
UNIT 2 APPROACHES IN PRACTICING ANTHROPOLOGY

Contents

- 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.2 Practicing versus Applied
 - 2.3 Methodologies in Practicing Anthropology
 - 2.3.1 General Methodology
 - 2.3.2 Traditional Methods
 - 2.3.3 Participatory Approaches
 - 2.3.4 Cultural Brokerage Approach: An Advocacy Approach
 - 2.4 Being a Professional: How to do Practicing Anthropology?
 - 2.5 Enlisting some Practitioners
 - 2.6 Anthropologists at Work: Hazards
 - 2.7 Summary
- References
Suggested Reading
Sample Questions

Learning Objectives



After going through this unit, you will:

- get an idea about applied and practical aspects of anthropological praxis;
- learn about the different methods applied by practicing anthropologists;
- learn about the different roles practicing anthropologists take as professionals; and
- learn about the difficulties they face in their areas of work.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The first evident purpose of anthropological studies for both students and academicians is the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Hence the practical importance of anthropological work is never mulled. Nevertheless, ever since anthropology has existed as a research discipline, it has had a practical aspect, in which anthropologists used their skills and knowledge to solve practical problems. By and large, this facet of anthropology has been named practicing anthropology. Robert Chambers says that knowledge and procedures utilised by anthropologists are not only for the attainment of further knowledge, but they also include actions in order to achieve some pragmatic purpose. This is understood as practicing anthropology (1989). These disciples of anthropology are concerned with human welfare, not with abstract knowledge alone. Although traditionally anthropology is divided into four subfields (cultural, biological, archeology, and linguistics), many experts see practicing/applied anthropology as a fifth subfield, reflecting a growth of the discipline in professional realms and scholarly activity.

Conventional anthropology and practicing anthropology differ from each other in various aspects. Practicing anthropology applies the discipline's knowledge to tackle contemporary social, economic, or health problems facing communities or organisations (Kedia and Bennet, 2005). Practitioners apply a large range of research methods and theoretical tactics to embolden people together to focus upon actual problems of the world and guarantee the continued existence of groups or communities which are at stake.

2.2 PRACTICING VERSUS APPLIED

Applied anthropology is anthropology put to use. It is usually observed that whenever innovative means of using anthropology are introduced, new nomenclatures come into practice, and they are compared to applied anthropology. This is done so as to keep the distinctive features intact and to guard the creator's intellectual vision. However this does not last long (van Willigen, 2002). Early writing about action anthropology and practicing anthropology drew this contrast even though all were involved in the use of anthropology and the various practitioners of different approaches shared many common interests. Differences in the career and work setting can produce new terms for such activity. Practicing anthropologists often conceived of themselves as being something different from applied anthropologists. In the late 1980s, it was generally understood that applied anthropology was conducted by anthropologists who are fundamentally academics but offering their consulting services to help solve pragmatic issues and whereas the term practicing anthropology was more regularly associated with people who had training in anthropology but were employed in offices and organisations on a steady basis.

Hence when distinction is made between practicing anthropology and applied anthropology, employment circumstances seem to be the most important factor in defining this contrast. Applied anthropologists are thought to be primarily academically employed, while practicing anthropologists are those working outside of academia or have little, if any, ties with academia. The anthropologist who rather than working in the traditional academic roles of teaching and research in a college or university, started working for many other kinds of organisations (such as government agencies, non-government agencies, and firms in a wide range of content areas) became the practitioners. The kind of work they take may include policy researcher, evaluator, impact assessor, needs assessor, planner, research analyst, advocate, trainer, culture broker, expert witness, public participation specialist, administrator/manager, change agent, and therapist (van Willigen, 2002).

While the above discussed distinction holds up imperfectly in use, there are some very important differences in the working conditions of these two kinds of people that lead to differences in knowledge, attitudes, and reference group. Yet we can take a view here that these all represent kinds of applied anthropology. To die down the distinction between the two terms practicing and applied it can be said that practicing anthropologists are those applied anthropologists who work in private sector.

