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Case Studies of Anthropology at Work

PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF AANT 497/560, APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY, FOR THE NETWORK ON CAREER READINESS.

Students

- Emma Falk
- Nina James
- Alex Harding
- James Koudelka
- Xavier McClean
- Rafia Rahman
- Brenna Rosenbaum

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Presentation Outline

- Introduction to the project
- Presentation of case studies
  - Prototypes for discussion
- Lessons and the value of the project

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ANTHROPOLOGY CAREER READINESS NETWORK

- At the invitation of Dr. Elizabeth Briody and Dr. Riall Nolan, students drew on case studies of anthropology outside the university with the aim of producing a share-able infographic that illustrates the value of applied anthropology.
- One group used written case studies while two groups interviewed practitioners.
  - Group 1 (Brenna, Nina, and Alex) evaluated various case studies and selected one for development.
  - Groups 2 (Xavier and Rafia) and 3 (Emma and James) conducted background research on the practitioner, developed an appropriate interview schedule, and interviewed the practitioner via Zoom.
- Each case includes: An **issue, concern or problem** in need of addressing; an **approach**; and **outcomes** and/or further directions.

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Case Studies

Emergency Food Security Recovery in Afghanistan

Brenna Rosenbaum, Nina James, and Alex Harding

- **Problem**: For nearly three years, 2005-2008, Afghanistan had been struggling with failing crops and food insecurity. Farmers had run out of seeds and could not afford to purchase more. They resorted to farming and selling poppy seeds illegally to make ends meet.
- **Goals**: The goals of the program were to increase access to seeds and fertilizer and to increase wheat yields on local farms. The project developed a voucher system to fund the agricultural needs of families and local farms
- **Outcome**: The program handed out 297,000 vouchers at a 99.9% redemption rate, increasing access to agricultural resources and restoring household food security. Wheat yields increased by 55% for irrigated farms and 94% for rain-fed farms.

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Case Selection

- **Sources considered:**
  - We looked at many different anthropological case studies provided in the book, *Profiles of Anthropological Praxis*, to find our case study. As well, Professor Andaya provided us with a list of different anthropologists who were willing to be interviewed on their work as applied anthropologists.
  - There were 21 different case studies by different anthropologists to choose from. Some of the other studies we considered researching were issues regarding cultural preservation, health management, and social change. Ultimately, Adam Koons' economic development project in Afghanistan interested us the most.

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Case Selection

- We chose to do emergency food security recovery because it is a critical issue that affects many families and communities globally. We wanted to see how an anthropologist applies their skills and methodologies to help the communities in need.
- We also saw that the author Adam Koons' career has focused on poverty reduction, food security, disaster management, emergency response, and humanitarian assistance as a full-time practitioner. These are social and environmental issues that are of interest to us.

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Emergency Food Security Recovery in Afghanistan

What Was The Problem?

For nearly three years, 2005-2008, Afghanistan had been struggling with failing crops and food insecurity. Farmers had run out of seeds and could not afford to purchase more. They resorted to farming and selling poppy seeds illegally to make ends meet.

What Were The Goals?

The goals of the program were to increase access to seeds and fertilizer and to increase wheat yields on local farms. The project developed a voucher system to fund the agricultural needs of families and local farms.

What Was The Outcome?

The program handed out 297,000 vouchers at a 99.9% redemption rate, increasing access to agricultural resources and restoring household food security. Wheat yields increased by 55% for irrigated farms and 94% for rain-fed farms.

Applied Anthropology in Hospitals in Saudi Arabia

Xavier McClean and Rafia Rahman

- **Problem**: Dr. Ann Jordan was called to evaluate a tertiary care hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, hosting top medical practitioners from more than 63 countries. Yet the hospital officials were curious -- why did the hospital fail to provide efficient care to the beneficiaries?
- **Approach**: Dr. Jordan was appointed by the hospital to look into the problem. She conducted ethnographic research, with particular emphasis on observation and interviews. She was able to expose the disparities within the hospital and find avenues to potentially influence policy and procedure to improve worker quality of life.
- **Outcome**: Dr. Jordan found that even though the medical practitioners were all world class, there was a striking difference in the salary they were being paid by the hospital which created tension among the medical practitioners. Therefore, the recommendation was to adjust the pay scale to reduce resentment and standardize pay.

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Case Selection

Dr. Ann Jordan was one of five practitioners open to being interviewed, and we were interested in her work in organizations.

