

Emerging Trends in Applied Anthropology

John van Willigen and Satish Kedia

As substantiated by the essays of this collection, applied anthropologists today are employed in a variety of diverse settings, which we have called domains of application. They work for domestic and international organizations; municipal, state, and federal agencies; philanthropic and consumer groups; grassroots and advocacy groups; and private consulting firms and corporations. In the future, the scope of settings in which applied anthropologists work is likely to expand even further as the discipline continues to evolve. While much of this growth comes from inside the community of applied anthropologists, external forces have had and will continue to have a significant influence on the discipline's future as well. This concluding chapter briefly summarizes some of the key trends in the field: demographic shifts affecting employment opportunities, creative adaptation to new work contexts, interdisciplinary exchange in the applied work, the changing relationships with study subjects, and contributions of applied work to basic anthropology. Additional perspectives on the topic are discussed in a special issue of *Human Organization* entitled "The Future Lies Ahead: Applied Anthropology in Century XXI" (Hackenberg and Hackenberg 2004).

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Demographic changes have long affected anthropologists' employment opportunities. World wars, migration, and globalization have resulted in population fluxes that have most indelibly marked contemporary anthropology. About 50 years ago, a number of key interlocking academic employment and demographic trends in the United States began having a significant impact on anthropology, which in turn altered the possibilities for applied work—most notably, the rapid expansion of the college population following the flood of servicemen returning from World War II. In 1944, the U.S. government started providing veterans with education subsidies through the G.I. Bill, leading to an influx of college students and a greater need for university professors. Returning G.I.s also led to the baby boom, an unprecedented surge of births in the United States from 1946 to 1964. When the children born in this era reached college age, once again the need for professors expanded the academic market for anthropologists.

Ultimately, as this population bulge passed through subsequent life stages, the need for faculty decreased, leading to a decline in the academic job market in the early 1970s when the annual production of anthropologists with graduate degrees became greater than the employment needs of university departments.

As a result, in the last twenty years, almost half of new anthropology Ph.D.s and the majority of those with master's degrees have moved into careers outside of academia. While these conditions have been tempered somewhat by the imminent retirement of the baby boom generation of academic anthropologists, other economic and social changes in postsecondary education have mandated increased use of part-time personnel rather than full-time, tenure-track faculty. At the same time, many anthropologists have chosen careers outside academia of their own volition rather than by necessity, since work in the private sector has many attractive features not characteristic of a university post, including higher pay, limited or no teaching, and less pressure to publish.

In the last thirty years, the rapid rise of immigrants to the United States also greatly affected anthropology, compelling attention to the expanding local immigrant and ethnic communities at home instead of those in Third World nations. The ensuing backyard anthropology addresses the newer issues of ethnic communities, such as first-generation Americans' relationships with their immigrant parents and relatives and their sociocultural ties to the countries of their ancestors. For example, the growing Hispanic-American immigrant community has impacted U.S. society, economics, and politics by compelling change in education, language, welfare, health care, trade, legislation, and even election of public officials who now clamor to garner the votes of this expanding minority group.

Simultaneously, the landscape of traditional anthropological work has been drastically altered by the expanding influence of globalization in business, government, and national and international commerce. Large multinational corporations and international aid organizations now conduct business in multiple countries, requiring personnel with an understanding of many cultures, societies, and economies to be successful in their endeavors. Thus, these demographic shifts as well as the forces of globalization have not only led to new types of employment for anthropologists but have also altered the face of much anthropological work and the discipline through the growing domains of application. The domains discussed in this anthology reflect, in part, the effects of the demographic shifts mentioned here. Gerontology and anthropology's contribution to understanding aging as a sociocultural as well as biological phenomenon are gaining focus partly because of the baby boomers that are reaching retirement age. The education, nutrition, and health and medicine domains also are growing in scope as a result of the baby boomers, migrations, and economic development. The scope of research and practice in agriculture, environment, business and industry, development, and involuntary resettlement are all advancing, at least in part due to economic globalization, which continues to expand the opportunities for applied anthropologists. In addition, there are many other domains such as substance abuse, criminal justice, forensic science, human rights, cultural resource management, fisheries, forestry and wildlife, urban development and housing, and mass media where a significant number of applied anthropologists are engaged and are making critical contributions.

