

TEXT 01

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The Domain of Application

The number of anthropologists employed to solve practical problems has increased dramatically in the last decade. Rather than working in the traditional academic roles of teaching and research in a college or university, large numbers of anthropologists work for many other kinds of organizations such as government agencies, non-government agencies, and firms in a wide range of content areas. While many work for government agencies, opportunities have also developed in not-for-profit private service agencies as well as profit-making firms, including those owned and operated by anthropologists. Still others free-lance through temporary contracts. These persons may describe themselves as practicing anthropologists or applied anthropologists. At their workplace they take many roles, including: 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. These roles are briefly described below.

PRACTITIONER ROLES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Policy researcher. Policy makers require information upon which to base policy decisions. This somewhat generalized role involves providing research results to them. It may involve traditional ethnographic research or a variety of specialized research techniques. This role may be the most common and can be activated at various stages in the research process, from research design to data collection. The research function is common to many applied positions, and therefore, all potential applied anthropologists need to have preparation as policy researchers. In a recent survey, 37 percent of members of the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA) reported involvement as researchers (Fiske 1991:vi).

Evaluator. Evaluator is a specialized policy research role that involves the

use of research skills to determine if a project, program, or policy is working effectively or has had a successful outcome. The basic task is to determine objectively the worth or value of something. Some kinds of evaluation are called program monitoring. This role is common; in the NAPA survey 31 percent reported using evaluation skills (Fiske 1991:vi).

Impact Assessor. Impact assessor is also a specialized policy research role that involves the prediction of the effects of a project, program, or policy. An impact assessor usually attempts to determine the effects of planned government projects on the nearby human communities. The information produced is usually intended to influence the design of a project, thus an impact assessor often considers various design alternatives. Particular attention is paid to the unintended consequences of projects such as reservoir, highway, and airport system construction. The term social impact assessment is often used to describe this kind of activity. This role is common; 24 percent of the NAPA membership reported expertise in social impact assessment (Fiske 1991:vi).

Needs Assessor. Needs assessor is a specialized policy research role that involves the collection of data on public program needs in anticipation of social, health, economic, and education program design. The needs assessor contributes to the process of program design and justification. This role is relatively common and is closely related to evaluation.

Planner. As planners, anthropologists participate in the design of future programs, projects, and policies. This may involve data collection and research analysis in support of decision makers. This role is not common.

Research analyst. The research analyst role consists of interpretation of research results for decision makers of various kinds. The analyst may serve as an auxiliary to planners, policy makers, and program managers. This is a common role.

Advocate. Advocate is a label for a complex role that 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 other roles, but in itself is not common.

Trainer. Trainers develop and use training materials referenced to a number of 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 applied anthropology.

Culture Broker. Culture brokers serve as links between programs and ethnic communities. The role appears especially useful in reference to health care delivery and the provision of social services. Many other roles have culture brokerage functions attached to them. In a few cases, it is the primary role. Brokerage is always a two-way communication role.

Expert Witness. The expert witness role is usually activated on a part-time basis, mostly by those academically employed. It involves the presentation of research data through legal documents, that is, briefs and direct testimony on behalf of the parties to a legal case or as a friend of the court. This role is not common.

Public Participation Specialist. The public participation specialist's role is newly developed in response to the need for public input in planning. It closely resembles the culture broker role, although it tends to occur on a case-by-case basis rather than continuously as with culture brokerage. The role may involve organizing public education, using the media, and conducting public meetings. The amount of anthropological involvement in this role is increasing.

Administrator/Manager. Some anthropologists have direct administrative responsibility for the programs within which they work. These roles are usually not entry-level, but develop out of employment in the other roles mentioned here. The number of anthropologists working as administrators and managers has increased in the last decade as practicing anthropologists proceed with their careers. In some agencies anthropologists have become very influential because they are in charge.

Change Agent. Change agents work to stimulate change. This is a generalized function and is part of a variety of other tasks. In some cases the change agent role is carried out as part of a specific strategy of change, such as action anthropology or research and development anthropology. This role is not common.

Therapist. The therapist role is quite rare. It involves the use of anthropology along with knowledge of various "talk" therapies to treat individuals with various problems. In some cases these people refer to themselves as "clinical anthropologists." Clinical anthropologists are more often involved in brokerage roles than in the therapist role. This type of application of anthropology is not dealt with in this text to any extent.

