Current Anthropology

Engaged Anthropology: Diversity and Dilemmas

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Wenner-Gren Symposium Supplement 2

by Leslie C. Aiello

Engaged Anthropology: Diversity and Dilemmas grew out of a Wenner-Gren-sponsored workshop titled "The Anthropologist as Social Critic: Working toward a More Engaged Anthropology" held at the foundation headquarters in New York City, January 22–25, 2008 (fig. 1). The workshop was organized by Setha M. Low (Graduate Center, City University of New York) and Sally Engle Merry (New York University). Both Low and Merry have had long-term interests in engaged anthropology, and this was one of the leading themes of Low's presidency of the American Anthropological Association (2007–2009). The Wenner-Gren-sponsored meeting led to an AAA Presidential Symposium of the same title held at the 107th annual meeting in November 2008. The overall theme of the AAA meetings that year was "Inclusion, Collaboration, and Engagement."

The major focus of Low and Merry's Wenner-Gren workshop, subsequent AAA Presidential Symposium, and current supplementary *CA* issue is the history and nature of engaged anthropology, its expansion and growth in the United States and abroad, and the dilemmas it raises. Low and Merry stress that the major contribution of this volume is to illustrate the breadth of forms of engagement. In their words, this extends "from basic commitment to our informants, to sharing and support with the communities with which we work, to teaching and public education, to social critique in academic and public forums, to more commonly understood forms of engagement such as collaboration, advocacy, and activism" (Low and Merry 2010, in this issue). Among the dilemmas that remain unresolved are the ethics of intervention, the appropriateness of critique given the anthropologist's position, and the hazards of working with powerful government and military organizations.

Engagement has been a continuing interest of the Wenner-Gren Foundation. One of the first meetings organized by the foundation was *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth* (Thomas 1956). This was a pioneering anthropological initiative on environmental issues involving 70 international and interdisciplinary scholars who were selected for their common interest and curiosity about the human impact on the earth.

Among many other Wenner-Gren meetings dealing with various aspects of engaged anthropology are the following: *The Teaching of Anthropology* (Mandelbaum, Lasker, and Albert 1963); *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries* (Fahim 1982); *The Sex Division of Labor, Development, and Women's Status* (Leacock and Safa 1986; Safa and Leacock 1981); *The Time of AIDS: Social Analysis, Theory, and Method* (Herdt and Lindenbaum 1992); *Embedding Ethics* (Meskell and Pels 2005); and *Corporate Lives: New Perspectives on the Social Life of the Corporate Form* (Partridge, Welker, and Hardin, forthcoming).

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Richard Fox, the Wenner-Gren president at that time, organized three meetings on issues of public concern. "Suffering and Recovery," held September 17–20, 2002, focused on issues of human wounding and suffering, as well as healing and reconciliation. "Heritage and Politics," held May 9–12, 2003, aimed to evaluate anthropology's capacity through basic research to make important interventions in public issues through a specific focus on heritage. "Anthropology Put to Work/Anthropology That Works?" held May 19–22, 2005, focused on the ways in which global forces, structural changes in academia and in the labor market, and the desire of anthropologists to engage in the world have led to a transformation in the discipline (Field and Fox 2007). Fox hoped to clarify the actual ways the discipline was contributing and adapting to global realities and demonstrate how younger scholars were already putting anthropology to work.

One of the most recent Wenner-Gren Foundation programs in the area of engaged anthropology is the Osmundsen Initiative supplement. This funding program provides additional financial support to Wenner-Gren grantees who demonstrate the engagement of their research with broader social or intellectual issues and how their work exhibits the unique perspective anthropology brings to understanding contemporary concerns.

Information about the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Sym-

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Figure 1. Participants in the symposium "The Anthropologist as Social Critic: Working toward a More Engaged Anthropology." Seated from left: Kit Davis, Sally Merry, Setha Low, Ida Susser, Norma González. Standing from left: Barbara Rose Johnston, Victoria Malkin, Jonathan Spencer, John Jackson, Merrill Singer, Martha Lincoln, Alan Smart, Helen Siu, Signe Howell, María Teresa Sierra, Kamran Ali, Michael Herzfeld, Leslie Aiello. Not pictured: Kamari Clarke.

posium and Workshop program, and the Osmundsen Initiative can be found on the foundation's Web site (http://www.wennergren.org/). The foundation is always looking for innovative symposium topics and encourages anthropologists to contact the foundation with their ideas for future Wenner-Gren-sponsored and Wenner-Gren-organized meetings.

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Engaged Anthropology: Diversity and Dilemmas

An Introduction to Supplement 2

by Setha M. Low and Sally Engle Merry

As a discipline, anthropology has increased its public visibility in recent years with its growing focus on engagement. Although the call for engagement has elicited responses in all subfields and around the world, this special issue focuses on engaged anthropology and the dilemmas it raises in U.S. cultural and practicing anthropology. Within this field, the authors distinguish a number of forms of engagement: (1) sharing and support, (2) teaching and public education, (3) social critique, (4) collaboration, (5) advocacy, and (6) activism. They show that engagement takes place during fieldwork; through applied practice; in institutions such as Cultural Survival, the Institute for Community Research, and the Hispanic Health Council; and as individual activists work in the context of war, terrorism, environmental injustice, human rights, and violence. A close examination of the history of engaged anthropology in the United States also reveals an enduring set of dilemmas, many of which persist in contemporary anthropological practice. These dilemmas were raised by the anthropologists who attended the Wenner-Gren workshop titled "The Anthropologist as Social Critic: Working toward a More Engaged Anthropology," January 22–25, 2008. Their papers, many of which are included in this collection, highlight both the expansion and growth of engaged anthropology and the problems its practitioners face. To introduce this collection of articles, we discuss forms of engaged anthropology, its history, and its ongoing dilemmas.

The importance of developing an engaged anthropology that addresses public issues (Lamphere 2004; Rappaport 1993) has been the subject of numerous articles and books written in an effort to move engagement closer to the center of the discipline (Bennett 1966; Checker 2009; Eriksen 2006; Forman 1993; Hale 2006; Lamphere 2004; Patterson 2001; Rappaport 1993; Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and van Willigen 2006; Sanford and Angel-Ajani 2006; Sanjek 2004; Schensul and Schensul 1978; Smith 1999). Some argue that anthropology has been engaged from its inception, because early anthropological knowledge was developed to solve human problems as well as those of colonial administration (Bennett 1996; Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and van Willigen 2006). Others focus on engagement as a politically conscious critical perspective that flourished from the 1930s through the 1970s and focused on social inequality and political economic critique (Berreman

1968; Patterson 2001; Roseberry 2002; Silverman 2007). The call for engagement has enlisted anthropologists as varied as those who argue that anthropology requires a rethinking of its methods and modes of writing to create a postcolonial relationship to its subject to those committed to finding a nonimperialist political stance to those working to formulate a new way to work collaboratively rather than hierarchically with communities. All of these forms of engagement contribute to a rich panorama of anthropological work in the public sphere.

In this article, we endeavor to provide an overview of the scope of engaged anthropology, including its major approaches and its historical development. Given the rapid emergence of engaged anthropology in the last two decades as well as the long-standing interest in such work in anthropology's history, it is impossible to do justice to the entire field. To name any scholars or practices risks leaving out others doing equally important work. However, we think it is valuable to try to trace where engaged anthropology has been and where it is now. Even though we used as wide a net as possible, our reach is inevitably limited. Others would organize and sort the field differently than we did. This is not the last word on engaged anthropology, but it aspires to open

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up the discussion, to show its breadth and variety. We deal only with social and cultural anthropology and to some extent practicing anthropology. There are significant forms of engagement in biological anthropology, such as the work of forensic anthropology; work in archeology around many issues, including repatriation; and linguistic anthropology, such as efforts to deal with the disappearance of languages. These issues are beyond the scope of this article and the collection of essays that follow. While the articles in this collection make some effort to deal with distinct national traditions, there are many more than those we were able to include. We seek to organize and systematize engaged anthropology primarily as a way to bring it, in as many of its forms and activities as possible and with its ambiguities and challenges, into greater visibility.

American anthropology's long tradition of speaking about crucial issues in contemporary society—exemplified by Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Franz Boas—is still reflected in the work anthropologists do. Now they work in fields of critical importance to contemporary public debate, from the nature of scientific knowledge and communication to the way global economic and political forces are decimating the life of forest dwellers and villagers. Anthropologists "study up," study globally, and study major institutions such as law, medicine, urban planning, and education. In these fields, the special perspective of anthropology—its focus on the microsocial situation framed by macroeconomic and political forces; its examination of the way social situations are made meaningful through discourse, symbols, and language; and its analysis of the small site's embeddedness in larger structures of power—is its unique contribution. In comparison with the growing tendency to understand behavior in broad, comparative, and statistical terms, anthropology insists on the importance of context, history, and particularity. Personally, the reason we are interested in engaged anthropology is that we are committed to an anthropological practice that respects the dignity and rights of all humans and has a beneficent effect on the promotion of social justice.

As a discipline, anthropology has pursued many paths toward public engagement on social issues. These avenues include (1) locating anthropology at the center of the public policy-making process, (2) connecting the academic part of the discipline with the wider world of social problems, (3) bringing anthropological knowledge to the media's attention, (4) becoming activists concerned with witnessing violence and social change, (5) sharing knowledge production and power with community members, (6) providing empirical approaches to social assessment and ethical practice, and (7) linking anthropological theory and practice to create new solutions. These are all important initiatives and contribute to the field's public presence. Melissa Checker's (2009) recent article offers a succinct review of the global problems that anthropologists are addressing in the areas of (1) war and peace; (2) climate change; (3) natural, industrial, and development-induced disaster recovery; (4) human rights; (5)

health disparities; and (6) racial understanding, politics, and equity in the United States. She argues that the discipline is on the threshold of a new era in which anthropological expertise, activism, theory, and knowledge is being disseminated widely and freely through new technologies as well as through news media, journal publications, and institution-sponsored reports. The authors are indebted to her for providing this overview of anthropological engagement and note that its publication in *American Anthropologist* indicates engaged anthropology's coming of age.

We focus on the considerable progress that has been made in bringing engaged anthropology to public awareness as a discipline within U.S. cultural and practicing anthropology. It is clear that the call for engagement has been addressed in all subfields and within a global context, but these areas are beyond the scope of this article. Within this more circumscribed sphere, we argue that there are a number of forms of engagement: (1) sharing and support, (2) teaching and public education, (3) social critique, (4) collaboration, (5) advocacy, and (6) activism. This engagement takes place during fieldwork; through applied practice in institutions such as Cultural Survival, the Institute for Community Research, and the Hispanic Health Council; and as individual activists work in the context of war, terrorism, environmental injustice, violence, and human rights (Hale 2006; Kirsch 2002; Sanford and Angel-Ajani 2006; Scheper-Hughes 1995; Speed 2006).

A close examination of the history of engaged anthropology in the United States, however, also reveals an enduring set of dilemmas, many of which persist in contemporary work. After exploring the history of engaged anthropology and the current state of practice, we discuss some of the enduring challenges it poses. These dilemmas were raised by the anthropologists who attended the Wenner-Gren workshop "The Anthropologist as Social Critic: Working toward a More Engaged Anthropology," January 22–25, 2008. Their papers, many of which are included in this collection, highlight both the expansion and growth of engaged anthropology and the problems facing its practitioners. Some of the articles consider the position of anthropology in other countries to shed light on the distinctive situation of anthropology in the United States. As an introduction to this collection of articles, we discuss the forms of engaged anthropology outlined above, the history of engaged anthropology's development, and the dilemmas engaged anthropology continues to pose for anthropology. As we trace out the dilemmas and efforts to overcome them, we provide ideas for how the discipline should move forward in its work of engagement. By way of conclusion, a number of remaining barriers to engaged practice are identified and briefly discussed.

The History of Engaged Anthropology in the United States

A critical and engaged anthropology has always existed in the United States, even since the earliest professional studies dur-

ing Reconstruction (Burawoy 2005; Patterson 2001; Textor 2005). In 1870, the first director of the Bureau of Ethnology and the Geological Survey, John W. Powell, testified before Congress about the genocide of native peoples following the building of the railroad and westward expansion (Patterson 2001; see also Vincent 1994). Before World War II there were numerous anthropologists working in the United States exposing economic problems, class divisions, and the effect of racism and inequality on American institutions and organizations (Silverman 2007).

North American anthropology in the 1920s and 1930s was still under the influence of Franz Boas. Anthropologists worked to record the cultures of native societies, especially those of Native Americans, but also did village studies in Latin America and Asia under scholars such as Robert Redfield (Silverman 2007). Boas helped to lay the groundwork linking anthropology and public life, including a critique of racism. Early studies on race relations included those of Melville Herskovits (1928) and such notable activist anthropologists as Zora Neale Hurston (Pierpont 2004; Silverman 2007). Boas also became a driving force against fascism before the war, joined by Ruth Benedict, Gene Weltfish, and Ashley Montagu (Patterson 2001; Susser 2010).

In the 1930s, engaged research was sponsored by the Depression era Works Project Administration (WPA), which employed anthropologists in several of its interdisciplinary programs. This organization supported such initiatives as the urban research and publication of *Black Metropolis*, socioeconomic surveys of the Southwest for the Soil Conservation Services, and rural sociological studies for the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE; Silverman 2007). BAE-sponsored studies included Walter Goldschmidt's critical project on agribusiness, the Rural Life Studies, and surveys of rural areas in Bell County, Texas, by John Bennett and Oscar Lewis. Anthropologists working with Native Americans criticized the effect of trade, technology, property law, and governmental policies, showing how they put these societies in crisis (Silverman 2007). Silverman (2007) asks what happened to this materialist and critical anthropology of the 1930s. She attributes its demise to the marginality of its practitioners, most of whom did not have academic positions, and the impact of World War II, which short-circuited these activities in favor of the war effort.

Nevertheless, during this period and far beyond, Margaret Mead was a pioneer of engaged anthropology. She was active as a writer and public speaker on all facets of people living in the contemporary world (Lutkehaus 2008; Mead 1942). She tackled pragmatic problems such as housing, urban development, race, and pollution, and she collaborated with a broad range of professionals and academics. But her celebrity and success in translating anthropological insights from non-Western cultures to critiques of American society were not necessarily received positively within the academy. In more recent years, her efforts were scrutinized for their scientific merit. Analyses of social change by Max Gluckman, A. L.

Epstein, and Victor Turner from the Manchester School in the United Kingdom, as well as Jaap Van Velsen and Godfrey Wilson, also contributed to the history of U.S. engaged anthropology, a point discussed in greater depth by Ida Susser (2010).

During World War II, 95% of anthropologists were in some way involved in the war effort, but there were aspects of this involvement, including the administration of Japanese relocation camps, that subsequently led to the vociferous 1960s outcry at this involvement (Wax 1971, 1978). Immediately following World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, U.S.-based anthropologists were enlisted for their knowledge of "traditional" societies. Large-scale funded projects financed the investigation of militarily strategic regions and national-character studies (Silverman 2007; Smith 1999; Warren 2006), while the U.S. military invested in the Human Relations Area Files and ethnographic research on Pacific islands. June Nash (2007) writes that as a fledgling anthropologist working with unionized villagers in Cantel, Guatemala, she witnessed the 1954 CIA-triggered coup of President Arbenz and endured a subsequent visit from a CIA agent on her return to Chicago. She points to Max Gluckman's (2002 [1958]) admonition about the inherent dangers in not analyzing and instead ignoring or denying the political context of fieldwork, and she queries the limits of anthropological naivete (Nash 2007:105).

Considerable concern developed about the use of anthropological knowledge in the 1950s and 1960s, especially when many anthropologists were recruited to university settings where they were offered lucrative and tenured jobs as anthropology departments expanded with Cold War funding (Chomsky 1997; Gusterson 1996, 2004; Nader 1997; S. Silverman, personal communication). Of course, not everyone was awarded tenure or an academic post. Many women and minority anthropologists continued to work in the public sector because of barriers to their full participation in the academic sector or because they were interested in activism. The marginalized nature of their social identities and activist interests decreased the visibility and importance of activism in terms of the broader, and especially academic, face of the discipline.

During the post–World War II period and the shift to university employment for many anthropologists, the ethical problems of the use of research data by the military came under attack. During the Vietnam War, research conducted on the hill tribes of northern Thailand sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense became the centerpiece of criticism against the military use of anthropological knowledge (González 2004, 2009; Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and van Willigen 2006; van Willigen 2002). Sol Tax's action anthropology attempted to address these criticisms by proposing that the voluntary practice of those inside the academy and other forms of value-explicit approaches set the stage for a different kind of engaged anthropology (Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and van Willigen 2006).

Of course, a number of anthropologists opposed activism in other spheres as well as in the military one. George Peter

Murdock in the late 1940s wrote to J. Edgar Hoover listing those anthropologists who were thought to be Communists (Price 2004). The horrific story of the fate of anthropologists at the hands of the House Hearing on Un-American Activities and the careers that were destroyed by accusations of Communist affiliation has been recounted in great detail by Laura Nader (1997) and David Price (2004). The McCarthy years limited anthropologists' free academic inquiry through "targeting, stigmatizing, and penalizing those working for racial, gender, ethnic or economic equality" (Price 2004). The cumulative effect on engaged anthropology should not be underestimated, because, "As red-baiting witch-hunts spread, a generation of social scientists learned not to overtly think under the rubrics of Marxist critique, while many in the discipline learned to ignore anthropology's natural, and ethically required, activist roles" (Price 2004:xviii). Price concludes that by midcentury, American anthropology had lost its way and retreated from the kind of engaged practice that had gone on before.

The ethical implications of military involvement and fieldnote privacy became murky as well when in 1971 the Mead Ad Hoc Committee to Evaluate the Controversy Concerning Anthropological Activities in Thailand "wrote its report exonerating all nonmilitary anthropologists of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) from the charges that they had acted unethically" (Nader 1997:126–127) and censured Eric Wolf and Joseph Jorgensen for exposing the contents of documents concerning anthropologists doing counterinsurgency research (Price 2008). Mead's concern was with the ethical implications of revealing the documents and not the consequences of the military use of the data, while Wolf and Jorgensen, joined by many others, decried the use of anthropological materials to further military aims. The report was rejected by the membership, and trust in the AAA establishment was hurt. There are similar debates today, such as about whether anthropologists should be deployed as members of Human Terrain Systems (HTS) for pacification in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The AAA and the Network of Concerned Anthropologists worry about the ethical implications of this form of anthropological work for the military. In 2007, Terence Turner presented a motion to the AAA to change its code of ethics to preclude any form of clandestine research and reinstitute the 1971 AAA Principles of Professional Responsibility, while a full report on HTS and an evaluation of its effect on the discipline was completed in October 2009, circulated at the annual meeting, and posted on the AAA Web site.

Critical engaged anthropology survived the McCarthy era in a number of academic settings. Marshall Sahlins, Stanley Diamond, Eric Wolf, Marvin Harris, Constance Sutton, Kathleen Gough, and David Aberle organized Vietnam "teach-ins." In 1963, Eleanor Leacock along with June Nash and Helen Safa fought for better working conditions for women both in the United States and Latin America, while Sutton and Leacock organized the New York Women's Anthropology Caucus

in the early 1970s. These efforts morphed into the International Women's Anthropology Caucus led by Leacock and Sutton and later by Johnetta Cole and Linda Basch. The caucus affiliated with the United Nations to connect with scholars in the third world countries (Berreman 1968; Sutton 1993; C. Sutton, personal communication). Also in the 1970s and 1980s, Christine Gailey, Louise Lamphere, Richard Lee, and many others joined Leacock in her campaign (Patterson 2001; Roseberry 2002). An activist perspective founded during the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War resulted in a special issue of *Current Anthropology* in which Kathleen Gough (1968) analyzes imperialism, Gerald Berreman (1968) examines social responsibility in social anthropology, and Delmos Jones (1968) discusses "insider anthropology" as an African American anthropologist following in the footsteps of W. E. B. DuBois and St. Clair Drake (Susser 2010). Feminist anthropology also flourished during this period, urging more inclusive methodologies, active engagement with the individuals and communities studied, and more egalitarian research relationships (Huggins and Glebbeek 2009; Susser 2010).

According to William Roseberry (2002), three critiques of anthropological practice emerged following World War II. The first was in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and it questioned "primitive isolates" as the traditional object of study and expanded the field to include complex societies and new social groups (Roseberry 2002:59). The second was from the late 1960s and the early 1970s and grew out of the past anthropological collusion with colonial powers and the failure of the discipline to recognize women and other forms of race, class, and ethnic discrimination. It was marked by the publication of Eric Wolf's (1969) *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* and Marvin Harris's (1964) *Patterns of Race in the Americas*. This critique was grounded in political economy, historical materialism, and the empirical and realist traditions of Marxist theory. Engaged scholars published *Reinventing Anthropology* (Hymes 1969) that proposed an anti-imperialist stance (Berreman 1968; Caulfield 1969). It also urged "studying up" to understand the culture of power and not just the culture of the dominated (Nader 1972) and moving from the academic world to working for communities or movements, even doing direct action as a member (Hymes 1969:56).

The third critique began in the mid-1980s with the publication of George Marcus and Michael Fischer's (1986) *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* and James Clifford and George Marcus's (1986) edited volume *Writing Culture*, and it continued through the early 1990s. Also employing the language of critique, its focus was on examining "the formation and cultural construction of identities" (Roseberry 2002:70) and interrogating received metanarratives, especially those of the white male anthropologist. This "cultural critique" addressed issues of inequality and voice discursively—often from a Foucauldian, deconstructivist, or postcolonial/subaltern theoretical perspective—and argued for a more reflexive form of ethnographic practice that values multivocal and coconstructed knowledge and narrative.

By the late 1970s and 1980s, engaged anthropology began incorporating these critiques by involving advocacy for and participation of studied populations and individuals (Hill 2000). Informants became collaborators, co-researchers, and colleagues rather than the subjects of study. Much of this research was based on theories of uneven development and power differentials between the core and periphery, but it also focused on the way that race, class, gender, and ethnicity structured socioeconomic inequality. The notion of "devolution of power to communities" at Hacienda Vicos in Peru was grounded in the idea that successful development could occur only if the structural inequalities of peasant life could be changed (Doughty 1987). Jean Schensul and Stephen Schensul's "collaborative research model" (Schensul and Schensul 1978, 1992) and Dennis Weidman's "cultural brokerage" (Weidman 1976) were new approaches to engaged research developed during this period.

By 1993, Shepard Forman's *Diagnosing America: Anthropology and Public Engagement* issued an "outspoken call for a *committed* and *engaged* anthropology" (1993:3) as part of an AAA panel "Disorder of Industrial Societies." The edited volume concludes with a "Statement to the Profession" that speaks to many of the issues addressed in this article, arguing for "an anthropology that includes prominently among its missions empirically grounded social criticism on the one hand and theoretically guided participation in public policy processes on the other" (Forman 1993:298). The statement identifies five aspects of engagement: (1) anthropology as a source of social criticism, (2) community engagement, (3) policy voices, (4) classroom engagement, and (5) reengaging anthropology defined as continuous self-criticism from within the discipline. Its recommendations include many steps that have been taken by the AAA, such as the creation of a commission on diversity (the current Commission on Race and Racism), a commission on the presence of women in academic anthropology (the standing Committee on the Status of Women in Anthropology), support for minority colleges (the standing Committee on Minority Affairs), and a reexamination of tenure and promotion criteria, an issue that is also identified as a barrier to engaged work in the conclusion of this article and is currently being addressed by the Committee on Public, Applied, and Public Interest Anthropology (COPAPIA).