CREATIVE ADAPTATION TO NEW WORK CONTEXTS

The economic and professional incentives that motivate graduate education and structure opportunities in the job market are core forces that determine the basic nature of any discipline. Because these incentives may be slow to develop, there is a lag between what anthropology professionals actually do in the field and what is considered mainstream academic anthropology. However, it is clear that the newly emerging work opportunities have profoundly impacted anthropology in general. Applied anthropologists have responded in innovative ways to the challenges in these new work contexts, generating new knowledge and methodologies. These responses have stimulated change in anthropology as a discipline, although in ways that may not be immediately evident.

Social programs and policy requirements frequently generate resources for research, which in turn has led to new work opportunities for anthropologists. While anthropological work is not just a response to the market or solely based on opportunism, it is nevertheless useful to consider those forces that motivate our work at any given time. Some practitioners have suggested redefining our enterprise as “public anthropology,” in order to move “our frame of reference to beyond the discipline: start with the world’s problems—as they come to us—rather than focusing on the discipline’s traditional formulations that do little more than perpetuate the status quo” (Borofsky 2002, 474). Peggy Reeves Sanday and Paula Sabloff have suggested the conceptual framework of public interest anthropology (PIA) be employed, an approach that merges theory, analysis, and problem solving in a commitment to positively impact human lifeways with a focus on conveying the anthropological perspective to the masses for consumption and debate (Sanday 2004). There is no doubt that applied anthropologists’ skills in employing cultural knowledge, grounded in sound ethnographic method, to solve real-life problems is highly relevant, but one of the future goals must be to move anthropology into the sphere of public discourse and to do so in ways that the layperson can comprehend.

While globalization is not univocally positive and comes with its own set of problems, it has also created opportunities for applied anthropologists, as illustrated by the contributors to this anthology. Robert Rhoades describes how anthropologists have been and continue to be in demand to identify and advocate local cultural, environmental, and economic factors that promote well-being and sustainability in response to global large-scale transnational agrobusiness. The broad resurgence of ethnic identity movements and religious fundamentalism, as well as the periodic onslaught of large-scale natural disasters, continues to give rise to areas where applied anthropologists can contribute as part of established organizations in the development field. Peter Little points out that a number of these employment opportunities are now being created on the institutional level, through the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and a proliferation of nongovernmental organizations, such as Oxfam–UK and World Vision International. In such settings, practitioners assess the regional impact of these organi-

zations' economic reform and investment programs.

Further, Anthony Oliver-Smith explores the key role played by applied anthropologists in mitigating the severe impact of development-induced displacement and resettlement (DIDR) upon communities deprived of both livelihood and human rights. He suggests that in the future the field will continue to "address the challenges presented by DIDR at the local community and project level, in national and international political discourse, and in the policy frameworks of multilateral institutions." The specific knowledge and analytical skills of applied anthropologists will be crucial in critiquing current development models, which assume the necessity of relocation without questioning the scope of initiatives that cause such disruption in individuals' lives and their environment. Similarly, David Himmelgreen and Deborah Crooks predict that in the twenty-first century, nutritional anthropologists will continue to use their expertise to resolve ongoing concerns of public health officials and policymakers at the local, state, and international level. Such practitioners will address the problem of malnutrition and nutrient deficiencies, the rise of obesity-related diseases, the connection of food insecurity to under- and overnutrition, the impact of globalization on the consumption of traditional food versus junk food, and the development of culturally competent nutritional programs for diverse populations.

Currently, applied work requires practitioners to leave the legend of the lone anthropologist behind and become skilled in working collaboratively and with greater diplomacy. Governments are not as willing to allow anthropologists to work wherever and whenever, and increasingly the nature of applied work demands that anthropologists be "members of a team of local social scientists" (Wolf 2002, 7). This team may consist of other professionals or scientists, national or regional officials, and members of the community being studied. It is essential for applied anthropologists to effectively act in concert with all of these parties to "share data and cope with the assertion of quite different expectations on what questions are important" (Wolf 2002, 7). For anthropology, collaboration, in particular greater community involvement or outreach, has resulted in the need for greater dissemination of research results, increased skills in communication of findings to new audiences in new formats, and employment of techniques from other fields.

