

Social Impact Analysis
An Applied Anthropology Manual

Edited by
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Introduction

Laurence Goldman and Scott Baum

Introduction

This book is concerned with an area of applied anthropology broadly defined as social impact assessment (SIA). Such studies are driven by a requirement, most usually of a legal nature, to prospectively evaluate types of social and cultural change likely to follow some interventionist programme, project or scheme. Importantly, the findings of such inquiries are harnessed to policy and planning decision-making in a manner that attempts therefore to anticipate and minimize adverse impacts. We are alerted here to the fact that SIAs are generally forward-looking in nature, highly evaluative, and seek to manage change responsibly by articulating how the findings and recommendations of any study can be translated into preferred and sustainable projects.

The contributors to this volume have at least two things in common. First, they are all variously practitioners, professionals or pedagogues in the field of SIA. Second, they all share the opinion that there is a need for a unified resource text on this genre of study that prioritizes the pragmatic tasks of doing SIA, and does so from the perspective of first-time students, indigenous and government personnel, developers, consultants and social scientists. While some two decades ago it may have been appropriate for Finsterbusch to pass comment that 'ethnographic studies . . . should definitely have a larger role in SIAs' (1981:9), today such advice merely expresses what is conventional wisdom. Why should this be the case?

In the intervening period global exploration and exploitation of natural resources in the world have continued at an inexorable pace. This process has unsurprisingly been conterminous with increased public and political sensitivities to issues of native title, cultural heritage, environmental damage, and the general place and role of ethnicity as an important world resource. At the same time, anthropology has itself emerged from the

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Preface

SOLVING PROBLEMS ANTHROPOLOGICALLY

Ever since anthropology has existed as a research discipline it has had a practical, problem-solving aspect, although this has attracted more attention in recent years. Historically this aspect of anthropology has been called applied anthropology. As the number of anthropologists who apply their knowledge and skills to activities other than basic research and teaching has increased, so has the number of different terms for practical activities. Besides applied anthropology, many other terms are used for the different forms of practice, including: practicing anthropology, development anthropology, action anthropology, research and development anthropology, and advocacy anthropology. In addition to these, an increasing number of anthropologists engaged in practical employment call themselves practicing anthropologists; they may not choose to call what they do applied anthropology. All of these terms carry meanings appropriate to specific circumstances, which are considered in this book. We will use applied anthropology as a general label for the entire array of situations and approaches for putting anthropology to use. In doing this we must recognize that some will disagree with this usage.

The text is based on a number of my experiences dealing with the applications of anthropology. The first was special training in applied anthropology at the University of Arizona, including an internship served with the tribal government of the Gila River Indian Reservation doing manpower research and other activities. The second consisted of experiences as a development administrator for the Tohono O'odham Tribe of Arizona. This provided first-hand experience in community development as an intervention process. The third

Preface

This edition pays more attention to international development. The first drew largely from American and Canadian domestic anthropological practice in an attempt to mainstream applied anthropology. Although appropriate, there needs to be more balance because so much of applied anthropology is also done offshore.

Parallel to this, in Chapter 2, I briefly acquaint readers with anthropological practice in some other countries. In Chapter 4, I enlarge the discussion on the domains of policy within applied anthropology and include more references. There I pay special attention to development anthropology and point to the rising fields of business anthropology and the anthropology of tourism. In Chapter 5, I summarize an important discussion by Robert Chambers on persistent obstacles to good policy-making, barriers that negatively affect people at the grassroots level. As a counterbalance, I describe the farmer-to-farmer approach, innovated by Robert Rhoades at the International Potato Center in Peru.

Serendipity, this past year, had two American colleagues come to my Canadian city, thus highlighting the global relevance of anthropological practice. Elizabeth Guillette was sponsored by several Saskatchewan environmental groups for a series of public lectures and municipal hearings to support appeals for pesticide bans. The arguments were based on her ingenious research among the Yaqui of Mexico. I include a summary of her work in Chapter 9. It clearly shows the anthropological difference in an important health and environmental issue. Similarly, a national conference was held in Saskatoon in the Fall of 2002 on the impacts of intensive livestock operations (ILOs). Invited as a globally renowned expert was Kendall Thu, an anthropologist who has made a compelling case against the proliferation of ILOs. Featured in Chapter 10 is a case study summarizing his work and that of others who have questioned the health, social, and environmental impacts of ILOs.

Chapter 14 has been updated to include some new material on rapid assessment. Chapter 15, now retitled "Participatory Research," includes some of the work and ideas on participatory rural assessment by Robert Chambers, a leader in international development. Chapter 17, "Becoming a Professional," adds tips by Riall Nolan for students contemplating becoming applied anthropologists. Finally, I provide an Appendix containing assignments used in my senior undergraduate course in applied anthropology; these might be useful for instructors, and students may wish to pay attention to the vision exercise. Beyond this, I have updated references and recommended reading and revised short sections throughout the text wherever appropriate.

I would like to thank the following reviewers of my book for their helpful commentary: Roberta D. Baer, University of South Florida and Mariam S. Chaiken, Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I also thank Amanda Young of Omegatype Typography for her outstanding work in helping me prepare this second edition.

I dedicate this edition to Niels Braroe, who died in 2002. Niels, who gave me much help with the first edition, was a mentor, best friend, soul brother, and cherished uncle to my four children.

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