Even with this milestone published in the early 1990s and AAA's efforts to move the discipline toward engagement, there remained considerable silence about the kinds and degree of advocacy and activism that would be supported within the discipline and especially within the academy. During the 1990s and early 2000s, however, a growing number of anthropologists have been pushing for increased activism both within and outside the academy. Nancy Scheper-Hughes's proposal for a militant anthropology suggests that "cultural relativism, read as moral relativism, is no longer appropriate to the world in which we live and that anthropology, if it is to be worth anything at all must be ethically grounded" (1995:410). With

this moral claim, she argues that anthropological writing can be a site of resistance. James Peacock's presidential lecture titled "The Future of Anthropology" introduced the idea of public anthropology and worked with other anthropologists to suggest that engaged anthropology should include transforming academia and breaking out of the stratification of anthropology itself (Basch et al. 1999; Peacock 1997). Gavin Smith's (1999) *Confronting the Present: Towards a Politically Engaged Anthropology* prescribes moving from political engagement to formulating anthropology as a political practice, and Stuart Kirsch (2002) offers an impassioned plea for the appropriateness of advocacy in cases of environmental injustice. Lassiter (2005) advocates writing collaborative ethnographies and has begun editing a journal, *Collaborative Anthropologies* (in 2009), to further this initiative, while Victoria Sanford and Asale Angel-Ajani (2006), Shannon Speed (2006), and Charles Hale (2006) claim that critical engagement can best be achieved by activist research and advocacy rather than academy-based cultural critique.

A diversity of engaged anthropologies emerged from this ferment. Some are forms of support, teaching, and communication; others are social critique—the scholarly pursuit of uncovering the bases of injustice and inequality; and some concern the collaborative approach to research by working with research subjects through collaborative and equal relationships. Some are more radical forms of engagement centered on advocacy and activism. These divisions and categories are not rigid or static, but we use them to provide a sense of the diversity of engagements practiced in the United States today.

Forms of Anthropological Engagement

One of our arguments is that anthropologists are engaged in a variety of ways, but, as indicated by the history, they do not necessarily agree about what constitutes engagement much less about the form that it should take. Our position is that there is a wide range of practices we would include under this rubric and that this breadth strengthens the discipline. We offer a preliminary typology, although it is not intended to be a set of mutually exclusive categories, because all the types of engagement are overlapping and interpenetrating. They serve, however, to describe the range of engagement and to clarify the discussion of the articles that follows.

Sharing and Support

Anthropological field research typically includes everyday practices of sharing, support, and personal interaction. Such relationships, which include friendship and even forms of kinship, can be thought of as a form of engagement. For example, John Jackson (2010) discusses the importance of sincerity rather than authenticity as the basis for an engaged ethnographic practice. Ethnographic explorations based on

authenticity seek to establish whether a person is an authentic member or subject of a group, an approach that converts the person to an object. Sincerity, in contrast, refers to a state of inner commitment. It offers another way of rendering the real but one that is always incomplete because it is never possible to know fully about another's sincerity. Jackson advocates a mode of ethnography not driven by the desire for the authentic or the real but by humor, affect, and a concern for sincerity.

Shared commitments to visions of social justice or social change are another form of engagement in ethnographic practice. Kamran Ali describes his sympathy for poor women of Karachi dealing with their fear and the violence of the streets in their everyday lives, and he asks at what point anthropologists should intervene with universalizing discourses such as human rights or empowerment to help them cope with these stresses (Ali 2010). Most anthropologists share not only social and political commitments with the people they work with or study but also their housing, food, medicine, automobile, and other economic, material, and social resources, both at home and in the field. These everyday acts of sharing and support may not seem like "engagement" in terms of advocacy or activism, but they reflect the anthropological sense of responsibility and reciprocity that often develops into other forms of engagement. João Biehl describes his efforts not only to document the life of a poor, ill woman in a Brazilian zone of abandonment but also to help her by trying to determine the nature of her illness (Biehl 2005; see also Briggs 2004; Briggs and Mantini-Briggs 2000; Farmer 2003).

Teaching and Public Education

Instruction in classrooms, in training programs in the context of practicing anthropology, and in individual advising and mentoring constitute another form of engagement. For example, Jackson talks about teaching as a form of engagement, while Susser describes developing an ethnographic training program on AIDS in social context in Namibia and South Africa (Susser 2010). Howell's description of the role of anthropologists in public debate in Norway over issues such as indigenous rights and the absorption of immigrants suggests that teaching can also take place through the media and popular writing (Howell 2010).

Active engagement in teaching that includes involving students in research and community outreach projects is a hallmark of many anthropology programs. Many programs, especially those that have applied anthropology concentrations or specialization, have developed internships for their students in local governmental agencies and community service institutions where both the faculty and the students work for and with people within the town, city, or region on local problems and initiatives. Faculty and students interested in engagement often set up community research centers where they develop cooperative projects between university and college-based fac-

ulty and students, and these outreach activities are incorporated into the curriculum as well.

Engaged teaching is also found in kindergarten through high school programs designed to offer an anthropological perspective and knowledge base to children and young adults. The AAA Committee on Anthropology and Education (CAE) focuses on promoting such projects because of their wide reach and immense public effect. Norma González (2010) discusses the importance of anthropological interventions in schools and the way that teaching incorporates insights about language and racial inequality as engaged practices with the power to transform education inequity.

Many practicing and applied anthropologists run training programs that engage the public and their clients in intense interaction over a limited period of time. Public workshops, lectures, seminars, and other forms of public programming are important components of engaged teaching. Sometimes this kind of engagement evolves out of research in the public sector, such as the work of the Public Space Research Group's 20 years of park studies for the National Park Service, the City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation, and other public agencies and institutions (Low, Taplin, and Scheld 2005). This group's research on cultural diversity and the inequality of access to adequate and appropriate park resources by gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, and ability produced a set of "lessons" that are now being used as the basis for training workshops for park managers and designers, historic preservationists, and urban planners in the United States and in Canada and Australia (Low 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010). Thus, "teaching" as an engaged activity has many forms, include classroom teaching, community outreach, training, workshops, and numerous other pedagogical and didactic forms, including serving as a public intellectual. Engaged careers in academic teaching and public education also produced a number of innovative academic leaders, such as Johnetta Cole at Spelman College and Judith Shapiro at Barnard College, who have inspired students and faculty to further engage with contemporary social issues.

Social Critique

Social critique in its broadest sense refers to anthropological work that uses its methods and theories to uncover power relations and the structures of inequality. There are many excellent examples of this kind of work in anthropology, typically drawing linkages between individual or group suffering and structural factors by examining harms in historical context and within relations of power. For example, Paul Farmer (2003) links disease with larger conditions of structural violence: the actions of institutions, states, and the unequal provision of medical services (see also Farmer 2004, 2005). João Biehl (2005) shows how everyday practices of pharmaceutical companies and medical services consign certain individuals to a zone of abandonment outside the space of ordinary life (see also Biehl 2007). Ugo Mattei and Laura

Nader (Mattei and Nader 2008) document the extent to which the rule of law not only failed to prevent but actively contributed to the global extraction of resources by rich and powerful countries. A body of scholarship on social suffering foregrounds the pain suffered by ordinary people and the possibilities of healing through the return to the everyday (Das 2007; Das et al. 2001). Anthropologists have worked to expose the destruction of development (Ferguson 1994), the suffering of poverty and hunger (Scheper-Hughes 1992), and the ravages of environmental degradation (Tsing 2005). Some anthropologists, such as Victoria Sanford, focus on exposing the human rights abuses suffered by individuals in conflict zones (Sanford 2004).

There is a rich literature on processes of conflict and violence such as genocide (Hinton 2002*a*, 2002*b*; Hinton and Lifton 2004; Hinton and O'Neill 2009), human rights violations (Cowan, Dembour, and Wilson 2001; Goodale 2008, 2009; Tate 2007), gender violence (Merry 2008), transitional justice and the aftermath of war (Clarke 2009; Nelson 2009; Wilson 2001), and violence more generally (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Starn 1995). These are only a few examples of a rich and variegated set of studies that seek to excavate hidden or everyday forms of violence and abuse and explain their incidence in terms of larger structures of wealth and power. Susser (2010) offers an account of the problem of AIDS in South Africa framed by the political economy of the country and shows how the Manchester School's work on the Zambian Copperbelt developed this form of analysis in the 1930s and 1940s (see also Susser 2009).

Another form of social critique exposes the misuse of concepts within everyday discourse, particularly when these concepts lead to discriminatory behavior. There is a long history of this work as well, some of which focused on exposing the fallacies of racial thinking. Often, this means critiquing the misuse of anthropological theory and concepts such as the culture of poverty. For example, González shows how the concept of culture, including the culture of poverty, is hijacked as a way to explain poor school performance and ultimately to exclude migrants. As "culture" is used to explain achievement differences between whites and Hispanics in schools, it comes to stand in for the concept of race and obscures the critical importance of poverty and uncertain immigration status on school performance (González 2010). Similarly, the racist underpinnings of "modernization" efforts are employed to destroy low-income housing areas in Rome (Herzfeld 2010). Signe Howell describes the way the anthropological concept of culture has been used in public debates in Norway in ways that concern Norwegian anthropologists (2010). In the international sphere, the concept of culture is used to explain the persistence of practices harmful to women in developing countries. Explaining the persistence of these practices in terms of "culture" reinforces colonial ideas of backwardness while ignoring the extent to which these practices are contested by local activists and supported for political reasons by conservative elites (Merry 2006).

Some forms of social critique directly tackle the misuse of anthropological concepts and knowledge circulating in elite public spheres. Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Besteman (2005, 2010), for example, edited two collections of essays by anthropologists critiquing the statements of pundits about a variety of popular topics concerned with culture. The Network of Concerned Anthropologists takes on areas where anthropological knowledge is being used in ways that cause concern for many anthropologists, such as helping military engagements, an issue also addressed by Catherine Lutz (2001, 2002, 2006, 2008) in her critiques of the military and the role it plays in everyday life in the United States.

Collaboration

Another dimension of engaged anthropology is a collaborative approach to research and practice. Collaborative research ranges from participation in the research site to collaborative leadership through action research. Participation in a research site is a low-key form of collaboration in which the researcher works with local organizations or social movements in carrying out their missions but does not actively lead them. This might mean doing child care during women's support groups in a domestic violence program or working as an intern in a human rights organization in order to study how it operates. Collaborative research also takes the form of shared leadership of a research project. For example, Sally Merry and Peggy Levitt developed a comparative study of the vernacularization of women's human rights by women's NGOs in India, China, Peru, and the United States by collaborating with scholars in these countries (Levitt and Merry 2009). Another example of this collaborative approach is the set of studies organized by Susan Gal and Gail Kligman on gender and postsocialism (2000). Robert Van Kemper and Anya Peterson Royce (2002), in their volume on long-term field research in anthropology, trace the development of field-research strategies from solitary ethnography to collaborative and advocacy approaches.

Collaborative research involves shared management and direction of a research project among the scholars and the subjects of the research. For example, in her research on the environmental and community damages suffered by the Marshall Islanders from nuclear bomb testing, Johnston worked with a colleague, Holly M. Barker, who specialized in the area, as well as members of the community as coproducers of knowledge. Participatory action research—which involves collaboration on the goals of project, the methods of research, and the analysis of the findings—is another example of this form of collaboration and one where the goals of the group supersede those of the individual anthropologist.

Luke Eric Lassiter (2005) argues that collaborative ethnography is another powerful way to engage the public. Through undertaking fieldwork and the writing of ethnographic texts with those whom he studies, he is able to pull together academic and applied anthropology efforts to be more directly involved. He points out that as anthropologists in the 1960s

and 1970s struggled to integrate theory and practice in order to create a more engaged and activist anthropology (Hymes 1969; Peacock 1997; Sanday 1976), the applied anthropologists were developing collaborative ways of working (Schensul and Schensul 1978, 1992; Stull and Schensul 1987). Merrill Singer (1990, 2000) contends that reinventing "public anthropology" is simply another example of how the hierarchies of academic/applied and the hegemony of academy anthropology marginalize applied/practicing anthropology's long history of public work.

Collaborative strategies are the hallmark of much of applied research and practice (Stull and Schensul 1987). Collaborative models of research and action (Schensul and Schensul 1978) are utilized and modified by medical anthropologists, such as Linda Whiteford (Whiteford 2009; Whiteford and Tobin 2007) and Noel Chrisman (2005) among many others, who employ collaborative strategies in their community-based health interventions and public-health research. Leith Mullings with Alaka Wali, Diane McLean, Janet Mitchell, Sabiyha Prince, Deborah Thomas, and Patricia Tovar (Mullings et al. 2001) collaborate as a team of researchers and with Harlem community members they address health inequalities and develop an intersectional perspective on health (Mullings 2005). Some anthropologists have been more interested in "agency" and health entitlement as a way to integrate collaboration in their practice (N. Taskima, personal communication), while Shirley Fiske (2009), through collaboration with legislators from her perspective working on Capitol Hill, encourages anthropologists to engage more directly in policy making. Setha Low, Dana Taplin, and Suzanne Scheld (Low, Taplin, and Scheld 2005) worked with National Park Service employees, park managers, park and beach users, local residents, and community groups to develop collaborative activities, research techniques, and workshops to reach a broader public in their cultural diversity studies. And although we do not review the many archaeological contributions to public and engaged practices, it seems important to note that most archaeological practice, cultural resource management, historic preservation, and public history projects, such as the ongoing work of T. J. Ferguson and Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2006a, 2006b, 2008; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006), focuses on the collaboration of the archaeologist with the local descendant communities to define and protect their ancestral places. This is research that can only be done collaboratively and provides a model, much like Lassiter's collaborative ethnography, for the future.

Advocacy

Another dimension in engaged anthropology is advocacy. Some examples of this diverse field are working to assist local communities in organizing efforts, giving testimony, acting as an expert witness in court, witnessing human rights violations, serving as a translator between community and gov-

ernment officials or corporations, and helping local groups use international principles such as human rights by working to vernacularize them. Stuart Kirsch (2002) asserts that advocacy is appropriate within anthropology, especially as it seems like a "logical extension of the commitment to reciprocity that underlies the practice of anthropology" (178). Many anthropologists work with indigenous people—translating their grievances into forms that can be heard outside the community, such as by an international tribunal—and serve to increase legal pressure and public scrutiny (Hale 2006; Kirsch 2002). Anthropologists have a long history of serving as advocates for indigenous peoples. For example, in the early years of protest against the construction of a massive complex of dams on the Narmada River in India, a project that displaced large numbers of people including many tribal peoples, the World Bank commissioned the anthropologist Thayer Scudder to carry out an appraisal of the resettlement process. His report, based on a 1983 visit, was critical of the government's resettlement efforts (Khagram 2002:211). In 1984, Scudder worked with a transitional coalition of local and international NGOs to improve resettlement policies, meeting with local villagers and activists to find out what they wanted in order to develop an agreement with the World Bank, which was funding the project at the time. Other NGOs joined the effort to claim that the resettlement was illegal because it violated International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 107, which acknowledges the right of tribal peoples to their traditional lands or equal land if they are removed (Khagram 2002:212–213). In this case, the anthropologist acted as an intermediary between tribal peoples, the Indian government, the World Bank, and international regulations such as the ILO convention and became an advocate for their perspective. Signe Howell's history of Norwegian anthropological activism shows that the defense of indigenous peoples has played a similarly galvanizing role in that country (Howell 2010).

Several articles in this collection describe advocacy anthropology. Barbara Rose Johnston describes her work on behalf of the Marshall Islanders as an expert seeking to document the biocultural effects of nuclear weapons testing in the islands (Johnson 2010). She worked to gather data and facilitate participation in decision making and remediation in support of a claim for damages before the Marshall Islands Nuclear Claims Tribunal. She and her team used collaborative and participatory methods to develop an understanding of community damages and remedial needs beyond economic compensation for damages and loss of property rights, ultimately winning a significant judgment. As Ida Susser describes her work on AIDS in South Africa, she shows how the urgency of dealing with suffering and disease lead her to take an advocacy stance toward the provision of treatment (Susser 2010). Michael Herzfeld describes his role in helping a small community in Bangkok protect its housing from redevelopment destruction. In the midst of the competing ethics of development and housing rights, Herzfeld chose to work to-

ward preservation of housing on behalf of a poor and vulnerable population (Herzfeld 2010). When Merry was doing research on gender violence and human rights at the UN, she became an advocate for intervening to prevent gender violence, helping to draft documents promoting gender violence as a human rights violation. As she visited gender violence programs around the world, she shared information about the organization and strategies adopted by other programs (Merry 2005, 2006). Low (2008), working with local groups to protect public space through radio talk shows, newspaper editorials, public lectures, tours, and as an artist through her public art work, has become a well-known advocate for protecting public space in New York City.

Activism

Advocacy is not easily distinguished from activism. Both can draw on a person's knowledge and commitments as an anthropologist, but activism also builds on commitments as a citizen or as a human confronting the violations or suffering of other humans. Barbara Rose Johnston proposes the concept of the "anthropological citizen," the anthropologist who serves as a scribe documenting abuses and as advisor, advocate, and partner in advocacy (Johnston 2001*a*, 2001*b*, 2006, 2010). Contemporary anthropological activism takes the position that anthropologists are "responsible for the potential effects of the knowledge produced about people and their cultures, to contribute to decolonizing the relationship between researcher and research subject . . . and to engage in a form of anthropology that was committed to human liberation" (Speed 2006:67). Charles Hale defines "activist research" as "a method through which we affirm a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle and allow dialogue with them to shape each phase of the process" (Hale 2006:97). Both Speed and Hale, as well as Sanford and Angel-Ajani (2006), argue that activism is different from critique, especially cultural critique, in that scholars who practice as activist researchers have dual loyalties, to their discipline and/or academic community and to a political struggle (Hale 2006:100). For those activists who work for a government agency, NGO, or as an independent contractor, the question of loyalty becomes even more complex in that there is also a commitment to a client or funder as well as to the discipline and the identified struggle.

There are many excellent compilations and examples of activist work. The most well-known is *Engaged Observer: Anthropology, Advocacy and Activism*, edited by Victoria Sanford and Asale Angel-Ajani (2006), which focuses on cases of the contradictions that anthropologists face in places torn by war, violence, and intergroup conflict. Another example is Shannon Speed's (2006) work with an indigenous community in Chiapas, Mexico. When she found that the community was very concerned about protecting its land rights, she worked with them to show them how to define themselves as an indigenous community and to present themselves to the ILO in order to use claims to collective cultural rights to protect their lands and resources. Taking a slightly different approach, Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995) argues that anthropologists have a duty in their field sites to act in situations of suffering even when the other participants object (see also 1992).

In practice, academic and activist endeavors are never autonomous, despite our analytical assumptions of separateness. For example, the ethnographic study of human rights practices continually reveals the porosity of borders between academic and activist work. As anthropologists move into new fields of research such as human rights, they encounter subjects who themselves employ anthropological concepts and engage in theoretical debates about what they mean. They debate what culture is, how to define gender, how globalization affects women, and how a human rights approach can increase women's safety. They are self-reflective, analytical, and participate in the same intellectual world as anthropologists. Anthropologists play important roles in this world as advisors, consultants, and advocates, particularly in the area of indigenous rights. Although at times during the twentieth century, anthropologists struggled to assert their status as scientists, seeking to stand outside moral debates, a position clearly articulated in the 1947 statement of the executive board of the AAA condemning the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Goodale 2006*a*, 2006*b*; Merry 2001), this stance has changed significantly.

Indeed, some anthropologists question the viability and moral acceptability of a nonactivist stance. They argue that the implications of ethnographic detachment in a world characterized by resource inequalities, "land grabs," and political violence are problematic. Under these circumstances, ethnography cannot be apolitical, and even inaction, such as not assigning responsibility to an oil company for its destructive activities, is itself an action, as Kamari Clarke (2010) argues. The absence of public action is not neutral, and to rely on anthropological principles limiting ethnography in contexts of conflict or war is itself a political act. As Jackson argues, we have ignored the ambiguous relationship between anthropology and activism in the ethnographic encounter and even in our teaching and graduate student training to the detriment of our analysis and our politics (Jackson 2010).

Clearly, there is a long tradition of engaged anthropology and a wide variety of forms of engagement in the discipline. But the florescence of engaged anthropology is not without problems. The following section discusses three dilemmas engaged anthropology faces.

The Dilemmas of Engagement

These three dilemmas grow out of questions about how, when, and to what extent anthropological work should be engaged. They have been areas of debate in the past, and they continue to be points of contestation in the present. There are no easy answers to the dilemmas they pose.

The first dilemma concerns the extent to which the re-

searcher should act as a participant, including becoming engaged in activism that seeks to reform features of social life to enhance social justice rather than being a disengaged outsider observing and recording social life. Some argue that participation of this kind changes the society being studied and question the ethical right to seek to change other ways of life. Others argue that those who fail to respond to the need for intervention are acting unethically. Some point out that all societies are now economically and politically interconnected such that isolation is not a possibility, and many suffer from the effects of this interconnection. How, and to what extent, the anthropologist should seek change is uncertain. There is a long history of debate on this point, and it is far from settled now. Interventions are often justified on the basis of universal principles of justice, but this seems uncomfortably close to arguments about the imperial "civilizing process" or the mandate of Christian missionaries to convert the "heathen." Several of the articles in this issue express concern about intervening in other societies, including Ali (2010), Susser (2010), and Herzfeld (2010), but they turn to universal discourses of social justice such as human rights to justify their intervention. Clearly, this issue underlies many of the debates about activism described above.

The second dilemma is the desire to criticize those who wield power over others unjustly in postcolonial societies while avoiding replicating colonial relations of power. For an anthropologist of the nationality of the imperial power to criticize a postcolonial government newly escaped from the control of that power seems to replicate colonial inequalities. Alan Smart articulates clearly the difficulties he, as an outsider, experiences in criticizing the government of Hong Kong under postcolonial conditions. In his research on squatter housing, with its history of British colonialism, he felt the need to use tact when doing social critique. For example, in his effort to criticize the operation of the housing market in Hong Kong, he confronted the difficulty of not feeling that he knew the right approach. He concludes that it is more useful not to be arrogant in critiques and perhaps best to restrict critique to one's own country (Smart 2010).

The third dilemma is the desire to promote social justice and ameliorate the suffering of war and conflict by providing anthropological insights and techniques to governments and the military while avoiding co-optation and misuse of anthropological methodology and expertise. To work with a government, military, or development agency offers the promise of rendering the work of these agencies more humane and responsive to community concerns and perspectives but risks losing control of the way research is used and manipulated. Refusing to work with these organizations denies them the benefit of anthropological insight and may hinder their ability to understand local communities and cultural practices. On the other hand, working with them poses challenges of avoiding co-optation and the ethical problems articulated by the AAA statement opposing the HTS. Clearly, to what

extent anthropology should, as a discipline, participate in military endeavors, has been debated at least since World War II.