For example, Kedia's evaluation of substance abuse treatment effectiveness in Tennessee, which is used to inform state policy, involves partnerships with many stakeholders. The complex and lengthy tasks of evaluation require not only collaboration with treatment providers (private, nonprofit, and faith-based) but also with funding arms of the government, Tennessee Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services officials, regional organizations that deal with substance abuse issues, clients, clients families and advocates, project staff, information systems specialists, and software and web developers. As evaluator, he "facilitate[s] stakeholders' active and effective participation in the process" through offering his guidance and expertise in "scientific knowledge, systematic

methodology, research rigor, and skills that many stakeholders may not possess” (Kedia, in press). These collaborative efforts only scarcely resemble traditional anthropological pursuits but result in multiple policy reports, bulletins, and other forms of communication that disseminate research results to the stakeholders to facilitate desired changes and to encourage continued partnerships.

INTERDISCIPLINARY EXCHANGE IN THE APPLIED WORK

All social science disciplines have been altering their assumptions and procedures as a result of increased interdisciplinary exchange. While anthropology has had a significant affect on other disciplines, it has also been influenced by them. Probably the most striking changes in anthropology include the addition of more time-effective methodologies, including rapid assessment procedures (RAP) and collective interviewing strategies such as focus groups (Scrimshaw and Hurtado 1987; van Willigen and Finan 1991). Originally a marketing tool, use of a focus group as a means to collect data is now commonplace in many of the social sciences.

At the same time, ethnographic approaches and the culture concept of traditional anthropology have been increasingly used outside the discipline. Over the last two decades, ethnographic research practices changed from being a mystery for persons in other fields to being mainstream methodology. For a number of years, van Willigen has given a series of guest lectures on ethnographic methods in a program evaluation course taught in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky. When he first started delivering this talk, many students seemed puzzled by the content of the lecture, often asking whether it was possible to generalize from this kind of data since their dominant research technique had always been the random-sample survey with results analyzed using statistical methods. Through the years, however, their awareness and enthusiastic acceptance of an ethnographic approach has become clear. This trend is also evident in the practices of new graduates and professionals in related disciplines, in which ethnographic or qualitative methods have gradually become common. In fact, it is not unusual to find edited volumes on qualitative methods in which virtually all the authors are sociologists or to find textbooks on the subject written by scholars in communication or cultural/media studies.

The influence of anthropology’s theoretical content, particularly the culture concept, has been extensively used in other disciplines and has been recast in the process. One result of this cross-fertilization has been fewer distinctions between the knowledge produced by anthropologists and those trained in other areas. One could argue that there is a coming together of ideas from various disciplines to form what might be thought of as a new synthesis of concepts, with loose networks of people working in the applied and academic realms that share ideas and influence each other even though they were trained in different fields. This interdisciplinary trend has significant implications for current and future applied anthropologists in many domains of application. Practitioners will need to master methodologies and technical terminology from a variety of fields

to be able to work collaboratively. In addition, they should shoulder the responsibility to articulate exactly what an anthropologist can bring to the various settings in which they might be employed.

This is particularly true in the contemporary information-driven government and corporate world, where job classifications and requirements are being broadened rather than narrowed to a specific expertise or skill set. In her chapter on the business and industry domain, Marietta Baba argues that anthropologists' "fine-grained analysis of carefully recorded qualitative data, informed by knowledge of human biological and cultural systems," is ideally suited to understanding those subcultures reflected in consumer behavior and emergent in corporate organizations. In particular, anthropologists can add tremendous value to modern business operations through their understanding of culture in holistic terms both within society and in a specific setting (e.g., the corporation itself), even when the researcher may not have knowledge of that setting. Their holistic perspective integrates a large range of social and behavioral phenomena to explain culture, cultural changes, and the roots of cultural patterns. Baba suggests that anthropologists' knowing how to learn about other cultures is a great asset; their grasp of best practices in ethnographic research, their ability to depict human experience in nuanced and innovative ways, and their commitment to protect the individuals being studied make anthropologists uniquely suited to initiate productive activities and bring humane approaches to (in Baba's case) the corporate work environment.

This is equally applicable to other domains, the study of the classroom as a cultural and social space, for example. As educational anthropologist Nancy Greenman demonstrates in her essay, anthropologists are uniquely trained to meet the pedagogical challenges of an increasingly multicultural and multiracial society via their ability to grasp the complexities of student/teacher relations and, particularly, their understanding of historical inequities and systematic disenfranchisement of minority groups in public education in the United States. In his chapter on the environment, Thomas McGuire argues that anthropologists, with their substantive expertise in ethnographic techniques as well as their understanding of the geopolitical dimensions of environmental change, are increasingly being called upon to ensure that a "healthy and productive life—in harmony with nature—is indeed a human entitlement." Whatever the approach and subfield of environmental anthropology, McGuire notes, practitioners should always strive to supplement cultural knowledge at local levels with the specific political economy of the region in mind. His work illustrates how ethnographic practices can be used to take regional research beyond the realm of statistics through the creation of regionally placed teams that provide real-time ground truthing of economic data. In the future, the unique capacities of anthropologists will become more familiar to consumers of research services, especially those that involve humans and their communities.