To decide on the specific case that we wanted to discuss in the interview, we considered Dr. Jordan's publications and online profiles. After reviewing her publications, we were particularly interested in her work in hospitals in Saudi Arabia.

As we developed the interview schedule, we decided to:

- Eliminate sources not related to hospital research so as not to be overwhelmed with and to stay within the topic
- Focus on the salary gap and the tension this generated among the medical practitioners as we felt that this held a concrete solution to an identifiable problem

We found that success is contingent on the client: Dr Jordan was able to analyze the problem and offer a solution, but her suggestions were not taken up by the client

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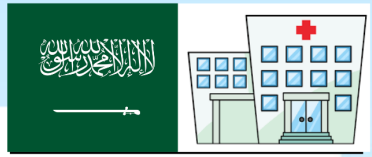
Applied Anthropology In Hospitals In Saudi Arabia



XAVIER MCCLEAN AND RAFIA RAHMAN

What was the problem?

Dr. Ann Jordan was called to evaluate a tertiary care hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, hosting top medical practitioners from more than 63 countries. Yet the hospital officials were curious -- why did the hospital fail to provide efficient care to the patients?

What was the approach?

Dr. Jordan conducted ethnographic research, with particular emphasis on observation and interviews. She found that even though the medical practitioners were all world-class, there was a striking difference in their salary that was regionally dependent.

What was the outcome?

This pay disparity caused resentment and poor quality of care. To mitigate this, new polices and procedures were advocated for to improve worker quality of life. The recommendation was to standardize pay to reduce resentment.

Cattle Feedyards in Rural Nebraska

Emma Falk and James Koudelka

- **Problem**: The concern for worker safety within the feedyards due to lack of experience, language barriers, and lack of trainings
- **Approach**: A multidisciplinary team was brought in to develop training and safety programs to implement within the feedyards. Opinions, stories, and hands-on experiences were collected from the workers and team.
- **Future Directions**: Developing strategies for implementing *Feedyard 15*, a training program educating workers on the hazards and safety of the cattle feedyards.

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Cattle Feedyards in Rural Nebraska

What is the problem?

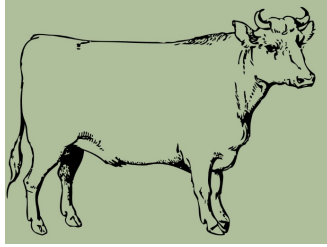
The concern for worker safety within the feedyards due to lack of experience, language barriers, and lack of trainings.

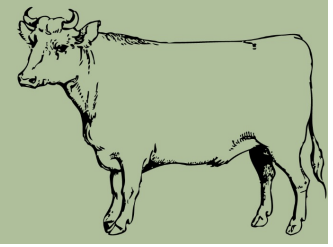
What is the approach?

A multidisciplinary team was brought in to develop training and safety programs to implement within the feedyards. Opinions, stories and hands-on experiences were collected from the workers and team.

Future Directions?

Developing strategies for implementing *Feedyard 15*, a training educating the workers on the hazards and safety of the cattle feedyards.





What Did We Learn?

WHAT VALUE DID WE GET FROM THE PROJECT?

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Learning Experiences

Practical skills

- Learned how to present information in a new way; infographic as a specific way to present data
- Learned how to design and create an infographic; learned Canva
- Learned the interview process from designing an interview schedule to conducting the interview

Knowledge of the field

- Understood the impact of applied anthropologists have in many different areas
- Learned what an anthropologist can provide to a project as opposed to other types of researchers
- Learned about the value of participant-observation in applied anthropology

"It was a worthwhile experience! It was great to get to know an anthropologist whose work you've read"

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What is the value of the infographic?

Provides a succinct and eye-catching abstract of a larger case study

Provides baseline knowledge that could catapult students into further research

Publicizes what applied anthropologists do in a visually compelling way

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How might other students access these infographics?

Social Media

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter
- University and department websites

Physical Spaces

- Posters can be displayed in halls and classrooms.
- Posters can be printed and brought to meetings, conferences, etc.

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If students could do it over, they would have …

- Spent more time refining the interview schedule and script. They realized that thinking about word choice and flow of the interview really made a difference.
- Explained the goal of the interview more clearly at the outset of the interview so the interviewee clearly understood what they were trying to achieve.
- Would have chosen to do an interview as a way of challenging themselves and learning a new set of skills.

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As an instructor, I would have…

- Established expectations for the presentation to the Network earlier in the semester so that students could prepare with more time in advance.
- Spent some time reading and discussing what strategies effectively and succinctly convey anthropological knowledge (blog posts, infographics, etc)

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