Jonathan Spencer illustrates this dilemma clearly, describing how an initiative of the British government that appeared at first to provide an opportunity for anthropological contributions to understanding other societies became a project antithetical to anthropological principles (Spencer 2010). The British Foreign Office sought to fund research on Muslim terrorism in collaboration with the United Kingdom's Economic and Social Research Council, the major academic research funding body. This collaboration created a highly problematic framework for research. Spencer describes the pitfalls of the funding arrangement and the increasing opposition of scholars in the United Kingdom to the project. But not all participation with government-sponsored research is ethically problematic. Kamari Clarke distinguishes between providing general knowledge to the army versus specific knowledge of persons and activities (Clarke 2010). Generic knowledge can be productive of better relations between the military and those under its control, while specific knowledge can be harmful to those it reveals. She argues that disengagement from the military is not the only stance for anthropology, but that it needs to engage this site of power as well. Not only is there a danger of engagement, but there is also a danger of disengagement. Clearly, it is important for anthropologists to study phenomena such as the emerging security apparatus in the United States (Fosher 2009).

Barriers to Engagement

Despite the range and strength of engaged anthropology, some of these forms of engagement face obstacles and difficulties in the form of intellectual and organizational barriers. Many of these hindrances are institutional, including the practices of funding agencies, hiring, tenure, and promotions rules, while others are conceptual, such as ideas of "science" rooted in anthropological history. Departmental or university norms along with corporate and company norms of what constitutes a legitimate work product, guidelines of what is publishable, the organization and structure of professional meetings, and the funding rules of granting agencies contribute to silencing advocacy and activism. These forms of silencing need to be discussed within the discipline and our graduate training programs so that we are better prepared to recognize and confront these obstacles and tackle the dilemmas above so that anthropological training can contribute more fully to the public realm.

The inability to talk or write about a political agenda even though political engagement is essential to the fieldwork. This inability to speak occurs when the people studied or worked with hold fundamentally different values from those of the anthropologist. Especially when "studying up," such as when interviewing middle-class white residents of exclusive cooperative apartment buildings or gated communities, the agenda of

the researcher may differ from that of those being interviewed (Low 2003, 2010). When interviewing gated-community residents, Low had a difficult time because her informants assumed that she held the same values as they did. She wanted to remain honest and open about her research findings that were critical of private housing schemes with both the residents and the public. She struggled to write a book that presented her informants' lives fairly but also offered an adequate critique to allow readers to reflect on the way that these communities are changing the housing landscape. The threat of silencing was always present as she searched for a way to present findings that were unpopular with her gated-community residents without compromising her agenda to uncover the social consequences of gating. In practice, anthropologists often confront the challenge of gaining access to research sites that require some forms of self-silencing as the price for working there.

The expectation that anthropological work be scientific, objective, and neutral rather than humanistic and personal. This often means presenting work in theoretical terms, sometimes with heavy use of jargon. Anthropologists who are interested in activism and critique are deterred from presenting their knowledge in forms that are readily accessible to the media and make a strong advocacy statement. In the field of human rights, for example, activists present knowledge for public consumption in quite different ways from anthropologists working on the same problems. Even though human rights activists and scholars rely on similar forms of data collection—such as surveys, personal narratives, and case studies—human rights advocates tend to present this knowledge in relatively stark forms in order to generate outrage and action from the public. They often rely on compelling personal accounts with simple story lines of suffering and individual responsibility supported by statistical documentation of the extent and frequency of the problem rather than presenting situations in terms of nuance and complexity framed by context and history. To be persuasive to the general public, narratives need to be straightforward and emotionally engaging. To be persuasive to an academic audience, they require nuance and intricacy. Outrage and moral judgments must be muted if they appear at all. Human rights activists frame their stories in universalistic terms; anthropologists present more contextually specific accounts of social injustice with less possibility of resolution. Although this introduction and collection indicate that norms of academic publication are changing, there are still issues with the presentation of knowledge that mute activist scholarship.

An emphasis on particularity and context, on reading each situation in terms of the variety of ways people live in it. This puts anthropology at odds with several universalizing discourses of importance to the field. Even though anthropological scholarship is increasingly engaged with universalizing discourses of reform, such as human rights and international humanitarianism, it resists universals. Such frameworks pro-

mote an ethical stance that is unabashedly universalizing and offers an important resource for many of the peoples anthropologists study. However, supporting the right to difference, grounded in the scholarship of the colonial era and resistance to its imperialist demands for change, continues to influence the discipline. At the same time, supporting political initiatives of subordinated groups that see possibilities of audience and resource support in adopting this universalistic language is critical to anthropologists. Insofar as ethnographic practice includes an implicit commitment to the well-being of its subjects, anthropologists tend to promote mobilization of whatever resources are available. Insofar as they seek to protect the right to cultural difference, these connections are problematic.

The expansion of international discourses of social justice. This poses a major challenge to anthropological scholarship. Such discourse frames experiences in universalistic terms, flattens difference, and focuses on individual injuries rather than structural violations. Anthropologists play a critical role in translating between these universalizing worlds and the particularities of community and neighborhood experiences to generate effective forms of communication for a variety of audiences as well as for advising on political strategy. However, as universalizing languages become more dominant in policy and public discussion, anthropological knowledge premised on specificity and context can be marginalized. As James Ferguson notes, for example, discussing Africa as a whole appeals to a broader audience than a more focused case study (Ferguson 2006).

The concern with avoiding the appearance of imperialism given the postcolonial consciousness of anthropologists. Anthropologists working outside of their own geographical or national regions often self-silence because they fear being considered a missionary or colonialist and are therefore reluctant to criticize societies or governments other than their own, as Smart argues (2010). Given the historical collusion of anthropology and colonialism, it is important to refrain from colonialist critiques of other countries. Indeed, even progressive human rights discourse has some parallels with the "civilizing process" in that it is a project of the former colonial powers to improve the "culture" of their former colonies. The discipline's emphasis on local knowledge and agency runs against the desire to critique the institutions of postcolonial societies.

Institutional pressures connected with promotion, tenure, and access to funding. These pressures sometimes emphasize writing in arcane theoretical terms rather than in forms that are more amenable to popular audiences. Moreover, because systems of promotion and tenure depend on the production of publications, particularly in peer-reviewed journals, anthropologists are constrained to conduct research that will enable them to publish in such journals in ways that satisfy their peers. Insofar as publication depends on field research, which requires financial support, anthropologists must seek external funding in support of their work, which provides another

constraint on field research. Some funding agencies emphasize neutral, scientific-appearing work over work that has a clearer activist agenda. Some government and corporate funding comes with requirements of secrecy in the use of the data or forms of reporting that could negatively affect the communities where anthropologists work and may violate ethical standards of anthropological research. Such forms of research are particularly common in conflict zones. Under circumstances of war or concern about terrorism, funding may be directed to particular political or military objectives, as in the example of the HTS.

Similarly, the U.S. government has not only generously funded the HTS system, it intends larger investments in anthropological work through Project Minerva. The AAA argued that these funds should be distributed through the National Science Foundation process of academic peer review instead of through the Department of Defense, but even a peer-review process does not deal with the problem that this is research with a particular military and political agenda. Clearly, anthropological scholarship that depends on funding is to some extent bound by the expectations and goals of the granting agency. The same problem confronts social activists, who must not only frame their projects in terms the granting agency approves but must also provide evidence for their accomplishments. As ethnographic research depends increasingly on defense and security funding, these issues will only become more complicated.

Conclusion

This volume argues that engaged anthropology has many faces, from emotional support in the course of field research to activism to promote the human rights of vulnerable populations. Within U.S. sociocultural anthropology, the spread of engaged anthropology is extensive, while the contributions of Howell, Smart, and Spencer indicate that similar issues are important in Norwegian, Canadian, and British anthropology. This is hardly a new endeavor for the discipline; as the historical section shows, there is a long history within anthropology of addressing social problems and developing social critiques of the structures that subordinate individuals and groups. Engagement is transforming the way anthropologists do fieldwork, the work they do with other scholars and with those they study, and the way they think about public as well as scholarly audiences.

Our undertaking here has been to assess the state of the field of engaged anthropology and to expand its scope. We wanted to broaden the range of what we consider engagement, showing how pervasive engagement is within anthropological scholarship. Our introduction and the articles attempt to illustrate this breadth and richness through an expanded set of forms of engagement that is more inclusive, from basic commitment to our informants, to sharing and support with the communities with which we work, to teaching and public education, to social critique in academic and public forums,

to more commonly understood forms of engagement such as collaboration, advocacy, and activism. The articles reveal this broad range of forms of engagement, from concerns about tact and ethnographic critique to direct advocacy in favor of subordinated communities.

We were also interested in highlighting the tensions and ambiguities inherent in this project. For example, the articles show that engagement raises dilemmas for ethnographic research and writing for both practicing and academically employed anthropologists. Many of these dilemmas have been with the field for a long time, such as the ethics of intervention into a research situation, the appropriateness of critique given the anthropologist's position as insider/outsider, and the hazards of working with powerful government and military organizations.

The articles in this special issue demonstrate widespread enthusiasm for a variety of forms of engaged anthropology along with some enduring ambivalence about engagement and a continuing set of obstacles and forms of silencing faced by those seeking to develop a vibrant, engaged anthropology. Finally, the articles not only reveal ambivalence but also highlight the obstacles and organizational barriers to engaged work. These include institutional dimensions of universities and the world of practice, such as the inability to talk or write about a political agenda; the expectation that work be scientific; anthropological emphasis on particularity and context; avoiding an imperialist stance; and problems with promotion, tenure, and recognition of scholarship. Yet despite these difficulties, engaged anthropology is alive and developing in many different ways that we support and herald as an intrinsic part of a vibrant and interconnected anthropological future.

Comments

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Setha Low, Sally Engle Merry, and contributors revisit the problems and possibilities of "engaged anthropology" in this comprehensive and indeed landmark collection of articles, which resulted from a 2008 Wenner-Gren Foundation–sponsored international conference. The editors' introduction to this special issue of *Current Anthropology* makes a range of important contributions to the history and historiography of the anthropological presence in the public sphere, and their innovative theorization of this often fraught presence must now serve as a benchmark going forward. As the editors rightly argue, now is an ideal time for anthropologists to reconsider both critically and creatively the multiple dilemmas

that confront those of us who seek to find ways to bring the unique and often ambiguous ways and means of anthropology to bear on some of the contemporary world's most pressing problems, including endemic poverty, structural violence, ethnic and racial discrimination, the rise of transnational criminal networks, and the deepening of various forms of marginality within those Fergusonian "global shadows" that are a necessary by-product of the consolidation of late (perhaps even decaying) capitalism.

I would characterize the overall tone of this major intervention as one that moves between guarded optimism and profound ambivalence about the challenges facing anthropologists who struggle with ways to bridge the often artificial divide between scholarship and the world. Indeed, as the editors explain, this "rich panorama of anthropological work" can and must be both intellectually vital and ethically consistent with the still-emergent standards of professional anthropological practice. Yet what is strikingly absent here is the kind of full-throated and passionate triumphalism that is to be found in some of the earlier writings on this topic. Readers coming to this collection hoping to find an uncomplicated blueprint for anthropology as political action will be disappointed; so too will those younger scholars and graduate students seeking epistemological solace in these dystopic times in which the promises of the early post–Bush II years have yielded to the sober realization that "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose."

What this collection offers instead is both a framework for understanding and an argument for why more anthropologists should reframe their scholarship as some form of engagement. In their introduction the editors unpack "engagement" through a clear-eyed and judicious conceptualization that leaves room for vigorous debate and further refinement. They distinguish between six modes of engagement that are relevant to the work of anthropology in all of its diversity: sharing and support, teaching and public education, social critique, collaboration, advocacy, and activism. Although the editors modestly describe these divisions as a "preliminary typology," the articles in this issue demonstrate that this framework can both capture and, in a sense, justify an important cross section of the leading edge of contemporary sociocultural anthropology.

At the same time, what the editors describe as barriers to these modes of engagement are all too real and must be acknowledged. These barriers are likewise diverse and confront anthropologists with epistemological, institutional, political, and (especially for American scholars) geopolitical challenges. In other words, despite the intellectual allure of an expanded conception of engaged anthropology, there are reasons why some anthropologists do not formally recast their teaching and practice in these terms. This collection demonstrates that what might be thought as an unengaged anthropology should not necessarily be reinterpreted as bad faith or as a symbol of narrow professional self-interest. Indeed, given the extent of the dilemmas for engaged anthropology that the editors

describe in convincing detail, such a reframing becomes something of an act of courage. Yet what this collection also demonstrates is that such acts of courage will continue to be "an intrinsic part of a vibrant and interconnected anthropological future" and much of what is best about our inimitable discipline.

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Low and Merry have written a comprehensive and careful survey detailing the efflorescence of an engaged anthropology, and it provides cause for celebration. The discipline's newly wide-ranging enthusiasm for making anthropological research and writing relevant to pressing global problems comes after a sometimes painful period of anxiety and disciplinary self-critique. That period in the 1980s and into the 1990s produced angry retrenchment into positivism in some corners and demoralization in others. The subsequent engagement with publics and the tackling of pressing human concerns, while not new as Low and Merry point out in their historical narrative, has given anthropology new life and reason for being.

Low and Merry define an engaged anthropology primarily via a six-part typology, including sharing commitment and resources; educating a variety of publics; identifying inequalities, suffering, harms, or discriminatory concepts; collaborating in research or action; advocating; and engaging in activism (though the value of the distinction between these latter two is not clear). Like a number of earlier commentators, Low and Merry write not simply to describe this trend but to valorize it and to help make this kind of anthropology more central to the discipline and more acceptable to those who broker careers in the academy.

They also argue for the value of making this kind of anthropology more recognizable to broader publics. Those publics are most often exposed to expertise on human behavior that reflects a "growing tendency to understand behavior in broad, comparative, and statistical terms" as well as, we can add, in deterministic biological (your genes make you do it) or economic (the market makes you do it) ones. Perhaps even more important is the ability of engaged anthropologies to highlight and make sense of popular experiences, desires, and misunderstandings of things such as inequality, environmental racism, or job and status loss. This ability to claim research-based knowledge is especially valuable in a historical era when public debate is so often run on discourse produced via the science of public relations and political expedience, both of which merely produce info-kibbles or sound bites.

Low and Merry write a very valuable account of the historical emergence of various forms of engagement from the discipline's national beginning. Their account of the marginalization of women and minority anthropologists notes that those scholars' typically more critical stance was blocked from contributing more to, or speeding the emergence of, a public-facing and collaborative anthropology. Even with their belated and/or partial entry into the university, the deradicalizing effect of working there continues for all of its denizens and represents a countervailing trend.

Anthropology in the United States is engaged with the world from within the constraints not only of our institutional locations but also of our cultural discourses. How to speak outside those constraints, while still being understood or getting uptake, could be added to the three dilemmas of engagement that Low and Merry ask us to consider. The dilemmas they identify include whether to participate in change efforts, whether to criticize the powerful in the Global South and risk replicating colonial modes of thought and action, and whether to provide knowledge and other assistance to governments, including the military, or risk the misuse of that knowledge.

In the third of these cases, we can see the limits placed on our thinking by a highly militarized end-of-empire discourse in the United States. That discourse continually suggests that the U.S. military is a tool for providing security to domestic and foreign populations as well as to others, albeit a tool occasionally misused or tragically failing to accomplish its intended aims. That discourse suggests that neither a "humane military" (as opposed to humane people in uniform) nor "humanitarian warfare" are oxymorons. Such assumptions would have little traction in the face of research that focused on body counts, environmental damage, ideological constructs, or the size of the military budget for weaponry.

As this example shows, the concept of engagement can easily lose its critical edge and simply become synonymous with "relating to" or with "working for" anyone or any institution. Anthropologists could be said to "engage with" advertisers or manufacturers of any type of consumer product from tobacco to baby formula. So the argument is made in this introduction and special issue of *Current Anthropology* that proper forms of engagement include providing general knowledge to the military in order to encourage them to treat the people of their occupation zones better. The military's paramount mission of winning the wars assigned to it by civilian elites becomes deeply confused with its public relations face. In what other world than the U.S.-centric and discursively limited one does this view of what anthropology can accomplish within the military make sense?

As informants become colleagues and allies in research and their voices become more integral to our conversations, such arguments will hopefully lose their force, and the larger project of an anthropology at work against the harms and injustice of our contemporary world will continue to grow and make a difference.

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This essay contributes an excellent and insightful overview of engaged anthropology to date; I applaud what is said and also suggest a further dimension: engaged anthropologists. Why distinguish engaged anthropologists from engaged anthropology? Because anthropologists as human beings, citizens, and in other roles often become engaged in ways that go beyond our discipline as well as engage it with the world.

To illustrate, consider a simple two-by-two table. One dimension is "Anthropology plus and minus" and the other is "Anthropologist plus and minus." Thus, we have four combinations.

Anthropology	plus	minus
Anthropologist	plus	minus

1. *Anthropologist plus/anthropology minus.* "Minus" is misleading, but in this combination, the discipline is emphasized less than the contribution of the person. Johnetta Cole is a superb example. Johnetta is indeed an anthropologist by training and orientation, but she has contributed strongly beyond anthropology as a college president, public intellectual, and brilliant commentator and speaker in a wide spectrum of contexts that transcend the discipline of anthropology. She as a person who draws on and deploys a much wider repertory than that offered by our discipline.

2. *Anthropology plus/anthropologist plus.* Here both the person and the discipline are emphasized. When doing fieldwork with the Muslim movement Muhammadiya in Indonesia, I was asked by a tribunal, "What is your religion?" I replied, "My religion is anthropology (ilmu Kebudayaan)." I affirmed a disciplinary identity rather than a conventionally religious identity, or rather I categorized a discipline as a religion of sorts; that is, I claimed to be devoted to ethnography as opposed to espousing some particular religious belief. Here I emphasized a disciplinary identity as part of my own identity.

3. *Anthropology plus/anthropologist minus.* The Human Terrain System employs 405 persons who are "embedded" with military units in Afghanistan. These persons reportedly follow an anthropological approach to research on local contexts, yet only five of the 405 are reported to be anthropologists. Here the discipline rather than the person's training or professional or private identity is emphasized.

4. *Anthropology minus/anthropologist minus.* I served as chair of the faculty senate of the university where I work. The 3,000 faculty whom I represented come from many disciplines and professions in 14 schools ranging from medicine and law to arts and sciences. Neither my discipline nor my professional identity as an "anthropologist" played much of a role in my 3 years as chair any more than did the discipline or identity

of my predecessor, a microbiologist. For each of us, the key considerations were governance; issues including curricula, economics, and ethics; relations to the legislature, etc. It so happened that we came from different cultural backgrounds as well as disciplines (he is a Yorkshire, U.K., native), but this mattered little compared to the mechanics and politics of both the university and the state. I had to deal with these, for example, in order to obtain a legislative appropriation that continues to result in millions of dollars in tuition reductions for out-of-state, including international, graduate and professional students.

Of course, there are gradations between plus and minus. Here is an example that might be termed *anthropology moderate/anthropologist moderate* in that discipline and disciplinary identity played a modest role in a person's "engagement." Here, the task was to internationalize a state university that was largely state and regional in focus. I undertook this task as a director of international programs. My nine-step plan entailed numerous program initiatives, including constructing an 83,000-square-foot building to house them. This was made possible by a statewide bond package that was voted in unanimously by all 100 counties of the state and that resulted in building on 16 campuses and many community colleges. My contribution drew moderately and occasionally or subliminally on anthropology and experience as an anthropologist, but neither aspect was or could be prominent in the effort because the focus was sharply on the overarching goal of "internationalizing."

What, then, can either anthropology or the anthropologist contribute to engagement? My impression is that the single strongest asset is holism. Holism includes an awareness of broader and immediate contexts and a certain agility in dealing with contexts. However, holism must be trumped by engagement if, in fact, engagement is the objective. The engaged anthropologist, like any other engaged human, has to focus on goals and means, which includes determining when and where anthropology is enriching and when it is not. For example, ethnography is often not plausible because action is needed quickly and observation must be curtailed or be included as part of the action at best. Also, leadership may require setting aside anthropological proclivities to look and listen rather than engage and change. The distinction between anthropology and anthropologist reminds us of both tension and productive interplay between our discipline and the engaged practitioner.

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Low and Merry's article set me thinking about the borders between engagement and disengagement and how the margins housing "activism" mark it as distinct from whatever unac-

tivism (passivism?) might be called. As I work on a large historical project connecting various anthropological research projects during the Cold War to the political economy in which this research was embedded, I come to see common notions of "engagement" and "disengagement" as distinctions that can decrease in utility as historical distance increases. Just as most British ethnographers working under colonial authorities in the early- to mid-twentieth century did not self-conceive themselves as primarily engaged with the dominant processes of colonialism, many anthropologists in the recent past were funded for research that appeared removed from direct "engagement" (in the ways we frequently consider many applied projects to be "engaged"), yet when the larger political economic forces are considered, many of these projects had their own engagements in ways that are seldom considered.

Some of these connections are as tenuous as the general shifts in funds to study languages and culture regions of pressing interest to American "national security" as political forces dump funds for a wide range of study in particular geopolitical areas of interest to American foreign policy. These political forces garner attention when they fund obviously more directly engaged things such as counterinsurgency research, but they also fund less directly engaged things such as obscure kinship analysis, art forms, or myths in regions of future geographical interest in ways that add to the brain trust. The macrotrends funding one geographic region over another rise and fall with geopolitical shifts, and these shifts produce differing stocks of scholars whose geographic expertise is an artifact of geopolitical interests in ways that can be seen in the shift in funds for language study over the decades as politically driven waves have shifted from Russian and Spanish to Farsi, Urdu, and Arabic. In some sense, the funding of even the most obscurely theoretical research is enmeshed in a political economy that dictates these funding trends regardless of how directly removed from political policy their work is (Price 2003). But there were also many other projects in which anthropologists unwittingly directly engaged in political work that they did not conceive of as "engagement" for reasons ranging from being lied to by funding sources (Price 2007) to disciplinary political naivete (Geertz 1995; Nader 1997).

I would not argue that distinctions between engagement and nonengagement do not have some utility; I would instead raise questions about how clearly such delineations can be made. Perhaps disengagement is not possible insofar as whatever an anthropology of neutrality or disengagement is, it is an anthropology engaged in supporting the status quo.

In a similar way, "activism" needs some unpacking. "Activism" is a loaded term, and exactly what is and is not activism is not clear. I suspect that activism is only the name we give to those opposing policies and programs undertaken by those with power; it is rare to hear the term used for anthropologists working in the interests of powerful organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary

Fund, or the Central Intelligence Agency, though these roles logically can and do exist. This same dynamic was found in the early twentieth century, when Madison Grant's "racial science" was viewed part of the nonactivist status quo and Franz Boas's research was considered to be an activist science. Boas was not advocating his position any more than Grant was advocating his, yet Boas is considered an activist because his position threatened the racialized stratification justified with Grant's foolishness. Activism per se has nothing to do with the quality of one's work (these standards are generally measured by such criteria as standards or reliability, validity, etc.); it has to do with opposition to power. Answers to questions of whether or not anthropologists should be activists depend on how amenable to change "power" is in a given situation.