In policy research today, it is far easier to sell ethnography than ever before, in part because the policy work demands a firm knowledge of the empirical re-

alities for which ethnographic methods are most appropriate. The use of this approach in program evaluation is common and, in some cases, virtually required. The particular training of anthropologists has always been well suited to policy work, a conviction echoed by a number of our contributors. In their discussion of anthropology and health care, Linda Whiteford and Linda Bennett contend that applied medical anthropology's understanding of the cultural and biological bases of disease, as well as how unequal distribution of resources can impact epidemiological patterns, will be crucial for effective public health campaigns, such as those addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Similarly in their chapter, David Himmelgreen and Deborah Crooks emphasize that, since sociocultural and biological factors impact how humans select and consume food, anthropologists' expertise in both makes them especially valuable to public health officials who require reliable and culturally specific research data to formulate nutritional policy. And as Robert Harman explains, anthropologists' skills in conducting ethnographic surveys and employing qualitative methods are very useful in developing the close rapport with informants required for advocacy on behalf of frequently disenfranchised but increasingly sizeable groups in the United States, such as the elderly, racial/ethnic minorities, refugees, and immigrants.

CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDY SUBJECTS

Throughout the development of applied anthropology, the relationship between practitioners and the people they study has changed substantially, paralleling the development of anthropology itself. In some sense, the history of anthropology, basic and applied, is the history of the power relationships between anthropologists and their study subjects. The fact that anthropology is a product of colonialism, when it was a tool used for the control and domination of subjects, is still central to popular memory of this discipline. Since World War II, these power relationships have changed, and the stance of basic and applied anthropology has adjusted accordingly regarding the communities and individuals studied. As Renato Rosaldo puts it, this transformation comprises for the researcher new conceptions of the objects of analysis, the language of analysis, and the position of the analyst (1993, 37).

The mainstream anthropological response to this essentially postmodern dilemma is to refigure ethnographic practice as 'reflexive'. As Marcus and Fischer (1986) argue, ethnography is not only about 'those studied' but a kind of 'cultural critique' of the anthropologist's culture. In addition, there currently is a tendency to change the mode of representation in the anthropological narrative in order to highlight the voice(s) of those being studied. Increasingly the path followed in applied anthropology has been to work with study subjects in a more collaborative or participatory way. In this approach, the goals of the anthropologists become aligned with those of the community and individuals being studied through the anthropologists' sharing of their skills and knowledge. Thereby, anthropologists can help empower individuals, transforming the study

population from 'object to be known' to a 'subject that can control'. Applied anthropologists become an auxiliary to the naturally occurring community leadership and serve in another capacity, as cultural brokers, or, in a more neutral role, as 'co-culture' mediators or liaisons, in order to emphasize the conceptual equality of anthropologists' and the studied population's cultural systems.

Several of the chapters in this volume identify anthropologists working with the local communities and their cultures as partners, indicating that those studied are not only subjects but individuals who can have greater impact and control over what is being done in their communities. Robert Rhoades, for example, advocates that agricultural anthropologists develop a professional relationship with a public constituency to the extent seen in other fields like economics, law, or education, as a means "to declare its [anthropology's] relevance through action." Thomas McGuire promotes anthropologists' collaboration with local communities to develop an ethnography for use as a tool for political mobilization, to gain state recognition of indigenous rights and protect biodiversity. Robert Harman notes that ethnographic practices and qualitative methods require long-term commitment and close rapport with informants and that, in aging anthropology, both of these approaches are much easier to achieve if practitioners work on a more equal footing with the study population. In addition, scholars from non-Western countries are often being trained in Western universities and are beginning to contribute not only to the scholarship on their own cultures but also on Western cultures. Peter Little foresees development anthropologists as having invaluable opportunities to actively collaborate with Third World scholars, for whom the distinctions among theory, method, and practice may be less clear in light of their direct involvement in the socioeconomic and political changes of their countries. Increasingly, the key relationship is not between the anthropologist and the discipline but between the anthropologist and the partnering community.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF APPLIED WORK TO BASIC ANTHROPOLOGY

