The Unique Contributions and the Unique Methodologies: A Concise Overview of the Applications of Business Anthropology

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Anthropologists can make their great contributions to improve business operations. Business anthropology is a relatively new but fast growing subfield in anthropology and the business anthropologist is becoming a major occupation for anthropologists. This paper analyzes the roles that business anthropologists can play, the functions that anthropologists can have, and the contributions that anthropologists can make in the real business world. It suggests that by using specially developed research methods of anthropology, such as participant observation, informant interview, focus group, various survey techniques, and network analysis, business anthropologist can help business management to improve performance from product design to marketing strategies, from organizational change to consumer behavior studies, from domestic to international business development.

INTRODUCTION

The roles and functions of business anthropologists have been widely recognized; in fact anthropologists are able to help solve most business problems in the real world and have made their unique contributions (Jordan, 2010). Business anthropologist Timothy Malefyt recently (2009) discusses the changing public role of anthropology in last few years by exploring the rise of branded ethnographic practices in consumer research. He argues that a juncture in the "New Economy"—the conjoining of corporate interest in branding, technology, and consumers, with vast social changes—help to explain the rapid growth of ethnography for consumer research and predict its future direction. Business problems are various, for example, some of the business problems are related to the acceptance of new technical tools, methods, and processes by reluctant workers. Business firms that have workers with different educational, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds may face serious difficulties in creating a coherent organizational culture (Schwartz, 1991). Business anthropologists have been hired to investigate sources of trouble and to suggest remedies (Mars, 1994). In some cases, business anthropologists are able to help mediate and open communication between groups of workers and management (Reice, 1993).

In practice, most business anthropologists play very different roles in the companies for which they work (Jordan, 2010; Marrewijk, 2010; Morais and Malefyt, 2010). Some focus on the products that businesses produce, for example, by helping businesses to develop attractive,

salable products and to market these products successfully. While others focus on business organizations themselves, for example, by helping businesses to improve the efficiency with which they are run. No matter what their topical focus or employment status is, however, business anthropologists rely on the same methods other kinds of applied anthropologists use in their practice, especially participant observation, informant interviewing, focus groups, various survey methods, and network analysis (Aguilera, 1996; Corbett, 2008). They also research and analyze many of the same cultural variables as other anthropologists, such as beliefs and values, social structure, and gender-related behavior differences in organizations. In general, their work includes the same process and methods along with other kinds of applied anthropology (Marrewijk, 2010; Ybema et al., 2009).

Margaret A. Gwynne (2003), an applied anthropological theorist, along with Ann Jordan (2003), a business anthropologist, places business anthropology as a subfield of applied anthropology. However, in Gwynne's view there is a major methodological difference between business anthropology and other kinds of applied anthropology because in most cases the fundamental purpose of private sector economic activity is to make profit, and as such, there is always full of competitions in the business world. Moreover, because when working for highly competitive business firms business anthropologists usually face a difficult task in being "open" with results, publications, and sometimes must undergo through severe concerns about professional ethical questioning (Gwynne, 2003).

The profit motive usually means that the "product cycle" of any given item produced by a business – the amount of time between the development and introduction of a product and its decline – tends to be relatively short. For this reason, research conducted by business anthropologists is usually of a much shorter duration and involves much fewer informants than research conducted by their colleagues in the academic world (Hafner, 1999). In the business world there are various approaches to the real problems that are mostly associated with people. The anthropological approach seeks to answer the ever-widening questions such as: "Why do people do what they do?" "What do they mean when they doing so?" Keeping these questions in mind we can further analyze the roles that business anthropologists can play, the functions that anthropologists can have, and the contributions that anthropologists can make to improve the business operations.

In her recent article on the importance of business anthropology Jordan (2010) suggests that business anthropology can be effectively divided into three fields: 1) *organizational anthropology* (the study of complex organizations to include their cultures, work processes, and change directives), 2) *anthropology of marketing and consumer behavior*, and 3) *design anthropology* (product and services design). While fully agree with Dr. Jordan, this author tends to add the fourth and the fifth fields, the fourth field can be termed as *anthropology of competitive intelligence and knowledge management*, focus on the study of unique methods by anthropologists to be used in competitive intelligence and knowledge management (Tian 2009), and the fifth field can be termed as anthropology of international and cross-cultural business (Ferraro, 2006; Lillis and Tian, 2009). In the following sections the author will briefly present the contributions that business anthropologists can make in the studies of corporative cultures, knowledge management, cultural audits, organizational changes, product design, marketing, consumer behavior, and international business with an additional section to discuss how anthropologists make their contributions.

CORPORATE CULTURES

More recently, anthropologist Grant McCracken (2009), by combining a mastery of marketing, culture, anthropology, and modern business practice, argues that given the rapid changes in today's business environment a chief cultural officer (CCO) is necessary for every company to anticipate cultural trends rather than passively waiting and reacting. McCracken suggests that the chief cultural officer should have the ability to process massive amounts of data and spot crucial developments among an array of possibilities. CCOs will be able to see the future coming, no matter which industry they serve, and create value for shareholders, move product, create profit and increase the bottom line.

