Careers in Applied Anthropology in the 21st Century: Perspectives from Academics and Practitioners

Carla Guerrón-Montero, Volume Editor

Satish Kedia and Tim Wallace, General Editors
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NAPA Bulletin (1356-4789) is published in March and September on behalf of the American Anthropological Association by Blackwell Publishing, Inc. with offices at (US) 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-0120, (UK) 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2ZG, and (Asia) 155 Cremonne Street, Richmond VIC 3121, Australia.

Mailing: Journal is mailed Standard Rate. Mailing to rest of world by IMEX (International Mail Express). Canadian mail is sent by Canadian publications mail agreement number 46573520. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes to NAPA Bulletin, Blackwell Publishing, Inc. Journals Subscription Department, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-0120, USA.

Publisher: NAPA Bulletin is published by Blackwell Publishing Inc., 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-0120, USA. Blackwell Publishing Inc. is now part of Wiley-Blackwell.

Information for Subscribers: NAPA Bulletin is published in two one-issue volumes per year. Subscription prices for 2008 are: Premium Institutional: £27 (Europe), US$34 (The Americas), £27 (Rest of World); Customers in the UK should add VAT at 7%; customers in the EU should also add VAT at 7%, or provide a VAT registration number or evidence of entitlement to exemption. Customers in Canada should add 5% GST or provide evidence of entitlement to exemption. The Premium institutional price includes online access to the current and all online back files to January 1st 1997, where available. For other pricing options, including access information and terms and conditions, please visit www.blackwellpublishing.com/napa.

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Associate Editor: Michelle S. Nathan

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Advertising: journalsadsUSA@oxon.blackwellpublishing.com

Print Information: Printed in the United States of America by The Sheridan Press. This journal is printed on acid-free paper.

Online Information: This journal is available online at Blackwell Synergy. Visit www.blackwell-synergy.com to search the articles and register for table of contents e-mail alerts.

Access to this journal is available free online within institutions in the developing world through the AGORA initiative with the FAO, the HINARI initiative with the WHO and the OARE initiative with UNEP. For information, visit www.aginternetwork.org, www.healthinternetwork.org, and www.oarecouncil.org.

Aims and Scope: The NAPA Bulletin series is dedicated to the practical problem-solving and policy applications of anthropological knowledge and methods. NAPA Bulletins are peer reviewed, and are distributed free of charge as a benefit of NAPA membership. The NAPA Bulletin seeks to:

- facilitate the sharing of information among practitioners, academics, and students;
- be a useful document for practitioners;
- contribute to the professional development of anthropologists seeking practitioner positions;
- support the general interests of practitioners both within and outside the academy.

The Bulletin is a publication of NAPA produced by the American Anthropological Association and Wiley-Blackwell. Through the publication of the NAPA Bulletin, the AAA and Wiley-Blackwell furthers the professional interests of anthropologists while disseminating anthropological knowledge and its applications in addressing human problems.

Submission Instructions: For submission instructions, subscription and all other information visit:

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ISSN 1356-4789 (Print)
ISSN 1356-4797 (Online)
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INTRODUCTION: PREPARING ANTHROPOLOGISTS FOR THE 21st CENTURY

CARLA GUERRÓN-MONTERO
University of Delaware

With its sustained emphasis on creating, implementing, and maintaining positive impacts on issues of local, national, and global importance, applied anthropology continues to be a crucial and relevant field of study. Its practitioners demonstrate their engagement in multifarious ways both in and outside the academy, showcasing their commitment not only to the tenets of academic rigor, but also to challenges shaped by real-world situations. This unique volume of 14 articles by 16 academics and practitioners provides specific advice to students on both the tangible benefits and potential disadvantages of careers in applied anthropology in the national and international arenas. Contributors offer practical, step-by-step advice on practicing anthropology with an M.A. degree, careers in national and international consultancy, small consulting business development, executive leadership, combining careers in applied anthropology and the academy, field school training, collaborative research and public engagement, applied anthropology in nonanthropological settings, among others. Although most draw on their personal life histories and careers as illustrations, their focus is on reflection, analysis, and recommendations that result from their experiences. The contributors to this volume stress the contemporary relevance of anthropology, the advantages of obtaining training in anthropology, and the plethora of opportunities to put anthropology to use in the real world with exceptional results. Keywords: applied anthropology, career advice, practicing anthropology, mentorship, theory and praxis.