2.3 METHODOLOGIES IN PRACTICING ANTHROPOLOGY

The methodologies of practicing anthropologists map the relationships between information, policy, and action, and the context of application which includes the knowledge relevant to a particular problem area and work setting. Therefore it includes the practices associated with producing and communicating information to solve practical problems. It can also involve various skills associated with being an interventionist, policy researcher or a change agent. In sum, the application methodology consists of the intellectual operations by which practicing anthropologists produce their products and have their effects.

2.3.1 General Methodology

The general methodology of practicing anthropology can be understood in three activities. These are obtaining information, formulating policies or plans, and action. These three activities are interrelated. Information is obtained through research. This information is used to formulate policy, and finally the policy guides action. Of course, nothing is ever that neatly rational; everything is subject to state of the problem. The relationship also operates in the opposite direction. The needs of action and policy often result in information being collected through research. Typically, in fact, there is a cycling back and forth through research, policy making, and action. We can call this situation the domain of application.

i) *Obtaining Information*

Information is seen as the foundation of the other two activities and can exist in a number of forms. Obtaining information is the diagnostic step of practicing research where the situation is defined or problem is identified through hypotheses and information is gathered using interview and focus group. The information which we deal with can range from raw data to general theory. Mostly, practicing anthropologists deal with information between these two poles. Through these methods of research we are able to move from observation, through various levels of abstraction, to more general theoretical statements. While the goal of practicing work is not the production of theory, the patterns of research logic are similar to those used in theoretical pursuits.

ii) *Formulating Policy/Plan*

The second activity of practicing anthropologists is formulating/shaping effective policy/plan on the basis of information obtained. Formulating plan is the goal setting and analysis step which formulates a guide for action. Therefore by policy here we mean the guides for consistent action which can be developed in reference to a wide variety of situations. Usually the practitioners as researchers provide information to policy makers, or as an analyst evaluates research data for policy makers and help make/shape effective policy. However they can also be directly involved in policy making.

iii) *Action*

The third activity is action. The action tool is used in decision/plan implementing step where action is directed at some practical goal. This includes various interventions carried out by practicing anthropologists to

bring change. The information obtained and the plan/policy formulated consists of a set of related ideas about role, procedures, and values. This is finally used to guide action.

The methods described above are applicable to all branches of practicing anthropology which use the knowledge gained from anthropological research to solve real life problems.

2.3.2 Traditional Methods

The methodology of application in the early stage of practicing anthropology was not well defined. Also the documentation during this period was poor. Therefore it was difficult to develop a sense of the nature of the approaches used by the early practitioners. In the early cases, the cross-culturally informed administrators used their knowledge to facilitate better “culture contact.” Social reformers, ministers, and administrators made use of the cultural knowledge to accomplish their tasks. The practicing anthropologists of this stage worked as training or research specialists in support of government or private foundation supported administrative programs. It was mostly observed that the dealings of the applied anthropologists assisted and encouraged the domination of the state over indigenous populations under colonial conditions.

2.3.3 Participatory Approaches

As time passed the aspects of a particular applied problem with which the practitioners dealt increased. The anthropologists became more occupied with application and intermediation taking increasing responsibility for problem solution. This necessitated that the roles for practicing anthropologists expanded beyond the researcher-instructor-consultant core. With role expansion the practicing anthropology methodology took an important shape. As a first product the role extension brought an increased intensity of participation. In this role anthropologists were no longer merely monitors and predictors of change but came to actually work as participatory agents of change with the help of the community with which they were working.

This new role involved participation and action. In this action involved roles the anthropologists were directly engaged in change-producing behaviour with the help of the community they were involved. This change did not result in a single new approach, but a multiplicity of new approaches for applying anthropological knowledge. These include *action research and participatory action research, collaborative research and cultural action*. In this mode the anthropologist works with the community to understand the conditions that produce the problems the people face.

i) *Action Research and Participatory Action Research*

Action research is practice oriented, problem solving method carried out by practitioners where action is undertaken to understand and evaluate problem and bring change. It is therefore a reflective process of problem solving where action is taken to initiate change. Also when individuals of an area extend their hand to help a practicing anthropologist with a view to inquire about and create changes in their own community, we call it, participatory action research (PAR). Action research can be conducted in a village, education centre (like school or college), an organisation, a neighborhood,

etc. All these places possess the characteristics of a community. While talking about action research and participatory action research, it can be noted that sometimes many scholars make a sharp distinction between the two whereas for some the two expressions are identical. However the term action research came first and participatory action research historically emerged from the former. PAR methods involve the detection of problem, collection of data, preparation of collective plan, and finally action. These are the characteristic methods which most often transpire concurrently.

