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Authors

Colson, Elizabeth
Foster, George M.
Scudder, Thayer
et al.

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Peer reviewed

- Gabriel Lasker, Department of Anatomy, Wayne State University School of Medicine, Detroit, Mich., U.S.A.: What is molecular anthropology?
- Genji Matsuda, Department of Biochemistry, Nagasaki University School of Medicine, Nagasaki, Japan: Evolution of the primary structures of primate and other vertebrate hemoglobins.
- G. William Moore, Department of Anatomy, Wayne State University School of Medicine, Detroit, Mich., U.S.A.: Proof of the maximum parsimony algorithm.
- A. E. Romero-Herrera, University Department of Clinical Biochemistry, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, England: Evolution of myoglobin amino-acid sequences in primates and other vertebrates.
- Vincent Sarich, Biochemistry Department, University of California, Berkeley, Calif., U.S.A.: Molecular systematics of the primates.
- Elwyn L. Simons, Department of Geology and Geophysics, Peabody Museum, Yale University, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A.: The fossil record of primate phylogeny.
- Richard E. Tashian, Department of Human Genetics, University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, Mich., U.S.A.: Evolution of carbonic anhydrase in primates and other mammals.
- Friedrich Vogel, Institut für Anthropologie und Humangenetik der Universität Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany: Mutation and molecular evolution.
- Alan Walker, Department of Anatomy, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.: Splitting times among hominoids deduced from the fossil record.
- Emile Zuckerkandl, Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole, Mass., U.S.A.: Features of evolutionary change in gene regulation, as basic to the appearance of man.
- Jeanne H. Tashian, Department of Surgery, University of Michigan Medical Center, Ann Arbor, Mich., U.S.A., served as rapporteur.
- The papers presented at the symposium and several additional ones will be published by Plenum Press.

Long-Term Field Research in Social Anthropology

by ELIZABETH COLSON, GEORGE M. FOSTER, THAYER SCUDDER, and ROBERT V. KEMPER
c/o Division of Humanities and Social Sciences, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, Calif. 91109, U.S.A. 15 IV 76

Perhaps without exception, anthropologists involved in long-term field studies are dedicated to such research. Certainly they enjoy it, and some believe that more and better long-term studies are essential if the development of anthropology as a discipline is to continue. The Burg Wartenstein Symposium "The Theoretical and Methodological Implications of Long-Term Field Research in Social Anthropology," held August 29–September 7, 1975, under the sponsorship of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, was organized as a stocktaking—an attempt to assess the strengths and shortcomings of long-term studies as anthropological research techniques and to try to pinpoint particular opportunities and problems associated with this kind of research. All participants (save one) had observed the same population on two or more visits over at least ten years, while several had worked with the same communities for a generation. Regrettably, a number of those invited were unable to attend, negating the attempt made to balance participants from the United States with anthropologists from other countries. In retrospect, most participants also believed that several anthropologists who had not engaged in long-term research should have been

included in the conference simply because all participants were so predisposed towards long-term studies. Though they recognized their bias, a few colleagues with different commitments might have sharpened many of the questions and much of the discussion.

The questions which participants dealt with in their papers and which dominated the discussions fell into three readily distinguishable groups: basic theory and interpretation, research design and research strategies, and policy and ethical implications. These will be considered in turn.

1. *Basic theory and interpretation.* The question basic to the conference was "Why long-term research?" That is, what is the justification for devoting large parts of professional careers to such research, and for investing major sums of money on repeat studies, rather than gathering data on peoples yet unstudied or choosing a different community for each new research project? It emerged that there were two quite different types of long-term studies represented at the conference. One could be called the longitudinal study, which systematically follows a population through time and attempts to monitor, explain, and predict both continuity and change. Such studies create time series of events as an important part of the research base. The other type of study looks more to a deepening understanding of a given culture associated with repeated visits in which one aspect after another of the cultural life is investigated in depth.

Most participants assumed that the primary justification for long-term research rested on the quality and quantity of data that could be obtained and upon the advantage gained when change can be observed as it happens. All participants felt that anthropological theories and models have had a greater "static bias" than is commonly assumed, that a time perspective is needed for assessing the rapidity with which change is occurring in the contemporary world, and that we need to consider how best to handle ethnographic data given rapid and widespread change. We already have instances of apparently discrepant hypotheses about the same peoples formulated at different periods of time which need explanation. The long-term study should also face the investigator with the need to assess his or her own earlier formulations in the light of new data and so lead to better standards of fieldwork, both in the observing and in the recording of crucial phenomena.

Even without the evidence for innovative change based on new inputs or radical transformations, the cyclical nature of many cultural processes was seen as necessitating continued observation. For an understanding of American presidential politics, a cycle of at least eight years is essential; pig festivals in New Guinea require observation over the entire cycle (which may continue for ten years) for a full understanding of what is happening; cycles associated with bush-fallow systems of agriculture frequently extend for a generation or more. Moreover, communities experience "good" and "bad" periods depending on rainfall, chance political events, and other factors. Unless the anthropologist has observed a range of variation, it is difficult to distinguish the exceptional from the normative.