In his lecture entitled “The Anthropology of Trouble,” prominent anthropologist Roy Rappaport called for the repositioning of engaged research (i.e., of “the application of anthropology to the solution of real world problems”) toward the center of anthropological inquiry (1993:295). In today’s increasingly complex and interconnected world, this invitation has become even more relevant.

The boundless vigor that has characterized applied anthropology worldwide continues and flourishes in the 21st century, and the United States is clearly no exception. Nowadays, more anthropology graduates in the United States find work outside the academy. The current trend began in the 1970s and has accelerated since the late 1980s. At the present time, it is estimated that from 42 to 60 percent of Ph.D. anthropologists and virtually all M.A. anthropologists work outside the academy (Fiske this volume; Kedia and van Willigen 2005; Nolan 2003). As this tendency is likely to continue resulting from factors internal and external to the discipline (Baba 1994; Kedia this volume), anthropology
departments, organizations, and societies have the responsibility to effectively prepare and aid future generations of practicing anthropologists. The strengthening of what Johnsrud calls “a strong market niche” outside academia is critical if anthropology is to be recognized for its potential to have a positive and sustained impact on local, national, and global issues and programs (2001:95). Likewise, an anthropology more engaged with pressing social issues is nowadays a more present demand in the minds of students and the society at large (Hemmert 2007).

The current volume responds to this demand, by offering practical, step-by-step advice from both academics and practicing anthropologists. I am fortunate that outstanding academics and practicing anthropologists in cultural anthropology accepted my invitation to contribute to this volume and address the most salient issues regarding careers in practicing anthropology.

In line with Goldschmidt’s (2001) assertion that applied and theoretical anthropology should be mutually supporting, the volume also addresses the theoretical and applied implications of the anthropological enterprise outside the academy. Throughout its history, anthropology has traditionally merged practice and theory successfully and fruitfully (Goldschmidt 1979, 2001). Applied and academic anthropology developed together and share methods and personnel (Ferraro 1996). Nonetheless, although practicing anthropologists have been recognized and supported through robust applied organizations and in spite of the complexity of the intellectual demands of anthropological praxis (Moran 2000),1 practicing anthropology has not received the same recognition and esteem as ‘pure,’ academic anthropology. In addition, “the relationship of theory to practice has been a source of continued anguish for anthropology since its very beginning” (Moran 2000:132; Hill 2000; Hymes 1999). As Stocking (2000), among others, notes, in the United States, this divide is the result of the Cold War. Thus it is necessary to stress that the artificial divide that has prevailed between practice and theory (and by erroneous extension, between applied and academic anthropology) has changed over time and space (Baba 2005; Kedia and van Willigen 2005), is confined mostly to the subdisciplines of cultural anthropology and linguistics (Ferraro 1996; Greenwood 2000), and is out of touch with contemporary practice in anthropology and the social sciences (Greenwood 2000; Lassiter this volume; Rylko-Bauer et al. 2006).

Such disjuncture is also more prevalent and evident in the United States and other western countries (Pink 2005). Anthropologists in many industrialized and developing nations learn to be well versed in—and to hold in high esteem—practice and theory within anthropology’s subdisciplines and beyond, and to navigate between practicing and academic settings as a natural result of the inbuilt interdisciplinary character of training programs and job markets (Baba 2005; Chambers 1987; Greenwood 2000; Guertrón-Montero 2002a; Hill and Baba 2006; Nader 2000). In my experience as an anthropologist initially trained in Ecuador, the disconnection between applied and academic anthropology found in the United States is not present in Latin America. During my first year in graduate school in the United States, even though I was studying in a program with an applied focus, I became aware that students were not sufficiently informed about how to obtain employment in the nonacademic world, nor were they
privy to the tension between the obstacles to tenure and at many universities. These discussions for nine consecutive years meetings, in order to make a to undergraduate and graduate much of the advice and guidance

OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUME

This unique volume of provides specific advice to study anthropology in the national volume of experience-based outside and inside the academy, the Practice of Anthropology.

The contributors represent experiences, and are located at different backgrounds in terms of both personal life histories and career recommendations that result from experiences, and specialty for the convergence of the advice being recommendations provided in a subdiscipline of anthropology. The last section is organizations, literature, and anthropology (Shaffer this volume).

