RAP
Rapid Anthropological Assessment Procedures

Susan C. Scrimshaw, PhD
RAP was developed by Susan Scrimshaw and Elena Hurtado in 1983 for a United Nations University 16-country study of communities’ perspective on nutrition and primary health programs.
What is RAP?

- Field guide for using anthropological research techniques to look at health behavior and health seeking behavior from the perspectives of the community
- A toolkit of methods based on qualitative and some quantitative techniques
History of RAP

• Nutritional and epidemiological data was sometimes explained by anthropological insights

• Needed community perspectives of effectiveness of primary health care post Alma Ata declaration of health for all

• 16 country study commissioned by the United Nations University
History of RAP

- RAP was the common methodology developed by the multi-site research team.
- Method adopted by UNICEF and others and published.
- Parallel development of Rapid Rural Appraisal by Sussex rural sociologist Robert Chambers and colleagues.
Versions of RAP

• Translated into Spanish, French, Portuguese, Chinese, Arabic, and many other languages

• UNU versions published for reproductive health, diarrheal disease, epilepsy, focus groups

• Versions under development for AIDS (available on disk), water and health (Spanish)

• RAP has become a generic concept and many other versions now exist. (eg RARE, ERAP)
Techniques included in RAP

- Informal conversations
  individual
group
- In-depth ethnographic interview
  individual
- Semi-structured interviews
  focused
  community
- Focused participant observation
  open
  semi-structured
  structured
## Data Collection (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Anthropology</th>
<th>RAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Existing documents</td>
<td>• Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ethnographic interview</td>
<td>• Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participant observation</td>
<td>• Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation</td>
<td>• Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Structured interview</td>
<td>• Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Informal conversation</td>
<td>• Same / Focus groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection (2)

Traditional Anthropology

- Life histories
- Time sampling
- (Experimental design)
- Psychometric techniques
- Photography
- Video/film
- Genealogy
- Long field stay (one year is the standard)

RAP

- Brief field stay (ca. six weeks)

Rapid Anthropological Assessment Procedures
Characteristics of RAP Studies

• Based in the community
• Relatively rapid
• Focused
• Action orientated
• Not expensive

Rapid Anthropological Assessment Procedures
When to use RAP

• Before beginning a program or a survey

• To pretest aspects of a program, or to design and test educational materials

• During a program as on-going evaluation or for problem-solving

• At the conclusion of a program or a survey for final evaluation
Uses of RAP

- Program planning
- Program evaluation
- Quantitative survey planning
- Quantitative survey interpretation
- Community participatory research
## Theory & Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Anthropology</th>
<th>RAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Usually theory-driven</td>
<td>• Sometimes theory-driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sometimes problem-oriented (applied)</td>
<td>• Usually problem-oriented (applied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Combines emic &amp; etic perspectives—emphasis may vary</td>
<td>• Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Often holistic</td>
<td>• Often focused</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rapid Anthropological Assessment Procedures
Theory & Approach

Traditional Anthropology
• Long periods of data analysis (often equals time in the field)
• Long written report
• Often published
• Theory driven

RAP
• Brief period of data analysis (often equal to time in the field or briefer)
• Brief written report
• Sometimes published
• Problem solving

Rapid Anthropological Assessment Procedures
Limitations

Traditional Anthropology

• Takes too long for many programmatic needs

• Rarely permits planned cross-cultural comparative work (costly and time consuming)

• Labor intensive

RAP

• Focus limits exploratory nature of field work

• Focus and brevity give “snapshot” not rich understanding of cultural complexity

• Can be superficial

• Less likely to get data on proscribed behaviors
What have we learned?

• Used by people from varied disciplines (social work, physicians, public health workers, nurses).

• Many people around the world using the method.

• AIDS, other health problems, have brought out need.

• More quantitative/qualitative studies now done.
What have we learned?

- More team studies possible
- More multi-site studies possible
- Validity and speed valuable for health program evaluation
- A tool for community participation in research and program planning
New RAP under development

Working title: Rapid Assessment Procedures for Understanding Food and Fitness Behaviors relevant to Children’s Health

Funders: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Sprague Institute (Chicago)

Location: UIC School of Public Health