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PART I Introduction

Change continually confronts anthropologists. We study it, we teach it, and we accommodate to it in our lives. Recent change in the environment of research and employment has forced us to create appropriate responses. One contemporary response is the pursuit of a vigorous anthropology at home.

The causes and challenges of change in modern anthropology are reviewed in Chapter 1. Two major questions are identified there that have guided the development of this book and are at the forefront of modern anthropology in North America: What are the methods? and What are the issues? Questions of why we do it and what we are doing are also asked. Many answers emerge, but in the long run those endeavors that are pragmatic and efficacious will clearly stand out above the others.

Anthropology at home is not a fad; neither is it a stopgap for unemployed Ph.D.s. It is, instead, a well-established branch of anthropology that has deep roots and a strong heritage. It links theory and action, past experience and present needs into a strong and vital aspect of the profession. It is contemporary and issue oriented, and it is here to stay.

Chapter 2 epitomizes part of the innovative quality of this anthropology at home. John Aguilar addresses the ongoing debate about the relative objectivity of insiders who study their own society. His method of exegesis is ethnographic. He examines both sides of the argument, its context and its manifestations, and he demonstrates keen insight and objectivity in his role as both an anthropologist and an insider-researcher.

In a telling point addressed to those who favor as well as those who disfavor doing anthropology at home, Aguilar notes that ethnocentrism exists both inside and out. The emic and the etic perspectives each have their faults. Ultimately, just as the insider must somehow seek distance to obtain objectivity, so the outsider must seek intimacy in order to understand. The argument does not stop there, but will doubtless continue indefinitely. Meanwhile, we strive to pursue our craft at home, as insiders to one degree or another.

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1 On anthropology "at home"

DONALD A. MESSERSCHMIDT

In the past, it was considered a requisite and proper rite of passage for fledgling anthropologists – or "baby anthropologists" as Margaret Mead once disparagingly put it (Maday 1975:41) – to leave the comfortable nest of our own social upbringing and brave the trials and tribulations of study in other lands, or at least among people other than our own. Research elsewhere, preferably abroad, was the norm, the custom, an established tradition of the profession. As Cassell has noted, this was the "anthropological ideal," which in addition to establishing certain barriers to the entry of our profession, set up a "classic relationship" by which we created and perpetuated "a gulf, a social chasm between those who study and those who are studied" (1977:412).

Today, few members of our profession any longer believe that becoming proficient in anthropology requires the classic, exotic, other-cultural experience, although few would seriously question its efficacy. Wolcott (Chapter 17) suggests, for example, that whereas cross-cultural research experience is still recommended for the individual anthropologist, "ethnographic research carried out in one's *own* society may be the sine qua non for anthropology itself" (emphasis added).[1]

Some may wonder, however, if we can be anthropologists in the traditional sense of the term if we study only our own society. Are we not somehow grossly distorting the standard definition of anthropology? Some also wonder how we can do anthropology adequately in the context of modern and familiar environs at home. Do we possess the requisite objectivity, they ask, and are we not limited by methods and theories derived, in the main, from the study of essentially premodern peoples elsewhere?

If our basic concern is with archaic or primitive society, as Diamond (1974), Lévi-Strauss (1963:101 ff.), and others suggest, then pursuing anthropology at home in North America seems to be a contradiction of terms. But if anthropology is the study of human and social conditions broadly conceived – in modern as well as archaic society – then we have a definite role to play here and now.

Our subject has always been people, culture, social structure, and community in the widest variety of places, times, conditions, and expressions. Our methods have always

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been both innovative and eclectic, borrowing from the past and from allied sciences and humanities to meet the demands of the present. Our goal has always been to enhance understanding of the human condition. Certainly, then, issues of life in contemporary, industrial societies in North America are as important and as revealing of human nature as those of the past and of so-called primitive societies elsewhere in the world.

To understand and appreciate better the substance and the tremendous potential of contemporary anthropological research such as ours, and in an attempt to formulate a framework for the study and practice of this variety of anthropology, certain questions about anthropology at home in North America need to be discussed. What are its issues? What are its methods? What is it we do, and why? Is it good? What is it called? And why write about it? Each of these issues is examined in the following pages of this chapter and throughout the book.