The "institutional pressures connected with promotion, tenure, and access to funding" discussed by Low and Merry significantly influence what is and is not considered "activism." The authors correctly observe that the pressures regulating tenure, promotion and funding "emphasize writing in arcane theoretical terms rather than in forms that are more amenable to popular audiences"; and I would add that the more arcane the writing, the further it is likely to be from engaged forms of activism.

The question is not whether or not anthropologists should "engage"; we are all engaging in some way or another. I fully realize that when I research and write about anthropology and military and intelligence agencies, I am engaging with the Pentagon, the CIA, the public, critics, and others. For me, the fundamental issues begin with being clear about the political issues raised by any work we undertake and taking steps to see that, whatever our political position, ethical standards of the discipline and met and upheld.

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Most of the authors in this collection see a continuity in anthropology between the rapport that allows fieldwork to occur and a political stance in favor of the community of study. The primary sense of engagement detailed here is in a status sense downward. For the most part, we find an educated, more powerful anthropologist "witnessing," "giving voice," or "advocating" for the less powerful. Thus, a few kinds of scenarios dominate the discussion. The first involves a marginalized community at some stage of organization against the encroachment of state and corporate power. This engagement often results if not in strategic victories then in tactical delays, where a rough balance between forces can be struck, sometimes resulting in the de facto or de jure development of a "community" NGO as a "recognized person" in the struggle (Herzfeld 2010 tracks just such a situation). The second involves how "traditional" forms of inequalities have been sharpened and even made lethal under the changes wrought by global capitalism and the ethical-political difficulties this situation poses for the ethnographer (e.g., Ali 2010). A third kind investigates how the funding of research interests highlights and makes sharper extant divisions within a society, especially at a moment when the term *culture* has been invested with extraordinary explanatory power in several discourses outside of anthropology (Spencer 2010 and to a lesser extent González 2010 are in this vein).

Of course, there exists a very different form of engagement in anthropology: instead of the anthropologist going literally or figuratively abroad and serving (heroically or no) another community, we do not need to look far back in the history of the discipline to find anthropologists, after finding dysfunction in their communities of study, suggesting an engaged response completely at odds with the tone in this issue. Turnbull's grim recommendation for the Ix, for example, at the end of *The Mountain People*, or Jules Henry's devastating critique of the U.S. family in *Culture against Man* are examples of strongly antirelativist stances in the largely disengaged period in Low and Merry's epochalization of the anthropology.

On the other hand, other anthropologists have come home, after studying some of the variety of human life, and find, in Mauss's phrasing, that they have "great possessions to defend." In the recent past, some of these have become public intellectuals but in a way that most of the AAA would rather not know about. Thus, some of the most active "scholarly" voices in the so-called culture wars in the United States, such as Stanley Kurtz (a stalwart for the *National Review*), claim to have PhD's in anthropology and expressly use their fieldwork experience in service of their restrictive understanding of, for example, marriage or the family. Howell's (2010) reading of the Norwegian academy, in the wake of Wikan's very controversial book *Generous Betrayal*, also hints at this problem.

Engagement, then, is clearly most problematic when it looks to be potentially damaging to those to whom we feel a debt as part of our ethnographic experience. The Human Terrain System (HTS), not surprisingly, comes in for very severe criticism in this regard. The refining of the means of imperial violence through the enlightened application of "local knowledge" is almost perfectly calculated to offend ethnographic sensibilities. As a discipline, however, we have not used the example of HTS very principally. Is, for example, all "upward" collaboration with the powerful suspect? World Health Organization policies have been severely critiqued by anthropologists, such as Jim Kim. These policies have resulted at times in appalling levels of death and suffering. Similarly, many anthropological careers have been made in the World Bank, whose influence in many areas of the world has been at best checkered. Should collaboration with these organizations be viewed as more or less suspect than those few careers currently connected with the HTS? If not, why not?

Some scholars find their way out of these conundrums

through the importation of a value system outside of anthropology per se. A good example cited by Low and Merry is Paul Farmer, who imports an explicit Catholic social activism/liberation theology admonition to "stand with the poor." If ethnography teaches us anything, though, it is how both poverty and power live in concrete social historical circumstances mostly as relative measures, and the world produces situations aplenty pitting relatively poor and powerless populations against one another, with victim and victimizer able to transform into one another with frightening rapidity. In this important collection, Low and Merry have provided a partial catalog of the diversity of the engagements of anthropology. Precisely because of its current positive valence, however, "engagement" itself needs to be critically interrogated. A necessary step in this process should be greater room to discuss those engagements in the history of the discipline and in the current moment, which will likely make anthropologists uncomfortable.

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Is it possible to carry out scientifically rigorous and politically committed research that uncovers the mechanisms of domination and contributes to social justice? Or should the production of anthropological knowledge defend a neutral scientific standpoint?

These questions continue to be central to anthropology in the twenty-first century, especially for those who argue for the need to reinforce the quest for the humanist ethos and search for social justice that has long characterized the discipline. At a time when neoliberal globalization has deepened structural inequalities across the world and contributed to polarization and violence in postcolonial societies and the so-called third world, anthropologists working in these contexts face the need to position themselves and make decisions about the direction and ethics of their research. Extreme cases of these dilemmas are those of anthropological collaborations in contexts of military occupation and those of activist research to support AIDS patients in South Africa. In some ways these two examples are poles apart and demand different responses in terms of a committed anthropology; for these reasons they cannot necessarily be judged according to the same standards. These are some of the concerns that run through the debate about committed anthropology in Setha M. Low and Sally Engle Merry's introduction to this special issue of *Current Anthropology*. Their essay revives one of the foundational debates of anthropology, namely, that concerning the ethics of anthropological research and a false dichotomy between scientific research and commitment.

Low and Merry reconstruct the genealogy of social and cultural anthropology in the United States by highlighting key moments, including the Boasian tradition against racism and fascism to the silences imposed by McCarthyism and anticommunism to the current moment, which appears to have given critical anthropology a renewed impulse. They argue that committed anthropology has many variants, including critical anthropology, activist anthropology, and advocacy. At the same time, they point to what they identify as some of the central dilemmas facing committed research, particularly those referring to ethics and neutrality and the risk of reproducing colonial positions, of taking sides and losing a critical perspective on power, and of providing firsthand knowledge to the military in an attempt to mitigate the negative effects of war. In their conclusions they underline the tensions and challenges facing committed anthropology today. In the following paragraphs I highlight some of the themes I consider central to the challenges of committed, politically positioned anthropology in Latin America and more generally in postcolonial societies.

1. *The nature of research and its effect: what for and for whom?* In Latin America the development of a critical anthropology linked to the struggle of indigenous peoples dates from the 1960s, as does the development of a social science committed to popular struggles, inspired by the contributions of dependency theorists and Latin American Marxists such as Orlando Fals Borda. These established the basis for an anthropology committed to social actors as indeed is the case today with activist research that supports the struggle of indigenous peoples for territory and autonomy. The questions of what research is for and whom it should serve have challenged the notion of "neutral" research. At the same time, to adopt an engaged position within a given field should not imply a noncritical view of all kinds of power relations.

2. *The decolonization of anthropology and the search for alternative knowledge and epistemologies.* The critique of the coloniality of power (*colonialidad del poder*; Anibal Quijano 2000), that is, the questioning of anthropological production and the applicability of theory derived from Western models to colonial and postcolonial societies, perhaps signals one of the major challenges facing anthropological practice today, particularly regarding the analysis of cultural diversity and of the state. Such positions have acquired new strength through the emergent role of indigenous intellectuals who defend alternative models of societies and who question the discursive colonialisms from which their realities have traditionally been analyzed and imagined. Such positions are clear, for example, in the production of the Nasa people in the Cauca region of Colombia. Current situated debates from different positions of gender, race, and class reveal the challenges of discussing essentialism and universalism from alternative frameworks of reference, something that in turn also affects the nature of anthropological research itself.

3. *Challenges for a collaborative and dialogic anthropology.* These recent developments generate new dilemmas and challenges for those who believe it is not possible to carry out neutral research in contexts of cultural diversity when power

differentials are brought into relief and where actors take a stance vis-à-vis a range of different demands. Such contexts oblige us to deepen our dialogic strategies and our collaborative methods of research, taking into account the constitutive tensions and contradictions of these processes, as Charles Hale has rightly observed. Engaged collaborative practice that fights for social justice constitutes the ground for new theoretical insights gained through dialogue between actors that in turn contribute to these alternative forms of knowledge construction and cultural modeling.

Fortunately, committed anthropology appears to be gaining ground and legitimacy in a range of different national contexts, albeit remaining something of a countercurrent to prevailing orthodoxies. The essay by Setha Low and Sally Merry represents an important contribution in this respect.

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Discussion of engagement raises several issues, some of which cut to the core of anthropology as a scholarly tradition and as an applied field with social concerns and practical utility. Past debates about engagement have tended to revolve around questions of objectivity, responsibility, and partisanship. These were the focus of an academic exchange in *Current Anthropology* more than a decade ago. On one side, representing the pure science or positivist perspective, Roy D'Andrade dispassionately maintained that anthropologists must avoid all forms of moral bias and cleave to the objective path. The engagement of anthropologists, he argued, should be in the construction of falsifiable models of human behavior. Accordingly, he asserted, "Science works not because it produces unbiased accounts but because its accounts are objective enough to be proved or disproved no matter what anyone wants to be true" (D'Andrade 1995:404).

On the other side was Nancy Scheper-Hughes, who proposed a perspective that viewed knowledge as a means to a moral end. Asserting the subjectivist view that because all data are inherently biased by the social origins and structural positions of science and scientists, true objectivity, although socially useful in making claims for authority, is ultimately unattainable, rigorous scientific methodology notwithstanding. Consequently, she stated, anthropologists should engage in moral criticism and advocacy based on an "explicit ethical orientation to 'the [ethnographic] other'" (Scheper-Hughes 1995:418). Thus, she called for the development of "an active, politically committed, morally engaged anthropology" (Scheper-Hughes 1995:415). This orientation, keenly aware of the tarnished past of the discipline as well as its current moral ambiguity (Price 2008*b*; Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and van Willigen 2006; Singer 2008), is characterized by a belief in scholarly accountability in a sharply conflicted and decidedly inegalitarian world in which neutrality in the production of pure knowledge is a form of taking sides.

In their approach to this ongoing debate, Low and Merry seek "to broaden the range of what [is considered] engagement, showing how pervasive engagement is within anthropological scholarship." Rather than an outlier, they stress, engagement is deeply embedded in standard anthropological practice, including the basic commitments we make to our informants, the ways we find to support the communities where do our work, and our efforts to involve students directly in real-world research and applied initiatives. While Low and Merry are to be commended both for organizing the Wenner-Gren workshop that led to this provocative set of articles and for their thoughtful overview of engaged anthropology, reading their introduction raises a number of questions. Is their net cast too broadly? In light of this wide-ranging review, can it be said that a distinct tradition of engagement exists in anthropology? If so, what distinguishes engagement as an approach to knowledge and application within the discipline? And, more specifically, if engagement and the commitments it implies are so central to discipline, why are we, during an era purportedly informed by lessons of the U.S. war in Vietnam, now producing anthropologists who not only participate in programs such as the Human Terrain System (HTS) but defend it as objective, reasonable, and appropriate? As an embedded employee of the HTS in Iraq, certainly an anthropologist could gather data on perceived health care needs that are objective enough to be proved or disproved as accurate accounts of popular understandings. But doing so willfully ignores how U.S. military and economic power "have contributed to the degradation of the public health system and [the] health and well-being of Iraqis" (Harding and Libal 2010:78). In other words, in addition to the reasons the executive board of the AAA concluded that HTS involvement was a problematic application of anthropological expertise (e.g., inability to ensure informed consent, use of HTS information by the military to target individuals for military operations), from an engaged perspective such work contributes to the exercise of power in the cause of social injustice and social suffering.

While work of many kinds is of value, including all of the anthropological efforts cited by Low and Merry, the problem with an overly broad definition of engagement is that it obscures the most salient features of this orientation, and these are revealing, critiquing, and confronting the unjust use of power. As noted in the 1963 inaugural issue of the journal *Transaction* (now *Society*), those who embrace engaged anthropology believe that the social scientist studying contemporary problems and the complex relationships among modern peoples knows that he/she can no longer discharge his/her social responsibilities by retreating into ivory-tower neutrality. As numerous studies, including in recent years, of the growing literatures on globalization, neoliberalism, global warming, health and social disparities, war and political violence, and AIDS make clear, human problems are urgent,

divisions between social strata are growing, the contradictions of the global economy are multiple, and the social consequences that lie ahead are ominous.

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This introduction, and this special issue of *Current Anthropology*, identifies a pivot point in the development of anthropology in the United States concerning the public purpose of anthropology. We live in a world that has a myriad of words, and it is rare to read an article that truly makes a substantive difference. This is one such article. Its importance lies in pinpointing a moment of change and in identifying diverse trends and weaving them into a credible whole, making it possible to see the overall pattern as well as the constituent parts, and bringing conceptual clarity to a diverse and changing process.

In this commentary I consider the issues raised by Low and Merry primarily in terms of my own discipline of archeology. The archeology of engagement has developed in two broad directions: in critical reflection on conceptual and methodological issues and in case studies that are shaped by an active engagement with the communities with whom archaeologists intersect. Over the last two decades, archaeological engagement has been most active in the repatriation of human remains (Fforde, Hubert, and Turnbull 2002), the protection of indigenous cultural and intellectual property (Nicholas and Bannister 2004), the construction of identity (Ouzman 2005; Shepherd 2003), archaeological ethics (Zimmerman, Vitelli, and Hollowell-Zimmer 2003), and collaborative practice (Chilton 2009; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008).

Recently, discussions of archaeological ethics have segued into an active interest in human rights, structural violence, and social justice often as part of a more general concern with ethical globalization (e.g., Badran 2007; Bernbeck 2008; Smith 2007). In many parts of the world, people are more concerned with the challenges of day-to-day living than with caring for cultural heritage, and the archaeologists who work with these people are engaging with matters, such as social and cultural rights, that are beyond the traditional remit of the discipline. The critical change is a movement from archaeology plus engagement to archaeology as engagement. While the aims of the former are primarily archaeological, the aims of the latter are primarily social or political. The main aim of the award-winning Nelspoort project in central South Africa, for example, was to help street children gain desperately needed employment and self-worth (S. Ouzman, e-mail, March 22, 2010). Culture heritage was a means to this end, not the end in itself.

The challenges of today are very different to those of the past. One of the principal areas of concern for engaged archaeology is cultural heritage in zones of conflict. Today, wars are less about territory per se than they are about cultural dominance. As military interventions increasingly target cultural heritage as a proxy (see Bevan 2006), new challenges arise. Current debates concern not only the physical protection of cultural heritage but also the ethics of archaeological employment in the military and the complexities of ownership of cultural objects located in conflict zones.

Some new challenges arise from changing relationships. Low and Merry comment on the trend from people being the subjects of research to becoming collaborators, co-researchers, and colleagues. This is certainly true of archaeology, and this collaboration has engendered profound changes. Isaacson and Ford (2005), for example, call for archaeologists to commit to a shared future by engaging with the daily challenges that face the people with whom they work.

> If archaeologists can bridge the barriers that traditionally separate private and professional lives, the future of the Indigenous community in which they work becomes a future in which they have a vested personal interest. If archaeologists see the Indigenous people with whom they work as more than just subjects of research, then archaeologists can no longer be silent observers to the problems Indigenous communities face every day. (Isaacson and Ford 2005:361–362)

Such deep community engagement is injecting new energy and ideas into archeology and changing aims, methods, and practice. Guided by a profound commitment to the needs and agendas of community peoples, this engaged archaeology is as liable to produce a press release or an opinion article in a newspaper as an academic paper or a consultancy report. It is generating archaeologists who consciously take on the role of social critic as they actively work to shape a better world for the people with whom they work and, through this, for themselves.

New methods bring new dilemmas. Archaeologists deeply engaged with communities may be called to act well beyond their disciplinary comfort zone. They may be asked to write the history of a community, develop funding applications or community management plans, or help people obtain medical care or access to education, all of which extends beyond their archaeological training. While the undertaking of such tasks provides much-needed assistance, it can raise questions around competence and purpose.

Finally, as archaeologies and anthropologies of engagement integrate a human rights framework into practice, pressing questions are raised. How can the communicative capacities of an interconnected world promote social justice or ethical globalization? Is a values-led globalization even possible? What changes are required of universities and other institutions to effectively address the ethical and moral challenges of a contemporary world (Robinson 2003)? This issue of *Cur-*

rent Anthropology provides some answers and some new questions as it defines and precipitates an important turning point.

Reply

All the commentators stress the importance of our introduction and this collection in valorizing the role of engagement in contemporary anthropology. They also appreciate our emphasis on the multifaceted nature of engagement. Several commentators point out that both engagement and activism are complex concepts not easily unpacked or distinguished from closely related activities such as advocacy. They value our historical analysis that demonstrates that engagement is not new to anthropology but has been a concern running through the field since its founding. Claire Smith shows that there are close parallels to work presented from social and cultural anthropology in contemporary archaeology and historical preservation practice. María Teresa Sierra points out that an engaged anthropology committed to social justice and collaboration with indigenous peoples has been developed even further in Latin America than in the United States. On the other hand, she is also concerned with decolonizing the U.S. domination of anthropological knowledge that can take place only through greater collaboration and dialogue regardless of how "engaged" a project might be. We wonder whether a more global anthropology would address this problem because even a shift to a more engaged paradigm does not solve the North/South inequalities within the discipline. Nonetheless, in the collection of articles and the commentaries, there seems to be a growing consensus that anthropology should emphasize engagement and its links with past engaged and applied work.

Intriguingly, there is virtually no discussion in either the articles or the comments about the old distinction between the inherent conflicts of objectivity and ethical commitment in anthropological work. While other concerns were voiced, such as the tension between universal standards exemplified in human rights discourse and the support for cultural specificity that Kamran Ali discusses, there is little discussion of the necessity of a disengaged science that does not make value judgments or take a political or moral stance. This issue no longer seems relevant to these authors and commentators.

Instead, the commentators point out that engagement is about politics and power, an invaluable point that was not brought out as clearly as it should have been in our introduction. Several commentators point out that engagement is connected to ideas of social justice and does not simply refer to being embedded in a contradictory and complex social system. One can be engaged with the World Bank or with the U.S. military, for example, just as much as one is engaged with a community group facing eviction for urban renewal. Yet these two situations are politically quite different and align

the anthropologist with different power regimes. Several commentators urge us to be more explicit about our politics as we become more involved in public and social issues. Catherine Lutz worries that even an engaged anthropology can lose its critical edge if practiced without attention to the webs of power in which the anthropologist is immersed. She cautions us to consider carefully what we are engaged in and who we are relating to, especially when working for the military, advertisers, and manufacturers. Merrill Singer advocates seeing engagement in terms of social justice and suggests that we are casting our net too widely. Instead, we should focus on improving the lot of the marginal and the poor as the hallmark and definition of engagement. While the forms of engagement might differ—from political activism as a citizen mentioned by James Peacock to anthropological critiques of social inequality—our commentators encourage us to take a stand.

As individuals and as citizens, however, we are strongly committed to ideas of social justice and to forms of anthropological scholarship that challenge forms of power that benefit some and harm or exclude others. But we also recognize that finding the politically and morally unambiguous space from which to make the claim that one is defending social justice is difficult. Things may change, so that the institution that looked like it was promoting social justice at one time turns out to be repressing it at another. The AAA executive board has condemned the Human Terrain System used in Afghanistan to gather anthropological data for the U.S. military, for example, but in the 1940s, many anthropologists worked to help the United States war effort. Do these two forms of anthropological aid to military activities differ because one was seen as a "bad" war and the other a "good" war? Does the former seem opposed to social justice and the latter to promote it? Yet virtually every war is justified to some extent by claims to promote social justice while its effects are widely destructive to the poor who fall in the way of the armed forces. Clearly, there are many challenges to identifying a fixed and specific space to stand from which social justice is readily recognized and understood.

Despite these difficulties, we agree that examining power relations is a critical dimension of engaged anthropology. There will never be a simple recipe for determining social justice and taking sides in engagement. Instead, the specificity of situations and the importance of a broad contextual analysis of power relations are as essential to an engaged anthropology as to all forms of anthropological research and writing. Only through such an examination can a politically informed engagement develop that is committed to social justice. Our understanding of engagement cannot be separated from social justice, despite the difficulties of being sure, in a variety of places and times, of knowing what that is.

Another criticism of our introduction commented on by Mark Goodale is our ambivalence in the way that we write about engagement and our position that engaged practice includes a wide array of practices. He seems to have been

looking for a clear blueprint for what engagement should be and did not find it. But we cast a broad net and did not preach a "standard" form intentionally in that we wanted more anthropologists to be able identify their contribution within this rubric. This broad definition also opens us up to what David Price points out, that we might seem politically naive and that we did not adequately consider distinctions such as the delineation between engagement and nonengagement, where the decision not to be engaged could be the more politically activist rather than supporting the status quo. His critique is well taken, as is his warning that the term "activism" needs some unpacking, especially with regard to power, also discussed by other commentators. His conclusion is not whether anthropologists should be engaged, because "we are all engaging in some way or another," but with what political issues we engage with and whether they conform to the ethical standards of the discipline. We hoped to be more clear on this issue and will certainly address the boundaries and borderlands of engagement further in our future work.

—Setha Low and Sally Engle Merry

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The Anthropologist as Social Critic

Working toward a More Engaged Anthropology

by Ida Susser

From early in the epidemic, AIDS has been an area where anthropologists have fought for an activist perspective. Here, I examine social justice and ethical issues that have been raised internationally with respect to AIDS research. I explore the political dilemmas, the real, much-discussed crisis of legitimacy for anthropologists in societies where they are not citizens, and the extent to which anthropologists have the obligation or the right to voice criticism. Drawing on ethnographic research in southern Africa since 1992, I discuss the interface of research with advocacy and developing links with feminist and human rights groups. Interpreting and helping to reinforce the demands of grassroots leadership informed by cutting-edge progressive scientists is an emerging area where anthropologists may find a legitimate public voice for social criticism.

The questions addressed in this article have emerged from research on women and HIV/AIDS in many different settings in both the global North and the global South. While the content of the research has been discussed elsewhere (Susser 2009), here I consider the issues of engagement and the dilemmas of involvement raised by the research. I review my own different experiences of engagement in research leading up to this work and discuss theoretical approaches to engaged research from which they draw.