Concern with process continued throughout the conference to be a dominant justification for long-term work, but increasingly participants felt that the opportunity to learn about a society in a depth of detail impossible in the single visit was also highly important. Those participants who had had the longest and most intensive exposure to their populations were particularly insistent on the importance of this point. It was urged that the long-term project could lead to economy of time and effort in the testing of anthropological theory, however generated, since rapport and background knowledge enabled the fieldworker to dispense with many of the preliminaries.

It emerged that it is too soon to assess the actual and poten-

tial contributions to theory of existing long-term studies. Logically, it can be argued, the study of processes over time should lead to better models and to greater accuracy in prediction. At the very least, return visits face the anthropologist with the need to assess the accuracy of earlier predictions and to discover what went wrong with the initial projections. Some participants were struck with how poor their record had been. This is all to the good if we learn to ask why. Admittedly, so many variables are involved in contemporary change processes that to identify and interrelate all the critical ones is a tremendously difficult task. Both training and research methodologies have encouraged anthropologists to examine change as bounded by a local community, but today the major factors promoting change are external to the community. All participants felt that in the future far greater attention must be paid to the relationships between the community and the nation-state. This of course becomes a major justification for longitudinal studies, since time is essential for examining the impact of policy at the local level.

Participants also compared long-term with cross-group studies in terms of potential contribution to theory building. All, it turned out, had done field research in several societies; all felt they were better anthropologists for this wider exposure and would recommend that young anthropologists contemplating long-term research should have additional field experience either before or during their intensive study (and preferably both) in order to keep their sense of problem and their appreciation of how cultures differ.

2. *Research design and research strategies.* A striking feature of the cases reported was the serendipitous nature of much of the research. While only a few studies were preplanned as long-term (and even these changed design with the passage of time), the lack of planning probably is a result of a recent commitment to long-term research. Though participants approved of flexibility, many felt that a greater degree of planning, associated with the expectation that comparisons were to be made between time periods over at least a generation, would lead to better design.

A major question was whether there is, or should be, a basic "core" of data that any anthropologist engaged in long-term research has the obligation to gather and keep current in order to facilitate comparative studies and to provide a baseline for later researchers. Ideally, and time permitting, it was felt that the anthropologist should strive to obtain and maintain quantitative data such as vital statistics; census material (including marital and parental status, social and residential units of affiliation, occupations, education, and religion); resource base (minimal descriptive data on ecological and economic categories); and sociopolitical differentiation. Likewise, the recording of the appearance and disappearance of key traits was deemed highly desirable. Some participants, however, pointed to the danger of neglecting significant trends and items in the pursuit of core data; their gathering, many reported, is time consuming in the extreme and becomes increasingly so as the years go by and the population to be followed becomes scattered and diversified. So far, the incorporation of students into an on-going project has not solved the problem of core-data collection. Anthropologists have yet to develop anything comparable to the laboratory team ethic that governs so much of scientific research and enables students to contribute to a joint enterprise as part of their apprenticeship. In appraising the utility of core data, and other data left by earlier researchers in the same area, it seemed generally agreed that solid, detailed, factual information is more helpful than are hypotheses or generalized descriptions. On the other hand, the vast amounts of data that long-term research generates present special problems of handling which most of the participants felt have yet to be solved, with the result that they are not able to take full advantage of their data for purposes of analysis and theory formulation. Whether or not

the use of computers with more powerful software systems will prove a solution remains to be seen.

Another major question dealt with "data banks," central files where all data from a project ideally should be kept. This question arises when two or more researchers work on the same or similar problems over time, or when other researchers or scholars wish to use data accumulated (and increasingly computerized) during long-term research. Obviously systems need to be developed to record and file notes to facilitate later retrieval by qualified researchers. As the discussion progressed, it also became apparent that a data bank is as much an ethical as a technical matter. A data bank can be a potential time bomb, the consequences of which cannot be foreseen, especially when it contains records of events associated with individuals. In an era of increasingly open files and legal rights to demand access to government or private dossiers on individuals, one wonders, "What happens when the people we have studied ask to see our files? What happens when governments demand access to files which may contain information on people who are engaging in illegal activities or political opposition?" These are questions that now face every fieldworker, but the long-term study, because of its high visibility, poses the question in a particularly acute form. Satisfactory answers were not found, but it became apparent that long-range research data, with resulting accumulations of materials involving many people, require special care and thought in coding, in filing, and in rights to access.

