Anthropology," and "Culture Brokerage." These modes of intervention are presented using, where appropriate, the prototypical case as the starting point in the discussion. In the fourth chapter, *action anthropology* is illustrated with the Fox Project, which attempted to stimulate certain change processes in a community of Mesquakie Indians near Tama, Iowa. In the fifth chapter, *research and development anthropology* is exemplified by the Vicos Project, which was directed at establishing an independent community of former serfs in highland Peru. The sixth chapter discusses *community development* as it was applied to bring about improved aspects of life in a number of communities on the Papago Indian Reservation in southern Arizona. The seventh chapter is about a kind of *advocacy anthropology*. Advocacy anthropology is depicted using a Chicago Community Mental Health Project in which anthropologists, working with activists in the Chicago Latino community, used their research skills to increase the political power of the Latino community and to improve available health, education, and recreational facilities in an area of Chicago's

South Side. In the eighth chapter, *cultural brokerage* is illustrated by a case study based on Miami's Community Mental Health Project, which used anthropological knowledge and skills to develop and maintain a linkage between five different ethnic communities in Miami and a large county hospital.

Action anthropology, research and development anthropology, and community development are quite similar in approach, purpose, and result. Each varies somewhat, and it can be argued that each represents a somewhat different array of techniques to achieve certain goals. All of these approaches can be used to achieve development of different kinds at the community level. To varying extents these approaches all stress what has been called developmental change: change which improves a community's long-term adaptability. One can often observe two parallel strands of development in projects which use these approaches. One is more public and results in physical transformations and improved services, and serves as a medium for the second. The second thread is more obscure and results in strengthened community organization and improved decision making. It is more focused on educational change, and results in the creation of social structures rather than physical structures. The three approaches vary enough to provide a set of alternatives for dealing with different development problems in different kinds of communities.

Both advocacy anthropology and cultural brokerage seem better adjusted to complex urban environments. Advocacy anthropology is used here as a general term for situations in which the anthropologist is directly working on behalf of community groups. This often entails working in opposition to more powerful political forces. The approach that is used to illustrate advocacy anthropology was developed by Stephen Schensul. This type is quite different from the three approaches described above. Here, the anthropologist acts more as a research auxiliary to community leadership rather than as a direct change agent, as is the case in action anthropology, research and development anthropology, and community development. Certainly, this is not to say that the anthropologist is not involved in the action—in fact, the advocacy process requires very close affiliation between the anthropologist and the community. The role reflects the development of increased political sophistication of ethnic minorities in American cities as much as a shift in the way anthropologists work. This is simply an appropriate adjustment to changes in ethnic communities. Cultural brokerage, too, seems appropriate to contemporary urban ethnic politics. In this approach, developed by anthropologist Hazel H. Weidman, the anthropologist serves as a link between a community service-providing institution, such as a hospital, and an ethnic community which receives services from the institution. In contrast with the other four approaches, the primary goal of cultural brokerage is not change per se, but increased efficiency through effective culture contact. That is, it aims at improving services for ethnic groups through enhanced communication, as well as changing the service provider and the ethnic community.

Part III of this book is entitled "Policy Research in Anthropology." This very important aspect of contemporary applied anthropology is presented in four chapters entitled "Anthropology as a Policy Science," "Social Impact Assessment," "Evaluation," and "Technology Development Research." The ninth chapter provides an overview of anthropology as a policy science by discussing various application domains. An expanded version of the discussion on policy which appears in chapter one, "The Domain of Application," is provided. A special section on using policy research data is included in this chapter. Anthropologists are both on the producing and using ends of policy research enterprises these days. In fact, one anticipates that more and more anthropologists will take on the role of policy maker as they gain experience in the agencies and firms which employ them. The next two chapters, "Social Impact Assessment" and "Evaluation," provide practical instruction in the two most important policy research areas. Social impact assessment (SIA) describes a generalized approach for doing this type of analysis. It is important to note here that SIA is usually done in response to a set of agency guidelines. Social impact assessment is most often done in response to specific federal laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act, and consequently is limited to domestic situations in the United States. This chapter contains an extended illustrative case, a social impact assessment done for a dam and reservoir project to be built on the Rio Grande in New Mexico. Other projects are mentioned in order to describe some of the variety of such research efforts. The eleventh chapter deals with evaluation research. For certain kinds of evaluation tasks traditionally trained anthropologists are quite well equipped. This chapter focuses on those tasks that best fit the traditional array of research skills. Basically, we can say that anthropologists are usually best prepared to serve well in evaluation of smaller scale programs or local subparts of larger national programs. One might also say that ethnography works best in evaluation strategies which respect qualitative data and/or are interested in the community perspective. The potential of anthropologists goes much beyond the qualitative evaluation of smaller programs. Because of this, the chapter will describe a variety of evaluation modes, including three case presentations. The last chapter of this section of the book deals with technology development research. In this type of research the anthropologist's goal is to increase the cultural appropriateness of new technology as it is developed. The case used to illustrate this kind of research is from the Farming Systems Research literature. The illustrative case is a research effort done in the Sudan as part of the International Sorghum and Millet Project.

The intervention component (Part II), and the policy research component (Part III), as noted above, represent the core of this text. These intervention and research approaches represent most of the major types of practice found in contemporary American anthropology. In addition to these activities there are many other kinds, most of them specific to particular new occupations

for anthropologists which are an important part of the total picture. Many of these kinds of activities are commented upon throughout the text. Increasingly, these diverse areas of practice will come to dominate applied anthropology. Below is an outline of the major approaches presented in this text. Cultural resource assessment and social soundness analysis are briefly treated in chapter nine, "Anthropology as a Policy Science."

Major Types of Anthropological Practice

- I. Intervention Anthropology
 - A. Action Anthropology
 - B. Research and Development Anthropology
 - C. Community Development
 - D. Advocacy Anthropology
 - E. Cultural Brokerage
- II. Policy Research
 - A. Social Impact Assessment
 - B. Evaluation Research
 - C. Technology Development Research
 - D. Cultural Resource Assessment
 - E. Social Soundness Analysis

Part IV, the concluding section of this book, is entitled "Being a Professional," and includes one chapter entitled "Making a Living." This last chapter focuses on skills which are important in anthropological practice. Most importantly, anthropologists need to be able to produce useful knowledge for their clients. Important communication skill areas which are discussed are report writing and proposal writing. Many anthropologists find that both skills are especially important in their jobs. Some would say they were hired because of these skills, not for their ability to do cultural analysis or ethnography. Proposal writing holds an especially enticing lure, since it often allows one to create one's own employment, either in self-organized consulting firms, or for various other organizations including, universities, agencies, and firms. There are a variety of organizational skills which are treated in this chapter. In addition, this chapter also looks at the role of the consultant. Topics discussed include: why people use consultants, different styles for being a consultant, and marketing your skills as a consultant.

The chapter gives practical advice on employment. The core of the chapter is about the job search and its component parts. It includes the selection of appropriate education and training experiences, selecting appropriate courses, how to build marketable credentials, and investigating the domain of application. Survival skills after employment are also discussed. These include networking and collaboration, and skill maintenance.

All chapters conclude with suggestions for further reading.

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PART I

Introduction and Overview