In the early 1980s, I was interviewing homeless people in New York City and was confronted with the new threat of HIV/AIDS (Susser and Gonzalez 1992). I had also worked in a barrio in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, where women and men were struggling to protect themselves and their families from the toxic fumes of the Union Carbide plant (Susser 1985, 1991). In both New York City and Puerto Rico, poor people were suddenly faced with the threat of HIV/AIDS; it was in this situation that I began research on resources and methods that women could use to protect themselves from the epidemic (Susser 2001; Susser and Gonzalez 1992; Susser and Kreniske 1997). In each case, I worked with other researchers and local people to develop interventions, from self-made videos on AIDS among men in the city's homeless shelters to community mobilization in Puerto Rico. The ethnographic research involved documenting and analyzing this engagement with respect to issues of gender and social movements.

Most of the women with whom I worked were poor and

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homeless and, at least in the popular press, invisible (Farmer 2003; Susser and Gonzalez 1992). Treatment was nonexistent and protection seemed the only route possible. From this on-the-ground approach, it seemed that collective action on the community level might be an important factor in empowering women to take precautions and to begin to assert their rights to safe sex (Susser 2001, 2002; Susser and Stein 2000). I helped to develop a proposal for an early community study in Durban and the rural areas of Kwazulu-Natal, drawing from my experiences with community organization in Puerto Rico (Abdool Karim and Morar 1994). Although the questions emerged from my work in Puerto Rico, the proposal was rewritten by Quarraisha Karim. For political reasons (an academic boycott of the apartheid regime), I had not been to South Africa since I was a child, and obtaining and managing research funding in South Africa was complicated. At the time, the apartheid government was still in control, and we had to submit the proposal through the Luthuli Institute, a human rights center in South Africa.

Several crucial questions have guided my research on HIV/AIDS in southern Africa. The questions were always framed in terms of an activist approach to ethnography and in the search for pathways to change in a challenging era. First, I hoped to explore the extent of women' s autonomy or the spaces available to women for action and instances of adaptability and flexibility among families and households (Leacock 1981; Susser 2009). Second, I searched for examples of local mobilization and examined how the politics of HIV/AIDS on the local level might affect policies at other levels. Third, I aimed to analyze government action and to evaluate its effect on women and men's collective action on the local and national level. This aim was based on the hypothesis that gov-

ernment cooperation and support is an almost essential component of the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. Without government support for national campaigns and the widespread distribution of crucial resources, it seemed possible that a population could be literally sentenced to die (Campbell 2003). Fourth, I aimed to explore the significance of international links among protest groups from the local to the transnational and how they might bring international pressure to bear on the state. Throughout this research (Susser 2009), I was concerned with the ways in which ideas of gender and AIDS are intimately tied to the political economy of the state and ideologies of national transformation within the global sphere. From this perspective, the generation of internationally linked social movements becomes ever more central.

Outsider/Insider Engagement

As neither a South African nor a complete outsider, I had a somewhat ambiguous standing from which to address crucial and controversial issues. In both South Africa and the United States, HIV/AIDS, sexuality, women's place, and global corporate investment are highly explosive topics. In addition, growing inequalities have generated sharp divisions that are buttressed by identity politics. I believe that a global and comparative perspective helps to clarify a progressive approach and allows an engaged anthropologist to place critique in a broader context.

Nevertheless, no matter the theoretical framework, it has been extremely difficult to think through the role of anthropologist as social critic in a country where one is not living or is not a citizen. As mentioned above, many of the issues I research concern the lives and deaths of millions of people whether or not my specific work is of any direct usefulness. Many points that emerge in the course of the research involve critiques of the government, health professionals, and even activists. I have found it much easier to engage in social criticism of the U.S government—because I live in and am a citizen of the United States—than of the South African government, especially because South Africa is a new hopeful democracy. In South Africa, as earlier in Puerto Rico, it seemed even more important than in New York City to work with progressive, engaged members of civil society in order to figure out what research might be useful to them and also to work within the local context rather than as an outsider imposing an external critique.

Nevertheless, the African National Congress (ANC), which came to govern South Africa, represented a liberation movement that succeeded against a fascist racist system and was hailed throughout the world for its unprecedented achievement of a bloodless transition to a nonracial society. In the past decade, the entrenchment of leadership and the participation of South African politicians and the business elite in the global corporate arena has created new divisions among previously revolutionary leaders and has also been accom-

panied by the devastating epidemic of AIDS. The changing interests of the leadership and the new challenges for civil society have been particularly difficult to confront.

From an anthropological perspective, universalistic human rights approaches have been criticized from a number of points of view, and such criticisms have been articulated by conflicting approaches of grassroots activists. In the work on AIDS and heterosexual transmission, for example, a universalistic approach that relied on legal definitions of, for example, the advocacy of "replacement feeding" (and the selling of formula) might be less appropriate in some situations than the advocacy of the mother/child dyad and breast-feeding, based on the principle that a feminist perspective that prioritizes a healthy woman will also lead to healthy children (Susser 2009). Similarly, feminist activists often seemed less active with respect to AIDS treatment and prevention than with other issues. In general, of course, the funding and sponsorship of many grassroots nongovernmental organizations were significant research concerns.

Although the analysis in this research is based on fieldwork and the systematic tracing of particular events across space and time, in order not to criticize from without, the journey and the perspective taken derived from my own experience. I focused on southern Africa but at the same time drew into the analysis significant events that have taken place in the United States, as well as discussions of the transformations in global capital. In addition, I developed a comparative analysis of the ways in which national policies in South Africa and the United States frame women's chances for survival.

It was during the transition, as South Africa began to emerge from apartheid, that I rethought my research around heterosexual negotiations and community mobilization around AIDS protection in the effort to contribute to AIDS prevention in southern Africa. Quarraisha Karim, myself, and several other people submitted a proposal to the International Center for Research on Women. It was in relation to this research that I made my first trip back to South Africa. In the course of this work, I met Dr. Nkosozana Zuma, who was one of the principal investigators for the original proposal. When she became the minister for health in South Africa, she appointed Quarraisha Karim (the main principal investigator in this study) as the commissioner for AIDS in South Africa. I have returned to South Africa many times since then and have become involved in both anthropological research and training with respect to the social issues surrounding women and HIV/AIDS.

In 1996, I asked Richard Lee, who had worked for three decades among the Ju'/hoansi of the Kalahari, to work with me to develop a training program in social science research concerned with AIDS. Over the past decade, Lee and I worked with faculty and students at the University of Namibia to conduct research in Namibia and Botswana among the Ju'/hoansi and also among men and women in other areas.

Whose Voices?

As noted above, since 1996, I have worked in Namibia and South Africa and elsewhere to develop ethnographic training programs on AIDS in social context. Sibongile Mkhize was a participant in an ethnographic training program that I helped to develop in Durban that was modeled on the Namibia field site. She went on to write her own story, which was published as part of this research. I worked with her in an effort to bridge the gap between a simple presentation of the voices of women without education, which risked fostering a stereotypical image and merely repeating their narrative in my own words, and illustrating the multiple hierarchical transformations that might ensue from my rewriting. Sibongile has an M.A. and is working toward a doctoral degree in anthropology. She is now a senior researcher at Health Systems Trust, a South African research organization. Sibongile Mkhize's courage and her intellectual insight, as she describes her own family infected and affected by AIDS, dispel many of the stereotypes about stigma, culture, and women as victims that have characterized discussions of Africa and AIDS in both the research literature and the mass media.

Ethnographic Methods: Paradigm and Purpose

This section outlines the roots of the engaged anthropology that I have tried to pursue in my own scholarship. This is not to claim that it is the only tradition of engagement but rather to argue that engagement is well established in the field. While AIDS provided a particular impetus for activism and many anthropologists may trace their engagement from such a specific impetus, in fact, the pursuit of social justice in many contexts, although waxing and waning over the decades, has been a strong force in anthropology, if not a central tenet.

In the effort to address questions of transformation in the ethnographic context, the extended case method, also known as situational or event analysis, was one important resource. Initiated by Max Gluckman in his classic analysis of "a social situation in modern Zululand" (Gluckman 2002), systematically described by Jaap Van Velsen (Van Velsen 1967) and much revisited (Burawoy 1998; Vincent 1978, 1986; Werbner 1984), such a processual analysis lays a solid foundation to analyze social change in the global era.

Confronted with the labor migration of men from African pastoral populations to the new urban centers in the 1940s and 1950s in what is now known as the Zambian Copperbelt, Gluckman, Van Velsen, Victor Turner, and others recognized that they could no longer rely on a single interpretive or symbolic understanding of a culture. Conducting research in both urban and rural areas transformed by colonial interests in the mines, the anthropologists were faced with diverse and contradictory values and people who adapted their responses to different situations. The work of the Manchester School emerged in critique of the operational assumption of a single unchanging culture represented in the early work of E. Evans Pritchard and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown.

While the situation for African mine workers was changing and urban-rural migration was a major factor, similar phenomena had been described by Robert Redfield in terms of a more static vision of culture in his urban-rural continuum. I would argue that the context of World War II not only changed the lives and understandings of the African miners but also led many anthropologists to engage more directly with their subjects both in South Africa and in the United States. Under these circumstances, these researchers became aware of the way in which the analysis of conflict or the dramas of crisis and reconciliation could expose the political fault lines and make visible forms of social organization that might not be fully evident in the repetitions of everyday life. In addition, an analysis of unusual rather than customary events might illuminate the directions of future change. However, such research was also representative of an effort to transform society.

In 1940, Godfrey Wilson, the first director of ethnographic research at the Rhodes Livingstone Institute (now the Zambian Institute) on the Copperbelt emphasized the creation of the migrant labor system in the interest of the colonial powers. His research represents the potential for anthropology as social critique. In 1941, after Wilson was fired for political reasons, Max Gluckman, who had been at the Institute as a researcher, became director. Gluckman's perspective, although he highlighted the importance of conflict, carefully specified the political forces for cohesion. Gluckman emphasized the need to posit a theoretical system in equilibrium, in other words, to assume that within a crisis or conflict there would be social mechanisms that would perpetuate or maintain the social system. In a rapidly changing world, such a perspective can literally be understood as more conservative than the notions of an imperial workforce that underlined Wilson's research. Thus, Gluckman categorizes "rituals of rebellion" that, in fact, reinforce the legitimacy of succession and are qualitatively different from efforts at revolutionary change. Similarly, Victor Turner, in his brilliant work *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* (1957), provided a four-part framework for analyzing conflict in terms of a drama that begins with competing factions, goes on to a crisis situation, and is resolved in ways that strengthen and maintain equilibrium. Turner develops this analysis with reference to the conflict over leadership precipitated by unequal relations among chiefs who had access to money to hire laborers and build roads for the British administration (Turner 1957).

As Benjamin Magubane pointed out, after Wilson lost his job, the creation of an urban proletariat by the British empire was never fully acknowledged by the Manchester anthropologists (Magubane 1979). They did, however, provide tools for the analysis of ongoing crises and conflict that have been incorporated into many of the studies of "performance" and "drama" current in anthropological treatises today.

Many of Gluckman's students emphasized the significance

of conflict in the transformations of capitalism (Epstein 1958; Watson 1958). One such student and later colleague, A. L. Epstein, described the battles for labor representation among African mine workers (Epstein 1958). Although the workers were rooted in many different language groups and tribal villages, they recognized common interests in forming a labor union. Epstein demonstrated that extended case analysis—in this case, tracing the mine workers' struggles as well as the responses of the mine owners over time—could be a powerful lens for making visible the constraints of industrial capitalism in a colonial context. From his focus on a mine workers' strike and his emphasis on the self-determination of African miners, we can see that Epstein was concerned with transformative change in the workplace deriving from a Marxist framework that looked for transformative changes in labor (similar to E. P. Thompson 1966). Indeed, lacking an engagement with feminist ideas, Epstein accepted an equilibrium model in his discussion of the family as he talked about miners maintaining customary law in marriage and other matters. It was not only the method but the problem addressed that represented the engagement of the Copperbelt anthropologists.

In the 1930s, U.S. anthropologists were also searching for ways to address issues of social justice emerging from the Great Depression, and many U.S. anthropologists worked for transformative changes (see review by Lewis 1999; Silverman 2007; and works such as Davis, Gardner, and Gardner 2009). Among others who might more easily be recognized as activist anthropologists, Ruth Benedict studied race relations in the U.S. South and, on the basis of this work, published, with Gene Weltfish, a pamphlet on human rights and race that was distributed internationally. As in the Zambian Copperbelt, the problems addressed signal a concern with social justice and an effort to promote transformative change.

This activist perspective, with an emphasis on community partnerships, was reinvented in the 1970s by scholars who were involved in the transformative arenas of the late 1960s (Brodkin 1988; Lewis 1999; Sanjek 1987; Susser 1982). The Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War together precipitated a generation of scholars who turned to the social sciences with the aim of understanding the possibilities and potential for transformative social change. In the United States this was reflected in the Dell Hymes–edited volume *Reinventing Anthropology* (1999), which included an analysis and critique of U.S. imperialism by Mina Caulfield-Davis (1999). It was also represented in the article in *Current Anthropology* in which Kathleen Gough (1968) analyzed the relations of anthropology to imperialism and in Dell Jones's (1970) work with respect to insider anthropology. As an African American anthropologist turning to study the urban United States, Jones was following in the footsteps of W. E. B. DuBois, St. Clair Drake, and many other African American anthropologists concerned with social justice. In the United Kingdom, Talal Asad (1973) brought out *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, where, interestingly for the discussion of engaged anthropology, the life and death of Godfrey Wilson on the Copperbelt is documented.

Such personal and political engagement was also a tenet of feminist ethnography (Bookman and Morgen 1988; Brodkin 1988; Gailey 1998; Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen 1989; Morgen 2002) as well demonstrated in Sandra Morgen's participation in the struggle to save a women's health clinic (Morgen 1988). Gailey writes that one of the defining aspects of feminist methodology is its commitment to engagement. However, many reviews of feminist ethnography since the 1990s do not incorporate this definition. In fact, analyzing representations of gender in terms of postmodern paradigms does not easily fit with a transformative approach to social relations.

Clearly, in confronting a transformed global arena we need to rethink our methods (Burawoy 1998; Marcus 1995). Nowadays, extended case analysis, which traces policies and people from the local to the global, is often labeled a multisited analysis or "the peripatetic translative mapping of brave new worlds" (Marcus 1995:114). However, extended case analysis is more than multisited. It is premised on the expectation that historical processes as well as government policies and corporate funding are crucially connected to everyday events and that these links can to be traced and even explained through ethnographic and archival methods. The Manchester School emphasized history and process so that the links between the sites, people, place, and time were a central aspect of the method (Vincent 1978, 1986). Again, the paradigm and the problems addressed emerged from an engagement that was searching for modes of transformative change. If, as in the idea of "multisited," there was no sense of priority or related processes but simply "translative mapping," then there could be no modus operandi for transformative change. It is for this reason that extended case analysis provides a useful method for an anthropology of engagement that is erased or self-consciously not highlighted in the concept of multisited analysis. As Marcus writes in his description of the multisited method, the approach decenters the "subaltern" or the common referent of much anthropological work and thus moves away from questions of inequality and social justice. As extended case analysis was specifically invented to capture the possibilities for change, it seems particularly appropriate for the study of spaces of action in a rapidly transforming global era (Edelman 1999; Gill 2004; Nash 2001; Schneider and Susser 2003; Susser 1982).

Nevertheless, because situational analysis was also invented to avoid the direct challenge to imperialism incorporated in Godfrey Wilson's formulations, it lacks an explicit framework for analyzing power and inequality. Here, the work of Eleanor Leacock, June Nash, Eric Wolf, Sidney Mintz, and others provides a framework for understanding historical processes of power, class, race, and gender. Gavin Smith (1996) has developed an engaged anthropological perspective based in the same disciplinary tradition.

My own first research (1982) was a study of working-class movements in response to the New York City fiscal crisis in an effort to highlight possibilities for change and also to draw

attention to working-class voices that were expressing a different vision of the future of New York City than that pursued by the bankers, corporate elite, and real estate developers. I drew on earlier engaged research to argue that studying and participating in a social movement was a legitimate approach to social analysis. In fact, inspired by the Manchester School, I argued that the study of the fiscal crisis and the conflicts that such an emergency exposed was one way to discover the underlying class relations in New York City. The impetus for the formation of the Society for the Anthropology of North America (for which I served as founding president) was partially a product of this kind of research. I have reviewed the many important developments in this engaged approach to the anthropology of the United States elsewhere (Susser 1996, 2000).

Because it was clear in the 1970s that industry was leaving New York City, my next research was conducted in Puerto Rico with John Kreniske, again in the analysis of a social movement, this one concerned with environmental pollution and workplace contamination caused by a new Union Carbide plant. Once more, an engaged perspective suggested that we work with the barrio residents who were protesting the plant and then also, with their help, interview the plant managers, regional senators, and the Environmental Quality Administration. In this way, we were able to document major violations by Union Carbide in their exportation of industry a decade earlier than the disaster in Bhopal. The protest movement that we analyzed won a major fine of $250,000 against the company: a Pyrrhic victory, as Union Carbide soon laid off many workers, eventually abandoned the plant, and left behind the pollution. However, the research and findings were designed to work with an engaged community and provided some of the information the community could use in their demands. Meanwhile, we also analyzed changing gender relations and other aspects of social organization with the cooperation of the residents (Susser 1985, 1991).

AIDS and Politics in South Africa

The tradition of engaged anthropology was not invented from scratch in the anthropology of AIDS. However, among anthropologists working in the field of HIV, it became a central rather than a marginal tendency.

In the 1980s it was already absolutely clear to many that HIV/AIDS would become the scourge of Africa and was a threat to most of the rest of the impoverished world. Even then it was obvious that AIDS would eventually follow the well-trodden path of most diseases and disasters and, over time if not immediately, affect the poor and the disadvantaged much more than it would those better off. However, under the new progressive leadership in South Africa in the decade after apartheid, mortality from AIDS has increased dramatically, and the government has been vilified worldwide for its misrepresentation of the epidemic.

In 1990, the Committee for Health in Southern Africa collaborated with doctors in National African Medical Doctors

Association and nurses in South Africa to organize a major conference with the ANC in exile in Maputo, Mozambique. The aim was to plan for health care in the new South Africa and to confront the AIDS epidemic. However, even at this point, reactions to the AIDS epidemic were contested.

Military leaders in exile in Angola and Mozambique had seen their own people dying of AIDS, and many viewed AIDS as a top priority for health planning. Chris Hani, the leader of the military wing of the ANC, was very aware of the AIDS issue. Nelson Mandela was not at this conference, and some ANC members still living in South Africa were less concerned about AIDS and objected to its priority status. At this time, HIV/AIDS had not permeated the black population in South Africa but was devastating the neighboring countries of Mozambique and Angola. In the 1980s, countries of east and central Africa, such as Congo (Zaire at the time), Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda, had the highest rates of AIDS in the world. It was not until the mid-1990s that southern African countries such as Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa overtook these countries in AIDS rates.

In 1992, the two-year interim South African government was formed that included the ANC, led by Mandela (who had been released from prison), along with de Klerk's nationalist government. During this period, Chris Hani, a major advocate for attention to HIV/AIDS, was shot and killed in his own backyard. As the new government planned the public health transition, AIDS was relegated behind many other urgent concerns, such as universal, free primary health care (Schneider 2002).

South Africa in Global Context

The leadership of the new South Africa were now participating directly in the new global arena (at Davos and elsewhere) and actually leading the global South in agricultural initiatives and battles against the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights legislation of the World Trade Organization. In addition, South Africa was itself an important global node serving sub-Saharan Africa.

As the government turned global, in many dramatic ways, HIV/AIDS activists from southern Africa commanded the global stage and entered the arena of antiglobal protest. The fight to provide affordable drugs for HIV/AIDS has been long, arduous, and dramatic. The question of international pharmaceutical patents has been central to this battle. In 2000, at the International AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa, Edwin Cameron, then a Supreme Court of Appeals judge and since promoted to the Constitutional Court, the highest court in South Africa, discussed the contrast between himself and his access to lifesaving treatment through his professional benefits, and the poor, who could not afford it. In public disclosure of his own HIV-positive status and a powerful speech advocating universal access to treatment, he fought for the rest of South Africa to have the right to live.

In 2002, in Barcelona, Spain, during the next International

HIV/AIDS Conference, Zachie Achmat, a brilliant South African activist, demonstrated before the world the dilemma of living in a country where others are dying of a preventable and treatable disease. On a video shown during the plenaries, he explained his refusal to take AIDS treatment, which he could, in fact, afford. He risked his own death in order to pressure the South African government to make AIDS treatment available to people throughout the South African public health system.

In the context of such local and global activism as well as the desperate need on the local level, ethnography itself calls for an activist approach. Engagement and partnership has been a crucial grounding for most anthropologists working with HIV, such as Paul Farmer, Merrill Singer, Brooke Schoepf, and Richard Parker (Singer 1995). This stance implies not only being explicit about one's critical perspective while talking to all actors or representatives of institutions involved but also "participating" with people most affected by the issues to understand and work actively to transform conditions.

In my research with respect to HIV/AIDS, I have seen myself as an advocate and activist trying to work with people to better conditions. Ethnography and the method of participant observation requires personal face-to-face relations and the establishment of trust and ongoing human responsibilities. Under these conditions, it is practically impossible to study a place where people are becoming infected from a preventable disease without advocating for preventive resources. It is equally untenable to conduct ethnography among people who are dying for lack of an available treatment without joining the struggle for treatment.

It seemed essential that ethnography in such situations include intervention as an integral and legitimate aspect of research. From the first research project described here, my work in HIV/AIDS involved community activism as well as advocacy on the global level. Hopefully such efforts are enlightening in their failures as well as their successes. From such an engaged perspective, activism itself became one subject of research (Susser 2009). When did it work? How did it work? What did people do to struggle for better health? What barriers and obstacles stood in the way of their efforts? Thus, such an approach to an engaged anthropology is informed by and can lead into broader theoretical analysis of social movements.

Conclusions

Overall, I would suggest that engagement in social transformation has a long-established history within anthropology. Much contested, it has been unevenly represented at different historical moments. The critique of colonialism, imperialism, and specific governments is part of this engagement, but participation in social transformation is a further step. I would maintain that today (if not always) we are all global citizens and that specifically as anthropologists who take the global

as our subject, we might be enjoined to theorize social transformation at both the domestic and international levels. In this article I have argued that participation in efforts for social transformation, working in concert with local grassroots movements, can be documented and analyzed just as with other forms of participant observation, and it is crucial to the development of anthropological theory and practice. Under such conditions, it is necessary that the anthropologist also endeavors to interview and observe people involved in opposition or in the surrounding context of such movements, from the local to the global, much in the manner suggested by the extended case method. Participation in efforts for social transformation and analyses of both the successes and failures strikes me as one important way that anthropologists work for social justice and simultaneously contribute to the field of anthropological theory.

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Social Responsibility and the Anthropological Citizen

by Barbara Rose Johnston

What does it mean to be an advocate, to conduct research and assert findings in public ways with obvious and concerted purpose? Voicing what concerns? On whose authority? For what purpose, and to what effect? Can such work produce credible scientific outcomes? These questions and the underlying ethics and praxis issues of participatory action anthropology are explored here through a reflexive lens. In this article, I argue that anthropological praxis based on collaborative and participatory engagement produces credible research outcomes, allows informed consent, and fosters equity in the science-subject relationship. Because it is both problem and remedy focused, collaborative and participatory engagement allows the identification, and ideally the implementation, of meaningful remedy. When such work is the product of or is endorsed by professional disciplinary organizations, the opportunity for peer review further strengthens the scientific integrity, enhances the credibility of findings, and amplifies the power of any subsequent advocacy effort. To illustrate, I detail some of my own efforts and after-the-fact insights on advocacy-oriented anthropology. The primary point is that to work in the public interest is an honor, a duty, and at times an intensely problematic burden that demands explicit attention to the social terms and potential ramifications of engagement.

