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0521431883 - Research Strategies in Human Biology: Field and Survey Studies

Edited by G. W. Lasker and C. G. N. Mascie-Taylor

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This book is about doing research, not about the results obtained. Those engaged on their first research may have had plenty of preparation about the techniques and results of prior research related to their proposed study, but may have limited knowledge of the actual strategies employed, or pitfalls encountered, by others who have conducted successful field and survey studies.

In this book, a number of researchers with experience of working on problems including environmental stresses, population genetics, parasitic vectors and vital records, describe obstacles encountered and successful strategies used in their own studies and by those of others. One learns to do research by trial and error, but accounts by experienced investigators can supplement what one learns from mentors and fellow students.

It is hoped that this book will prove helpful to biological anthropologists and will have applicability in related research pursuits.

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Research strategies in human biology: field and survey studies

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521431880

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First published 1993

This digitally printed first paperback version 2005

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN-13 978-0-521-43188-0 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-43188-3 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-01909-5 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-01909-5 paperback

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Preface

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In most sciences a sort of apprentice relationship to a teacher helps span this gap. In biological anthropology, however, the problem of becoming an independent investigator may be exacerbated by the loneliness of field work far from one's university and the support of mentors and other fellow researchers there. Thus preparation for research of this kind may benefit from accounts about doing research by a number of authors with various kinds of research experiences. A few representative examples have been selected to illustrate the range of studies. To increase further the number of points covered, brief boxes with further examples from other studies are interpreted with the text.

This is not a methods book with details on how to do measurements and other procedures. Such methods, whether long-standing well-standardized anthropometry or new techniques devised for special purposes, are usually presented in the 'methods' sections of research reports, but the problem of research strategies, the subject of this work, is often omitted. It is hoped that a book on this aspect may prove helpful to biological anthropologists and have some applicability in related research pursuits by others.

We thank our co-editors of Cambridge Studies in Biological Anthropology and the staff for the biological sciences at Cambridge University Press for help and encouragement, and anonymous critics for concrete suggestions.

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