The volume is divided into includes a chapter that frames of Applied Anthropology," he in the 21st century that will and some are internal (inter). These changes “have significant human condition, from roles to guidelines for practice” (Shaffer) at length. He also assesses roles fulfilled by anthropologists and trends in the discipline, particularly as well as discipline priorities.
approaches that will become commonplace in the future. These changes represent a challenge for anthropologists. “In preparation, applied anthropologists must hone their skills in diplomacy, collaboration, and oral and written communication to raise the stakes for disciplinary and scholarly recognition of applied work and, particularly, their community engagement” (Kedia this volume).

The second section, Graduate School in Applied Anthropology, includes two chapters. Terry Redding’s chapter, “Mastering the Art of the M.A. Program and Beyond,” centers on advice for those who are seeking to enter, are already enrolled in, or are just completing an M.A. degree program in applied anthropology. The chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of essential aspects in regard to finding the appropriate M.A. program, building a fitting graduate school experience, and making the transition into the work place. Through his experiences and those of his colleagues, Redding highlights the need to be flexible, creative, and open-minded about one’s career choices and outcomes. This discussion should be taken as a warning against the assumption of the existence of one linear path for a person’s career. The U.S. ideology of “a linear career, a quest in which the end goal is visible from the start […] still holds a powerful sway over many of our students” (Wasson 2006:16). Redding’s career experiences and choices remind us that improvisation and unpredictability should be acknowledged and even welcomed. “I have not yet worked in ‘typical’ applied anthropology contexts, although I do use my training in subtle or unconscious ways. I learned to never assume anything, to never be satisfied that the way things appear were the way they were, and to watch people’s actions rather than their words” (Redding this volume).

In her chapter, “Small Fish in a Big Pond: An Applied Anthropologist in Natural Resource Management,” Jennifer Gilden provides a candid account of her experiences as an applied anthropologist working in fisheries management. Gilden emphasizes that the nature of her work has demanded flexibility and constant learning. As an applied anthropologist working in a field dominated by biologists (that of fisheries management), Gilden’s job “has involved many types of education: educating myself about fisheries biology, educating managers about the contributions of social science, educating the public about the fisheries management process, and, perhaps most importantly, educating myself about the role and limitations of social science in this particular field” (Gilden this volume). In addition, Gilden discusses the challenges and rewards of being an applied anthropologist (or social scientist) working in a natural science field. Finally, complementing Redding’s discussion, this chapter also addresses the topic of practicing anthropology with a M.A. degree.

Gilden notes that a Ph.D. in anthropology ensures the possibility of accessing research networks that are sometimes difficult to reach otherwise. In addition, Gilden states that the length, intensity, and demands of Ph.D. programs can lead to “a more solid sense of identification as an ‘anthropologist’ than might be achieved in M.A. programs” (Gilden this volume). Redding argues that Ph.D. roles tend to be more clearly defined in position descriptions, while M.A. graduates might need to be particularly flexible in performing a variety of tasks and trying many new roles. Finally, Gilden calls for more networks
available for anthropologists with M.A. degrees, and for those with M.A. degrees to be properly familiar with current theories and ideas in the field.

Four chapters in the third section of the volume offer advice from the academy to budding anthropologists. As an academically based applied anthropologist, Philip D. Young addresses the topic of combining careers in the academy with (part-time) practicing anthropology outside the academy. In his chapter, "Practicing Anthropology from within the Academy: Combining Careers," Young notes that this endeavor is both challenging and rewarding, for the premises and outcomes of both sectors differ. As Young states, "you will likely find yourself living in two parallel worlds that only touch tentatively here and there" (Young this volume). Young notes that, although many of the skills learned in the academy are transferable to the practicing world of international development, flexibility to learn new ways of performing tasks and analyzing and communicating information are essential. Young stresses the importance of immersing oneself in managerial culture (incl. participation and careful attention to meetings, use of acronyms, negotiation and presentation skills), and addresses the seldom discussed issue of ethical dilemmas faced by practicing anthropologists in the field.

In the chapter, "Moving Past Public Anthropology and Doing Collaborative Research," Luke Eric Lassiter addresses collaborative research. In this chapter, Lassiter discusses the importance of moving past the debates regarding applied—practicing vs. public anthropology to the development and strengthening of collaborative research as a special opportunity to conduct publicly engaged anthropological work. The author understands collaborative research (or community-based research, action research, participatory action research, or participatory community research) as work that is conceived, produced and enacted by the researcher and the social actors involved in the process. Lassiter's scholarship and practice lies within collaborative ethnography, "a very specific kind of ethnography that builds on the cooperative relationships already present in the ethnographic research process (i.e., between ethnographers and informants/consultants) and endeavors to engender texts that are more readable, relevant, and applicable to local communities of ethnographic collaborators (i.e., local publics)" (Lassiter this volume). Additionally, Lassiter provides recommendations for students interested in engaging in collaborative ethnography as an applied and public practice.

