



Applied Anthropology: Tools and Perspectives for Contemporary Practice (2nd Edition)

By Alexander M. Ervin

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The most up-to-date and accessible text on the subject, Applied Anthropology provides the skills, perspectives, and methodologies needed when working in today's communities and organizations.

An invaluable resource, this practical book answers the question, “What can I do with a degree in Anthropology?” In addition to a focus on method, this book provides a solid foundation in the history, activities, and ethical concerns of applied anthropology. The book stresses decision-making and the need to understand policy through anthropological analysis. Because an anthropologist must communicate effectively with the general “non-anthropological” public, the text employs an accessible, jargon-free writing style. More than twenty case studies plus many “real-world” examples of anthropological practice reinforce the usefulness of anthropology in the real world. New material includes a summary of Elizabeth Guillette’s research, a case study summarizing the work of Kendall Thu on intensive livestock operations, an analysis of Rapid Assessment Procedures and a summarization of the work and ideas of Robert Chambers.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

Preface

Anthropology cannot be treated in a "cookbook," step-by-step fashion. It challenges people to exercise enormous flexibility, analytical capacity, and subtlety of thought, abilities that are especially important when sorting out the nuances of unfamiliar cultures. My challenge is to present the essentials for actually doing applied anthropology.

So, as I discuss the history and subject matter of applied anthropology, I emphasize methodologies in applied research. I could have stressed theory but much of the effective theory in anthropology is tied to specific areas, such as economics, poverty, ecology, health care, and conflict resolution. Then too, practitioners tell me that the greatest asset gained from university study has been their knowledge of methods. I want to give the reader a set of generalizable tools that can be used in various settings and domains. Students need to consider methods early in their training. This can be best accomplished through "hands-on" practicum assignments accompanying courses in applied anthropology.

Another asset for applied anthropologists is the ability to analyze, inform, and, one would hope, influence policy. Understanding formal decision-making and planning as sociocultural phenomena is heavily emphasized in the book. Policy analysis, by itself and in the contexts of need and impact assessments, program evaluation, and advocacy, is detailed.

I frequently make use of case studies. The case study approach is often the best way to teach anthropology. Because applied anthropology currently covers so many domains, varied case studies can familiarize students with the many options for practice. At the same time, each case illustrates such principles as bottom-up perspectives in program evaluation or the corroboration of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Although I generally treat the various content areas of practice indirectly through case studies and other examples, there is one exception. Anthropological practice in environmental issues is given a separate chapter. The challenge of the global environmental crisis has generated rapid advances in environmental anthropology. Current work by political ecologists should stimulate the interest of students and illustrate how exceptionally relevant anthropology can be.

Another decision needs explanation. Although the book covers most of the significant principles required for applied research, I mainly illustrate them with studies done in the United States and Canada. Why? First, I have a variety of applied experiences both in Canada and the United States, and I am much more familiar with the North American literature and policy contexts than international applications. Second, one of my major goals is to provide tangible and usable perspectives for the thousands of anthropology students who do not enter a Ph.D.-level program and will probably be working in domestic settings after graduation. Third, I wish to reverse the unfortunate image of anthropology as an exotic and arcane subject normally done in remote places. I hope to show its mainstream relevance. Anthropology is just as much an applied policy science as are sociology, political science, public health, business administration, educational foundations, and other subjects. When I was a student, the basic text in applied anthropology was Ward Goodenough's (1963) *Cooperation in Change*, which used international examples almost exclusively, yet his book was quite influential for domestic applied anthropology. Although I dare not consider this present book in the same

league as Goodenough's classic, surely an alternate approach is possible—domestic examples can inform international applications. Of course, in spite of this North American emphasis, I do use some international examples.