To summarize this introduction to practitioner roles: the most frequent role is that of researcher. The various social action roles have great utility and potential, but are not often used. While we might associate teaching with academic employment, teaching is important in practitioner work settings. There is a general tendency for the number of roles to increase.

Typical applied anthropology jobs consist of many roles. Sometimes the job title reflects the role, and other times not. "Anthropologist" is not commonly used as a job title. This is because most of the jobs applied anthropologists do are also available to other kinds of social scientists. Some typical applied and practicing anthropologist's job titles, as shown in the *NAPA Directory of Practicing Anthropologists* (1991), are: administrator, advisor, analyst, anthropologist, archaeologist, caseworker, chief, consultant, coordinator, curator, director, ethnographer, extension anthropologist, manager, partner, president, research associate, social scientist, socioeconomic, specialist, supervisor, and therapist. It is difficult to tell from the job title what is entailed in a particular job, of course.

CONTENT AREAS FOR APPLIED WORK

In addition to working in many different roles, applied anthropologists work in a variety of different content areas. This can be seen in the contents of *Anthropology in Use: A Source Book on Anthropological Practice* (van Willigen

Figure 1.1
Content Areas Found in Anthropology in Use (1991)

Agriculture	Human Rights, Racism, and Genocide
Alcohol and Drug Use	Industry and Business
Community Action	Land Use and Land Claims
Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement	Language and Action
Cultural Resources Management	Media and Broadcasting
Design and Architecture	Military
Development Policies and Practices	Missions
Disaster Research	Nutrition
Economic Development	Policy Making
Education and Schools	Population and Demography
Employment and Labor	Recreation
Energy Extraction	Religious Expression
Environment	Resettlement
Evaluation	Social Impact Assessment
Fisheries Research	Training Programs
Forestry and Forests	Urban Development
Geriatric Services	Water Resources Development
Government and Administration	Wildlife Management
Health and Medicine	Women in Development
Housing	

1991). This volume contains descriptions of cases in which anthropology was used to solve a practical problem, and is based upon materials in the Applied Anthropology Documentation Project collection at the University of Kentucky. This is a collection of technical reports and other documents prepared by practitioners. The content areas are listed in Figure 1.1. The most frequently cited topics are agricultural development, health and medicine, and education. Most frequently cited in the survey of NAPA members are "public health and health services, agricultural development, natural resources, and education" (Fiske 1991:vi). Because of the nature of the collection process of the Applied Anthropology Documentation Project, the listing emphasizes content areas where the research role dominates. Nevertheless, it serves as a useful indicator of areas of work.

APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY: WHAT IS IT?

Clearly, anthropologists apply their knowledge in a wide variety of ways in many situations. Further, the extent to which their backgrounds as anthropologists

can be expressed directly in their work varies a great deal. Their work is often defined by the problem and not by the discipline. In addition, new terms for the role and the work have emerged. All this makes defining the content of the field quite difficult.

We can start our discussion of a definition by simply saying that applied anthropology is anthropology put to use. Given the changes that are occurring in applied anthropology these days, it is tempting to leave the definitional question at that, and go on to the next question. Simply asserting that use defines the field has significant advantages. The generalized and fuzzy quality of that definition is appropriate to the changing job market. Yet in spite of the utility of flexible definitions it is useful for us to think about what we do somewhat more precisely.

The conception of applied anthropology used in this book is quite general. It is viewed as encompassing the tremendous variety of activities anthropologists do now, and have done in the past, when engaged in solving practical problems. The view taken here is that the various kinds of anthropological problem-solving activities are types of applied anthropology. This book is about the different kinds of applied anthropology. While this may seem like a simple idea, some people contrast action anthropology with applied anthropology, cultural brokerage with applied anthropology, and public-interest anthropology with applied anthropology.

More important, practicing anthropologists often conceive of themselves as being something different from applied anthropologists. This view, more common in the late 1980s, is that applied anthropology is something that is done by academic anthropologists when doing consulting work relating to practical problems. The term practicing anthropologist may be more frequently applied to persons who are employed by firms and agencies on a full-time basis. While this 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 the view taken here is that these all represent kinds of applied anthropology.