A business, like a small-scale society or subculture, exists under certain rules and policies established by the government or industries. As discussed previously, a business firm consists of many individuals, of both genders, and a wide range of ages with different educational backgrounds; moreover, the individuals within the same business organization may have different skills and levels of ability. A business firm may include members of different ethnic groups and representatives of different socioeconomic classes. Each of these individuals will play a particular role in the institutional structure of the business, and this role conveys, on each, a particular status in the corporate hierarchy structure. The first, and perhaps the most important, contribution of business anthropologists to business organizations therefore is their systematic understanding of the corporate or organizational culture (Kotter, 1991; Reeves-Ellington, 1999).

For anthropologists, business firms are not only economic organizations that exists primarily to make a profit, but also groups of people similar in many respects to the other kinds of human groups studied by anthropologists traditionally. Business anthropologists have the ability to "penetrate" corporate cultures and to elicit not only formal but also informal knowledge from them (Garza, 1991). For example, business anthropologist Eleanor Wynn, who has worked for a number of high-tech companies on a consulting basis, compares the work she did for one of them, the Xerox Corporation, to "going to deepest, darkest New Guinea… What goes on in an R&D (research and development) computer lab … was one of the strangest things I'd ever seen" (Quoted in Corcoran, 1993).

Business anthropologists tend to find out the answers to the following questions in a given business organization under the study: Who are the leaders and who are the followers in the business? How many different groups of people exist in the business? What common beliefs, values, and attitudes do members of each group inside the business hold? What does the existing political hierarchy, according to which power and authority are wielded and responsibility is delegated, look like? How is information passed through among the members of each group? How do group members relate to and communicate with each other? What causes disputes among group members, among groups, and how are these resolved? It is sometimes difficult to convey to business managers that studying the answers to these and other anthropological questions can lead to corporate policy recommendations, which will be able to help a business function more smoothly and thus more profitably. Anthropological theory is sometimes not easily adopted by the average businessperson (Aguilera, 1996).

According to Gwynne (2003), any cultural anthropologist who is going to unknot and make explicable the culture of a small-scale society will have several different models to follow, which include Levi-Strauss's structuralism, Malinowski's functionalism, Geertz's symbolic approach, and Marcus's postmodern approach. Each of these models, and there are many others as well, provides a different means for conceiving of and investigating the culture of a group of people

who are bonded together by same shared common values. Any of the models listed above can be used as a conceptual tool for investigating the culture of a business organization. Dr. Alfons van Marrewijk (2010) identified that, in the European context, business anthropologists developed their own interpretive perceptions on organizational culture, and created a cultural approach to study organizational issues. The analysis of the culture for a specific business organization by business anthropologists can be approached in different ways.

In reality, no matter what the model to be followed, a business anthropologist will always view a business as a bounded cultural community of people to be studied, analyzed, and understood in the same manners as other anthropologists study non-business communities (Gwynne, 2003). Take Judith Benson, an applied anthropologist, as an example. She worked for Kaiser Permanente, a health care management firm. Her responsibilities ranged from conducting focus groups to setting up a computerized system for processing clients' complaints and managing a local call center. When Kaiser decided to embark on a "re-engineering" project intended to implement significant organizational changes within the firm, she smoothed the way for process change by offering guidance to the team members on how to identify the cultural context within which the change would take place. One of her concerns was to ensure that any changes made to the corporate culture would be sustainable for employees being affected, a task she addressed by developing a series of strategies that promoted communication, idea sharing, and collaboration among employees:

> "I worked closely with individuals whom I recognized as potential roadblocks to the process change…I spent time with these major stakeholders to understand their points of view. At the same time, I worked with team members so that they could develop the process change in a way that blended with rather than confronted the existing cultural context." (Benson, 2000).

TACIT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Patricia Burke, the founding director of Workspace International, suggests that observing what employees are doing about their day-to-day tasks is an important way of externalizing tacit knowledge, which is one of the ways that anthropology can make a significant contribution to the implementation of knowledge management. Tacit knowledge often consists of habits and culture that we do not recognize by ourselves. In the field of knowledge management, the concept of tacit knowledge refers to a knowledge which is only known by an individual and that is difficult to communicate to the rest of an organization (Burke, 1988).

Knowledge that is easy to communicate can be termed as explicit knowledge. The process of transforming tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge is known as articulation or codification. This kind of knowledge contrasts with formal knowledge in that it is not made explicit. For instance, a factory worker may have an "informal mental map" of the way raw materials actually flow through a manufacturing logistic process, a map that may reflect what really happens on the shop floor more accurately than what is shown on an idealized schematic drawing of the manufacturing process. When study tacit knowledge management, just as Gwynne (2003) suggests, an important part of what business anthropologists can make contributions is to tease out tacit knowledge that would otherwise remain hidden.