An anthropology of issues

On several occasions in recent years, I have heard elder anthropologists allude to a so-called golden age of anthropology, when researchers had a wide range of choice for study and employment. It is widely believed today that the golden age is gone, particularly as we find ourselves closed out of foreign societies and as we see many newly minted Ph.D.s going jobless in the academic world for which they have been groomed. On the other hand, however, many anthropologists – academic and nonacademic alike – find themselves practicing anthropology quite comfortably outside of the confines of academia in areas of planning and evaluation, in government and industry, and in schools and communes under conditions with which many of us would never have dreamed of becoming involved as recently as a decade or two ago. Anthropologists are becoming attuned more than ever before to nontraditional research and work opportunities, and the directions some of our more innovative and aggressive colleagues and students are now taking reflect important new directions for the profession. It is a change that relies on our time-honored and traditional methods and perspectives as a discipline but that is forcing us to focus on exciting, new, and different sorts of issues.

If coming home is the process, then coming to grips with social issues at home is the substance of the exciting changes we are pursuing. Many of us are turning directly to the issues that confront our own people. Urban-born anthropologists now attend to urban social concerns in business, industry, housing, education, and government. American Indian anthropologists are working on reservations and with urban Indian problems. Chicano anthropologists are helping to mitigate the social and economic plight of many Hispanics. Feminist anthropologists are engaged in women's political movements and in problems of sexism and social action. More than ever before we are staying home, where we study communal living, neighboring and cooperation, health and healing, old age and alienation, bureaucracy and political process, social relations and economics, ecology and social environments, local–federal relations, school–community issues, and much more. We are contracted for the short term or hired for long-term studies. We do needs assessment. We plan, design, implement, evaluate, report, and advise. What we do are the analogs of the traditional anthropologists' studies of kinship and community; alliance,

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economics, and exchange; political process and sociocultural change, as they find expression in today's technobureaucratic world.

We are witnessing and participating in the efflorescence of a new sort of anthropology – an anthropology of issues. This anthropology of issues is more than applied anthropology (usually and sometimes inaccurately defined only in terms of intervention and directed change), and it is more than theoretical (or pure, or abstract) anthropology. Rather, it implies a unique and indivisible link between them. More and more these days, anthropologists are combining pure and applied approaches in their professional and research endeavors. It now appears that we have arrived at a point well beyond the usual theory–practice dichotomy that has so long divided our discipline. For too long we have pitted an older, general anthropology against the study and practice of social-action anthropology. What seems to be emerging now is what Bastide (1973) calls "applied anthropology as a theoretical science of practice." He defines it as "a branch of anthropology" not simply oriented toward the rather standard approaches of planned acculturation or toward any reforming or revolutionary action (in the Marxist sense of *praxis*), but an anthropology that implies cooperation between action and planning. Looking back, Bronislaw Malinowski said as much in his well-known article on practical anthropology over half a century ago (Malinowski 1929). It is an anthropology that analyzes action and planning much as traditional anthropology analyzed the major topics that fill every introductory cultural textbook: kinship and descent, marriage and family, ecologic and economic systems, power and politics, religions and world view (see Bastide 1973:180–181, Angrosino 1976, Chambers 1979).

The opportunities and challenges of this form of anthropology beckon us home to apply our skills and our perspectives to the issues of our own society. It focuses our attention on the methods and theories of our profession as well as on the pressing problems around us, on their nature and on actions to deal with them. There are new lessons to be learned from the anthropology of issues, new insights to be gained into the human condition, about survival and improvement of the species. It should be stressed that this impetus is not singularly American: It has worldwide manifestations and implications as our profession comes of age by coming to grips with some of the signal issues of our time.

All the contributors to this book are engaged, in one way or another, in the anthropology of issues, and it is fast becoming a major force in the profession. It is a fully professional position that is concerned with more than the application of anthropological knowledge and skill and with more than the mere generation of social theory. It is a joining of theory and practice in a way that "does not prevent [us] from making a basic contribution to general anthropology on the one hand, [nor] to social practice on the other" (Bastide 1973:181).

