



Doing Health Anthropology: Research Methods for Community Assessment & Change: *Christie W. Kiefer, PhD*

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Reviewed by Alice Fornari, EdD

The preface of this book states, “the basic ideas, attitudes & skills that are needed by anyone who wants to do anthropologic research on community health.” It is designed for novice learners – multi disciplinary health professionals – who are seeking to enter communities. Faculty who are focused on assisting learners & novice researchers on entering communities, with the possibility of partnering on health research, can use this text as a foundation to teach & discuss basic principles of community health research.

A theme woven throughout the text is cross-science communication. The book is ordered by 4 sections/ broad concepts. Chapters 1-4 introduce the naturalistic theory of knowledge, which informs anthropologic thinking. Chapter 1 begins with defining cultural Anthropology & the concept of culture. Each chapter provides a connection between a concept important to the topic i.e. cultural anthropology & social perspectives on health. The mini cases presented are stimuli for a health issue to be connected to the social perspective presented. This allows for reflection on practice to occur as the learner transfers the

scenario to their own personal experiences. Each chapter ends with a summary highlighting the key points to be remembered. Theory is the focus of the first section and provides a foundation for the chapters that follow. The chapter guides clearly describe the purpose of the chapter text to follow. Chapter #4 clearly describes the framework of anthropologic research. The true key elements as outlined in the chapter guide and presented as core attitudes of researchers involved in anthropologic research. Section II, beginning with Chapter 5, focuses on designing a research project using an anthropologic approach. As with all research asking the right question is the first step in the process. Once again community based health examples are provided to help the reader connect the content to health issues that could be relevant to many communities. Characteristics of good questions are outlined & will be helpful to more novice researchers approaching communities with an anthropologic perspective. The last chapter six, is this section focuses on an affective goal of establishing trust & cooperation between the community & the larger society. This is core to a suc-

cessful community-based research process.

Chapter 7 & 8 focus on the processes of collecting & analyzing data. These chapters put forward examples but also stress personal experience as key. Data collection requires background research on the community, a study of the physical community, a study of the physical com-

munity & population, and an investigation of the social organization & people’s roles in the community. Different data collection strategies are described including how to keep records using data management tools & writing up the results.

Section II of the book begins with the author generated concept of community health practice, which integrates the concepts of health & community & the way of life. Once again examples of a health concern are presented to provoke thought & discussion for readers & learners. The theory of needs is followed by the theory of hope to achieve community change of behaviors & attitudes that interface with good health. The theory of hope offers a model of how successful communities solve shared problems.

Chapter 11 focuses on action anthropology – the concept of participating as a partner in the change process and supports voluntary cooperation leading to social change. Examples are provided to work through community empowerment & facilitating change.

Chapter 12 moves beyond the actual

research paradigm to the teaching of health anthropology. Many readers of this book might be asked to facilitate teaching of the concepts presented with various learners. The focus presented supports learner centered teaching (paralleled to patient centered care) and the teacher as a facilitator of learning. Various important teaching & learning strategies are presented that are core to the learner centered process. Once again examples for discussion provide opportunity for engaging content with process. Chapter 13, the concluding chapter, focus on professionalism & social science research. This is an appropriate conclusion (or beginning) for any discussion on health, healthcare & communities. An important criteria to any community health intervention is assessing health beliefs. This is appropriately addressed under the scope of professionalism.

The book concludes with an Appendix, specifically a scoring system for Need Satisfaction Values. This can be applied to the research & the research subjects therefore scoring each behavior twice. A short list (for a book) of references are provided at the end of the text. This book clearly reflects the knowledge & experiences of the author, an experienced Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at a well-respected public institution. He has taught & participated in teaching & action research in diverse communities & is able to clearly present & explain concepts & examples to novice learners who would like to begin "Doing Health Anthropology" in a respectful knowledgeable & skilled way. As an educator committed to teaching and learning, increasing their (physicians in training) knowledge &

skills about community health issues, best practices in community based research, and ethical considerations when working with the community is a priority. This text provides clear & concise practical information, which can be a foundation to (physicians in training) overall community health curriculum. I enjoyed the read & I am excited to use this text with our medicine interns during their formal orientation to their Bronx communities. This introduction will foster a stronger partnership between healthcare providers & the community. Bronx, New York
Alice Fornari, EdD
Aforinari@aecom.yu.edu