All employees will gradually develop tacit knowledge, which is defined as an informal body of knowledge gained in the course of doing a particular job (Baba, 1998). With tacit knowledge,

people are not often aware of the knowledge they possess or how it can be valuable to others. Tacit knowledge is considered more valuable because it provides context for people, places, ideas, and experiences. Effective transfer of tacit knowledge generally requires extensive personal contact and trust. Tacit knowledge is not easily shared. One of Polanyi's famous aphorisms is: We know more than we can tell (Polanyi, 1966).

Business executives who understand their employees' various bodies of tacit knowledge can use these to improve the efficiency with which a business is run, which ultimately, of course, helps increase profits. This skill is called tacit knowledge management. The tacit knowledge of a group of experienced, long-term employees, for example, can sometimes be "captured" and taught to incoming employees (Baba, 1986). This may be accomplished formally, by means of orientation lectures or written guidelines for new employees, but is more often done quite informally by having long-term employees talk to newcomers about a corporation's history and traditions (Laabs, 1992).

CULTURAL AUDITS

Cultural values and preferences can impact how the employees, vendors/suppliers and customers of a global organization respond to its strategies, products, practices and communications. A marketing strategy, training program, compensation plan, advertising campaign, competency model, corporate communication or personnel policy is successful in one culture might be totally ineffective in another culture, if adopted without modification the result will not only make the adopting firm lose its revenue, but will lose its goodwill as well. Cultural audits examine current practices, programs and processes to identify how culturally appropriate they may be for multi-cultural or global audiences. Cultural audits will enable the global organization to align business processes with desired outcomes. ITAP International is a professional consulting firm that is ready to help business organizations achieve their global vision and strategy through customized cultural audits and action plans based on auditing results. (Cf. ITAP International homepage, accessed in Dec. 2008: http://itapintl.com/)

Businesses firms fail to reach their production or sales goals despite reasonable investments in capital and labor from time to time. Sometimes they experience strikes or other disputes. In such cases, a business anthropologist may be hired to carry out a cultural audit, a detailed study of the company undertaken in order to pinpoint discrepancies between the company's goals and what is really going on (Weber, 1986). A cultural audit can be conducted by a permanent employee of the company but is more appropriate to be done by an outside cultural consultant with anthropological training. In either case, the results of a cultural audit are considered highly confidential, since companies, especially those publicly traded ones, usually prefer not to air their problems publicly (Gwynne, 2003).

Cultural audit or audit culture is the process for study and examination of an organization's cultural characteristics, such as its assumptions, norms, philosophy, values, and relations among employees, to determine whether they hinder or support its vision and mission (Strathern, 2000). Gwynne (2003) outlines the process to perform a cultural audit, in which a business anthropologist may need to interviews employees at all levels of the organization. She suggests that business anthropologist, as a cultural auditor, might be not only interested in employees' opinions (both positive and negative) and their suggestions for improvement, but also be interested in their values, feelings, attitudes, and expectations about their organization and the

place they are within it. When doing cultural auditing business anthropologist may ask the interviewees a wide range of questions as below:

What are the company's strategic goals, and what strategies are employed to reach these goals? What happens when these goals are not met? How can the workplace atmosphere best be characterized? What positions do the interviewees occupy in the company, and what do they feel they are contributing to the company's success? How are they expected to behave and to communicate with others? Do these expectations reflect reality? What mechanisms exist through which employees can make their opinions, ideas, or grievances heard? Are performance incentives offered and, if so, to whom and under what circumstances? Do they work? Why or why not? These questions are merely examples of the types of questions asked by cultural auditors; the scope and range in fact could be virtually unlimited (Gwynne, 2003).

Sometimes the business anthropologist who functions as a cultural auditor may go outside the immediate company to interview members of its board of directors or even its stockholders for detailed information. The information collected is put together in the form of a report containing specific recommendations, the company's manages or directors can take specific corrective actions according to the recommendations made by the business anthropologist made. A cultural audit undertaken by Briody and Baba at General Motors, for many years one of the giants of the American automobile manufacturing industry, provides a good example. A few years ago, management observed that some of the employees who had worked long-term in any one of GM's overseas branches seemed discontented and less than fully productive on their return to the United States (Briody and Baba, 1993). Many returnees, for their part, felt their overseas work had not been sufficiently appreciated and that their status in the company had suffered because of their overseas service.

GM's in-house, full-time business anthropologist Elizabeth Briody was assigned the task of undertaking a cultural audit of the company to help its managers solve the problem. Briody conducted a series of interviews with GM employees at all levels of the company. The results were interesting. It turned out that some of GM's domestic operations were administratively linked, or "coupled," with overseas operations, while others were not. Employees of "de-coupled" domestic operations saw themselves as GM's "elite" (Garza, 1991). Their managers had little understanding of, or appreciation for, the importance of overseas work, and they sometimes shunted employees returning from overseas assignments into less promising career paths. On the basis of her cultural audit, Briody was able to recommend some specific ways in which GM could improve returning employees' productivity and job satisfaction. In addition to coupling operations, she recommended, for example, the establishment of an exchange program in which American and foreign workers would trade places for a few years and then return to their original jobs without having sidetracked their careers (Garza, 1991; Gwynne, 2003).