The range of issues for study and the kinds of opportunities for employment in our modern society are very large, and we have only begun to scratch their surface. In turning homeward, we are abandoning neither our methodological heritage nor our holistic perspective. Rather, we are building on them with confidence and innovation. In this, we may be witnessing our profession's revitalization movement; we may be on the verge of a new "golden age" in anthropology.

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Methods for anthropology at home

Roger Bastide has stated that the new anthropology uses "exactly the same techniques of approach" as the old (1973:181). Not everyone agrees. One of the overriding questions that unites the contributors to this volume is that of which methods, strategies, styles, and techniques can be used in the application of anthropology to the study of modern society. Each author was asked to consider whether or not, for instance, our profession's many traditions, developed in the study of less complex tribal and peasant societies, have utility and relevance in studying today's complex and highly industrialized society. This question has been the focus for debate for as long as anthropologists have been returning from, or turning away from, doing research in traditional, exotic, "primitive" or "other" cultures elsewhere; that is, for as long as we have been doing research among our own kind.

On the one hand, some social scientists are skeptical about the ability or success of anthropology's attempts to devise theory or method sufficient to the task of studying complex contemporary society. Gillin, for example, expressed concern over twenty years ago that as anthropologists "we still lack an adequate theoretical analysis of the modern national system from the cultural, as distinguished from the sociological point of view" (1957:27). Yehudi Cohen echoes Gillin's concern, arguing that "the concepts, paradigms, and methods developed in the study of tribal and peasant groups are inadequate, if not misleading, for the study of industrial societies" (Cohen 1977:389; see also Kushner 1969:80, Spicer 1974:11).

In an essay, "The Concept of Archaism in Anthropology," Lévi-Strauss is outspokenly critical of our attempts:

> It is striking to note that, in losing awareness of its particular subject matter [the primitive],[2] American anthropology is permitting a disintegration of the method – too narrowly empirical, but precise and scrupulous – with which it was endowed by its founders, in favor of a social metaphysics which is often simplistic and which uses dubious techniques of investigation. [Lévi-Strauss 1963:102]

On the other hand, some anthropologists maintain and have demonstrated quite adequately that many of our methodological and theoretical traditions are directly applicable to modern and complex research settings (Despres 1968).[3] Proponents of this viewpoint say that "anthropology does not have to perish and be made over anew in order to study complex society" (Weaver and White 1972:124).

It is significant that not one of the authors in this book advocates a complete break with the theoretical roots and methodological traditions of our profession.[4] Rather, some of them demonstrate that our heritage is sufficiently rich and varied to find application in entirely new settings and in the face of challenging new issues. They maintain that many of our standard approaches to research are capable of being used effectively to address some unique research situations and contemporary social issues. In this volume, for example, Aamodt and Molgaard and Byerly use ethnoscience techniques in their studies of community health and healing practices. Graham demonstrates the continuing utility of network analysis in her study of social interaction in two mining towns. Bennett and Kohl rely on the precepts of cultural ecology to guide their research. And all of the contributors demonstrate the importance of maintaining the traditions of the participant-

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observer method, albeit in some novel ways, as in Zimmer's combination of participation and consultation in his study of urban food cooperatives.

Some contributors demonstrate, equally convincingly, that old ways can be successfully combined with new and different methods, some of which may be borrowed directly from other social sciences. For example, as Bennett and Kohl developed their longitudinal study in rural Canada, their anthropological theory and method "adopted and adapted a variety of analytical and theoretical tools from a variety of fields: agricultural economics, resource management and conservation, climatology, demography, rural sociology, agronomy, hydraulic engineering . . . " (Chapter 7).

Some authors write primarily of the related issues of research style and role, place and time, and of opportunities and responsibilities for research at home. Gwaltney portrays his entry and his rapport with fellow blacks in an urban ghetto with a measure of perception and sensitivity available only to indigenes. Wolcott, contrasting research Here (at home) and There (abroad), notes relatively more flexibility in choice of subject and in the availability of time for research in the familiar setting of home. His 1977 study of a complex suburban education system is a superb example of how to adapt traditional methods (observation and interview) and hypothesis (about moiety structure) to contemporary research problems. Serber, Feldman, and I all stress serious restrictions that may be felt in situations wherein a power differential exists between researchers and the bureaucrats they study or with whom they work. Sieber shows us the diverse strategies necessary for entry, rapport building, and data collection in three different urban school settings.