The actions of the working population of anthropologists—what they publish and teach, which associations they join or professional meetings they attend, as well as their exchanges with peers and personal networks—lead to transformation in the discipline. Policy research needs, a cornerstone of applied work, invariably contribute to innovations in basic anthropology because of the employment and research funding opportunities that emerge and create further incentives. These developments often challenge orthodoxy within the discipline, which in turn produces gate-keeping behaviors calculated to exclude applied anthropology. It is surprising to discover that topics and methods, now regarded as integral to the discipline as conventional anthropology, were once subject to the question "But is it really anthropology?" and were marginalized. A good example would be the development of medical anthropology, which arose outside of academic departments as a research activity to help inform public health programs after World War II. For a time it did not seem necessary to use the

modifier 'applied' with medical anthropology. It was thought of as an applied field by definition. Today, medical anthropology has both applied and theoretical advocates.

One factor that limits the impact of applied anthropologists on the discipline is that practitioners have a tendency not to write and publish as much as those who work in academic settings. Often they either do not have time or are simply not confronted with the same 'publish or perish' pressure of their academic colleagues. In many instances, practitioners' written work may be proprietary or confidential and not available for public use or for journal publication. Equally prohibitive is the tendency of journal editors or reviewers to reject manuscripts that are perceived as 'not academic'. As a result of these factors, many applied anthropologists have given up on publishing in traditional anthropology journals or engage in code switching, writing on their applied work for certain stakeholders, then altering the writing to meet the requirements for inclusion in traditional anthropological scholarly venues. Applied practitioners' links to basic anthropology may be quite limited; some finding it irrelevant to communicate back to the discipline when much of what is published in core anthropological journals contains little material of immediate use to applied work. Nevertheless, there are periodicals such as *Human Organization*, *Practicing Anthropology*, and the *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* that provide venues of information exchange for applied anthropologists. Also in recent years, the publication of applied materials on websites has greatly increased the opportunity for communicating findings of applied work.

CONCLUSION

This anthology suggests that key trends in applied anthropology reflect a new synthesis, in which knowledge from a variety of disciplines are combined to address human problems and challenges in myriads of settings. At the same time, this synthesis maintains a core of traditional anthropological concepts and methods, including an emphasis on the importance of local knowledge; participation and empowerment of the community; increased critical reflection on the underlying structures causing the problems with which applied anthropologists deal; and ongoing concerns about sustainability of the environment, cultures, programs, and livelihoods. Future trends as noted by Robert Rhoades in this volume exemplify the kind of synthesis being discussed: spatial and socioeconomic complexity of innovations involving multiscale research, integration of computer-based approaches (e.g., GIS, simulation modeling) with indigenous knowledge, and a new range of issues arising from the transformation of local actions to large-scale transnational operations.

Increasingly, those in academia are under pressure to demonstrate the applied significance of their intellectual endeavors, for politicians and policymakers are demanding that university personnel engage in more activities benefiting society. At the very least, most funding agencies—the source of nearly all anthropological inquiry—require researchers to document the pertinence, scope,

and impact of their proposed activity in practical terms. This will entail more emphasis on equipping graduate students with skills appropriate for the real world (see Lamphere 2004) and will require the communication of applied anthropologists' skills and abilities to an audience wider than the discipline and its limited community of practitioners.

The future of applied anthropology lies in the growth of theoretical and practical work in various domains and in establishing their relevance for solving societal problems. As the various authors in this book suggest, successful applied anthropological work relies on collaboration and integration of the techniques and vocabularies of other fields, development of the most effective and innovative anthropological methodologies, increased facility in the use of emerging technologies, and mobilization of strong communication skills to best disseminate information to a lay public. Applied practitioners and academicians alike must continue to be active and engaged proponents of the diversity and vitality of human lifeways by forming and advocating culturally appropriate policies, programs, and actions that will alleviate the social, economic, health or technological problems facing our ever-changing global society.

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Citation:

Kedia, Satish and John van Willigen. Emerging trends in applied anthropology. Chap. 11 in *Applied anthropology: Domains of application*, edited by S. Kedia and J. van Willigen. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, (in press). pp 232-242
2005