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

The last two decades of the 20th century were a time of change for organizations, with a preoccupation in changing organizational culture, a concept attributed to business anthropology. These changes have been accompanied by questions about different styles of organizing. In both public and private sector organizations and in the first and third worlds, there is now a focus on understanding how organizational change can be achieved, how indigenous practices can be incorporated to maximum effect, and how opportunities can be improved for disadvantaged groups, particularly women. Business anthropologist Susan Wright once explored organizational

culture as a tool of management. She presented and analyzed the latest anthropological work on the management of organizations and their development, demonstrating the use of recent theory and examining the practical problems which anthropology can help to solve (Wright, 1994).

Scholars have paid much attention on the enormous changes in the global economy, which certainly brought the changes in organizations. For instance, Nigel Thrift (2001) notes that in the new economy condition women are a declining because finance is representative of a certain kind of male role model. Anthropological study on the new economy suggests that organizational changes are unavoidable and firms must very well prepare for changes (Fisher and Downey, 2006). Just like cultures, businesses are very dynamic rather than static; this is particular true for those large transnational corporations, which are in a constant state of change.

Business firms are expanding to take advantage of economies of scale, contracting or restructuring for greater efficiency, constantly implementing innovations to encourage greater productivity. One innovation that has become very popular in the past fifteen years is a change from a department-based structure to a team-based structure. An aerospace company in which all the engineers were formerly assigned to the engineering department, for example, has created new "integrated product teams" (IPTs) in which all the workers involved in producing one type of aircraft, from managers to engineers to shop floor workers, are organized into a single team. Another popular innovation is "self-directed work teams" (SDWTs), the members of which manage themselves (to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the company). Both kinds of teams have been shown to enhance productivity and to contribute to employees' sense that they are an integral and important part of a larger pattern (Jordan, 1999, 1997).

A major role for business anthropologists is to contribute to such organizational changes. The team structure is particularly well suited to anthropological analysis (Van Marrewijk, 2010). For example, applied anthropologist Judith Benson helped the Boeing Company create and integrate product teams into the structure of the business. Applying anthropological methods and skills, Benson helped to improve Boeing's team work efficiency by interviewing shop floor mechanics. She was able to recommend specific changes in the way team leaders worked with their teams, which fostered Boeing's goal of involving its entire labor force in "determining the course of work" (Benson, 2000; Gwynne, 2003).

PRODUCT DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Another major role for business anthropologists involves helping businesses improve their products, design and develop new products, or improve the way their products are presented to consumers. In general, companies hire an anthropologist to conduct an internal or external ethnographic study for a simple reason: to uncover new ways to achieve competitive advantage. It takes research to understand new opportunities for products or services, or internal focus to change organizational issues, among other things. In recent years, ethnography has become popular with designers of products and technologies as a way of learning about the experience of the users. This research approach has been applied to such diverse problems as: How to design office environments that encourage group work and collaboration? How to design websites that fit the "mental model" and usage patterns of their target audiences? How to design museum exhibits that maximize the engagement between visitors and displays? (McDonough and Braungart, 2002).

The value of incorporating ethnography into product development and work practices research has been widely recognized in the business world, particularly in the design industry in

recent years (Squires and Bryan, 2002). New firms have arisen that specialize in design research, and some of them explicitly include ethnography. Although some scholars may disagree that these "ethnographers" are business anthropologist, in special cases it appears that being an "ethnographer" means a willingness and ability to make observations about how consumers use the products in their everyday life at their own home or other locations. In such a case, contextual analysis of findings is strictly optional, and not well understood or necessarily valued by the design firm or its clients (Baba, 2006).

Some business anthropologists specialize in helping businesses design and develop products that will result in profits for the company. As an example, a business anthropologist undertook research on behalf of a corporation manufacturing surgical instruments to assess medical doctors' demand for these instruments. The method used was to observe emergency-room doctors on the job in order to gain insight into how the doctors actually used the instruments. In prior interviews, the doctors had reported that their main concern was that their instruments be highly accurate. The anthropologist, however, discovered through direct observation that speed was actually more important than accuracy; the doctors preferred instruments that permitted them to work rapidly. The anthropologist's insight convinced the company to redesign its surgical instruments; the new design helped company increased its market share (Baba, 1998).

The burgeoning high-technology field is particularly ripe for anthropological input into product development. Business anthropologists are increasingly called upon to help generate ideas for new technologies or new ways to use existing ones as well as to provide businesses with a clearer understanding of the effects of new technologies on consumers. In order to develop ideas for new products and services, for example, applied anthropologist Bonnie A. Nardi has studied the ways in which workers use technology at Apple Computers and AT&T. Jean Canavan, a business anthropologist and manager of culture and technology initiatives at Motorola, has described how a 1996 study of pager use in rural China, where there is a scarcity of telephones, "prompted Motorola to start thinking seriously about two-way paging outside urban markets (Hafner, 1999).