Not surprisingly, team research and multi- or interdisciplinary approaches are used to solve some of the problems created by the complexity of research in contemporary settings. That complexity and a need for a strategy of cooperation with which to address the problems of research inherent in modern society have long been recognized (for example, in Gillin 1949, Lévi-Strauss 1963, Sirjamaki 1971). In this volume the problems and solution to problems posed by working in teams and by employing multiple disciplinary perspectives are exemplified by Bennett and Kohl, Bohannan, Light and Kleiber, Molgaard and Byerly, and, indirectly, by Hennigh, Houghton, Feldman, and me in government research (see also Beals 1976, Belshaw 1976). Missing from all these discussions is any thorough discussion of the relationship between anthropology and sociology, but perhaps that is because we are still too busy trying to get our own act together in this genre to confront openly the thorny issue of how we differ from our sister discipline at home.

In most instances, the contributors discuss research at home with rich and insightful examples based on their own personal and professional experiences. They demonstrate the successful use of old as well as new concepts, paradigms, and methods in the pursuit of the craft of anthropology of issues. Perhaps the most important aspect of developing a methodology for anthropology at home is that it is often highly inventive in the sense that Barnett (1953) expounded a quarter century ago: We bring with us experiences and certain knowledge from the past, and, when confronted by the stimuli of present needs, we innovate. Innovation is defined as "any thought, behavior, or thing that is new because it is qualitatively different from existing forms" (Barnett 1953:7). It is innovation

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that gives our profession its strength and character. Innovations are the building blocks of the paradigm shifts by which scientists respond creatively to new demands made upon their science, and by which they maintain its resiliency and its relevance (Kuhn 1967).

A new native anthropology

In the pursuit of anthropology at home, the contributors to this book and many others (see the Bibliography) have demonstrated considerable sensitivity and imagination in choice of topics. Much of the anthropology at home has attracted us to the study of our own kind – kinfolk, neighbors, and associates in social and professional life. Anthropologists at home do not have to consider whether or not to make a commitment to "go native" in the research setting, for in many instances each of us is already one among the natives under study. According to Freilich's definition of "natives," our "speech, dress, eating and sleeping habits, interactions, social relations, and personal identification all . . . approximate community norms" (1970: 2). But no longer do we have to try hard to become like the natives. For many of us, the communities and the groups we study are intimately familiar; quite clearly, we are the natives. (Note, however, that Molgaard and Byerly, in Chapter 11, question this assumption.) Many of the people we study are those with whom we most closely identify: people of our ethnic group or subculture; people with our same social class, history, and traditions; our own language, color, and sex; as well as people within the institutional and bureaucratic centers of power with which we are all familiar and with which we cope daily.

In this volume the extent of relative "insidedness" and "identity" between researcher and subjects is best conceived of as a continuum from virtual oneness to a marginal nearness. Four of the contributors are closely identified with their subjects: Gwaltney as an urban black among his own folk, Aamodt as a Norwegian-American woman among her Wisconsin kinspeople, and Light and Kleiber as women studying a Canadian feminist health collective.

At the other end of the continuum are those contributors who are in most cases the relative equals of their subjects in social background and minority or majority identity but who are nonetheless unable to breach professional, philosophical, or subtle class boundaries to identify closely with their subjects. Molgaard and Byerly, describing research with a philosophically distinct counterculture commune, and Serber, working in the bureaucratic environment of two state insurance commissions, demonstrate this problem.

Somewhere in between these two points on the continuum fall most of the rest of the contributors. Hennigh identifies himself as a key informant in his rural Oregon community study. Graham, the anthropologist-spouse of a mine company employee, studies company towns in Arizona. Bohannan and his fellow researchers are urban Americans studying the elderly in San Diego. In my own three-year study of a Wyoming frontier school district, I describe my initial identification as a kindred soul, a fellow frontiersman. Sieber is an urban Brownstoner among fellow brownstone dwellers in one of the three urban schools he studied. Zimmer describes and analyzes San Francisco food cooperatives, with which he worked as a consultant.

