

Preface and Acknowledgments

There has never been a better time to be a practicing anthropologist, as across the globe, people work together to confront and address our societal and environmental challenges at a variety of levels and in a variety of ways. Anthropology has much to contribute to these efforts, but until a few decades ago, I think it's fair to say that our discipline sometimes took a somewhat off-hand and haphazard approach to issues of application.

Fortunately, this is no longer the case. Anthropology outside the university is now the fastest-growing – and arguably most exciting – facet of our discipline, bringing theory and practice together in new and exciting ways. More and more of our graduates now choose practice, and more and more of our academic programs are gearing up to help develop these practitioners. Essential to this undertaking is the inclusion of practitioner voices in our disciplinary conversations about what anthropology is and what it is becoming. This book is a modest contribution to that effort.

My intention here was not to provide a survey of the literature and theory relating to practice, but instead to bring together insider accounts from experienced professionals, accounts of what it's like to be them. I wanted them to tell us, from their perspective, what they do and how they do it; what they see as major issues and opportunities in their work, and how they address these. Consider this, if you like, an attempt to provide an emic perspective on practice, and one which connects our discipline and its concerns to wider structures, interests, and issues.

No book of this size and scope can be created without the efforts of many different people. My thanks and appreciation go out to my original small group of "sages," with whom I consulted at the outset and who helped me with ideas, encouragement, warnings, and advice. Later, I received helpful suggestions from many other practitioners as the project proceeded, regarding possible authors, topics, and approaches. And throughout, I was encouraged and supported by the editors at Wiley-Blackwell, in particular Rosalie Robertson, Julia Kirk, and Jennifer Bray.

But most of all, my thanks go to our authors, most of whom are engaged in full-time practice, and who gave generously of their precious time and energy to make this book possible. They did not write their chapters for the purposes of promotion or tenure. Nor did they do it for the money. They did it, as I learned, because they are passionate about their work, because they understand how integral anthropology is to what they do, and because they want to tell that story to others.

I am proud to claim them as friends and colleagues. I am impressed with the skill and dedication with which they approach their work, and I am equally impressed with their accomplishments. I think you will be too.

Riall Nolan

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