In a very different application, Patricia Sachs' work at Nynex illustrates the way in which an anthropological analysis of ethnographic data can influence the re-design of work systems. Customer repair work at Nynex became disjointed and inefficient when a new 'trouble ticketing system' was introduced. It broke repair work down into small pieces to be distributed to disassociated individual workers. If a worker did not complete a repair job by the end of his shift, the job was re-cycled to another worker, without an opportunity for the two workers to talk to one another. An activity analysis conducted by Sachs showed that the whole activity surrounding repair work, especially making sense of a problem through conversations among multiple workers, is crucial in solving a customer problem efficiently. The new information system disrupted the natural activity pattern and made the problem resolution process much less effective (Sachs, 1995).

MARKETING

Some twenty years ago, John Sherry, one of the pilot business anthropologists, indicated that marketing and anthropology afford each other some distinct opportunities for intellectual cooperation (Sherry, 1987). Advertising is perhaps the most obvious of the marketing techniques employed by businesses, but there are many other steps in the successful marketing of consumer goods and services. Business anthropologists involved in marketing use standard anthropological

field methods to help private businesses identify the potential consumers of a product, raising consumers' awareness of the product, and creating demand for the product through, for example, appealing advertising, user-friendly web sites, attractive packaging, appropriate product placement, and affordable pricing (Sherry, 1994; Malefyt and Moran, 2003).

One area in which business anthropologists are playing a growing role is market research, defined as the applications-oriented study of broad cultural patterns and trends, as well as sub-cultural or ethnic group variability, aimed at determining characteristics that affect consumer behavior (Baba, 1986). The market researcher attempts to determine the distinguishing features of various cultural contexts, and the factors that might motivate consumers, within those contexts to buy particular products. Related questions include identifying the places where consumers would expect to purchase particular products, what kind of packaging would encourage them to purchase these products, and how much money they would be willing to spend. The most popular technique used by business anthropologists involved in market research is to do ethnographical research and to conduct individual interviews or focus groups with potential purchasers of a product, in order to gain information on their needs, values, opinions, likes, and dislikes (Gwynne, 2003).

Business anthropologists involved in market research also analyze the constantly shifting symbolic meanings consumers attach to products. It is very important that business anthropologists to pay attention to consumers' conscious or unconscious desire to create or enhance a particular image of themselves or their economic or social status. Some corporations specifically hired business anthropologists to help them create image-enhancing products. Chevrolet, for example, eager to command a position at the top of the lucrative sport utility vehicle (SUV) market, hired business anthropologist Ilsa Schumacher to study how car buyers decide which vehicle to purchase. Focusing on the symbolic role played by automobiles and consumers' inner motivations to purchase them, Schumacher conducted in-depth interviews with car buyers in order to discover what kind of image SUVs have in the minds of potential purchasers. She found that some potential buyers were eager to overcome "gender ident-ification." Women with children, in particular, liked the fact that SUVs, unlike station wagons, do not announce to the world "I'm a mother." Other consumers viewed SUVs as simultaneously safe and adventurous. Chevrolet's use of this kind of information has helped to make SUVs enormously popular. Indeed, says marketing expert Ilsa Schumacher, "If a marketer is skillful enough to equate his or her product with (its) deeper symbolism, they have the potential to turn it from just another good products into a cultural icon." (Shuldiner, 1994)

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Another significant contribution of anthropology has been to critique and expand constructs underlying consumer behavior and marketing theory, based on empirical research in non-Western societies. For example, business anthropologists Sunderland and Denny (2007) have been conducting ethnographic consumer research for corporate and institutional clients since 1980s. They have worked with the producers, suppliers, and advertisers of consumer goods ranging from drain cleaners and power drills to 24-carat-gold ingots and fine arts. They have worked with financial, healthcare, and educational institutions, retail conglomerates, emerging technology industries, and governmental nonprofits. Their cultural analyses have helped clients to brand and market their goods and services in relevant and resonant ways as well as to think about entirely new products and services.

Eric Arnould was among the first anthropologists to interpret his extensive, long-term ethnographic studies in West Africa for marketing audiences. In an early paper, he problematized the notion of 'preference formation' (i.e., how a consumer develops likes and dislikes, an idea that is central to diffusion theory) by comparing the standard Western view of this construct with both a local construction that is compatible with pre-market socio-centric values, and an Islamic ethno-nationalist view in which individuals achieve status through innovations based on 'Meccan' goods (Arnould, 1989 cited in Baba, 2006). Since then, Arnould has published an extended series of papers that draw upon ethnographic sources to shed new light on marketing concepts ranging from cross-border trade to relationship management enabling an empirically-based globalization of the marketing literature (Armould, 1995 cited in Baba, 2006).