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Other contributors identify to one degree or another with the various subjects of their research, but their contributions tend to focus on issues somewhat removed from their personal or social identities. Feldman discusses problems of contract research in Alaska. Houghton describes the critical issue of how to communicate with the staff of a federal agency in rural Nevada. Wolcott compares personal styles of conducting research at home in the United States and away from home in Africa and Asia. Aguilar, in the book's major think piece, discusses the pros and cons of insider research.

How much we can claim to be true insiders in this sort of research venture at home is highly questionable. As Aguilar points out, the anthropologist's social identity as a professional, itself a class distinction, may make it impossible to identify fully with the subjects of our research. (Bailey [1977], however, has even accomplished this, as an academician studying fellow academicians.)

How native and how strange is the social scientist in the typical at-home research situation? Constraints on research in one's own society may vary considerably from what is normally experienced by the privileged stranger in societies other than his or her own. We often glibly assume that as anthropologists in foreign tribal or peasant societies, perceived as strangers, we can be excused for all sorts of misunderstandings, improprieties and insensitivities to local codes of etiquette. But do these excuses still hold for anthropologists at home? I think not.

Sayles (1978:211) cautions anthropologists that "personality differences and diverse cultural values demand an openness that is often more difficult to achieve in one's own culture than in another." Perhaps the most reasonable approach for determining what it is like to be inside a particular culture – be it a culture of power or of the oppressed, our own or someone else's – is to let the native informants speak as much for themselves as possible, as demonstrated in the contributions of Zimmer, Gwaltney, Light and Kleiber, and Bennett and Kohl.

The rationale

Recent commentators tend to agree that there are many intertwined reasons for the current upsurge in anthropological activity at home. Five reasons emerge from the summary insights of Aguilar (Chapter 2) and Hayano (1979) on this question. Four of them – funding, exclusion, competition, and specialization – reflect a concern for employment. The fifth reason, efficacy, is far more important in the long run.

Funding is presently a serious issue for all scientific research endeavors. Money for research at home and abroad has dwindled significantly in recent years. Just as the cost of everything has increased and budget priorities have changed, so the cost for scientific research, including the social sciences, has been critically reexamined and drastically cut by our parliamentarians and funding agencies. Employment opportunities have suffered accordingly.

Exclusion is a second problem many of us confront. Some newly independent countries, former colonies, simply do not want us and have devised exclusory policies to keep us at bay, or far away. As Hayano (1979) notes, we no longer have the protection of the colonial authorities to assist us. And those many new nation states that have not opted to exclude us have nonetheless put restrictions and qualifications on our work that make it

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less than attractive except to the very dedicated, the very favored, the very concerned, or, as noted below, their very own (see Nash and Wintrob 1972).

Competition on the home front is a third problem. North American anthropology is now witnessing an infusion of well-trained minority and foreign-born social science professionals, working in areas that were formerly the research monopoly of predominantly white, male Euro-American anthropologists. That monopoly is fast disappearing, and a healthy spirit of competition is being felt in its place. Women, ethnics, and non-Euro-Americans are entering the profession in increasing numbers. As Aguilar points out, the rise of ethnic study programs in North American colleges and universities has greatly encouraged interest among ethnic anthropologists to study their own kind. Many anthropologists place a high priority today on studying their own (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974, Fahim 1977, Hayano 1979, Fahim et al. 1980). Gwaltney (Chapter 4), for example, speaks directly to the responsibility he feels as a black anthropologist "to augment the current minimal body of native anthropology" and to help incorporate "traditionally ignored perspectives into theory building." Other observers have noted the biases of traditional anthropology and have called for a new approach, a "reorientation of anthropology so that it studies *humankind*" (Reiter 1975:16, original emphasis) instead of some types of people to the exclusion of others.

Specialization in anthropological inquiry is a fourth concern. Specialization in such areas as urban studies, medical anthropology, aging, education, women's and ethnic studies, law and social impact assessment and analysis has emerged, and the students of these subdisciplines have begun looking for (and have been sought out for) research on problems closer to home. This has led "many graduate students to do at least some predoctoral fieldwork in their own backyards" (Hayano 1979:99), and many have opted to stay there and make a career of it. Even some long-established professionals who began on traditional research abroad are turning to the anthropology of issues at home.