At a general level, one can think of anthropology as having two aspects, one of which is concerned with the solution of theoretical problems, and another which is concerned with the solution of practical problems. The first we will call theoretical anthropology, or sometimes basic anthropology, and the second, applied anthropology or practicing anthropology. Both terms encompass a lot of diversity. Actually, the terms theoretical and basic are problematic. Much theoretical anthropology is not very theoretical, really. We just use the term to describe its implied purpose. Basic is also a misleading term because it suggests that it comes before, or first, and serves as a basis for more practical work. As will be shown later, practical work often serves as the basis of important theoretical developments. In spite of these semantic problems, the applied versus theoretical contrast is a useful distinction.

While there are no previous definitions that dominate the published literature

on the definitional issue, one widely disseminated statement was written by George Foster for his textbook, *Applied Anthropology* (1969). He defined the field in the following way: "Applied anthropology is the phrase commonly used by anthropologists to describe their professional activities in programs that have as primary goals changes in human behavior believed to ameliorate contemporary social, economic, and technological problems, rather than the development of social and cultural theory" (1969:54). In many ways this definition remains quite serviceable. Foster identifies the major theme in applied anthropology as "problem solution. The definition is limited in a number of ways. His use of the phrase "in programs" seems to imply that applied anthropologists do not work directly for communities. Advocacy anthropology and collaborative anthropology are kinds of applied anthropology that do just that (Stull and Schensul 1987). The definition also seems to emphasize change as the goal, while there are some examples of anthropology being used to assure stability (van Willigen 1981b).

The definition used in this text is based on review of large numbers of different types of anthropological practice. Considering those activities that are typically labeled applied anthropology, let us define the field in the following way: applied anthropology is a complex of related, research-based, instrumental methods that produce change or stability in specific cultural systems through provision of data, initiation of direct action, and/or the formation of policy. This process can take many forms, varying in terms of problem, role of the anthropologist, motivating values, and extent of action involvement.

The definition used here states that applied anthropology has a broad range of products. These are information, policy, and action. In the past and in the present, the most typical product of applied anthropologists seems to be information; information that can be used to construct policy or motivate action. Action and policy are less frequently the products of the process. Parts II and III of this book deal with different types of products: action products, policy products, and information products. The situation within which these products are produced is very complex. For our purposes here we can call this situation the *domain of application*.

DOMAIN OF APPLICATION

By domain of application we mean the knowledge and technique that are relevant to a particular work setting. The domain of application includes the methodology that maps 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.

Application methodology consists of the intellectual operations by which applied anthropologists produce their products and have their effects. This view is consistent with the conception of research methodology presented by Pelto and Pelto (1978). It is simply an extension of that scheme to include action and policy.

Information. Information is seen as the foundation of the other two products, and can exist in a number of forms. The information we deal with can range from raw data to general theory. Mostly, applied 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 applied work is not the production of theory, the patterns of research logic are similar to those used in theoretical pursuits.

Policy. The second product of applied anthropologists is policy. Policies are guides for consistent action. Policy can be developed in reference to a wide variety of situations. Cases of anthropologists actually developing policy are relatively rare, however. For the most part an anthropologist's involvement in the policy formulation process is as a researcher providing information to policy makers, or as an analyst who evaluates research data for policy makers. The experiences of anthropologists in this process will be discussed in more concrete terms in Chapter 2, "The Development of Applied Anthropology," and Chapter 10, "Anthropology as a Policy Science."

Action. The third product is action. Here are included the various interventions carried out by anthropologists. Part II of this text deals with the various action or intervention strategies that are used by anthropologists. These include: action anthropology, advocacy anthropology, community development, cultural brokerage, research and development anthropology, and social marketing. Each one of these strategies consists of a set of related ideas about role, procedures, and values that can be used to guide action.

The three products of applied anthropology are related in the following way: information is obtained through research, information is used to formulate policy, and policy guides action. Of course, nothing is ever that neatly rational; everything is subject to the struggles of politics. 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. The process of social impact assessment described in Chapter 10 is a good example.

Social impact assessment is done to help predict the effects of an action taken in the future, such as building a dam and reservoir. The research is often determined by which alternative plan would have the least social cost. This information would be fed back to the decision makers and used to determine which course of action would be the best considering many factors, including the political, economic, and social. The chapters on action anthropology and research and development describe the continual interplay between information and action. In thinking about this process it is possible to be either too cynical or too naive. Think pragmatically—the process is workable.