The formation of contemporary consumer markets is basically about the formation and deployment of social identities. Cultural creative, account managers and research teams invent, contest and negotiate varying models of what kind of person, what kind of self, will be most amenable to the realization of exchange value for these particular social markets (Malefyt and Moeran, 2003). Grant McCracken (1990) demonstrates how the consumption process has meanings that resonate from culture. For McCracken, consumption is broadly defined to include the processes by which consumer goods and services are created, bought, and used. According to McCracken, the relationship between culture and consumption is profoundly interrelated within three contexts: history, theory, and practice.

A key to being successful in the business world is through the understanding of consumer demand**,** their level of desire and their urgency to purchase a particular item or service, and how to stimulate it (Sherry, 1994). What products are consumers likely to purchase? Which are they likely to avoid, and why? Which might be modified to enhance their appeal? Some product elements affecting consumer demand (such as price, ease of use, efficacy, and attractiveness) are obvious, but others, such as the unconscious meanings consumers may associate with particular products, are less so. To obtain information on consumer demands, business anthropologists conduct ethnographic research, interviewing and observing consumers in their "natural habitats" (Hafner, 1999). The field methods they use include one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and even videotaping.

Since not all consumers are alike in any society, the market researcher usually differentiates among potential consumers by factors such as sex, generation, age, occupation, socioeconomic status, level of education, place of residence, ethnic group affiliation, and geographical context (Burkhalter, 1986). This aspect of market research is termed market segmentation. The business anthropologist attempts to understand, for example, what kinds of consumers, as distinguished by specific characteristics, would be likely to purchase a particular product, and how these consumers' expectations about the product for performance or longevity might vary (Gwynne, 2003).

As a business professor with anthropology training, the author and his students conducted a series study on cultural factors and food consumption using an anthropological approach. Their findings indicate that to understand human responses we must first understand the culture within which the consumer behavior takes place. The extent of cultural understanding and cultural awareness of the consumers also influences behavior and purchasing decisions. Buying products is a way for the consumer to gain cultural meaning as well as establish self-identities. One approach to the analysis of consumer behavior is termed cross-cultural interpreting, meaning that there are differences in cultural norms and values between countries. These differences can be best illustrated through studying food consumption. The beliefs and attitudes a culture has about

food consumption are important to the choices consumers make about food; this is particularly meaningful to the study of consumer behavior at various ethnic restaurants. Food habits and consumption represent ethnic, regional, and national identities, and differ from country to country because of cultural differences (Tian, 2007).

The British anthropologist Daniel Miller is an especially prolific scholar with numerous volumes on various aspects of consumption spanning to the present from the late 1980s. Drawing on a range of examples from Western and developing cultures, Miller offers a re-reading of contemporary society as the product of both individual and collective identity and behavior. He indicates that Marxist interpretations of the expansion in the range and number of material goods has tended to view people as estranged from the objects they produce, however massive consumption reinforces the nature of capitalism that is fragmented and individualistic. Miller, by revealing the creative potential in the relationship between people and goods has developed a more positive theory of material culture. He argues that rather than being oppressed by them, people redefine material objects to make them express themselves and their cultures by showing that everyday objects reflect not only personal tastes and attributes, but also moral principles and social ideals (Miller, 1997).

Miller connects shopping to sacrificial ritual (Miller, 1998). He notes that sacrifice has two central features – it places the sanctifier in a relationship with a transcendent entity and thereby sanctifies the former, and it marks the transition from production to consumption (e.g., first fruits sacrifice). In shopping, which usually is carried out by women, the shopper is linked through bonds of love and devotion to a family, either an existing family, or one that she hopes to have one day. It is the underlying relationship that guides the woman's purchases, which are thoughtful and thrifty. While consumer goods might be mechanisms of alienation, discrimination, or control, this case suggests that a mature anthropology does not make such judgments a priori. Just as in sacrifice, purchase of the commodity transforms it to an object of consumption from an object of production (Baba, 2006).

GLOBALIZATION, INTERNATIONAL AND CORSS-CULTURAL BUSINESS

Since the end of cold war in the late 1980s, the world and its economic structure has experienced dramatic changes. Scholars have termed this changing process as "globalization" (Daniels and Sullivan, 2009). On the other hand, the regional economic cooperation among nations that are geographically connected has become increasingly commonplace (Tian, 2009). In this emerging world of change and interrelationships, new techniques and skills for understanding, motivating, and empowering diverse employees is becoming essential. The world is made up of distinct groups; success of international business depends on an ability to effectively communicate with each on its own terms. Helping organizations examine and respond to cultural values and other dimensions provides a significant role for business anthropologists (Jordan, 2003).