The topic of collaborative research is further discussed by Geraldine Moreno-Black and Pissamai Homchampa, who focus on collaboration and cooperation—particularly international collaboration—among applied anthropologists within the academy. As Van Arsdale (this volume) notes in regard to ethnographic field schools and the emphasis placed on individualized rather than group field research experience, Moreno-Black and Homchampa state that collaborative work is discouraged, and sometimes even penalized, in the academy. An indication of this discouragement is precisely how little has been written about collaboration among researchers (with the exception of feminist and anticolonialist scholarship and interpretative anthropology). The authors contrast this standard with that of other disciplines in the natural and social sciences, and center on the area of health sciences, the purview of a significant portion of their collaborative work. Moreno-Black and Homchampa address collaboration from different angles, based
on their experiences as professors, research assistants, graduate students, cross-disciplinary colleagues, and program directors.

The section ends with the chapter “Learning Applied Anthropology in Field Schools: Lessons from Bosnia and Romania,” by Peter Van Arsdale. Field experience that is required of students of anthropology can be obtained through individualized experiences (the traditional “Lone Ranger” approach of conducting ethnographic fieldwork) or group experiences. Van Arsdale notes that ethnographic (or “cultural”) field schools are a very suitable approach to acquire these experiences, and he provides illustrations based on field schools he has organized in Bosnia and Romania. These field schools are unusual in their approach, as they combine elements of more traditional study-abroad programs and more recent service-learning programs. One of the most important outcomes of these programs is the incorporation of the concept of “pragmatic humanitarianism.” “Tied to an emerging theory of obligation, this notion of humanitarianism features hands-on training with at-risk populations” that respects humanitarian intervention and acknowledges the positive outcomes of individual and group efforts (Van Arsdale this volume).

Young, Moreno-Black and Homchamps address the challenges of being a (part-time) applied anthropologist in a nonapplied academic anthropology department and engaging in cross-disciplinary collaboration. Young also notes that applied anthropologists tend to be better received in departments or programs where applied work in general is more highly valued (i.e., international studies programs). In the context of applied work in academic departments, anthropologists are able to advance praxis by engaging traditional research and applied work in a dialogue. In fact, academic–practicing anthropologists can “bridge the gap between academics and practice” by bringing the insights and theory development that results from applied work into the academic arena, while also offering solutions to real human problems through knowledge gained in traditional research (Jordan 2001:85).

The fourth section of the volume centers on advice from practicing anthropologists, some of whom are also active academics or scholar–practitioners (Wasson 2006). Shirley Fiske offers a discussion of careers for anthropologists in the U.S. federal government. Fiske reminds us that the federal government is the single largest employer of anthropologists outside universities, particularly at the present time with at least five agencies employing in-house anthropologists. She provides a detailed explanation of the varied and complex world of careers in the federal government, emphasizing that generalizing about them is challenging. She describes careers in the federal government for a number of specialty areas including international development, both as a consultant and as a full-time permanent government employee, cultural resource management, the legislative branch, forensic and physical anthropology, natural resource management, and defense and security sectors (Fiske this volume). In order to both demystify and exemplify these career paths, the author offers illustrations from her 22-year experience in the field and from interviews conducted with accomplished senior anthropologists in five agencies. In addition, Fiske provides advice on how to go about finding, applying for, and obtaining a job in the federal government.
In her chapter, "Applied Anthropology and Executive Leadership," Barbara Pillsbury narrates her experiences forging a path as an executive leader and the ways in which anthropology assisted her in this endeavor. "In today's world, to be an effective executive means connecting [one's] vision and values to a position of responsibility for executing a program—that is, managing personnel, time, budgets and ideas to achieve, and better yet surpass, expected objectives" (Pillsbury this volume). Based on her career and that of two other anthropologist executive leaders, Pillsbury focuses on pivotal management and decision-making skills, and discusses how anthropological theory and methodology—such as the emphasis on the concept of culture broadly understood, the holistic approach, or the understanding of diverse worldviews—can become invaluable tools for executive leadership positions. This is particularly true in international and intercultural work. However, the author also warns us about some characteristics of the anthropological approach that may constitute hindrances in the context of executive leadership, namely emphasis on cultural difference and resistance to generalization, prominence of participatory methods (which might be viewed as too time consuming), and lack of management and budget skills (see also Young this volume).