Introduction

Calls for developing a fieldwork ethic that emphasizes participatory action research have been met with complaints from many anthropologists who argue that participatory approaches—especially those that involve collaborative efforts to shape research goals, methods, and outcomes—overly emphasize the social welfare needs of the study population (Gross and Platner 2002). In catering to the needs of the study population, the argument goes, such research runs the risk of compromising the objectivity and integrity of anthropological research and transforms the role of anthropologist from scientist to social worker.[1]

At issue here is the question of the substantive "work" of anthropology: is it simply and solely an intellectual pursuit, with the primary purpose of fieldwork to collect data in a rigorous and objective manner? If so, then the social meaning of doing anthropology is, simply, to conduct work *in* communities, not *with* communities. In the social contract that structures such work, the power to define the terms of research is in the anthropologist's hands, and the nature of the researcher-subject relationship is necessarily hierarchical rather than equitable.

A contrary and increasingly dominant approach in anthropological praxis is problem-focused participatory research: working *with* communities to understand and address problems of mutual concern. The social contract that structures such work is a product of negotiation and collaboration, producing a research-subject partnership based on equity and respect.

My purpose in this article is to argue that participatory and collaborative research offers a means to implement the *meaningful* informed consent that is increasingly required by ethical codes of conduct and stipulated in national and international law. Such work (1) ensures that free and prior informed consent is achieved in meaningful ways; (2) allows for the possibility of more equitable relationships between scientists, problems, and subject; and (3) produces credible scientific outcomes. While all anthropological work is conducted with some form of social contract, whether implied or obvious, what distinguishes participatory research from

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1. This discussion of the social work of anthropology was prompted in part by criticisms of the recommendations of the American Anthropological Association Darkness in El Dorado Task Force, especially criticisms of the recommendation that participatory and collaborative methods be a core element of research with indigenous populations (Gross and Platner 2002).

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other forms is the overt pursuit of a social contract negotiating not only permission to do research (consent) but also negotiating the terms of work: the underlying questions, rules for conduct, hoped-for outcomes of such work, and the respective rights and obligations when work is done (meaningful informed consent).

Human Rights and the Environment: Asserting Disciplinary Voice

My life as an anthropologist reflects a professional path that many involved in human rights, environmental quality, health, and social justice struggles have taken (González 2004; Hale 2008; Sabloff 2001; Warren and Jackson 2002). This trajectory begins with a case-specific focus on incidents and examples of human rights abuse. Over time the research perspective broadens to include a more complex analysis of the contexts that precipitate gross violations and the controlling processes that link incidents to global patterns. And again, as research achieves cross-cultural and temporal depth, the focus of research further expands to consider the synergistic and cumulative consequences of perpetrating, hosting, or surviving these events. In this evolution of problem and focus, I have also seen my goals for engagement evolve. My initial goal was simply to document abuses and sound the alarm by asserting a generalized call for accountability. Goals have evolved to a current focus on locating evidence of culpability, assessing the consequential damages of abuse, discerning the many meanings of remedy, and encouraging the political will to implement or create mechanisms that might achieve reparation. Thus, I define myself as a scholar-advocate: a researcher, writer, adviser, expert witness, advocate, and, at times, a collaborative partner in consciously shaped political processes.

My initial point of entry to the scholar-advocate world began in the late 1980s with my first postgraduate job as a professor in an interdisciplinary environmental studies program. I had been hired to teach introductory courses that fulfilled a general education science requirement as well as upper division and graduate courses in natural resource management, environmental impact analysis, field methods, and public policy. I began using previously required textbooks and found a frustrating lack of attention to the human dimensions of environmental problems. Like many new hires in an interdisciplinary program, I took to reworking the curriculum to strengthen the view through my disciplinary lens, in my case with a focus on intersects between ecocide and ethnocide. My revisionist effort involved adding human ecology texts to the curriculum, a disappointing addition in that it seemed too many of the typologies were built on cultural case examples of peoples whose ways of life—and in some cases, lives—no longer existed. Unable to find a text that reflected current conditions, contexts, and human environmental relationships, I decided to put off turning my political ecology dissertation into "the book" and instead focus on writing an

environmental studies textbook to tackle head-on this problem of static and apolitical representations of cultural diversity and human ecology.

In the fall of 1991, while reading *Earth Island Journal*, I came across a call for contributions to support a United Nations (UN) Commission on Human Rights Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities investigation into the relationship between human rights and the environment. A special rapporteur had been appointed to examine the linkages between human rights abuse and environmental crisis, and a call for case-study materials had been sent to the nations of the world and to concerned civil-society organizations. The call for contributions suggested an opportunity for generalized reciprocity, and I contacted the coordinating organization, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund (now known as Earth Justice), to offer my assistance with summations from my library of case studies on ecocide and ethnocide with the hopes that I could review the results from their call for contributions and incorporate relevant examples in my environmental anthropology text. At our first meeting, I learned that while their framing of the human rights and environment abuse issue was expansive, their supporting case documentation largely consisted of instances of individual rights abuse, especially journalists, scientists and others imprisoned for publicizing environmental crimes. While they were aware of the indigenous rights movement and had contacted several key organizations, they had had no success in securing social science commitments to provide case-study materials on abuses experienced by cultural groups. I was surprised by this revelation, as so many anthropologists were reporting in conferences, newsletters, and scholarly publications case after case of development-induced ecocide leading to ethnocide.[2]

Realizing the need for a structured conduit to assert case studies and anthropological perspectives on the human rights–environment intersect, shortly before the November 1991 American Anthropological Association (AAA) meetings, I approached AAA President Jane Buikstra and Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) President Carole Hill with the proposal that they establish a joint committee with a mandate to develop and submit case studies to the UN-appointed special rapporteur. The advocacy goal here was to assert a disciplinary voice—not just the individual contributions of a concerned anthropologist, easily dismissed as an activist, thus biased voice, but the powerful statement of the disciplinary voice that emerges through professional organization–sponsored research and peer review. In response, Jane Buikstra

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2. See, for example, publications of the International Working Group of Indigenous Affairs; Colonialism and Indigenous Minorities Research and Action; Minority Rights Group; Survival International; and Cultural Survival; see also Bodley (1975, 1988); Burger (1987, 1990); Downing and Kushner (1988). See also the UN Commission on Human Rights Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities study of the protection of the cultural and intellectual property of indigenous peoples (Daes 1995).

agreed to the joint committee concept and placed me as a human rights and environment member of the new AAA Environmental Task Force.[3] Carole Hill invited me to present the idea to the SfAA executive board at their November 1991 meeting, resulting in their formal endorsement of a joint commission and its advocacy mandate. In subsequent months, as I attempted to get the human rights and environment (HRE) committee structured and running, the AAA, with its new president on board, rejected the notion of a joint commission with the SfAA and thus declined to formally participate in a disciplinary contribution to the special rapporteur on human rights and environment.[4]

By spring 1992, following a 10-hour brainstorming meeting with David Maybury-Lewis, Ted MacDonald, and R. Brooke Thomas, we had an operational plan in place. By November 1992, the HRE committee had grown to include some 150 people—mostly anthropologists, a few sociologists, geographers, and ecologists—who responded to the call for case-study contributions. Our goal was to compile as many well-documented "representative" cases as possible—including indigenous rights issues, problems associated with large infrastructure development, abuses occurring in the name of national security, and the failure to recognize and attend to the human disasters that accompany environmental crises. We held HRE committee meetings at the SfAA, AAA, and other conferences, and we communicated year round through letters and floppy disks. We passed a coffee can at meetings to offset copy fees and eventually secured a $5,000 grant from the Nathan Cummings Foundation to the SfAA to underwrite the costs of disseminating committee findings. I served as the HRE committee chair and worked with the committee to draft, compile, and review case submissions that formed the core for annual reports to the special rapporteur, supporting in small part the broader effort to shape a draft Declaration of Principles on Human Rights and the Environment.

Collectively we argued that cultural groups as well as in-

dividuals had rights; these rights were being abused by broad processes, such as militarism and development; in countless cases involving the consequences of development and militarism, people have no recourse because of the lack of a viable judiciary and the inability to bring some actors (state governments, transnational corporations, international financial institutions) to a regional or international court where claims can be filed and some measure of remedy provided. We called for national and international governance that recognized the relationship between human rights and the environment and that worked toward environmental justice. These calls were articulated in project reports, SfAA and AAA newsletter articles, and edited collections in books and journals (Johnston 1992, 1993*a*, 1994*b*, 1994*c*, 1995*a*). The Nathan Cummings Foundation grant allowed us to publish and send 450 free copies of a HRE booklet to a global network of environmental organizations, human rights groups, and the foundations that sponsor their work (Johnston 1993*b*). Gregory Button, the last AAA congressional fellow, was able to provide copies of this booklet, *Who Pays the Price?*, to all incoming members of the 103rd Congress (1993–1995) and thus generate interest in environmental justice issues and support for legislation introduced by the late Senator Paul Wellstone in February 1994 (later addressed by President Clinton through Executive Order 12898 [Clinton 1994]).

The HRE committee goal was to support the review of the special rapporteur and with our documentation draw increased attention to abuses that result from processes, such as development and militarism, that are experienced by cultural groups. Evidence of success in achieving this goal, as measured by citations to our work in United Nation's reports, is hard to find. Our reports were received but rarely cited in the special rapporteur's annual reports to the UN Human Rights Commission. However, our broad-spectrum approach to "make the case" in varied public forums produced a number of unanticipated results. Thus, our reports helped frame World Watch Institute research on indigenous peoples and environmental justice issues, summaries of which were included in their widely published *State of the World* series (Durning 1993; Sachs 1995, 1996). United States Senator Barbara Boxer sent *Who Pays the Price?* to energy secretary Hazel O'Leary with a letter drawing her attention to the Rongelap case study and urging her to include the Marshall Islanders as part of the Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experimentation review. The booklet went to press in late 1993 as an SfAA report, and advance copies were sent to Vice President Al Gore and Kathleen McGinty at the White House Council on Environmental Quality. According to their letters of acknowledgment, the booklet helped support new initiatives within the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emphasizing the community role in environmental decision making and problem solving. The U.S. State Department later underwrote the costs to translate *Who Pays the Price?* into

3. The Environmental Task Force was one of many outcomes of the Wenner-Gren–sponsored Panel on Social Transformations in Pre-Industrial and Industrializing Societies (1988–1989) and an initiative emerging from Roy Rappaport's open call to the membership to "enlarge anthropology's concern with and role in public affairs" (1986). Task force membership consisted of Emilio Moran, Roy Rappaport, Priscilla Reining, Carole Crumley, Shirley Fiske, and as a later addition, myself. In 1992, Environmental Task Force chair Emilio Moran represented American Anthropological Association concerns at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Task force activities included demonstrating the need for and providing congressional testimony in support of a National Institute for the Environment. One outcome of the task force was the formation of the Anthropology and Environment Section, with task members serving on the interim board.

4. While the American Anthropological Association (AAA) did not formally participate in this effort to inform a United Nations investigation, the majority of cases collected for the human rights and environment study were drafted by anthropologists with memberships in both organizations, including a contribution from AAA Past-President Roy Rappaport on "Human Environment and the Notion of Impact" (Rappaport 1994).

Arabic and facilitate distribution of 5,000 copies in Africa and the Middle East.[5]

Over the years, our social documentation of the "culpability gap"—where abuses occur as a result of state and transnational processes and in the absence of any formal viable judiciary—expanded to include a focus on response. By the mid-1990s, the HRE committee shifted its focus, addressing the questions of what people, communities, and their governments were doing in response to these life-and-death situations and to what effect. Were there examples of relative success in achieving meaningful remedy? Were there lessons that might be applicable elsewhere? And how could anthropologists facilitate the ability of affected peoples to tell their own stories, document their own problems, and more effectively make the case for meaningful remedy? This work resulted in a number of edited collections, including the *Endangered Peoples* book series (Brower and Johnston 2007; Donahue and Johnston 1998; Fitzpatrick 2000; Forward 2001; Freeman 2000; Greaves 2002; Hitchcock 2002; Johnston 1997; Sponsel 2000; and Stonich 2001).[6]

In this work, my role as an anthropologist was largely that of the social documentarian. Anthropological knowledge and expertise was used to examine on-the-ground experiences and draw linkages between micro and macro conditions, processes, and consequences, with the overarching goal of asserting an advocacy voice that draws attention to and seeks remedy for human environmental rights abuse. I also worked as a union organizer of sorts—working with like-minded colleagues to help shape within our professional organizations the space for collective engagement on human rights and environment issues and the structural mechanisms for asserting a disciplinary voice in national and international political arenas (Johnston 1995*b*, 2001*a*, 2001*b*, 2001*c*, 2001*d*, 2001*e*).

Anthropology in My Backyard

Publication of this action-oriented research prompted requests from similarly affected communities and government agencies on behalf of communities for anthropological assistance in documenting conditions in ways that might encourage increased acknowledgment of culpability and, ideally, generate the political will to fashion some sort of remedy. One such example is the 1996 request to the SfAA from the EPA to develop a cooperative agreement providing anthro-

pological expertise and assistance to communities involved in environmental decision-making and problem-solving processes. I worked with SfAA President Jay Schensul and others to draft a cooperative agreement and served as the project director for the first four years of the five-year project. My government counterpart was Theresa Trainor, a policy analyst in the Office of Sustainable Ecosystems and Communities, whose master's degree in anthropology made her one of the few "noneconomic" social scientists working for the EPA.

The SfAA-EPA cooperative agreement was consciously shaped as "backyard" anthropology: work that involves the application of anthropological skills and knowledge to problems and needs in the towns and communities we call home. This backyard approach was a reflection of the rapidly growing interest in a problem-focused, public service–oriented anthropology, where the "field" is literally in your backyard and the close distance between engagement and outcome allows a stronger sense of responsibility and understanding of the social impact of doing anthropology. In essence, our advocacy goal was to both expand the social relevance of environmental anthropology and strengthen the presence and efficacy of anthropological work in the environmental labor market. Our mission and various project activities were developed in cooperation with EPA Project Officer Trainor and with the peer review assistance of an advisory committee of cultural, medical, and ecological anthropologists working in academia, government, and communities and with tribal nations.[7]

Developing activities of equal interest to the EPA and the SfAA required fashioning a collaborative partnership that sharply contrasted with relationships with other disciplinary agencies. Our funded activities were not the product of client-consultant relationships—where ultimate power and authority in defining the problem, approaches, and reporting terms largely rests in the contracting agency's hands. Nor were funded activities the product of federal research awards—where questions, methods, and outcomes are defined and shaped by the scholars who produce scientific knowledge for the benefit, first and foremost, of the scientific community. Rather, environmental anthropology projects were consciously framed as "technical assistance" shaped and implemented through partnership negotiation. This framing of anthropology as community-based technical assistance allowed us to prioritize problem-focused work using anthropological tools and techniques to address specific public-interest needs and to produce concrete outcomes. Projects funded under

5. In 1997, following the organization of the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) Environmental Anthropology Project, the SfAA Committee for Human Rights and the Environment was discharged of its duties. The Arabic version of *Who Pays the Price? The Sociocultural Context of Environmental Crisis* was published by Dar Al Faris, Amman, in 1997 as an initiative of the U.S. Department of State Arabic book program and is distributed by the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan.

6. This description of the human rights and environment committee work has been previously published in various forms. See Johnston (1994*b*, 1995*a*, 1995*b*, 2001*e*).

7. All work proposed, funded, and implemented through the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA)–Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) cooperative agreement was developed in partnership with EPA project partner Theresa Trainor and the Environmental Anthropology Project advisory committee: Bonnie McCay, Muriel (Miki) Crespi, Ed Liebow, Miguel Vasquez, and SfAA presidents Jay Schensul, John Young, Linda Bennett, and Noel Chrisman. In the final year of the project (2001), Rob Winthrop served as project director, managing the activities of interns and fellows, and I conducted a project evaluation and drafted technical assistance brochures.

the cooperative agreement partnership were participatory and collaborative, reflecting the interests, actions, and code of ethics of the discipline; the mission and mandate of a federal regulatory agency; and the interests and concerns of civil society, communities, governmental agencies, and American Indian tribes. This framing meant that power relationships and project responsibilities were negotiated in equitable and respectful terms and codified in a scope-of-work contract signed by the anthropologist and representative from the host community or organization. Contracts included the SfAA code of ethics as well as the right for all parties to revisit and renegotiate the scope of work, partnership responsibilities, and project deliverables. In addition to the assistance in planning, public participation, and other environmental problem-solving processes, project outcomes included reports, conference papers, and, in a few instances, PhD dissertations and formal publications. The scientific integrity of this enterprise was strengthened by the requirement that fellows, interns, and technical consultants work with a mentor, and their work products underwent community and advisory committee peer review. All told, I drafted the initial work plans and managed anthropological assistance in more than 30 different community-based environmental health, restoration, planning, and other problem-solving projects in California, North Carolina, Vermont, New York, Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Montana, Colorado, New Mexico, Washington, Oregon, Oklahoma, Ohio, Georgia, Florida, Maryland, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania.[8]

For me, the most difficult and time-consuming aspect of this work was not the research, data collection, community outreach, facilitation of meetings, or engagement in political processes, nor was it the analysis, reporting, and publication of findings. The most demanding aspect of this work was learning how to cooperate, how to listen, how to revise my notions of power and place in the intellectual enterprise to ensure an anthropology that facilitates, collaborates, and assists. The scope-of-work contract—with its overt expression of goals, objectives, partnership roles, and anticipated outcomes—became a key means by which this learning occurred.

Consider, for example, a project involving anthropological assistance to an American Indian community. The task was to develop a culturally appropriate restoration plan for a repatriated sacred site, a spring and saltwater marsh. After research was completed, the host community requested changes to the reporting requirements in the scope-of-work contract. Specifically, they requested new language to ensure project materials (field notes, reports, interview recordings) were rec-

ognized by all parties as the intellectual property of the American Indian partner. This meant that the final project report would be the sole intellectual property of the American Indian government, that copies of this work would not be provided to the SfAA or EPA without prior permission from the council of elders, and that research findings would not be published by the consulting anthropologist without formal council review and approval. These changes in the terms of reference reflected the growing concern, by both the anthropologist and the American Indian partners, that the nature of anthropological assistance (documenting cultural values, uses, and stewardship traditions of a sacred site and incorporating this traditional knowledge into a restoration plan), if published or otherwise disseminated without the permission of elders, would violate customary law.

In negotiating the revised scope-of-work contract, the EPA partner expressed difficulty in agreeing to these new terms, as the formal product, a case-study report, is physical evidence that work occurred and funds were expended in legally defensible ways. Further, such reports not only justify the expenditure of funds but also are used by the EPA to educate their own staff and to inspire and assist other communities facing similar problems.

Resolution of this issue involved getting all parties to agree that the indicator of success in this project would not be a physical product (the publication and use of a report, or the completion of a mutually agreed-on restoration plan) but a social outcome. The anthropologist conducted ethnographic and ethnobotanical research for the American Indian partner and authored a report that was reviewed, revised, and accepted by tribal authorities. For the EPA and the SfAA, the project sponsors, the "product" was a postproject debriefing, with indicators of success found in the culture-broker role of clarifying agendas and social relationships between tribal partners, the state, and federal government agencies. In short, "success" was redefined from a product to a process of engagement.[9]

Seeking Environmental Accountability in the Marshall Islands

The community-based environmental anthropology work described above involved working with governmental agencies to better assist communities in a common effort to understand and resolve environmental problems. This involved largely nonconfrontational ecopolitics in which all parties acknowledged that an environmental crisis existed, and somewhere some entity produced funding and the will to address the problem. In such contexts the anthropologist's role was to provide the data and tools and to help facilitate informed and meaningful participation in decision-making and remediation processes. Other work resulting from the HRE dis-

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8. See the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) Environmental Anthropology project page (http://www.sfaa.net/eap/abouteap.html) to access links to the SfAA–Environmental Protection Agency cooperative agreement and to access project brochures, reports, conference papers, and other publications. The cooperative agreement is reproduced in its entirety at http://www.sfaa.net/eap/cooptext.html. An evaluation of the project and its outcomes was published as a special environmental anthropology issue of *Practicing Anthropology* 23(3) (2002).

9. Project details are somewhat vague in respect for the renegotiated terms of the technical assistance contract. See *Environmental Stewardship in Indian Country* (Johnston, O'Malley, and Liebow 2001).

ciplinary outreach campaign involved a much more political and personally engaged scientific research process aimed at teasing out the nature of the human-environmental crisis, the varied failures to protect human rights, and the consequences of those failures. As one example, I briefly outline my work documenting the biocultural impacts of nuclear weapons testing in the Marshall Islands.[10]

After acute exposure to radioactive fallout after the March 1, 1954, detonation of a thermonuclear bomb, Bravo Test, the Rongelap community in the Marshall Islands was initially evacuated and enrolled in a classified research study documenting radiation burns and other acute effects. Three years later, with assurances that it was now safe, they were returned to their contaminated islands, and over the next four decades they served, without informed consent, as subjects in research documenting the ways radiation moved through the environment, food chain, and human body. Biomedical examinations, sampling, and procedures focused on documenting the wide array of degenerative health effects of radiation exposure, while treatment was largely limited to specific radiogenic cancers. They were evacuated in 1985 after learning that their islands were still dangerously contaminated, and they continue to live in exile (Barker 1997; Johnston 1994*a*).[11]

In 1998, I received a call from Bill Graham, the public advocate for the Marshall Islands Nuclear Claims Tribunal, who, having seen my work on human rights and the environment (which included a case study summation of the Rongelap experience), asked me to advise the tribunal on ways to assert Marshallese values and perspectives in the Rongelap community claim for property damages resulting from nu-

clear weapons testing. I agreed to assist with the caveat that I work as part of a team with Holly Barker, a linguistic anthropologist and adviser to the embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), who had several years of experience living and working with the Marshallese. We also agreed that our role would be to advise the tribunal and to assist the Rongelap community in asserting their claim for damages, that this work would require additional research conducted with the involvement of the Marshallese community, and that our goal in applying a holistic lens to the question of how nuclear weapons testing damaged the community was to expand the categories of concern in property damage proceedings to include the injuries associated with the loss of a healthy way of life and human radiation experimentation.