Ideologically, globalization is used to describe the neoliberal form of economic globalization. From a more hand on perspective, globalization often overstates the degree to which the world is a single unit, while international recognizes that different peoples, cultures, languages, nations, borders, economies, and so on. Robertson refers to globalization as the compression of the world and the view that it can best be envisioned as a unified whole, a single place. How to function in view of profound interrelationships raise questions and suggest strategies. These issues trigger

distinct responses from different individuals and societies based on the degree to which they feel they are distinct from vs. unified with others. (Robertson, 1995)

In international business, globalization has several facets, including the globalization of markets and globalization of production (Hill, 2004).While the globalization of markets means the merging of historically distinct and separate national markets into one huge global market, the globalization of production refers to the sourcing of goods and services from locations all over the world is ready for firms to take advantage of national differences in cost and quality, the sources discussed here including factors of production such as labor, energy, raw materials, land, and capital. Whereas market liberalization basically refers to the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to international trade between countries, globalization is a more complex phenomenon that is becoming increasingly present in various domains, including economics, politics, technologies, and to anthropologists more importantly in different cultures. As markets globalize an increasing proportion of business activity transcends national borders, institutions need to help manage and regulate the global marketplace, and to promote the establishment of multinational treaties to govern the global business system (Yücel et al., 2009).

In the 1950s, anthropologist Edward T. Hall, a noted pilot business anthropologist, served as director of the U.S. State Department's "Point Four" training program, which was designed to teach technicians who would be working outside North America. Hall clearly understood the significance of the cultural influence on communication effectiveness. Hall built a career in the cross-cultural communication field and eventually wrote several seminal works well in business, in anthropology, in communication, and in many other fields (Hall, 1981; Jordan, 2003).

Hall's practice and influence in the fields of cross-cultural communication and intercultural training is monumental. He clearly understood that errors in cross-cultural communication could destroy a business deal or a peace agreement. In his first book, *The Silent Language,* he explained culture as communication as much more than merely language. Communication included nonverbal characteristics that needed to be understood in cultural context. In later books he explored the culturally different ways of conceiving space and time and their implications for business. Hall's practice in and theoretical contributions to the business communication generated great impact and others, such as Ferraro, continue Hall's work on communication in international business settings (Ferraro, 2006).

Ferraro' contribution to the international business is termed by some business anthropologists as Ferraro's model. His work examines cultural values such as individualism versus collectivism, equality versus hierarchy, tough versus tender societies, varying levels of uncertainty avoidance, and certain aspects of time, including precise versus loose reckoning of time, past, present, and future time orientations, and sequential versus synchronically aspects of time. Ferraro's work on cultural dimension of international business is one of countable texts that balance the theoretical with practical effectively enough to be used to help students gain the basic knowledge and skills for doing international business with cultural sensitivity (Tian et al., 2010).

Currently, Geert Hofstede is the best known cross cultural communication specialist. He has created a global model to help business professionals distinguish cultural differences. He work has given rise to what is called "the four-dimension of culture model" composed of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). Moreover, some researchers such as Emery and Tian with others have added one more dimension into Hofstede model called Confucian dynamism with the special intention for differentiating Chinese from Western cultural values (Emery and Tian, 2003).

Emery and Tian demonstrated that the significance of cross-cultural differences in advertising, one of important business communication formats, has become even clearer as we continue to move toward a globalized marketplace. It is important that marketing personnel should not let old stereotypes drive their advertising strategies; this is particularly important in the Asian market, as China and Taiwan become formal members of the WTO. The findings indicate that heuristics such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions are too broad to capture the detailed differences required in launching an effective advertising campaign.

While Emery and Tian's findings do not provide unequivocal recommendations for developing advertising, they do provide some general information for marketing practitioners seeking to do business in China. For example, one should consider the seven appeals (i.e., effectiveness, safety, tamed, durable, natural, nurturance and assurance, in descending order of importance). Conversely, those ten appeals (i.e., casual, distinctiveness, community, status, adventure, dear, family, untamed, magic and popular, in descending order of least important) should be avoided. It is strongly suggested the need to consider market segmentation and to consult with an expert in Chinese consumer behavior before developing ads for their market (Emery and Tian, 2003).

HOW CAN ANTHROPOLOGISTS MAKE THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS?

Although anthropologists can and have made significant contributions to the business world (Jordan, 2003), the theories and methods of this qualitative social science have not been as widely phased into business research practice as they could and should have been (Tian and Walle, 2009). The most powerful tool that business anthropologists can apply anthropological skills to make contribution is to do ethnographic study. The term ethnography means to make picture of a people. It can be juxtaposed with ethnology, the process of comparing different peoples or ways of life in the hope of discovering universal or recurring patterns, tendencies of human behavior. Put simply, ethnography is the research approach used by anthropologists when studying groups of people. Business anthropologist Malefyt reveals that technological methodologies are central to the production of branded ethnographic practices, as forms of branding and technology legitimate consumer–corporate flows of interaction. The conclusion raises awareness to the ways in which modern branding practices reconstruct anthropology in public discourse (Malefyt, 2009)

According to business anthropologist Dr. Robbie Blinkoff and his team of Context Based Research Group, one of most successful business consultation service firms by using anthropological theory and methods, ethnography involves four key tenets: *Participant Observation*, ethnographers spend time with people as they go about their daily lives, learning how they live by actually doing what they do. *Natural Setting* ethnography is conducted in the space where participants actually live, work and play, not in a separate research facility. *In Their Own Words* ethnography research findings are delivered in the words of the participants, using their language and intonation. *Holism* people's actions and thoughts are influenced, directly or indirectly, by absolutely everything in their lives. Ethnographers stay open to all potential connections. Ethnographers use many different research methods to gain insight into people, but always come back to these four core ideas (Cf. Context Based Research Group homepage http://www.contextresearch.com/context/index.cfm).