In addition to the relationship between information, policy, and action, we can also think about these categories at different levels of abstraction. Information, policy, and action can be thought of in terms of a progression from the

simple and concrete to the complex and abstract. Anthropologists as social scientists are most familiar with this kind of relationship in terms of the linkage between observed data and general theory. The same kind of relationship exists in the realms of policy and action. The most important point is that the three realms have somewhat similar logical structures.

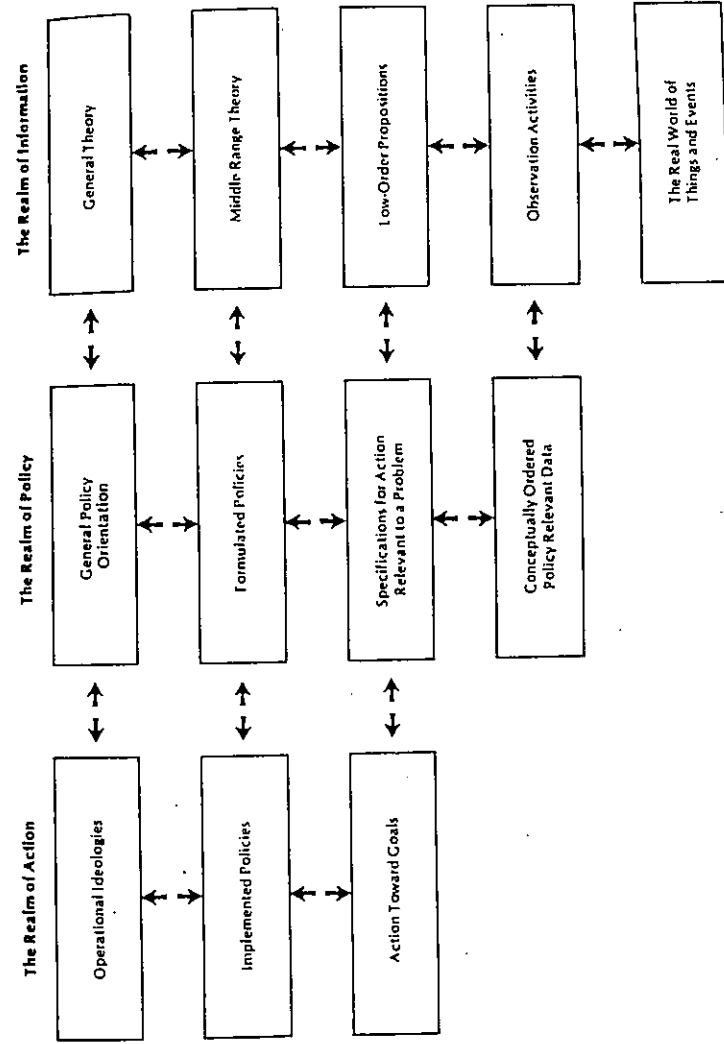
The general structure of the relationships across the information, policy, and action categories, and between the simple and complex levels, is shown in Figure 1.2. This figure is derived from the conception of the Domain of Methodology described by Pelto and Pelto (1978). Their model depicts aspects of the scientific research process, while the model presented here attempts to show the articulation between information, policy, and action as well as the general structure of the logic of the process.

The diagram depicts elements of a large and complex process within which the practitioner works. The work that individuals do only rarely encompasses the whole process. A typical function for an applied anthropologist would be to collect information, which would be turned over to a policy maker. The policy would be used to guide action carried out by yet another person. The process is, of course, not unique to anthropology. Collaboration with nonanthropologists would be typical at various points in the process. This often requires what might be called conceptual translation. The information that is communicated may be derived from special purpose research, secondary sources, or the general expertise of the anthropologist. The point is that not everything requires or allows the execution of a research process to solve a specific problem. In some cases, what is required is the transmission of just a few informally derived facts or interpretations. Thus there is great variation in the degree of formality. In my own work in development administration, I was struck by how rapidly one could act under certain circumstances. Information flow can vary from a crucial fact based on one's expertise communicated in a meeting, to the presentation of an elaborate research report based on a formal design to a policy maker. Information may also flow to the public to influence debate.

