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Introduction

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Introduction

Lisa J. Lefler

For many people, anthropology is a mystical or even marginal discipline. Most often people think of anthropologists as merely archaeologists who dig up the past or, even more specifically, paleoanthropologists who spend their careers piecing together giant bones and fossils of animals from the prehistoric past. I hope this volume creates a fuller appreciation among those who don't know much about what we do or who may see us in a negative light, thinking we only go into communities to exploit them for knowledge. A popular *Far Side* cartoon by Gary Larson comes to mind. It pictures three "native" people inside a hut. One looks out the window at two figures headed their way with notebook and camera in hand and shouts Anthropologists! Anthropologists! while the other two occupants bustle their television, telephone, lamp, and VCR from the hut. Instead of being an annoyance to people, we hope in this volume to provide more positive examples of our lifelong efforts to preserve, conserve, protect, and perpetuate the dynamic and rich cultures of communities. We hope we can shed light on problems that have troubled humanity in the past as well as offering practical suggestions for the future.

Anthropologists work on practically every issue that humanity has encountered. What allows us to engage in this massive undertaking is the way in which anthropology is organized. Our discipline is divided into four major subfields: biological or physical

anthropology, linguistic anthropology, socio-cultural anthropology, and archaeology. Each of these four subfields has many sub-subfields, each garnering a more specific focus on some activity or study of humankind. For instance, you can have a concentration in socio-cultural anthropology and also specialize in education, ethno-history, or medicine cross-culturally. You can have a concentration in physical anthropology but specialize in forensics or primatology. But the real bonus and wonderful nature of anthropology is that in our study of human activity we have cross-training to some degree in all subfields, providing us with multiple lenses and tools with which to work, as we emphasize working with others, collaboration, and fieldwork.

Anthropologists have extensive experience in working across disciplines with other professionals to tackle problems. We were, in a very real sense, the initiators of multi-cultural studies and diversity training. Some of the earliest scholarship and research on gender and race, for example, came from anthropologists who were studying in communities all over the world. For example, it was from early anthropological field studies and the likes of Franz Boas and Margaret Mead that we came to understand that race and gender are social—not biological—constructs. Through the work of anthropologists we came to understand that our health and behavior are a result of both biology *and* environment, nature *and* nurture—not just one *or* the other. The dynamic contemporary science of epigenetics is proving that both DNA and environment are important in being able to understand and predict chronic disease. Epigenetics depends on those working in the medical and social sciences putting their heads and theories together for a better, fuller understanding of humans and health. From these contemporary theories we gain a better understanding of just how our history and environment impacts population health and health inter-generationally.

But I think our most important and effective strategy is our deep commitment and devotion to working with and in communities. Without community assistance, buy-in, and support, we could not do what we do—or at least do what we do with any effectiveness. Most anthropologists have focused on two important research strategies that have historically set us apart from other disciplines: (1) qualitative research methods and (2) community-engaged research strategies, now often referred to as CBPR (Community-Based Participatory Research). Because socio-cultural anthropologists were required to do fieldwork in and with the people they were studying, there had to be a human connection made to the people who were helping with language, customs, and other daily activities that allowed anthropologists to do their work. Eventually, after decades of mistakes and lessons learned, we were able to develop more positive strategies to gain the trust and respect necessary for effective research cross-culturally.

Today, those of us who work with tribal communities understand that our work depends, foremost, on our positive relationship and mutual respect for those with whom we work. Instead of CBPR, it sometimes is referred to as TBPR, Tribally-Based Participatory Research. Tribal people must be full partners in initiating the research, gain the greatest benefit of the research, and be integral participants and drivers in the research. Their input and initiation are critical to any work conducted in Native communities. If it is not of benefit to the community, it should not be done—plain and simple. Several years ago, a Tribal health administrator for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, in a meeting about research, spoke the simple phrase, "nothing about us, without us," and I have never forgotten the importance of that short and concise saying.

The focus of the 2014 SAS conference and of this volume is *how* anthropology works with communities. We wanted scholars and

students to show from our different lenses and subfields how we weave our activities with those of the communities with whom we work, for a broader understanding of issues. Excerpting from the program:

> As we move into the 21st Century we can draw upon our holistic discipline to examine topics ranging from climate change to language death. The Cherokee basket watermarked in our 49th annual program is exemplary of how skilled hands can weave multiple types of materials and patterns to create a single outcome that successfully reflects heritage, meaning, and purpose. Coming back to a four-field discipline provides stronger resources to meet our purpose of understanding the human experience.

This volume provides the ethnographic stories of early work with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, as well as more recent work with this community. Ray Fogelson, who has mentored many of us in Cherokee studies, provides a glimpse of his very important work beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, while linguist Hartwell Francis shares his work on language preservation in the community today. The last two chapters by Jim Sarbaugh and myself, focusing on traditional knowledge and health, also reflect many years of work regarding the Cherokee. Trey Adcock, a Native educator, while not an anthropologist, works in Native studies and shows the importance of interdisciplinary work in providing an effective and vibrant program in a university on Cherokee homeland. Brandon Lundy's chapter provides insight into ethnographic methodology and uses his work in Guinea-Bissau to demonstrate the process of partnering to produce data that provides real knowledge about people and community.

We hope that this manuscript is useful for those interested in working with communities—particularly those communities that have been colonized—by providing more effective perspectives and approaches to conducting partnered research for the benefit of the community.