a) ***Identify Problems and Constraint***

The PAR process begins when members of a community recognise some problems they want to solve by bringing change. The themes for evaluation can be identified by the practitioner himself/herself working with key informants within the community by constructing basic questions about community needs, regarding health, agriculture, environment, economy, education, etc. Once the problem has been identified, the practicing anthropologist begins communication with community members. At this preliminary stage, the practitioner works to gain thorough knowledge of the community in question by doing literature review and answering a few basic questions about the context of the community and its capacity. Anthropological research methods (such as ethnography, participant observation, interviews, field notes, archival analysis, and case studies) often form the basis of this initial exploration. The practitioner can conduct formal, in-depth interviews with community members for important information. Focus group discussions can be also carried out to help gauge the level of interest, resources, and constraints for various problems.

b) ***Obtaining Information, Formulating Policies/Plans, and Action***

Data collection is an important way of obtaining information which begins with the first conversation about the PAR. During data collection, participants become researchers as they continue to dialogue with other community members and begin to gain a deeper awareness of the problem. Planning/policies emerge from the solutions proposed by participants. Plans for action also include discussions of how much participation is needed, how to obtain necessary resources, and plans for continuous evaluation. Action occurs when local participants and other collaborators begin to put the plan into action such that the social situation improves.

To sum up, action research and participatory action research methodologies represent a useful array of practices that address problems in a constructive, capacity-building way. The action research links research and action and shows the community-orientation of practicing anthropologists.

ii) ***Collaboration Approach/Collaborative Research Approach***

In the collaborative approach, the researchers, programme developers, and community members are networked to do research for “joint problem solving and positive social change” (Schensul and Schensul 1992:162). Collaboration here means using one’s research skills to support the attainment

of community goals. Therefore, this is a research activity where the practitioner is involved in change producing action. The practicing anthropologist here is not a direct change agent but an auxiliary to community leaders. However, it is important for the success of the process that the relationship between the community and the collaborating practitioner must be direct. Hence in collaborative research approach practitioners are well adapted to working in direct relationship with the community organisation as opposed to working through an intervening agency. The role of the collaborative practitioner is focused on the expressed needs of the community, usually expressed through its leadership. Collaboration does not usually call for a practicing anthropologist to be directly involved in change-producing decision making.

a) ***The Components of Successful Collaboration***

For collaborations to be fruitful, many finite rules are to be adhered. The community control of research operations makes the collaboration successful. Here the informed and involved community should determine if a specific research project (and its related methods), is appropriate to community needs. The research results should be reviewed by community activists. Thus, real collaboration is only possible where there is substantial ideological sharing and agreement between the practitioner and the activist. The quality of collaboration is evaluated through analysis of its positive impact on the community.

Research based on collaborative objectives should be worked out in such a way that is beneficial to community requirements. Hence the techniques used in such research should take time into consideration. Both time effectiveness and the fundamental idea of collaboration are coherently associated with the involvement of the community to the research process. The most significant aspect of this process is the way instruction is provided to the community members to make them proficient investigators.

b) ***Steps in collaborative approach***

The collaborative methodology is conceived as having a series of steps as mentioned by Schensul (1973). They are:

- 1) Development of Rapport and Credibility of Applied Research
- 2) The Identification of Significant, Indigenous Action Programs
- 3) The Negotiation of Relationships (Cooperative and Reciprocal) between the Applied Researchers and the Action People
- 4) Initial Participation in Specific Action Programs
- 5) The Identification of Specific Informational Needs of the Action People
- 6) Meeting the Needs of Long-Range Research Plans
- 7) Formalised Research and Data Collection Operations
- 8) Analysis of Data
- 9) Data Dissemination, Evaluation, and Interpretation.