Most training that we receive as anthropologists relates to either research methodology or informational content. We receive very little training about the process of application as such, depicted here as the flow across the elements of information, policy, and action. Various aspects of this process are dealt with at various points in this text. The model of the application process and the definition presented above stresses the importance of research in the whole process. The foundation of all of this is objective knowledge obtained using the canons of scientific research as a guide and standard. While this may involve special research efforts, it can also be derived from the literature or our accumulated expertise. As Sol Tax asserted, an applied anthropology that is not based on research is simply a kind of propaganda (Tax 1958, in Gearing, Netting, and Peattie 1960:415).

The research base of the application process goes much beyond that which can be legitimately called anthropology. The informational basis of applied

Figure 1.2
Methodology of Application



anthropology is defined by the problem, not the discipline. If we limited ourselves to knowledge exclusively from anthropology, we could not adequately deal with the problems at hand. This is not to say that anthropology is an uninformed discipline, it simply says something about reality. Further, the information that we tend to apply has certain characteristics that allow it to be efficiently applied. Good applied anthropologists have the skill to relate information to practical problems.

The discussion of anthropology as a policy science will deal with the process of knowledge utilization. There are at least three major issues or questions that are the basis of successful knowledge utilization practice. First, knowledge should be provided in reference to areas where the client can act. Telling someone about a problem on which they can not act is a waste of time. The applied anthropologist needs to be able to identify where action is possible. Second, knowledge has to be provided on time. Oftentimes action can only be effective within a specific time window. Research design has to allow for timely completion. If your goal is application, time becomes a crucial factor. Third, knowledge has to be communicated in a way that facilitates action. The basic conclusions of the process are best expressed as a recommendation for action with a justification.

In addition to the methods of application, such as effectively providing information, or skillfully converting information to effective action, the practicing anthropologist needs to know a great deal about the work context. Most important is knowledge about the particular policy area being dealt with. Each setting in which anthropologists work requires certain kinds of knowledge and experience for effective practice. It is to these practice areas that we bring our knowledge and techniques as anthropologists. In most areas of practice the anthropologist must learn a great deal from outside of anthropology in order to function in a professional manner. As mentioned above, we refer to the work context and its related knowledge as the context of application. This simple idea, along with the idea of methodology of application, helps focus our attention on information that is essential for being an applied anthropologist. In addition to these areas of special knowledge, we also need to understand those aspects of anthropological method and knowledge that are necessary for the work with which we are engaged.

KNOWING THE DOMAIN OF APPLICATION

The basis for effective practice is knowledge of the substantive aspects of a particular context of application. The first kind of knowledge that you should master is derived from the works of other social scientists relevant to a work context. Some content areas, such as health care delivery, are associated with immense bodies of literature. Other areas, such as fisheries management, are relatively limited. In addition to knowing the collateral social science literature referenced to a particular context of application, it is necessary to learn something

of the technical basis of a particular field. If you are interested in agricultural development, knowledge of agronomy, soils, and marketing may be useful, if only to allow you to talk with your development colleagues. While not many of us can master both the collateral social science literature and a technical field in addition to our knowledge of anthropology, it is important to add continually to our knowledge of these areas.

The anthropologist's understanding of the domain of application may also be enhanced by knowledge of the legal basis for a particular area of application. In the United States, for example, many contemporary opportunities for work in various context areas are made possible and shaped by federal statute and regulation. The whole social impact assessment enterprise came about through a series of laws (most notably the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969), regulations, and agency guidelines. Often, the law mandates our work. The regulations and guidelines substantially tell us how to do it. These issues are discussed in Chapter 2, "The Development of Applied Anthropology," and Chapter 11, "Social Impact Assessment." The legislative and regulatory basis for the different areas of application are rather difficult to keep up with.

The next aspect of the domain of application for us to consider is its social organization. Here we can stress three components: the agencies and firms that hire anthropologists to do this type of work, the professional organizations established for people doing this work, and the social networks of the people employed in a particular context. It is important to identify the firms and agencies that hire people to deal with this type of work. It is especially useful to come to understand something about their hiring practices, job classifications, employment evaluation criteria, and even their previous experiences with anthropologists. Knowledge of professional organizations is useful because these organizations often afford a point of access into the social organization of a particular content area before employment. Such organizations may have newsletters and other publications that serve as information sources.