From the world of high level executive leadership, the volume moves to a discussion of creating and running a small-business operation. Carla Littlefield and Emilia González-Clements address this topic in their chapter, "Creating your own Consulting Business." They provide a detailed account of the basic principles of business startup as well as specific illustrations about running a consulting business based on their extensive experience. The authors also answer the question: "What makes anthropologists good consultants?" by pointing out that

as anthropologists, we are trained in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. We may also receive instruction on research design and how to conduct fieldwork and research.... Our anthropological training in observing and understanding the beliefs and behaviors of groups, to see things from their unique perspective gives us an edge as consultants. Our training helps us work in other cultural settings, and to work with different groups and sub-groups. [Littlefield and González-Clements in this volume]

In addition, the authors highlight the key nature of networking as a fundamental promotion strategy that can take place at professional meetings (local, regional, or national) or at community organizations relevant to one's business (organizations, foundations, or coalitions).

The last two chapters of this section are specifically dedicated to international issues in the practicing world, issues that are also addressed by Young, Fiske, and Pillsbury in the volume. In "Using Anthropology Overseas," Riall Nolan notes that anthropologists commonly find work in the international arena, particularly in the areas of international development and humanitarian assistance. In this chapter, Nolan advises students on how to prepare for and secure anthropological employment in the international arena. The author reminds us that anthropologists excel at development work, and that "by using what we know as anthropologists, and by working in collaboration with others
around the world, we can achieve far more than any of us could manage to do on our own" (Nolan this volume). Nolan recommends that students of anthropology interested in working overseas make sure they obtain some basic qualifications including the necessary academic background (M.A. or Ph.D., depending on the position desired), workplace skills (incl. self-management, functional, and technical skills), cross-cultural experience, and language proficiency. Nolan also discusses the types of jobs available to anthropologists in international development work.

Gisele Maynard-Tucker focuses more specifically on the process and challenges of becoming an international consultant. Echoing the words of other contributors to this volume (Gilden, Littlefield and González-Clements, Nolan, Redding, and Young), Maynard-Tucker asserts that becoming a consultant is a challenge “that is both exciting and intimidating,” and it requires acquiring general anthropological knowledge and mastering a specialization. “Becoming a consultant is not easy and one has to be willing to tough it out, to be flexible and adapt to various situations, to make decisions on short notice, to be pragmatic and focused” (Maynard-Tucker this volume). The author provides a detailed discussion of the solid academic background and international experience necessary for a student of anthropology considering international consulting work. Maynard-Tucker defines consultations and describes the types of consultations and clients and how to contact development agencies. The author includes illustrations deriving from her experience in international development. Maynard-Tucker concludes by reflecting on the benefits and constraints of the profession, and offers lessons learned during more than 20 years of international consultancy work in the field of global health.

The last section of the volume consists of a chapter by Scarlett Shaffer, a graduate student at the School for International Training (Brattleboro, Vermont). Shaffer identifies several resources on career-building, networking, and job opportunities for applied anthropologists within the four subfields of anthropology.

**General Trends and Recommendations**

The contributors to this volume stress the contemporary relevance of anthropology, the advantages of obtaining training in anthropology, and the plethora of opportunities to put anthropology to use in the real world with exceptional results. Contributors also speak of a trend toward more flexible, less traditional, and linear careers, even for those anthropologists mostly based in academic settings (Wasson 2006). The contributors note the holistic nature of anthropology, its emphasis on a broad conception of culture and on ethnography, the ability to communicate and understand other cultures and worldviews and to translate this knowledge into comprehensible terms. As Nolan (this volume) articulates, “We are inductive in our methods and our thinking, good at building a picture of reality from the ground up. We are very good at eliciting local data, making sense of it, and using it, rather than relying on theoretical constructs from outside. And in the process, we are not threatened by ambiguity, contradiction, or discrepant information.”
Many of the contributors also address some of the limitations of our training when working in nonacademic areas: our general fixation on research, and more specifically, long-term research, on detailing the complexities of phenomena when simpler, less elaborate answers and solutions are needed, or the stress placed by the discipline on individual research, the “Lone Ranger” or “lone-wolf” approach. Results of a recent survey covering the past 25 years sponsored by NAPA and conducted by Harman et al. (2004) with M.A. graduates in anthropology indicate that there is a general discrepancy between skills used at work and skills taught in their training programs (4). Contributors to this volume remind us that anthropologists need to be entrepreneurial in their approach toward a career outside the academy. Johnsrud also makes this point:

Most practitioners today must be extremely entrepreneurial in development practitioner careers. This requires several skills, including an appropriate degree of assertiveness, excellent fieldwork skills to interpret organizational contexts and recognize opportunities when they arise, the ability to communicate in non-anthropological terms, tenacity, and the ability to project an image, especially in the private sector, of willingness to learn. [2001:97]

A student interested in working in the professional world of anthropology as a practitioner needs to acknowledge the assets and recognize the limitations, so that anthropology does not become an “interesting but irrelevant” field (Johnsrud 2001:98).

Recommendations provided in this volume are especially useful in structuring academic programs to train practicing anthropologists. These recommendations apply both to institutions and individual students, and they can be summed up in the need to develop an elastic anthropological curriculum. In this regard, one major difference between applied and nonapplied anthropology programs tends to be focused on methodological approaches. In nonapplied anthropology programs, methods are oftentimes less emphasized than theory, whereas applied programs that specifically train students in applied work stress the importance of sound methodological approaches (Hemment 2007), although engagement with the public sector beyond the academy has also become more common in traditional academic programs and settings (Borofsky 1999; Lassiter et al. 2005). The curriculum in applied anthropology should involve a combination of theory and methods. However, some specific areas should be stressed when training future practicing anthropologists (Ervin and Holyoak 2006). In theoretical terms, this curriculum should include an interdisciplinary approach and accentuate both critical thinking and problem solving skills. Contributors recommend adding one or more specialization(s) to one's general anthropological knowledge (health, business, environmental studies, law, etc.). In practical terms, this curriculum should offer innumerable opportunities for teamwork, interaction with practitioners, case studies and simulations that replicate to the extent possible the experiences of practicing anthropologists (Van Arsdale this volume). In terms of methodology, there should be a strong combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, and emphasis on language and computer skills. In other words, merging theory and practice in the curriculum becomes essential to prepare well-trained practicing anthropologists.
Mentoring has been a crucial topic discussed directly or indirectly in several chapters of this volume. The importance of mentoring cannot be overstated, especially in the case of women (Stone and McKee 2000) and minorities. Aspiring practicing anthropologists need to find creative ways to access mentors throughout their studies and, later on, their careers. In connection with mentoring, networking is addressed in several chapters. Networks provide anthropology with visibility and a “presence” outside the academy (Johnsrud 2001:96). It is essential for fledging anthropologists inside and outside the academy to actively participate in network development. However, as Nolan warns, “to network, you will need a story; a story about who you are and what you are seeking. Since networking is a professional activity, and not simply chitchat, craft this story carefully” (Nolan this volume).

Several authors in this volume mention the importance of being affiliated with one or more active professional organizations, such as the SfAA, the NAPA, Local Practitioner Organizations (LPOs), and other formal or informal organizations (see also Bennett 1988). Kedia (this volume) points out, “anthropologists early in their careers should take advantage of the opportunity to join professional associations and attend and participate in meetings, forums, and conferences to help establish themselves in their field and remain abreast of the latest trends in the discipline.” In addition to the information provided by several authors, Shaffer’s chapter provides an extensive list of sources of this information (Shaffer this volume). Students should also participate in conferences as early and often as possible; participating in and attending conferences specifically organized by or intended for nonacademic anthropologists should be essential for the development of larger networks (Johnsrud 2001:96), and more importantly, for the development of more acceptance and more collegiality among academic and practicing anthropologists.

As more and more anthropologists find employment as practitioners in the private sector as well as the nonacademic public sector, their successes will continue to highlight the value of applying anthropological methods, analysis, and interpretation to humanity’s problems. The contributors and I sincerely hope that the readers benefit from the generous and careful discussions offered in this volume.

