ANH101: Anthropology

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What is Anthropology?

**Anthropos**: human  \[\text{Logos}: \text{word}\]

= The study of humans
What is Anthropology?

*Anthropos*: human  
*Logos*: word  
= The study of humans

What does it mean to be **human**?
Deductive and inductive reasoning

**Deduction:**

Theory → Hypothesis → Observation → Confirmation

**Induction:**

Observation → Pattern → Tentative hypothesis → Theory
Qualitative research methods
Research methods in anthropology

- Participant observation
- Interviews
- Surveys/questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Oral histories
- Archival and other documentary sources
- Photography and video
Participant observation is the primary method used by anthropologists
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• Immersion in social setting
Participant observation is the primary method used by anthropologists

- Immersion in social setting
- Participation in the daily activities of research informants
• ‘…subjecting yourself, your own body and your personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation.’

- Erving Goffman
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- Inscription of observed or experienced realities
**Participant observation** is the primary method used by anthropologists

- Immersion in social setting
- Participation in the daily activities of research informants
- Inscription of observed or experienced realities
- Emic and etic theories
Data analysis

• Close reading of ‘fieldnotes’ and other data
• Qualitative analytic coding to identify analytic categories/concepts
  - Open coding
  - Focused coding
• Theoretical memos
• Theoretical proposition
Levels of analysis

- Theory
- Concepts
- Data
From the specific to the general…
Why use participant observation?

• Accessibility

• Reduces “reactivity”

• Increases relevance of survey questions

• Creates intuitive understanding

• Many research problems require it
Land access/tenure

Access to labour/credit/inputs

Ecology
e.g. soil quality

Rising incomes

Risk/low returns

Cultural acceptability/aspirations
Access to labour/credit/inputs

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- Rising incomes
- Ecology e.g. soil quality
- Risk/low returns
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Questions?
How can anthropology help in agri-health research?

• Qualitative methods create access to certain kinds of environments
• Connecting policy and practice
• Anthropology can identify the negative or unintended consequences of interventions
• Anthropology identifies the social determinants of disease
1. Bridget O’Laughlin, *Konzo* paralysis in Mozambique

- 1981 - Outbreak of an irreversible spastic paralysis of the legs
- *Konzo* is a form of cyanide poisoning resulting from the high concentration of linamarin found in the edible leaves, peel and roots of cassava
- It is caused by excessive consumption of unprocessed or poorly processed cassava
- *Konzo* is associated with drought
- However, why did *Konzo* occur during this drought and not others?
- ‘Politics, not drought, was arguably the most important cause of *Konzo’

2. Mark Hunter, HIV/AIDS in South Africa

- Uses anthropology to challenge stereotypes of “African promiscuity”
- 2 years of ethnographic fieldwork in Mandeni, KwaZulu-Natal
- Patterns of intimacy have changed rapidly over a period of 60 years, due to the break down of the migrant labour system and the emergence of chronic unemployment from 1970s onwards
- Economic precariousness and unemployment, not cultural exceptionalism, explains the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in KwaZulu-Natal

Problems and challenges

• Different methodologies make it a challenge to work across disciplines
• Time scales can be incommensurable
• Anthropology unearths inconvenient truths
• No quick-fix solutions
Why do rapid ethnographic assessment?

- Rapid assessments provide results and recommendations that are practical and based on local realities
- They provide a richer understanding of the underlying causes of poor health outcomes
- They are relatively low cost
- They can compliment other forms of public health data
- They are useful in contexts where interventions require direct engagement with local communities
What does rapid ethnographic assessment involve?

- Focused scope
- Based on anthropological and qualitative research methods
- Team based
- Small purposive samples
What does rapid ethnographic assessment look for?

- Local categories and terms
- What do people do?
- How and why do they do it?
- How do they feel about what is occurring?
- Patterns and relationships
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Thank you! e.hull@soas.ac.uk