To sum up, collaborative method implies the continued involvement of the practicing anthropologist in problem solving where achievements are measured with reference to the community's achievement of its goals.

iii) *Cultural Action*

Cultural action is a method directed at changing the relationships between poor people and power elite. In this method, a community, through reflection and study, can understand those factors which cause their predicament. It is highly participatory and focused on increasing self-determination in the context of cultural dominance and oppression. While it was developed in the context of poor communities, the ideas have been applied to several settings.

The basis of this technique is to have an exchange of ideas and communication between the community members which is created with the assistance of a mediator. The objective of this discussion is to comprehend the issues at hand. This feat helps them understand their problem better and in turn find better solutions.

Thus this methodology involves people defining problems based upon their view of the world and their situation. It involves a team composed of a facilitator, who acts only to guide the activities, a number of investigators (or educated experts) who are typically from social sciences such as practicing anthropology or sociology, and the local people who act as co-investigators at all stages of the process. Such groups which are formed in this manner are called "culture circles" or "reflection groups". People meet and talk about their issues in these "culture circles".

2.3.4 Cultural Brokerage Approach: An Advocacy Approach

In cultural brokerage approach practicing anthropologists often mediate between people of different cultures. The most common is the situation where the practitioners serve to mediate between health care providers and individuals or communities that are ethnically distinctive. In such a scenario the practicing anthropologist either becomes the mediator or sometimes trains others to be one. The processes used to train include research and creation of media. Examples of cultural brokerages can also be cited from cultural resource management in which the practicing anthropologist connects government run bodies in the building of a project with the affected community (Downum and Price 1999).

Cultural brokerage methodology is an intervention strategy of research, training, and service that links persons of two or more socio-cultural systems through an individual, with the primary goals of making community service programs more open and responsive to the needs of the community, and of improving the community's access to resources. Interestingly in cultural brokerage the interventions affect the agencies working towards change more than the communities themselves. The cultural broker with his/her determined and deliberate attribute is an important mediator between two halves of a bigger cultural set up.

2.4 BEING A PROFESSIONAL: HOW TO DO PRACTICING ANTHROPOLOGY?

Practicing anthropology is seen in various categories like action anthropology, advocacy anthropology, social impact assessment research, needs assessment, cultural brokerage, etc. Practicing anthropologists face different working conditions depending on the location and nature of the organisation they work for and their role in that organisation. The combination of background, anthropological training, and prior work/internship experience provides the skills that assist in making the transition from either academics to practice, or from one practice job to another. NAPA¹ defines practicing anthropologists as having keen observation and interpersonal communication skills, which is of complete value and assists in fitting into any new work environment.

i) *Looking for a Profession*

For practicing anthropologist the most important step is the process of finding a profession. Earlier the job market for practicing anthropologist was based on demand for persons with skills in social science research methodology. Though this is now changing, yet some job markets are not aware of practicing anthropologists. This sometimes creates a situation where there are opportunities for professional work but very few are available for “practicing anthropologists only.” It is because of these conditions that the practicing anthropologist seeking work must be ready to deal with employers who are unfamiliar with the true capabilities of well-trained, contemporary anthropologists, or who hold grossly inaccurate stereotypes of the practicing anthropologist’s capabilities. The practitioner should be able to adapt to such situations and should be able to enlighten the employer about his/her credibility towards work and this may be displayed through an acute presentation of one’s experiences and competencies.

Success in seeking a profession requires special preparation and tactics. At the very onset it is important to assess who s/he is and what s/he wants to accomplish in the future. This requires continual self-assessment. Reading of employment advertisements in newspapers and specific profession based newspapers helps in getting ideas about a profession to be chosen and taken up. There are, what we call anthropological newsletters which put up a long list of careers outside of the academia. Though government agencies have a rather complex system of disseminating employment information, yet their employment offices should not be overlooked.