Related to the North American perspective is a tendency to draw from my own experiences—social impact assessment in the Arctic, farming and rural communities on the prairies,¹ refugee resettlement, needs assessments, urban social planning, participatory research, and advocacy—in some case studies and other illustrations. I do this not only because I think that the experience is informative but also because it is easier to write with confidence and accuracy about one's own work. I have also provided a very wide and representative range of both classic and recent works in applied anthropology.

I have had some important help and influences in writing this book. Ten years ago, while at the University of South Florida catching up on the advances of the applied anthropology, I benefited greatly from the hospitality and advice of the faculty. I am especially indebted to Al Wolfe, Jerry Smith, Michael Angrosino, and Gil Kushner. In fact, Gil Kushner provided the flash of "satori" for me that ultimately led to this book. In 1978, braving the chills of an Alberta February, he addressed the Canadian Anthropology Society's annual Congress, telling us of the remarkable innovations in training anthropology students for nonacademic practice in the United States.

Two mentors deserve mention. The late Jim Millar, my longtime departmental head, was a latecomer to academia. Having spent most of his life as a mining engineer, he was frequently uncomfortable and frustrated with academic passivity. He actively encouraged the development of a practical curriculum in our department, and, although he was an archaeologist, he saw the future of anthropology in its social, nonacademic applications. I am very grateful for his encouragement and friendship. One could not expect a better mentor and academic advisor than the late Demitri Shimkin at the University of Illinois. Demitri was above all an applied anthropologist and taught his students by example. When something needed to be done—from resolving a crisis in Holmes County to creating more socially relevant courses—he did it. This book benefits from my apprenticeship with Shimkin during the development of his pioneering course—American Communities and Their Problems. It is no accident that so many of Demitri's students are contributing to contemporary applied anthropology.

I also owe a collective debt to the founders, current members, executives, and staff of the Society for Applied Anthropology. This remarkably effective and welcoming organization has led the way in nurturing most of the anthropology that I discuss here, and much of the book's tone comes by way of osmosis from an ongoing relationship with the SfAA.

I would like to thank the five reviewers of my book proposal as well as those seven who reviewed the actual book, for their helpful commentary: Jean S. Forward, University of Massachusetts at Amherst; Winifred Mitchell, Minnesota State University-Mankato; J. Anthony Paredes, Florida State University; James M. Schaefer, Union College; Walter M. Vannette, Northern Arizona University; Alvin W. Wolfe, University of South Florida; and John Young, Oregon State University. I am indebted to the generosity of Nazeem Muhajarine, a colleague in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, who allowed me to follow his excellent outline for the design of questionnaires in Chapter 13. Five friends have been especially generous with their time and advice. Let me make the standard but absolutely necessary disclaimer that they cannot be faulted for any deficiencies in the final product. Gil Kushner, the "godfather" of applied training programs, provided me with many wise observations and cautions on the entire text. I have very much benefited from the highly-honed editorial and critical skills of Pat Higgins, my predecessor as editor of *Practicing Anthropology*. Rob Winthrop, an excellent example of a modern practitioner who combines "real world" savvy with scholarly erudition, commented on the earlier chapters. While criticizing my lapses of clarity, Niels Braroe, one of the best writers in anthropology, helped smooth the "bumps and ruts" of my

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From the Back Cover

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Highlights of the Second Edition:

- Devotes more attention to **international development** to highlight the global relevance of anthropological practice outside North America (Chapters 2, 4, & 5).
- NEW material in Part II, **Policy Analysis and Practice**, includes a summary of Elizabeth Guillette's research among the Yaqui of Mexico (Chapter 9) and a case study summarizing the work of Kendall Thu and others who have questioned the health, social, and environmental impacts of intensive livestock operations (Chapter 10).
- NEW material in Part III, **Methods For Applied Research, includes** Rapid Assessment Procedures (Chapter 14) and the work and ideas of Robert Chambers, a leader in international development (Chapter 15, now entitled "Participatory Research").

NEW tips by **Riall Nolan** for students thinking about a career as an applied anthropologist (Chapter 17).

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