In this volume, some contributors have narrowed the scope of research and others have joined two or more special interests, or methodologies, together. Aamodt, for example, is a nurse-anthropologist who has concentrated on neighboring behavior among her own kinspeople. Bohannan describes a project in urban aging. Light and Kleiber combine women's studies, urban anthropology, and a study of a health-delivery system. Graham applies a network methodology to the community-study genre.

Each of these concerns has had its effect on employment (or survival as some see it). The sociocultural setting in North America has changed dramatically in the past two decades, and that change has drastically affected our discipline's self-image. The crisis-ridden social and economic concerns of the 1960s and 1970s – racial injustice, war, poverty, energy, the environment, runaway inflation, and worldwide expression of anti-American sentiment – are reflected in new American social policies and new value orientations and in a demand for a clearer definition and explanation of who we are, where we have come from, and where we are headed as the unique plurality of peoples that we are. All of this change has radically altered the role of the academician in general and of the social scientist in particular.

Goldschmidt calls the change in anthropology a "crisis of jobs" and the change in American society that it reflects a "crisis of culture," both of which reflect a "crisis of

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values" (1977:300; see also Lévi-Strauss 1963:102). Herein is the case material for a more pragmatic anthropology. "Because it is a crisis in culture, it particularly needs anthropological examination," Goldschmidt concludes (1977:300). The society, the government, and the anthropologists have all responded. New opportunities are opening up in which to apply anthropology and to probe and help solve some of our social and economic ills and issues. The opportunities are legion, but they require aggressive and insightful recycling of old tools and research techniques; in some instances they suggest the need for a major overhaul of our discipline's approach.

The concern with jobs and joblessness in anthropology is widespread. Our professional editorialists are continually discussing and bemoaning the problem, as recent commentary and correspondence in the *Anthropology Newsletter* attest (Nelson 1977, Kay 1977, Thompson 1977, Angrosino et al. 1977, Hicks 1978). Even the general public has been apprised of our problems through the medium of the popular press. *Time* magazine's article, "Studying the American Tribe," for example, provides a candid assessment of the challenges and the reality of the anthropological dilemma:

> When two well-dressed strangers turned up at a sleek apartment building on Chicago's Gold Coast, the doorman called the cops. The men explained they were anthropologists from the University of Chicago, anxious to study rich families. "The policeman couldn't believe it," said one of the men. "He looked first for my *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, then for my vacuum cleaner and then asked me what was the gimmick."
>
> The gimmick is that anthropologists, after decades of following Margaret Mead to Samoa and Bronislaw Malinowski to the Trobriand Islands, have staked out new territory – the nonexotic cities and rural byways of the U.S. . . .
>
> The golden age of anthropology, as many older scholars wistfully call it, is now over. Increased concern with domestic social problems is part of the reason for the turn away from glamorous globetrotting. So is the growing shortage of primitive peoples, many of them now part of politically touchy developing nations which have set severe restrictions on visiting anthropologists. These days a candidate had better have outstanding credentials, the ability to prove he is not with the CIA, eagerness to share his findings with the host country and a total absence of subtle colonial attitudes. [*Time*, Dec. 23, 1974:54]*

In a direct reference to the employment problem (subtitled "No Jobs"), the *Time* article goes on to say:

> Just at a time when foreign opportunities are decreasing, the profession is turning out Ph.D.s at a record rate . . . Traditionally, 90% of anthropologists return to the campus, but now colleges are expected to be able to employ only 25% of American anthropologists by 1990 . . . In an interview . . . [Margaret] Mead charged that anthropologists are producing "academic versions of themselves and aren't oriented to things that need to be done in this world. They have spent too much time discussing how many cross-cousins could dance on the head of a pin."
>
> Said former A.A.A. [American Anthropological Association] President George Foster: "Unless we are able to train people to do new kinds of research and break down our false pride, we will wither on the vine." [*Time*, Dec. 23, 1974:54–55]

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