Relatively few employers have a clear conception of what practicing anthropologists can do. This relates to some basic conditions which practicing anthropologists face while seeking any profession. They compete with persons who are not trained in anthropology, for example, social workers, sociologists, and urban planners. They are hired on the basis of what they can do, not what they are. The practicing anthropologist needs to work to overcome stereotyped potential employers. This will require that s/he focuses on her/his skills in her/his presentation of self. The acquisitions of skills which are appropriate to the goals of the potential employing organisations

¹ <http://practicinganthropology.org/practicing-anthro/>

are very important. A skill such as doing statistical analysis using a computer program such as SPSS can make the difference. This is why training and the profession seeking are coincidental.

ii) ***Selling the Practice in the Job Market***

The job market for practicing anthropologists is difficult to characterise. The requirement to know the market is absolutely crucial in practicing anthropology where so few employers are aware of the potentials and nature of practicing anthropology. It will be necessary to “sell” practicing anthropology by showing the usefulness of the skills one has learned. A practicing anthropologist is in a better position because of her/his acquired anthropological perspective in problem solving. The employers need practitioners but they just do not know it yet. A practitioner must know enough about the organisation to be able to identify its problems and to associate her/his skills with solutions to its problems. A practitioner is not hired on the basis of her/him being the best anthropologist. S/he is hired when employers see her/him as a skills-possessing problem solver that relates to the organisation’s need and is more efficient, more sensitive, more effective, more responsive, and in the end more profitable.

iii) ***Practicing in Research Market***

The research support obtained through grants and contracts is highly marketable and the most important means of a practice development. Research support for practicing anthropologist can be obtained through either grants or contracts. Both are subject to their own special kind of procedures and regulation. Although at times it is difficult to distinguish between grants and contracts, it is possible to point out certain differences. Contracts provide a means of paying for an activity which meets a specific need identified by an agency. One finds that contracts have stricter and bounded rules than grants. This is because, grants are regularly utilised in researcher developed experiments and investigations aimed at positive changes. Researches with grant allotments do not face severe updating or apprising obligations.

Funding is made available for various types of research activities. These include basic research, applied research, and development programs which have a research component. It is often necessary to have the support of specialists who continually search for research opportunities, provide preliminary support, assist in proposal preparation, and negotiate contracts properly in order to be consistently successful. It must be made clear that all these processes are highly competitive and that success is based upon competence in both research and the funding process. A means to enable procuring funds for research is by building one’s own non-profit research organisation. Such institutions are generously supported by the government and other mentors if they are designed keeping in mind interests of the public. Many anthropologists by training tread this path, open such non-profit agencies and become successful and invaluable practitioners.

iv) ***Practicing as Consultant***

Due to special skills of the practitioners, the special needs of the client organisation, and the limitations of the client organisation, the practicing anthropologists are hired as consultants. In some cases the fact that the

practicing consultant is an outsider is essential to his or her contribution. In other words, he or she may be hired as an outsider, and less as an expert.

When the practicing anthropologist engages a client's problem, he or she must to some extent conceptualise the problem in anthropological terms. This allows the practitioner to deal with the problem, but it also causes the need for translation of the results back to the meanings which are significant to the client. This process can result in an effective use of the anthropologist's skills, and therefore, a potential for improving the efficiency of meeting client needs.

v) *Reasons for using Practitioners as Consultants*

van Willigen gives the following reasons for the use of practicing anthropologists to work as professional specialists, i.e. consultants (2002):

- 1) The practitioner's knowledge of a specific region or aspect of culture may not be available within the organisation.
- 2) The practitioner's special research skills may not be available within the organisation. These skills may be derived from the generalised pool of social science techniques (e.g., questionnaires and survey techniques) as well as techniques specific to anthropology (e.g., excavation, participant-observation).
- 3) The practitioner's special problem-solving skills are not available within the organisation. This may relate to the goal of improving the organisation functioning of the client's group.
- 4) The practitioners as consultant may possess skills which, although available in the client organisation, are required to meet temporary short-falls in manpower.
- 5) The practitioners as consultant may be "certified" to have the skills necessary to meet certain legal requirements which the client must satisfy.
- 6) The practitioner's status as a credible outsider may allow him or her to provide a noninvolved, and therefore objective, evaluation of the client group's functioning.
- 7) The practitioner's status as a credible outsider may be used by the client to reduce the social cost of certain organisational or policy changes. That is, the interventions for change may be designed by the client for application by the consultant.
- 8) The practitioner's teaching skills coupled with her/his knowledge may allow her/him to contribute to the development of the client organisation's knowledge and skill levels.
- 9) The practitioners as consultant may provide the client with a mechanism for increasing organisational prestige, or a "headliner" attraction for a conference or other meeting.