NOTES

Acknowledgments: This volume is the result of nine years (1997–2005) of organized sessions (14 workshops, panels, and roundtables) sponsored by the International and Membership Committees of the SfAA and held at the society’s annual meetings. The sessions were designed specifically to provide information about careers in applied anthropology to undergraduate and graduate students. Sessions ranged from workshops on international career opportunities for students, workshops on CV and resume development, to one-on-one career counseling, mentorship, practice job interviews, and networking. Articles containing summaries of these workshops were published in the SfAA newsletter (Guerrón-Montero 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2001, 2002b). I would like to express my gratitude to the SfAA Board of Directors, officers, and program chairs who supported the organization of the sessions from which this NAPA Bulletin derives. I especially thank Gisele Maynard-Tucker, Jeanette Dickerson-Putnam, and Carla Littlefield, cochairs of some of these sessions. My sincere appreciation goes to the panelists and audience of the aforementioned sessions, and especially to all the contributors to this volume. I have learned from your wisdom and grown professionally and personally as a result of this experience. I also thank Philip D. Young, Sarish Kedia, Pamela Punterney, and the anonymous
reviewers of this introduction and the volume for their insightful suggestions. Last, but not least, I offer my appreciation to Tim Wallace and Satish Kedia, NAPA coeditors, for their support, enthusiasm, and confidence on the importance of this project.

1. I understand praxis as a combination of theory, practices, and ethical and civic values that become embodied in the anthropological (and social science) project (Greenwood 2000; Kozaitis 1999).


3. Some of the necessary skills recommended by the M.A. graduates included supervision, organizing, workplace public interaction, management skills (management, budget, training, time management, etc.). In addition, it was recommended to add emphasis on writing, especially that of reports and grant proposals, survey preparation, statistics, and qualitative analysis (Harman et al. 2004:4).

4. Applied visual anthropology is not discussed in this volume; however, the value of applied visual anthropology theory and methods (art, drawing, photography, video, digital and visual media, multimedia technologies, etc.) in training practicing anthropologists is worth noting (Pink 2004).

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The emergent global economy of the 21st century will create an ever greater need for research-based information and pragmatic utilization of social science skills, creating new work opportunities for applied anthropologists in a variety of settings. However, anthropologists may need to adjust their traditional roles and tasks, approaches and methods, and priorities and guidelines to practice their craft effectively. Anthropological training and education must be based in sound ethnographic techniques, using contemporary tools, participatory methods, and interdisciplinary knowledge in order to accommodate faster-paced work environments and to disseminate their findings efficiently to a diverse audience while fulfilling the goal of empowering and enabling humans around the world to address social, economic, and health issues, along with other pressing concerns facing their communities. Keywords: applied anthropology, practicing anthropology, changes, trends, and guidelines for practice

As Rylko-Bauer and colleagues (2006) and a host of other writers (Basch et al. 1999; Borofsky 2002; Hill and Baba 2006; van Willigen and Kedia 2005) have noted, the application and practice of anthropology has been much affected in the 21st century by external forces, in particular economic, political, and demographic shifts. These transformations have created new work contexts and thus new employment opportunities for anthropologists. At the same time, internal changes such as cross-fertilization with other social sciences and especially changing relations with study subjects have significantly altered the traditional ways anthropologists examine and influence human conditions, from roles and tasks to goals and methods, from application priorities to guidelines for practice. This article critically reflects on some of these changes and trends that are influencing the practice of applied anthropology.

EXTERNAL FORCES

Contemporary anthropology has been most indelibly marked by rising population fluxes, development projects, public health crises, environmental problems, natural catastrophes, political strife, and transformations driven by a global economy. These fluxes have led to migrations, both forced and voluntary, and associated problems such as increases in poverty, morbidity, crime, and drug abuse. Economic development has led to increased use of natural resources and intensified exploration into remote regions for the extraction of oil or natural gas and hydroelectric power. These activities have resulted in displacement
of indigenous groups by private entities and sometimes their own governments; at the same time, the global sharing of information aided by the Internet and satellite feeds have made international audiences more keenly aware of the kinds of privation such development projects often perpetrate on these disempowered communities. By and large, however, new technologies have become a commodity of those in power benefiting the technically skilled class far more than local populations.