3. *Policy and ethical implications.* In addition to the ethical problems described above, other themes were explored. It was taken for granted by all that human subjects are to be protected and that the traditional anthropological concern to avoid injury to individuals and groups is essential in long-term research. Concern was also expressed, however, about the *positive* obligations of researchers to peoples studied. Some participants took an "action-oriented" and/or "advocacy" stance, arguing that research on a population cannot be justified unless positive good is likely to accrue to them as a result of it. Absence of injury, they argued, is not in itself sufficient. Other participants stressed the importance of recognizing that in many countries long-term research increasingly may be preplanned applied research, supported by government, which will expect practical results. Government will insist upon frequent, utilizable reports, and policy increasingly will require communication of research findings to the subjects studied.

Another issue involves relationships between anthropologists. The long-term study is highly vulnerable to the unexpected encroachment of other research workers who decide to institute work in the communities under study, perhaps just because so much is known about them that they seem ideal research sites. Participants knew of instances where such intrusions had come perilously close to destroying all rapport and to bringing about the closing down of the long-term research. Professional courtesy should involve consultation and consideration for the effects of new work in the area.

Throughout the conference, participants continued to believe that long-term research offers many advantages over short-term research, even though few convincing examples of major theoretical advances so far have emerged largely or entirely from long-term work. This poses a dilemma: If most significant contemporary theory in social anthropology is still based on traditional, or more time-limited, research, does this mean (a) that long-term research is of less value than the participants believe, or (b) that long-term research is relatively recent in anthropology, with much of the data accumulated and insights gained still to be analyzed and/or published, and represents a very small fraction of all anthropological research? While it is too soon to say, within the next decade the published results of current long-term work should provide an answer.

Associates in CURRENT ANTHROPOLOGY are requested to send information to the organizers at the above address about other long-term research projects, including names of the researchers, what they have done, and how frequently and for what periods of time they have returned to the field. The research should span a ten-year period, with two or more studies taking place within that time span.

The conference papers are now in process of revision by their authors for anticipated publication in a single volume. The three coorganizers, joined by the rapporteur, will edit the volume and provide an introductory chapter emphasizing the major findings of the conference.

Participants in the conference were as follows:

Elizabeth Colson (coorganizer), Division of Humanities and Social Sciences, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, Calif., U.S.A.

T. Scarlett Epstein, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, England

Hussein M. Fahim, Social Research Center, American University, Cairo, Egypt

George M. Foster (coorganizer), Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, Calif., U.S.A.

June Helm, Department of Anthropology, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, U.S.A.

Tamàs Hofer, Ethnographic Museum, Budapest, Hungary
Robert V. Kemper (rapporteur), Department of Anthropology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Tex., U.S.A.

Louise Lamphere, Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A.

Richard Borshay Lee, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ont., Canada

William Mangin, Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y., U.S.A.

Mervyn Meggitt, Department of Anthropology, Queens College, CUNY, Flushing, N.Y., U.S.A.

L. J. Pospisil, Department of Anthropology, Yale University, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A.

Thayer Scudder (coorganizer), Division of Humanities and Social Sciences, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, Calif., U.S.A.

Alfonso Villa Rojas, México, D.F., Mexico

Evon Z. Vogt, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A.

Wanted

■ For the *International and Intercultural Communication Annual*, names and addresses of persons to whom inquiries may be directed for information about conferences, conventions, workshops, projects dealing with international and/or intercultural communication topics during 1975-76; also references to the work of individual scholars offering research, experimentation, or philosophical insight in this field. Please write: C. K. Flemings, California State College, California, Pa. 15419, U.S.A.

■ Correspondence with persons who have knowledge of pottery styles of southern Angola, ancient or modern, or of the location of examples in museum collections. Please write: L. Jacobson, State Museum, Department of National Education, Postbox 1203, Windhoek 9100, South West Africa.

■ Symposium participants of all disciplines for the 1977 Association for Asian Studies meeting in New York. The topic is "The Politization of Folk Culture and Marxist/Maoist Ideology"—specifically, examples of the use by revolutionaries of Asian folk cultures/Little Traditions as a means of mobilizing prospective followers. Although the focus is on regional

interpretations of communism/socialism, other suggestions will be considered. Please write: Paul Winther, Box 533-Anthropology, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Ky. 40475, U.S.A.

■ Assistance in preparing a guide to anthropological bibliographies, to include bibliographies of *bibliographies* on all regions of the world and on all topics within the discipline. A project of the Library-Anthropology Resource Group in Chicago, the guide will be published within the next two years. Readers interested in contributing material to this cooperative effort or willing to correct and expand parts of the manuscript are invited to write Fr. Francis X. Grollig, Department of Anthropology, Loyola University, 6525 N. Sheridan Rd., Chicago, Ill. 60637, U.S.A.

■ Communication with users of Wenner-Gren fossil hominid casts who would be interested in exchange of their duplicate or unneeded specimens for duplicates of the Skhül V skull and mandible and innominate bones of specimens from Sterkfontein, chimpanzee, and *Homo sapiens* currently available in our physical anthropology laboratory. Please write: Kenneth A. R. Kennedy, Department of Anthropology, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850, U.S.A.