Conducting an ethnographic study is a very specific investigation that explores a circumscribed social setting. The goal of ethnographic fieldwork is to describe and analyze a set

of human behaviors that exist or existed in a specific time and place, not to generate universal theories of mankind or human behavior. This type of focused investigation has a proven value to businesses that seek to understand how people respond in the workplace, as employees, as consumers and so on (Walle, 2001). Doing ethnographic research involves a range of data-collection activities and can be placed somewhere along a continuum, stretching from the passive observer at one end to the active participant observer at the other. Participant observation involves a level of immersion that allows the researcher to be able to intellectualize what is seen and write about it convincingly. To develop a strong familiarity with the business issues being studied, ethnographers must unravel different clusters of meaning by engaging in a level of interaction that allows them to test their insights about a setting. Ultimately, ethnography is an inductive process, whose data is produced by repeated and prolonged contact between a researcher and informant, often with considerable mutual involvement in the personal lives of native participants (Tian, Lillis, and Van Marrewijk, 2010).

In recent years, researchers in business have increasingly begun to employ qualitative methods such the ethnographic method and participant observation. Marketers and consumer behavior specialists have developed ways to employ the techniques of ethnography and participant observation within the context of the marketplace. Specialists, such as John Sherry and Russell Belk among many others have demonstrated the value of doing so. This research stream, arguably the most successful example of applying qualitative methods within business research, has gained a high profile and generated great interest (Walle, 2001; Tian and Walle, 2009). More recently, business anthropologists use ethnographic methods have helped business firms to improve the business performances in many function areas, such as product design and development, consumer behavior studies, human resources management, competitive intelligence, and so on.

More recently, Malefyt (2009) sharply notices that a conjunction in the rise of branding, fast technologies, and increased corporate interest in consumers has produced new branded forms of ethnographic practices, a unique method that business anthropologists can use to make their unique contributions to the business world. For example, Hunt Corporation is a manufacturer and international marketer of consumer products. Their products targeted to home, office and educational users. Hunt was interested in expanding its shelf presence in the home office supplies and tools categories.

The business anthropologists at Context worked as a team with Hunt's design partner conducted an ethnographic study by doing fieldwork in Baltimore and Philadelphia area; they conducted a deep interview and observation of each participant's home office. They identified that there were three types of home office users with each type having very specific unmet needs and desires. Armed with this knowledge, the designer was able to produce product sketch concepts for Hunt which were targeted toward each type of home office user. In the end, Hunt selected the final concepts which will become products for the home office and marketed at mass merchandisers and office stores throughout the United States (Cf. Context Based Research Group homepage http://www.contextresearch.com/context/index.cfm). There are many examples to demonstrate that using ethnography is the best way to get closer to the consumers (Sherry, 1994; Sunderland and Denny, 2007).

CONCLUSION

In recent years, business anthropology as a sub field of anthropology and a sub field of business studies has experienced a great development and progress. The significance of business anthropology along with its unique methods and contributions to the business world has been widely recognized. The unique methodology developed by anthropologists enables them to make unique contributions to the business world. The roles that business anthropologists can play, the functions that anthropologists can have, and the contributions that anthropologists can make in the real business world are various according to the needs of individual business firms and the expertise individual business anthropologists accumulated.

Corporate cultures, knowledge management, cultural audit, organizational change, product design and development, marketing, consumer behavior, and international business studies are some areas that are particularly suitable for business anthropologists to look into and make their contributions. Business anthropologists can also work in and make their contributions to other areas, such as competitive intelligence, international business, human resources management, and operations. In short, the contributions that business anthropologists can make in the real business world are unlimited, and it is reasonable to expect that in the near future business anthropologists will become one of the most demanded professionals in the real world.

Ethnographic method provides a very powerful tool for business anthropologists to make their unique contributions. Business researchers can often benefit from doing ethnographies and the information that they can provide. Business ethnographers focus on the fact that there is often a significant difference from what people say to what they really do. By participant observation business anthropologists can reveal informal social structures and patterns of behavior that exist as well as tensions that might not be obvious at first glance. Ethnographies have been increasingly used in the business world as effective means to improve business performance and profitability.

Acknowledgement

The author gives his great thanks to the IJBA reviewers for their insightful comments and constructive suggestions to refine and revise this article.

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