A number of recent health crises and natural disasters, including the worldwide HIV/AIDS pandemic, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and 2005’s Hurricane Katrina, have demonstrated that the expertise of practicing anthropologists is needed in First World as well as in Third World societies. Of ongoing concern to anthropologists is the global spread of AIDS, which has left its mark on populations across the globe from sub-Saharan African to Cambodia to the Caribbean. For example, from 1985 to 1990, sub-Saharan Africa saw typically higher death rates for the very young (birth–4 years) and very old (60+), but these rates dramatically shifted as the epidemic spread in the subsequent decade and affected the usually most productive members of society, those ages 20 to 49 (UNAIDS: The Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS 2006:4). AIDS has impacted entire national economies, crippling already poverty-stricken regions by depleting the adult work force and increasing responsibilities for grandparents and public agencies to accommodate orphans. This in turn has kept children from taking advantage of educational opportunities because they often must act as caretakers for sick parents and breadwinners for entire families, most commonly as sex trade workers who frequently become HIV infected themselves, thus perpetuating the downward cycle.

Confronting these issues not only requires trained personnel who understand the dynamics of multiple cultures, societies, and economies, but also the mechanics and imperatives of funding that must be in place to support such research. Anthropologists can inform programs and policies affecting local communities and the activities of funding agents by helping ensure best practices through advocating proper considerations, precautions, and follow-up measures. As with HIV/AIDS programs, funding for research, healthcare, and relief related to the 2004 tsunami and Hurricane Katrina has come from governmental and private sources as well as local, national, and international charitable organizations. However, while billions of public dollars have been directed toward improving efforts to detect and respond to tsunamis, very little has been devoted to victim relief. In fact, only $300 million of the $3.4 billion formally committed in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster had actually been pledged to victim relief a month after the deadly wave hit (UN News Service 2005). With regard to Hurricane Katrina, much attention in the national press has been given to questionable allocations, ranging from mishandling to outright fraud, of both public and private monies. Vast private funds were poured into Katrina relief, as well as significant amounts from many government and nongovernmental organizations, but a number of reports made public have demonstrated that these funds have not yet reached their intended targets. Inadequate and ill-informed policy and planning have actually led to money being spent to store supplies that were never delivered to, or used by, the victims who sorely needed them in the months following the disaster (O’Hara 2006). These unfortunate results
may well have been avoided had applied anthropological practitioners been employed to preemptively establish proper measures to ensure the accountability, sustainability, and effectiveness of funded programs.

Indeed, there are a number of ways in which anthropologists might apply their knowledge to address societal issues. For example, of much current interest is the sustainability of natural resources as they dwindle or become more difficult to access. A greater understanding of environmental and ecological impacts is necessary as development increasingly pervades every continent. Applied anthropologists can contribute to environmental dialogues by evaluating current practices and offering recommendations, as well as evaluating responses to those recommendations within both the public and private sectors. Another growing field for practitioners is gerontology/aging as a sociocultural and biological phenomenon, particularly as the baby boomers in the United States reach retirement age. They are leaving urban locales to retire in rural settings, necessitating reassessments of healthcare availability and resources that the evaluative research and community involvement of applied and medical anthropologists can provide.

A rapidly developing subject of interest includes diet, nutrition, and related health issues, along with their relation to a proliferating commercialized mass culture dominated by marketing. Junk and fast food are replacing healthy food choices around the world, thereby advancing concerns about globesity, the global trend toward greater body fat indexes. Finally, media communications is reemerging as a domain in which anthropologists can play a significant role by developing prosocial campaigns targeted at specific populations and relevant stakeholders. The public’s increasing need for greater accessibility and availability of new venues for information dissemination has helped provide more efficient means for communicating research results.

Perhaps the best demonstration of the range of nontraditional work settings now available to those trained in anthropology is found in the projects funded by the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS). DRCLAS provides nearly 100 grants for graduate and undergraduate students in several fields, including applied anthropology. In 2001, DRCLAS supported community development work on education programs in Chile, research by the Socios en Salud (Partners in Health) organization in Peru on the successful treatment of patients with multiple drug-resistant tuberculosis, human rights advocacy by the Instituto de Defensa Legal (Institute for Legal Defense) nonprofit group in Peru, investigation of converging medical systems in Latin America, analysis of state mediation of visual forms in Cuba, exploration of tourism’s impact on women in social contexts in Honduras, and studies in Bolivia on the potential and actual sociopolitical consequences of the racialization of campesinos (subsistence farmers in Latin America countries often subject to exploitation; Harvard Gazette 2001).

**INTERNAL FORCES**

Two decades ago, Robert H. Hinshaw (1980) and Erve Chambers (1985) noted the increasing necessity of collaboration in practitioners’ knowledge transfer and decision