2.5 ENLISTING SOME PRACTITIONERS

There are two major types of anthropological practice viz. intervention anthropology and policy research (van Willigen, 2002). Policy research combines the methods of social impact assessment, evaluation research, and technology development research while intervention anthropology combines the approaches of action anthropology, research and development anthropology and advocacy anthropology. For example practitioners with the knowledge of design anthropometry knowledge are employed in technology development research where they provide measurement of humans for making work stations, cockpits, improved clothing size, machinery and other industrial design.

Typical practicing anthropology practices will consist of many roles. Sometimes the practice title reflects the role and at other times, it does not. There is a general tendency for the number of roles to increase. Some practitioners can be enlisted as (van Willigen, 2002):

Policy Researcher

The role of practicing anthropologists is also to give information to policy makers and it is in this role they become policy researchers. The given information is vital in the making of policy decisions. The findings of ethnographic research with the use of different core research techniques can create knowledge which assists in better policy formulations. This is a common role of the practitioner and can be taken up as a stage of research, from the creation of a research design to collecting of data and its analysis. The research function is common to many applied positions, and therefore, all potential practicing anthropologists need to have preparation as policy researchers.

Evaluator

As opposed to policy researcher, the role of an evaluator is specialised. The evaluator's task is to utilise his/ her research expertise to decide whether a project, strategy, or policy is operating and functioning successfully or not. Sometimes an evaluation is also known as programme monitoring. Thus a practicing anthropologist as an evaluator is assigned to impartially ascertain the success or failure of a project or plan.

Impact Assessor

The role assigned to an impact assessor is also specific and is part of the policy research role. S/he has to envisage the results of any scheme, project, policy or programme. A practicing anthropologist in the position of an impact assessor endeavours to ascertain the consequences of any strategic project designed by the government for the public. This data related to the outcomes is aimed at guiding the strategy or plan of a programme/project. The impact assessor hence offers different substitute strategies so that a programme or a project can work better. For example the construction of larger systems (like airports, highways, dams, etc.) creates havoc in the entire population surviving in these planned areas. It is here that the impact assessor plays an important role of providing a structure which is beneficial and supportive of the inhabitants long with the success of the proposed constructions. This in fact briefly also defines what social impact assessment is all about. Anthropologists are trained to understand communities always from their perspectives, and thus as practitioners they can enact a pivotal role here.

Needs Assessor

Another specific policy research role of the practicing anthropologist is the role of the need assessor. In this, the need assessor collects information on public programme needs expected in the designing of programmes related to social, economic, educational and health concerns. The practicing anthropologist as a need assessor fundamentally evaluates and participates in the administration of designing and reasoning of any programme or project.

Planner

The role of a planner is not very usual. However if a practicing anthropologist does get an opportunity to work as a planner, s/he contributes to the framing and modeling of projects, policies and programmes to be taken up in the future. This also includes among other things collection of information and research investigation which assists the decision makers.

Research Analyst

This role is a common one and decision makers like policy makers, planners, programme supervisors, etc. use practicing anthropologists for this. Here the research analysts have to infer the outcomes of research and help in creating new decisions.

Advocate

Practicing anthropologists as advocates perform complex role which involves acting in support of community groups and individuals. It almost always involves direct political action consistent with the community's self-defined goals. Advocacy may be part of the other roles. This is not a common role.

Trainer

A practicing anthropologist as a trainer develops training materials for different client groups and content areas. Often this involves preparation of technicians for cross-cultural experiences. This is a role with a long history in practicing anthropology.

Culture Broker

Practicing anthropologists as culture brokers serve as links between programmes and ethnic (and local) communities. The role appears especially useful in reference to health care delivery and the provision of social services. Many other roles have culture broker functions attached to them. Brokerage is always a two-way communication role.