As a student, it is difficult to tap into social networks in the area of application. As you seek employment, you will begin to build your own network. It is important in this regard to begin to collect names of anthropologists who work in a domain. This will minimally give you an indication of where and whether anthropologists are working in a specific area. It may also serve as a basis for networking. Some local associations of anthropologists, such as the Washington Association of Professional Anthropologists, provide situations at their meetings that facilitate networking. Networking provides one with a source about work opportunities, agency plans, and information that may lead to the establishment of more network links. You will find those who have gone before are very willing to share certain kinds of information about opportunities. Their willingness to share is based on their continued use of the same sources of information into which you are trying to tap.

Students need to systematically collect information about potential work contexts. I often suggest to my students that they prepare a "pathfinder" to a

particular content area in order to guide their learning. A pathfinder is a guide to learning resources and information, and can be thought of as a road map for self-instruction. The pathfinder idea was developed at the library of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a means of sharing information.

You should start your pathfinder with a "scope note" that defines the area of application. In your scope note you may find it useful to include reference to content, service population, and role. Some examples are: water resources development, with reference to social impact assessment and public input to planning reservoir construction; community development program administration among American Indian reservation communities; nutritional assessment techniques as used in determining the impact of economic development; and evaluation of curriculum innovations in education in the framework of the classroom.

A good pathfinder should be thought of as only a starting point. For the purposes of an applied anthropologist, a pathfinder should include information sources of the following types: guides to literature, review articles, indexing services, abstract services, major journals, newsletters, as well as computerized data bases. All of these should refer to anthropology, the collateral social science fields, and substantive technical fields. In addition, reference should be made in the pathfinder to relevant professional organizations, agencies and firms that do work in this area, and any special research facilities. A listing of anthropologists working in the content area is useful, as is a listing of the relevant statutes and regulations that are important to applied anthropologists working in the area.

SUMMARY

Applied anthropologists need to know the domain of application. This includes knowledge of the methods of application and the work context. Knowledge of method includes the practices associated with producing and communicating useful information in a policy or action setting. It can also involve various skills associated with being a development administrator or a change agent. Knowledge of the work context should include: knowledge of the literature of collateral social science fields; knowledge of the substantive technical field; knowledge of statute, regulation, and policy issued from government sources; knowledge of firms and agencies that work in a content area; knowledge of professional organizations in the content area; and knowledge about which anthropologists are doing what in the content area.

It is sometimes difficult to learn the context and method of application to any great extent through course work in anthropology departments. Students with a serious commitment to becoming practitioners should expect, in addition to their anthropological course work, course work in other departments, self-study, and practical experiences through internships and practica. While there are a number of training programs in applied anthropology, even these programs have to rely on a number of extradepartment resources (van Willigen 1987, Society for Applied Anthropology 1989), making it clear that anthropologists must expect that

less of their training will fit traditional conceptions of what anthropology is. They must expect to be continually learning through their own efforts.

Start your self-instructional efforts right now. The first step is to consider your goals and interests, along with an assessment of opportunities. A starting point might be to review the content areas listed in the early part of this chapter. The possibilities go beyond this list, but it is an informed starting point. In addition to the content area, the knowledge and techniques needed vary with role (researchers, trainer, evaluator, planner, analyst, etc.), organizational type (public/private, profit/not-for-profit, etc.), and service population (ethnicity, age, sex, etc.).

Define a content area for yourself that you can use as a focus for your own development and career planning. Be realistic, but really reflect on your goals. This reflection process is very important, and you will find that it sets the scene for the employment process. Try to project yourself into the future. This process of planning should start now and continue through all of your training, job hunting, and employment. As you do this, your conception of your own future will become refined and more specified. This process can serve as a reference point for your development. As this process unfolds, you can increase your focus and mastery, and take better advantage of learning opportunities in your area of focus.

FURTHER READING

Chambers, Erve. 1989. *Applied Anthropology: A Practical Guide*. Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press.

Presents a very useful discussion of work specializations in applied anthropology. Also useful for discussion of policy and policy research.

Society for Applied Anthropology. 1978. *Practicing Anthropology: A Career-Oriented Publication of the Society for Applied Anthropology* (College Park, Md.: Society for Applied Anthropology).

Provides information on current practice in applied anthropology. Most articles are written by practitioners, many focusing on their personal experiences.