These terms were worked into a modified version of the Nuclear Claims Tribunal expert witness–consultant contract. Other modifications to the contract occurred at my request and included reference to an attached copy of the SfAA code of ethics, the formation of a Rongelap committee of elders and experts to advise and assist in shaping the research plan and to provide feedback on draft expert witness reports, the requirement of prepublication review by the public advocate of any derivative research product, and the agreement that we provide the opportunity to review and seek permission from the Nuclear Claims Tribunal and Rongelap community leadership before publishing the expert witness reports and results from related research. This last requirement represented recognition of Marshallese intellectual rights and our mutual commitment to ensure meaningful informed consent before the publication of any derivative product.[12]

The Marshall Islands work involved the methodological challenge of how to quantify the qualitative: What is the value of the loss of land when such loss not only harms the individual, household, or community but also results in the loss of the means to support and sustain a cultural way of life?

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10. For a critical assessment of professional organization–sponsored human rights advocacy, see discussion of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Committee for Human Rights investigation of Chilean dam development and displacement of the Pehuenche in Johnston and Garcia-Downing (2004). For an example of how professional-organization sponsorship helped ensure that investigations were independent, communicated international interest, and helped create rights-protective space in a consequential damage assessment and plan for reparations in Guatemala, see Johnston (2009). In the Guatemala case, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and AAA sponsorship helped ensure that research was conducted as an independent scientific investigation with full professional peer review. In later years, the AAAS expanded on this approach, creating their Science and Human Rights coalition (2005) and an "on-call" program, Scientists with Human Rights Needs (2008).

11. As Glenn Alcalay (2010) notes, a U.S. congressional grant funded a limited remediation plan involving removal of contaminated soil, bioremediation, and construction of new buildings on the island of Rongelap. The Rongelap community is now being encouraged to resettle on this island. No remediation has occurred on the other islands of Rongelap Atoll, in the seriously contaminated lagoon, or on Ailinginae Atoll. Thus, the return to Rongelap would likely involve increased exposures to low-level radiation, very restricted living, and a dependence on imported foods. To offset radiation-exposure concerns, the U.S. Department of Energy proposes a return to the biomedical studies monitoring the radiation body burden of Rongelap island residents. For many reasons, the proposal to return has produced intense anxiety and controversy in the Marshall Islands.

12. While our research and expert witness reports were completed in 2001, we waited until after the Nuclear Claims Tribunal judgment was issued in 2007 before formally requesting permission from the tribunal and the Rongelap community to publish (Johnston and Barker 2008). The report details an explosive array of human rights abuses involving, for example, Atomic Energy Commission human experimentation with Marshallese subjects, including the use, without informed consent, of radioisotopes in children and women of childbearing age. Some of our Marshallese advisors were concerned that publication of this report would generate political controversy that might adversely impact the bilateral negotiations for a new Compact of Free Association between the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States and impede efforts to take up a "changed circumstances" petition to the U.S. Congress for additional funding to address nuclear weapons testing program damages. A related concern was whether publication of the report before a tribunal decision might undermine the scientific integrity of the work, as the content would appeal to and be used by antinuclear activists and such use might foster a general public perception of the work as advocacy. Such a perception could, potentially, weaken the ability of a tribunal decision based on this report to stand up to future congressional scrutiny or U.S. court appeals. Holly Barker, with permission from the community, described elements of the Rongelap study methods in her 2003 monograph (Barker 2003).

How do you identify the cumulative and synergistic effects on health, community, and culture when loss of use is the result of environmental contamination from nuclear weapons fallout? How do you value such damages to the marine, terrestrial, and arboreal ecosystems? How do you value these damages in ways that honor and respect Marshallese notions of meaningful remedy, remedy that largely involves acquiring new means to sustain a healthy way of life?

Many people in the Rongelap community had submitted complaints on their treatment and their injuries during the weapons testing period (1946–1958) and in later years when they served as human subjects in Atomic Energy Commission–funded research conducted by Brookhaven National Lab that documented the long-term effects of radiation exposure on a human population (1954–1992). Many had testified in the United States, the UN, and other international forums as well. Survivor accounts, however, had been easily dismissed as anecdotal—the unsubstantiated, biased, and imperfect understandings of victims. So, at a more fundamental level, our work involved the challenge of transforming how research was conducted (we introduced transparent, participatory, and collaborative research as the primary means of identifying and asserting the Marshallese voice) and the related challenge of transforming how this voice was perceived and valued as a formal element in tribunal proceedings. The then-existing role of the Marshallese voice in tribunal proceedings was that of survivors and witnesses whose anecdotal testimony suggests, amplifies, or illustrates complaints where the authenticity of complaints and value of damages is determined by an outside expert. We sought to introduce a new role, that of the cultural expert whose account constitutes a source of credible evidence concerning the value of critical resources that support customary ways of life and thereby allows a broader understanding of injury, consequential damages, and remedial needs.

Addressing these multiple challenges required archival research, evidentiary analysis of a recently declassified scientific record, ethnographic research, and most importantly, participatory and collaborative work that included repeated interdisciplinary and Marshallese review of research plans, methodologies, briefings, draft reports, and findings. For example, when we encountered evidence in the declassified biomedical record of an official policy to report, but not to study or to treat, any incidents of miscarriage and congenital birth defects, the Rongelap community helped to compile lists of affected women and children. And, to help broaden tribunal procedures for valuing land (at the time the only recognized value of land was a market value for the lease rights to dry land), we created, with the help of Rongelap experts, a series of ethnographic maps for each atoll depicting sacred sites and critical resources such as springs providing drinking water, giant clam beds, and important reefs. We also located classified documents that illustrated United States awareness of customary law and property rights, especially the awareness that such rights extended into the marine realm. With the help of interdisciplinary reviewers from the scientific and legal com-

munities, we identified case precedents and summarized the methods and rationale for valuing damages to natural and cultural resources. With input from anthropologists in Australia, Canada, and the United States, we developed a briefing citing the legal precedents granting expert witness status to indigenous community members as cultural experts. In short, we deployed a holistic approach to establish traditional ways of life, identified the critical resources that sustained those traditions, detailed the chain of events and injuries, and identified the diverse consequences that resulted when lands, lives, and livelihoods were damaged and destroyed by nuclear weapons fallout.

Our strategy for communicating this history and its consequences in an expert witness report and in the Nuclear Claims Tribunal proceedings involved a dual narrative consisting of Marshallese testimony and scientific "voice" from the declassified record that served to contextualize and support each element of the Rongelap complaint. In addition to narrative voice, the Rongelap community provided record books and maps depicting land claims and land-use history for exhibits. In addition, the Rongelap women prepared and submitted as evidence a list of names of those people who had died from radiation-related illnesses and those people who suffered from a preventable epidemic of polio. The participatory and collaborative approach to this research also involved substantial peer review of the initial research plan, draft findings, and expert witness reports. The result was an assessment of the consequential damages of nuclear weapons testing, human subject experimentation, and involuntary resettlement. The expert witness report demonstrated social, cultural, physical, economic, and environmental effects—with anecdotal accounts supported by the declassified scientific record—and presented valuation assessments for each category of injury using United States standards, international case precedents, and the community notion of a meaningful remedy.[13]

On April 17, 2007, some 16 years since the first claims were filed and five and a half years after presenting the expert witness findings to the tribunal, the Nuclear Claims Tribunal finally issued their decision in the Rongelap case, accepting the complaint and ordering some $1,031,231,200 in compensation for remediation and restoration of contaminated atolls as compensation for past and future lost property value and as compensation for the pain, suffering, and hardships that are consequences of those injuries. This award includes damages for the loss of way of life, including the loss of the means to live in a healthy fashion on the land (people were on an island but were exposed to high levels of radiation). It includes compensation for serving, without informed consent, as a human subject in long-term biomedical studies, and it includes additional personal injury awards to subjects iden-

13. Various versions of this summation of the problem and approach to the Marshallese work have been published by Johnston and Barker (1999, 2000, 2001, 2008).

tified as receiving radioisotope injections as part of those studies (Nuclear Claims Tribunal 2007).

While this result demonstrates that a credible outcome can be achieved through a participatory and collaborative action-research process, meaningful remedy, while defined, has yet to be fully realized. The fact that Rongelap survivors were able to attend and testify at proceedings and see long-contested and denied experiences accepted by tribunal judges, without question, as expert evidence in a formal court was significant. Elements of meaningful remedy were also achieved with the tribunal findings accompanying the award, findings that suggested a fundamental transformation in the principle of just compensation from a model of economic compensation for damage and a loss of individual property rights to a broader model of community damages and remedial needs associated with the loss of a healthy way of life. This transformation was achieved arguably as a result of our collaborative and participatory methods. We helped create the space for tribunal judges to listen and consider the Marshallese perspective and experience in new ways. However, while the monetary award is an essential core component of remedy in that it will help pay for medical care, environmental cleanup, and socioeconomic development to build a sustainable and healthy way of life, the tribunal has exhausted its funds and cannot pay this or other awards. The initial Nuclear Claims Tribunal trust fund created by the U.S. Congress under the Reagan administration never grew to the projected $150 million, an amount that was manifestly adequate to personal injury and property damages. At this writing, the only chance for the Marshallese to achieve the means to finance the meaningful remedy is through bilateral negotiation, or congressional action on the "changed circumstance" petition, and funding as provided by an act of the U.S. Congress.[14]

14. The Nuclear Claims Tribunal was established in 1986 as result of the Compact of Free Association, a Reagan-era agreement between the United States and the Marshall Islands. In this agreement, the government of the United States accepted responsibility for compensation owed to citizens of the Marshall Islands for loss or damage to property and person of the citizens of the Marshall Islands resulting from the nuclear testing conducted in the Northern Marshall Islands (June 30, 1946–August 18, 1958). The Compact of Free Association changed the Marshall Islands status from a U.S. territory to an independent, though associated, nation. In a separate agreement, the United States established the Nuclear Claims Tribunal as an administrative court to adjudicate claims and awards from a trust fund that was intended to achieve $150 million with investment and growth. Both parties agreed this action would represent a full settlement of all claims, past, present, and future, of the government, citizens, and nationals of the Marshall Islands. The agreements were made without Marshallese access to U.S. documents showing that the entire nation, not just the four northern atolls, had been exposed to dangerous levels of fallout, the nature of that contamination, and the full array of known biomedical effects. As a result, the agreed settlement for damages was manifestly inadequate. At the time of the judgment, there was less than $1 million in the Nuclear Claims Tribunal fund—with most personal injury awards and all property damage awards still outstanding. Because the initial Compact of Free Association included a "changed circumstances" clause, the Marshall Islands government believes it has the right to petition the U.S. Congress for additional funds. A "changed circum-

Since completing the expert witness work on the Rongelap claim, I have continued to serve the Nuclear Claims Tribunal as a pro bono adviser on human radiation experimentation. This work has included developing summations of the declassified record and assisting the public advocate in his effort to identify Marshallese subjects and secure on their behalf their right to a personal injury award for human radiation experimentation. With hopes of keeping the issue of U.S. obligation to the Marshallese in the public mind and on the political agenda, I have taken periodic action to advocate for remedy by sending letters and e-mail briefings with findings from the report to legislators and congressional staff and including summations of the case in other publications (Barker 2007; Johnston 2007). When the tribunal announced its award in the Rongelap Claim in 2007, as per the terms of my 1999 scope-of-work contract with the tribunal, I requested permission to publish the expert witness report. In 2008, Holly Barker and I published a revised version of the report in the book *Consequential Damages of Nuclear War: The Rongelap Report.* Again, as per the terms of our scope-of-work contract, we sent a case of books to the Rongelap community, local government, the RMI embassy, and the Nuclear Claims Tribunal staff. I also sent prepublication copies of this book to nuclear security and other advisory staff in the Obama and Clinton 2008 presidential campaigns, wrote commentaries for the online political magazine *CounterPunch*, and posted excerpts on various Web sites. In addition, I have also used the data collected in my review of the Marshallese declassified record, especially the documentation of the biomedical consequences of long-term exposure to low-level radiation, in articles, op-eds, and other publications to question the wisdom of a new boom in uranium mining, a renewed push for nuclear energy, and a rapidly escalating reliance on depleted uranium in military and civilian police action (Johnston 2008; Johnston, Dawson, and Madsen 2007).

Obligations, Power, and Social Responsibility

This brief reflexive narrative of public-interest anthropology illustrates my understanding of what it means to use the tools of the trade as scholar and scribe to advocate for social change. My work has involved intensive engagement in case-specific environmental quality–social justice concerns. These efforts

stances" petition submitted to Congress in 2000, 2001, and again in 2004 was rejected by the Bush administration, and while congressional hearings were held in 2005, as of this writing (March 2010), Congress has not adopted a formal response. A court case filed in U.S. courts by Bikini Atoll demanding full payment of its Nuclear Claims Tribunal Award in 2006 was dismissed by lower courts for lack of standing. This decision was reconfirmed in January 2009 by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, which ruled that the language of the initial agreement withdraws the jurisdiction of the U.S. courts. In October 2009 an appeal was filed with the U.S. Supreme Court arguing violation of the Marshallese right to just compensation. In April 2010 the Supreme Court declined to hear the case, dismissing the petition without comment.

have helped inform my global studies of human environmental rights abuse and the evolving political architecture of rights-protective (or -abusive) space, an architecture of controlling processes, culpability gaps, and formative accountability mechanisms. Much of this work has been collaborative, participatory, and action oriented. It has also been, at times, immensely difficult.

In my praxis I have found that the ethical terms of engagement are a constant source of tension in financing, in problem formation and the making and remaking of priorities, in collaborative partnerships, in research and the articulation of findings, and in advocacy initiatives. In an ideal world, professional codes of ethics guide and protect the researcher and the people we work with. In the real world, where research involves multiple sets of concerns and relationships—with subjects, partners, collaborators, sponsors, funders, clients, and more—defining the terms of engagement becomes all the more important.

The moral urgency that helped shape our code of ethics— the "do no harm" tenet—is derived from very real and horrid histories: anthropologists have done considerable harm with their tools and training, and anthropological theories have been used to shape and legitimize rights-abusive state and institutional polices and action (Schafft 2004). Ethical codes of conduct emerge and evolve as after-the-fact reactions to exploitation and abuse, as hopeful vows to ensure "never again."

Legal mandates governing human subject research and related efforts to strengthen local control over scientific research originated out of the need to ensure that biomedical research is conducted in ways that respect fundamental human rights. In recent years, the legal mandates and guidance governing scientific relationships with research subjects have been further expanded to protect intellectual property and cultural knowledge and to ensure free, prior, and meaningful informed consent (United Nations 1992, 2007; WHO 2003; Workgroup of the Indigenous Peoples Subcommittee 2000).

At its most fundamental level, meaningful informed consent implies, self-determination, and as such, it has been an essential core element of indigenous rights struggles. Adoption of the UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly in September 2007 reconfirmed and strengthened the notion that indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, and their status as subjects of international law includes the right to determine whether research is truly in their own best interest. Adoption of this declaration means that academic and research institutions that conduct work with indigenous peoples and the professional organizations that provide ethical guidance to their members (as organizations recognized by and subject to the laws of their nation) are now challenged to incorporate the declaration in their plans and activities.[15]

15. Two articles of the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples (2007) are of particular relevance to this discussion of anthro-

While informed consent is a both a matter of ethical codes and national and international law, it still suggests a hierarchal relationship between scientist and subject. The scientist controls the definition and shaping of the research problem, methods, and desired outcomes (and this shaping in turn is presumably influenced by the source of research funding). The subject or subject community gives their informed permission to proceed.[16] In reaction to what has been at times an exploitative science-subject relationship, American Indian tribes and nations in the United States and Canada have adopted research evaluation tools that strengthen internal community capacity to both evaluate and meaningfully participate in research (American Indian Law Center 1999; Council of Yukon First Nations 2000; Mohawk Council of Akwesasne 2006; National Environmental Justice Advisory Council 2000).

Universities and governments are also adopting guidance to ensure research is conducted with meaningful informed consent, especially when such work involves indigenous populations. A Canadian example is the recommendation for adoption of regulations for ethical conduct by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1993); the subsequent adoption of conduct codes involving research with aboriginal peoples by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC 2005); and the resulting university regulations, for example, the University of Victoria's "Protocols and Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context" (Faculty of Human and Social Development 2003).

A similar U.S. example is the National Science Foundation's "Principles for the Conduct of Ethical Research in the Arctic"

pological praxis and the obligations of citizenship, articles 11 and 31.

A/Res/61/295, Article 11 (1,2): Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

A/Res/61/295, Article 31(1,2): Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions. In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights.

16. The text in this section is abstracted from Johnston (2006).

(National Science Foundation 2010). Prepared by the Interagency Social Science Task Force in response to a recommendation by the Polar Research Board of the National Academy of Sciences and at the direction of the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee, adoption of this code of conduct is one of remedial actions resulting from the National Research Council (1996) investigation of human radiation experimentation in the Arctic involving the administration of radioiodine 131 without informed consent. Other remedial outcomes from the investigation of human subject abuse with federal funds have included a formal apology by President Clinton and individual and community compensation awards (Johnston 2007).[17] Such guidance reflects in part the growing federal recognition of the sovereign rights of American tribes and nations and federal obligations with regard to reparation and the right to remedy. These recognitions reflect both national experiences and resulting changes in law as well as the implementation of international treaties and conventions establishing fundamental rights for indigenous peoples.[18]

Conclusion

As citizens, anthropologists have the obligation to respect and abide by the laws and norms of the states in which we live, the states in which we work, and the nations and peoples

17. Human radiation experimentation in the Arctic involving the administration of radioiodine 131 without informed consent, which was investigated by the National Research Council (1996), offers a significant example of human subject abuse with federal funds. In this instance, remedial outcomes included a formal apology by President Clinton and individual and community compensation (research and remedy discussed in Johnston 2007). Remedy also included policy and mechanisms to ensure "never again"—specifically with the adoption of an ethical code of conduct for National Science Foundation grantees.

18. See, for example, Presidential Executive Order 13007 (Clinton 1996) directing federal agencies to accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Native American sacred sites by Native American religious practitioners and to avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites; Executive Order 13175 (Clinton 2000) recognizing tribal rights of self-government and tribal sovereignty and affirming and committing the federal government to work with Native American tribal governments on a government-to-government basis; U.S. General Services Agency (GSA) guidance for implanting these executive orders committing GSA to a government-to-government relationship with federally recognized Native American tribal governments and further committing all federal agencies down to the regional and local level to integrate guiding principles and practices of meaningful consultation and communication with Native American tribal governments; Presidential Executive Memorandum (Bush, September 23, 2004) recommitting the federal government to work with federally recognized Native American tribal governments; and "Memorandum on Tribal Consultations" (Obama, November 5, 2009) directing each federal agency to submit an action plan detailing how the agency will meet the consultation requirements set out by President Clinton in Executive Order 13175. Implementing guidance suggests that meaningful informed consent involves relationships and agreed actions developed under a collaborative framework, and these directives are a concern not simply for federal agencies but for all entities that receive federal funds. These documents, policy implications, and implementation guidances are discussed in U.S. GSA (2010).

with whom we work. Obviously there are times and circumstances when the obligation to abide by one set of laws comes into conflict with others. And there are times when our code of ethics, with its central "do no harm" tenet that is meant to shape and legitimize our conduct, is simply inadequate, especially when anthropologists are working in the service of a government, institutions, corporations, or other actors whose actions produce grave societal harm.

It is my argument that as global citizens who have historically and currently worked with the world's vulnerable peoples, anthropologists not only have a special obligation but a disciplinary obligation to consider international laws and norms in the shaping of their praxis. Recognition of international law, with its superseding rights, provides important guidance when, for example, the states in which we live or work are engaged in actions that result in gross violations of human rights. Such considerations are also a disciplinary norm, as evidenced by the AAA membership adoption of a human rights declaration that is situated in the broader body of human rights law.[19]

In short, we not only have the ethical obligation to do no harm but also the obligation to ensure that we consciously structure our public forays with careful consideration of the nature of proposed work and the social contracts that structure this work. The act of negotiation generates opportunities to proceed with eyes wide open, to implement meaningful informed consent, and to articulate roles and responsibilities. Codifying these social contracts in negotiated and transparent instruments (such as the scope-of-work contract described in this article) allows an overt articulation of disciplinary ethics and responsibilities and serves as a core mechanism for restructuring social relationships in the production and application of anthropological knowledge, thus transforming the loci of power in the research enterprise.

I end this narrative with three concluding points. First, in my experience, the four-fields approach to studying the human condition allows an evidentiary-based analysis of history, conditions, and consequences that contextualizes and at times substantiates ethnographic voice. When coupled with participatory and collaborative research, the social impact of anthropological endeavor has the potential to move beyond documentation and toward the recognition of culpability, reparation, and ideally, the experience of meaningful remedy.

Second, such work involves complex histories, injuries, and social relationships. It is intensely political. Documenting so-

19. These are the views of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) membership in their June 1999 vote and adoption of the AAA Human Rights Declaration. In adopting the declaration, AAA members acknowledge their responsibility to uphold and, through research and actions, help implement the tenets of international human rights law. As international human rights law evolves, so to do the obligations of the AAA and its members. Thus, AAA members are obligated to abide and respect the terms of new international human rights treaties and covenants, such as United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Indigenous Rights Declaration.

cial conditions with an aim toward exposing and addressing abuse is difficult work even in the most rights-protective of settings. This anthropology of trouble can generate an array of personal, professional, and societal risks that are addressed, and at times minimized, through the use of formal and informal social contracts—agreed-on terms of engagement—that structure the nature, approach, and intended outcomes of anthropological work (Johnston 2001*a*, 2001*d*).

Finally, while my own particular experiences are unique to my life, the broader narrative suggesting the promise, power, and social obligations of an engaged action-oriented anthropology could easily have been written by countless colleagues. Indeed, the call for a socially relevant action anthropology echoes across the generations. Consider, for example, the 1951 framing of the term "action anthropology" by Sol Tax (Bennett 1998); the Vietnam War–era call for reinventing anthropology by Dell Hymes, Laura Nader, Eric Wolf, and others (1969); and the disciplinary advocacy architecture set into place with Roy Rappaport's 1986 vision of the AAA as a socially proactive force with social problem–oriented task forces that, in later presidential terms, held commissions that led to the Committee for Human Rights (Rappaport 1986). And consider some of the many calls for an ethically responsible action anthropology within the broader context of the resurgent security state (Gonzalez 2004; Hale 2008; Network of Concerned Anthropologists 2009).

In her essay "Public Interest Anthropology," Laura Nader argues that the 1960s vision of an anthropology that is both accessible to the public and is a fundamental part of public life will only be achieved if a "critical mass, a network, a will, and a passion to contribute to public education" emerged (1999:9). While the political economy of academia in the 1980s and 1990s pushed more than half of our discipline into applied and public settings, I believe that it is only with the events, actions, and subsequent degenerative human and environmental conditions created by the past decade of militarism and its profound consequences that we have finally achieved that critical mass with a passion and will to do public interest anthropology. We are all keenly aware, now more than ever, of the obligations and responsibilities we have as anthropological citizens to assert individually and collectively our critical insights.