Public Participation Specialist

This role is a recent one and has come as a reaction to the requirement of public involvement and contribution in the process of planning. It sounds similar to that of the concept of culture brokerage however here the participation of the specialist with the public is on a case to case basis instead of being uninterrupted, as is the case with the former. As a public participation specialist the practicing anthropologist organises public education using the media and public meetings. The amount of anthropological involvement in this role is increasing.

Administrator/Manager

Practicing anthropologists may also take up or be asked to take up administrative duties in programmes and projects for which they provide investigative and research support. This kind of participation does not arise at the beginning. It is only when their role of researcher and analyser is appreciated, are they offered the jobs of an overseer. Though such positions were not so popular among anthropologists in the past, these last few decades have seen an increase in anthropologists being approached for such posts. The anthropologists do play influential roles here and it is their responsibility in such arenas to work for the betterment of communities and people.

Therapist

Anthropological knowledge and know-how is used as a therapeutic means by practicing anthropologists to converse and connect with people troubled by myriad issues. When anthropologists act as therapists, they are referred to as “clinical anthropologists”.

2.6 ANTHROPOLOGISTS AT WORK: HAZARDS

When anthropologists move out of hard core academics and move to professions outside it, to practically use their knowledge, they face many unexpected hurdles. And the problems may not be the same for everyone. In some cases, discrepancies arise when needing to collaborate and work with people from other disciplines and fields. In other cases research perspectives can clash. If in one situation quantitative methods get an upper hand, in others it may be the qualitative method. At times ethical and moral confrontations are to be dealt with, for example giving out particular knowledge to clients. Again in other situations, practicing anthropologists may need to repeatedly market their proficiency of the role of a consultant or contractor to the organisations’ employers who are not acquainted with anthropology or its methods. Practicing anthropologists may also find themselves in jobs which involve a good amount of risk and threat. Anthropologists studying and researching issues like use of drugs or gangs or racial conflicts or inconsistencies in the military, etc. have to make use of all their skill sets and knowledge to tread such paths carefully and still bring out positive ideas and solutions to the best of their abilities.

Client organisations may use practitioners to produce an impact on third parties. Clients may also use the anthropologist as a means of solidifying, protecting, or enhancing the position/image of the client. The anthropologist should use his/her position of centrality to increase control and access to information.

2.7 SUMMARY

The various methodologies of practicing anthropologists are nothing but the story of the growth of public recognition of practicing anthropology and its use from ancient times to the present, from colonial powers establishing trade and conquering indigenous populations to practitioners working to preserve at-risk cultures and empower communities for self-determined positive change. Over the past 25 years a new synthesis has emerged. This new synthesis revolves

around a newly emerging relationship between anthropologists and the persons and communities they study. Most recently a trend for short-term, contract work makes us brood over the question that do practicing anthropologists practice anthropology?

The methodology of practice should improve the client's or community's understanding of anthropology. Before developing the methods one should not be absorbed into "whether or not it's an anthropological problem." As practicing anthropologists we cannot afford compulsively maintained boundaries. Attempts to rigidly define what is or is not anthropology are unproductive. The focus of concern of a practicing anthropologist is not the discipline, but reality that we see through what we have learned as anthropologists.

The information, policy and action which are the heart of practicing methodology should ultimately focus on the total situation. If the needs perceived by the client are different from and perhaps contradictory to the needs discovered in the community at large, the practitioners through suitable methods should identify a significantly large range of needs within the total community served by the agency. This will bring holism in the true sense. The client may be presented with a copy of the Society for Applied Anthropology or the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology's ethics statement to make them understand the professional ethics of the anthropologist.

One of the benefits of using these methods will be an improved understanding of the nature of anthropology as a practicing discipline.

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Suggested Reading

van Willigen, John. 2002. *Applied Anthropology: An Introduction* (3rd Ed). New York: Bergin and Garvey

Sample Questions

- 1) Is there a difference between a practicing and an applied anthropologist? Is the distinction real or is it just an extension of how they work?
- 2) What are the methodologies applied in practicing anthropology. Discuss elaborately.
- 3) Who is a practicing anthropologist? Identify and describe some of the roles practiced by a practicing anthropologist.
- 4) What are the hazards faced by a practicing anthropologist?