Acknowledgments

This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the January 2008 Wenner-Gren workshop The Anthropologist as Social Critic: Working Towards a More Engaged Anthropology. The reflexive narrative and heavy reliance in this article on previously published work reflects the nature of my role in that seminar: I was asked to write a summation of my own experiences as a scholar advocate with a focus on praxis. With regard to the scholar-advocacy work that is described, an intellectual debt is gratefully acknowledged to Laura Nader, especially her efforts to encourage the discipline to study up—

to overtly consider the nature of the social contract that structures anthropological engagement—and her work in thinking through the meaning and social impacts of controlling processes (Nader 1974, 1996, 1997). My insights on praxis and the potential power of advocacy through professional organizations was influenced by Sylvia Helen Forman, Roy Rappaport, Carol Hill, John Young, Shirley Fiske, Miki Crespi, and the experience of conducting such work with my colleagues on the Society for Applied Anthropology human rights and environment committee, the Environmental Anthropology Project, and the American Anthropological Association Human Rights Committee. In this article my focus on praxis, ethics, and the meaning of anthropological citizenship reflects the questions and insights offered by students attending my public lectures in 2008–2009 at the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Hawaii, Michigan State University, the University of Tennessee–Knoxville, the University of North Texas, and the University of California, Berkeley.

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Advocacy Anthropology and Education

Working through the Binaries

by Norma González

This article considers the role of anthropologists of education as social critics in contemporary issues concerning education, teaching, and learning. The field of anthropology and education has deep roots in critiques of schools and schooling, and anthropology research and knowledge has been effective in interrogating the structural inequities of educational policy and practice. Yet anthropological theorizing can be appropriated into political agendas, and concepts such as "culture" can be misconstrued as impediments to academic success. The sociohistorical context for the transfer of the anthropological construct of culture to educational practice is a space where anthropology and education have engaged in the struggle to influence educational policy. Arguments against the binary oppositions of fixed centers and margins are useful for conceptualizing complex intersections of multiple spaces, historical contingencies, and subject positions that students and teachers take up within and outside of schools especially as they relate to immigration, language, and education. The perceived opposition between academic anthropology and applied and advocacy anthropology is also a space for working through the binaries inherent in transdisciplinary work.

American Anthropological Association 2010 President Virginia Dominguez declared in her first *Anthropology News* interview that anthropologists should "follow their nose" in and out of the scholarly community in which they were trained (Lathrop 2008:14). She affirmed that interdisciplinarity should not be subject to the policing of disciplinary boundaries but that we should seek and even embrace opportunities to follow our intellectual "noses" in moving across disciplinary communities, national and international collaborations, and dialogical relationships between practitioners and researchers.

For anthropologists of education, interdisciplinarity is the space where we engage with advocacy anthropology and educational policy, recognizing "the shifting borders between academic and applied anthropology and emerging projects of engagement" (Peacock 2007:13). Anthropologists of education have been eloquent speakers of what Kris Gutiérrez (2008) calls the "grammar of the third space," narrators of the discourse that is situated on the edges of difference along the end/s of anthropology. Anthropologists of education acknowledge that the disciplinary space between the fixed centers of anthropology and education is not a binary but an encounter that is beyond either and liberates us from binary

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closures (Bhabha 1994). But we also acknowledge that imaginaries from the margins can be both inside and outside of a discursive field and can negotiate polarizations without acceding to either's foundational claims.

The vibrant and continually growing field of anthropology and education has deep roots in social critiques of schools and schooling. As a subfield of the discipline, anthropology of education began by asking, first and foremost, how and why do human beings *educate* the way they do? Within this broad purview, the process of education can be defined as humanity's unique methods of teaching and learning—that is, of acquiring, transmitting, producing, and transforming cultural knowledge for interpreting and acting on the world. Anthropologists of education seek to understand how teaching and learning are organized socially and culturally, but teaching and learning encounters are embedded within social processes, and basic theoretical questions cannot be decontextualized from political and applied questions. In the United States, the civil rights movements, racial desegregation, and the growth of demographic diversity through the "new immigration" of the 1960s brought forth the need to conceptualize the relationship between nondominant populations and their schools. Thus, many anthropologists asked the question, "How do nondominant groups organize their education in the community and home, and how does this education contrast or conflict with the educational practices of schools?" (Levinson and González 2008:12).

When the field of anthropology and education began to

emerge, it drew heavily from the "culture and personality" studies of anthropology in the 1940s and 1950s, especially the work of Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Melville J. Herskovits. After the work done by these luminaries, who are regarded as some of the founding parents of the field of anthropology and education, we might assume a deep investment of the discipline of anthropology in issues relating to education. Yet issues relating to schools and schooling have been largely peripheral to what are taken as the central concerns of anthropology. In the disciplinary policing between academic and applied anthropology, educational anthropology has been relegated to the "applied" pole of the binary, with a resulting abrogation of responsibility toward educational issues and their dismissal as authentic anthropology. However, the convergence of anthropological and educational research is implicated in issues central to both disciplines: relationships of power, knowledge, and identity as well as critiques of the effects of globalization and increasingly market-based neoliberal approaches to social policy.

A Disciplinary Social Critique: The Fallacy of Theory-Driven Anthropology versus Practice-Driven Application

> Through the years, anthropologists have engaged in criticism of applied anthropology, [the first being] that applied anthropology has *no theory of its own* and that it borrows only superficial ideas from academic or scholarly anthropology or other disciplines. (Bennett 1996:S30, cited in Baba 1999)

As anthropologists we have been trained to analyze and interrogate issues of inequality and differential access to resources, yet it is sometimes necessary to turn the critical gaze on anthropology as a field. The anthropologist as social critic can also look within our own ranks. As an applied anthropologist in the field of education, it is dismaying to find that the theoretical content of educational practice is often not validated within academic anthropology. As Low and Merry (2010, in this issue) have alluded to in their introduction, the discipline as a whole is insufficiently engaged in institutional support for engaged and advocacy scholarship.

Unfortunately, the discipline of anthropology has often failed to recognize how anthropologists of education have blurred theoretical insights with engaged and advocacy scholarship, interrupting the false binary between advocacy and scholarship. Anthropologists of education encounter the slippages at the margins of anthropology because of the implications of applied work and classroom practice. Yet anthropologists of education have found that the margins between disciplines can be a space where authorizing paradigms can be breached and displaced (González 2010). One example of anthropological disciplinary disinterest in education is an institutional silencing exemplified by the lack of investment in anthropology and education because departments of anthro-

pology rarely recruit in this area. If we are to advocate for an engaged anthropology, we must be vigilant in confronting inconsistencies in our own institutions and professional communities. Although anthropologists of education can often find more like-minded colleagues in departments of education, the institutional and structural disconnect between what has come to be perceived as mainstream anthropology and the applied fields is obvious. Outside of the subfield of anthropology and education, the publications of anthropologists of education are rarely if ever included in anthropology graduate course readings. It is entirely possible to go through a graduate program in anthropology and never hear of George and Louise Spindler or read the early groundbreaking work that fostered a concern with looking beyond the institution of the school as the locus for teaching and learning. In addition to its relegation to the applied outer limits, education as a field has had low status in academic and university circles for several reasons: (1) teaching is a mass occupation, and entry standards for teacher education are thought to be lower than for other fields; (2) it was historically conducted in separate, lower-status institutions such as normal schools and teachers' colleges; (3) it was and is associated with women and children (see Cuban 1999).

Yet the central concerns of anthropology are played out daily in the crucibles of schools and learning contexts of communities. For instance, educational scholars reference notions of hybridity and linguistic multivocality as tools that students manipulate in order to dislocate the processes of domination through the alteration and transgression of discursive practices. Arguments against the binary oppositions of fixed centers and margins are useful for conceptualizing complex intersections of multiple spaces, historical contingencies, and subject positions that students take up within and outside of schools. Youth identities are analyzed within paradigms drawing from theories of performative as well as poststructural abstractions regarding fluidity and emergence. Anthropologists of education acknowledge the textual construction of student identities through the lens of Derrida, Foucault, and Bakhtin as well as the situated practices of literacy and learning. As students are embedded within processes of globalization, transnationalism, and fragmentation, issues of emergence, interculturality, and discursive formations are increasingly important for educational analyses. In this way, learning and teaching are reconceptualized as cultural work at the interstices of heterogeneous practices that connect minoritized and diasporic communities within the United States with schools and schooling.

In addition, neoliberal global economies that maximize profits by promoting the primacy of the market, reducing the cost of labor and privatizing all spheres of economic and social life, affect schools as well, because every aspect of economic and social life is seen as fair game for commodification and privatization. For example, the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University has documented increasing schoolhouse commercialism in which corporate spon-

sorship of programs and activities allow corporations to associate their name with events and activities, and exclusive agreements between schools and corporations give corporations the right to sell and promote their goods or services in the school district as well as to create incentive programs, such as giving free Pizza Hut pizzas to children who complete certain quotas of book reading (Molnar 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005). Educational researchers join with anthropological social critiques of the wholesale integration of market-driven approaches to public education as well as to public policy. In a further convergence of anthropological and educational social criticism, educational scholars Jean Anyon (2005) and Gary Orfield (2002) have demonstrated the educational implications of how macroeconomic policies disadvantage urban minoritized families and communities and federal policies and practices contribute to personal, neighborhood, and educational poverty.

Anthropologists as Social Critics: How the Concept of Culture Has Impacted Schools[1]

Central to a historical context for the anthropological critique of education is an examination of how the concept of culture has been transferred into educational discourses. Although currently the critiques of culture have displaced the concept from the discourse of anthropological theory, it still lives on "quite robustly elsewhere, including within institutions where culture is given the bureaucratic work of classifying people" (Gershon and Taylor 2008:417). As we enter an era of "culture in the spaces of no culture" (Gershon and Taylor 2008:417), the classificatory work of schools is a space within which cultural models can be appropriated in the service of circulating discourses and ideologies.

As we take seriously the political situatedness of all knowledge, is it not surprising that the insights of anthropology have had to be learned and relearned. As previously mentioned, the "culture and personality" studies of anthropology were particularly influential in the nascent field of anthropology and education. Although these paradigms stressed the arbitrariness of human constructions, for the most part these anthropologists focused on the patterns of culture acquired by children (and by extension, by students) as part of their enculturation process. For Herskovits, enculturation included the "aspects of the learning experience which mark off man from other creatures" (1949 [1948]:39). Education in this sense was broader than schooling and encompassed both formal and informal learning. As the field of anthropology and education grew, culture was an important tool for understanding both cultural continuity and discontinuity within schooling processes as well as an important antidote against the assumption of genetic differences as causative explanations for differential academic achievement (for an overview

1. Portions of this section appeared in González (2004).

of the growth of the field of anthropology and education, see Eddy 1985; Spindler 2000). Teacher education programs began to take note of this paradigmatic shift in how teaching and learning processes were positioned across cultures. Work in linguistic anthropology opened up new spaces for considering language practices in communities and advocated for cultural continuity and congruence between classrooms and communities. Anthropology was seen as an essential element in the social foundations of education, and the concept of culture was one of the most potent remedies in its dispensary.

Now, having foregrounded the contribution of the culture concept to quality education as both disciplinary knowledge and equity, one might suppose that the concept of culture would necessarily be a positive affirmation of diversity. This has not always been the case. In fact, the culture of poor and minoritized students came to often be targeted as the cause of educational failure. Because culture had come to be viewed as a holistic configuration of traits and values that shaped members into viewing the world in a particular way, these assumed rules for behavior were seen by some as the root of the educational failure of minoritized groups. In explaining educational achievement disparities and differential social mobility through recourse to forces within the "culture," in the private, domestic realm, and hence outside of the public purview, aspects of the dominant writing of anthropology were conscripted in the service of legitimizing the marginalization of many students, effectively undercutting the resources available in households and communities (González 2005). Perhaps the most infamous example of how the centripetal forces of reductionism came to affect quality education is the "culture-of-poverty" model. Although critiques of the culture-of-poverty model have excoriated the inadvertent promulgations that have resulted from policy enactments that embraced this concept, it maintains currency in circulating discourses concerning the poor and the disenfranchised. In its simplest form, argued anthropologist Oscar Lewis, membership in a group that has been poor for generations constituted a separate culture. Paradoxically, the culture of poverty, for Lewis, was a progressive concept:

> It is the label for a specific conceptual model that describes in positive terms a subculture of Western society with its own structure and rationale, a way of life handed on from generation to generation along family lines. The culture of poverty is not just a matter of deprivation or disorganization, a term signifying the absence of something. It is a culture in the traditional anthropological sense in that it provides human beings with a design for living, with a ready-made set of solutions for human problems and so serves a significant adaptive function. (Lewis 1966:19)

For Lewis, the culture-of-poverty model was a counterdiscourse to notions of familial instability and disorganization as well as an alternative to biological notions of race and poverty, which implied that inequalities were inevitably determined and fixed. To counter claims of instability, he states,

"their behavior seems clearly patterned and reasonably predictable. I am more often struck by the inexorable repetitiousness and the iron entrenchment of their lifeways" (Lewis 1966:19).

Unfortunately, the anthropological stretch for a pattern resulted in a distortion of the complexity of the lives of the poor. While the theorizing of the concept implied that inequalities could be addressed through policy, particularly educational policy, the practicing of those theories often resulted in a centripetal, reductionistic limitation of quality education. Although Lewis described a number of clusters or traits shared by families caught in the culture of poverty, two were particularly pernicious in terms of how teachers came to view the students from the nondominant culture: "strong present-time orientation, with relatively little ability to defer gratification and to plan for the future; [and a] sense of resignation and fatalism" (Lewis 1968:188).

The idea that poor students were shaped by a culture of poverty that was considered to be antithetical to the deferred gratification inherent in school achievement was in large part responsible for the development of cultural-deficit models in schooling. Poor and minoritized students were viewed with a lens of deficiencies and seen as substandard in their socialization practices, language practices, and orientation toward academic achievement. The exemplar of such deficit approaches is the oft-cited Moynihan report (1965), which stigmatized the black family as pathological and dysfunctional, lacking in male role models and networks of support and solidarity. For some groups, specifically Latinos, culture was invoked as the most important contributing factor to a supposed lack of family support for education as well as a lack of motivation for educational achievement (Samora 1970). The culture of the Latino family was indicted for stressing cultural norms that hindered educational progress: family ties, male authoritarianism, and living in the present. In a more elliptical vein, as already noted, culture was deployed within these circulating discourses as a metonym for race. When the culture of poverty was referenced, the relevant image was generally that of people of color residing in inner-city ghettos and barrios or American Indian reservations. A theoretical protest against the policy implications of the culture of poverty was marshaled by anthropologists who offered nuanced and penetrating critiques (Leacock 1971; Stack 1974; Valentine 1968) and argued that this psychological concept of culture was missing the larger sociohistorical dimension (see Foley 1997 for a history of the concept as well as a class-based analysis of the culture of poverty). Yet these deficit conceptualizations tended to become fossilized in the public mind and often emerged decades later, fully formed, around flash-point issues such as affirmative action. One case in point is the furor that erupted in the 1990s over comments made by a University of Texas law professor, Lino Graglia, who asserted that minority students were not academically competitive with whites in selective institutions. Graglia invoked a culturological explanation for "failure" by claiming "It is the result

of primarily cultural effects. They have a culture that seems not to encourage achievement. Failure is not looked upon with disgrace" (Mattos 1997). Deficit conceptions of how the "other" lives and learns are alive and well, a legacy of a culture concept that failed to align a theoretical and methodological stance within historically embedded contexts of power. Implicit in deficit conceptualizations of culture is a further binary: a dominant culture whose valence was nearly always positive. A culture of domination was a hidden and invisible corollary to the culture of poverty, whose place on the nondominant end of the continuum is pathologized. Because the culture concept could be appropriated and transformed to fit multiple political agendas, it became a two-edged sword. "Culture" became the roadblock that many students had to hurdle on their path to a quality education. Furthermore, because culture was assumed to be equally shared and equally distributed among particular populations, it was a small leap into the abyss of reification and reductionism. Culture X (often read as a racialized category) was said to share Y and Z traits, and one instance of the extreme that this trajectory can lead to is exemplified in discourses that came to affirm that whites "know through counting and measuring," Asians "know through striving toward transcendence," and blacks, Hispanics, and Arabs "know through symbolic imagery and rhythm" (Harris 1995:12–13). Culture had cyclically metamorphosed into the biological reductionism it was intended to combat.

The interlocking of both the ideological and material is particularly relevant at this moment in history as we in educational circles find ourselves faced with simplistic and reductive notions that pathologize poverty as a set of deficient behaviors. Just when we thought the deficit conceptualizations of the culture of poverty had been vanquished, it reemerges in the work of highly paid external educational consultants, such as the renowned Ruby Payne. Touting her books, especially the *Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Payne 1996), and her business "aha! Process," Payne tours the country providing in-service training for school districts by dispensing information about the "hidden rules that govern how each of us behaves in our social class. Those rules, because they are hidden and only known to those within the group, prove to be a major stumbling block for individuals trying to move to a new social class. Students from poverty often languish in classrooms run by members of middle class because those are the rules that govern" (http://www .lecturemanagement.com/speakers/ruby-payne.htm).

The uncritical embrace of this work by significant numbers of school districts prompts a critique of the underpinnings of assumptions that rationalizes poverty as built on choices of individuals, a behavioral psychological condition, separate from material structures of unemployment and undereducation. The thesis of these workshops is that poverty is perpetuated intergenerationally as a result of particular values and beliefs held by those in poverty, and hence they are themselves responsible for their poverty. In these conceptualiza-

tions, people in poverty must learn the "hidden rules": poor children need to be taught to speak in formal register; they need to be taught behavioral self-governance; they need to engage in procedural self-talk in order to compensate for lack of procedural memory and thus their inability to follow instructions. In short, children in poverty are assumed to be heirs to the lower end of the hierarchy of skills, eliding the stratification of social and cultural capital that is inscribed in these assessments.

This resurgence marks an unwelcome regression into hostile views of the poor. In 2006, the *New York Times* published an article by Orlando Patterson on the "Poverty of the Mind" that claimed that there exists "a deep-seated dogma that has prevailed in social science and policy circles since the mid-1960s: the rejection of any explanation that invokes a group's cultural attributes—its distinctive attitudes, values and predispositions, and the resulting behavior of its members—and the relentless preference for relying on structural factors like low incomes, joblessness, poor schools and bad housing" (Patterson 2006).

Six months later, the *Times* also published an article (Tough 2006) that reinforced the culturological explanations of educational disparities by referring to traits such as "self-control, adaptability, patience and openness" and "everyday intellectual and emotional stimuli" as possessed only by middle-class families and the claim that these traits lead to school success. Poverty is equated, in a culture-of-poverty model redux, with dysfunction and deficit as outcomes of class-based household socialization patterns. Sadly, none of the literature in anthropology and education, which has challenged the inadequacy of these explanations for more than 30 years, was referenced. Anthropology as social critique can be useful only when it is engaged in public as well as academic spheres. Pollock (2008), for example, argues that anthropologists of education have a particular responsibility to counteract "shallow" analyses of "culture" in schools that "dangerously oversimplify the social processes, interactions, and practices that create disparate outcomes for children" (369). For Pollock, only deep, thorough cultural analysis of schools can prepare us to respond quickly to publically superficial claims about student achievement and differential outcomes.

Linking Immigration, Language, and Education

Using anthropological tools for social critique is especially relevant in articulating the linkages between education, immigration, and language policies. The success of social critique by an engaged anthropology of education lies in the possibility of influencing educational policy at local, national, and global levels. The polarizing national debate on immigration is played out not only in legislatures but in everyday practices of language and education. The 2006 immigration rallies that mobilized hundreds of thousands of people startled the general public into a realization that the plight of millions of immigrants is a reality that has a visible face. The issues of visibility and invisibility around immigration, language, and education are among the most compelling for anthropologists who engage in social critique. Terry Eagleton, the critical theorist, reminds scholars that research should address struggles of people to engage with issues of social justice. He says, "There is nothing academic about those struggles, and we forget this at our cost" (Eagleton 1976:v). As immigration issues affect the furthest corners of the United States, the metaphorical borderlands extend throughout the country as the new diasporic communities reach into centers and margins that are experiencing massive demographic shifts. Embedded within these shifts is the public discourse that constructs and solidifies images of immigrants, specifically Latinos, within the public mind. The analysis of discourse can be used as a tool to understand the construction of circulating discourses and their influence on public policy. For example, the work of Otto Santa Ana identifies multimodal discourse that embeds pervasive themes about Latino immigrants. One theme he identifies relates to the metaphor of dangerous waters and its concomitant corollary, the unleashing of unstoppable forces of nature. Santa Ana documents media references to the country, such as "awash under a brown tide," the "relentless flow of immigrants," "like *waves* on a beach, *these human flows* are remaking the face of America," "*a sea* of brown faces marching through Downtown," and of course the ubiquitous quote about "foreigners who *have flooded* into the country" (Santa Ana 2002). In Arizona, one of the states most affected by immigration, one Arizona legislator referred to the "*tsunami* of illegals crossing daily" (Fischer 2007). How does this ontology of immigration as dangerous waters create indexical linkages within the public mind? For Santa Ana, a semantic mapping of uncontrolled flows of water relates these as dangerous, a threat, and something that must be subject to control. But more importantly, references to uncontrolled nature erases the individual, the personal, and the human into an aggregate that is faceless, nameless, and undifferentiated. The metaphor desensitizes us to the individual lives, struggles, and journeys that are masked by this public erasure of their humanity. In related research, anthropologist Leo Chavez (2001) found that immigration has been cast primarily as a national crisis and that alarmist images of immigration have grown in frequency since the 1980s.

But an even more important erasure is the reframing of what the term *immigrant* means in a globalized context. Any student of history is well aware that anti-immigrant sentiment has been a recurring theme; whereas the "old" immigrants to the United States, those from northern Europe, were easily able to blend into the melting pot, other immigrants were perceived as not so easily melted. Writing back in the 1920s, a writer to the *Saturday Evening Post* asserted that "If the United States is the melting pot, something is wrong with the heating system, for an inconveniently large portion of the new immigration floats around in unsightly indigestible

lumps. Of recent years, the contents of the melting pot have stood badly in need of straining in order that the refuse might be removed and deposited in the customary receptacle for such things" (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001:39). It is interesting to note that this particular quote referred to immigrants from Europe, although from southern and Eastern Europe. When we add the racialized identities of more recent immigrants from Asia, Mexico, and other parts of Latin America, the "new immigrants" do not laminate onto publicly held images of what the immigrant experience should be. As anthropologists of education, we have the responsibility to ask, what is the effect of anti-immigrant discourses on children and students? How do children respond to the constant bombardment of messages that unequivocally remind them that neither they nor their parents are wanted and that every means will be taken to keep people like them out. In Arizona, three anti-immigrant referenda were voted on in a November 2006 election, and all resoundingly passed. More recently, bills have been introduced to the Arizona legislature that would make illegal immigrants pay for all costs related to their use of the state's civil justice system, including the time spent on their cases by judges, interpreters, courts staff members, and the court reporter. Another would require that all who apply for a state, county, or city permit to do business must prove they are in the country legally. Students at Arizona universities must currently provide documentation, according to Proposition 300, that they are legal residents. And of course, these are the legal measures that have been taken and that do not even begin to address the extralegal actions of those who patrol the borders as self-proclaimed border agents. The message to our immigrant students, both documented and undocumented, leaves no doubt as to the marked status that they occupy in the country.

The year 2007 marked the 25th anniversary of the court case *Plyler v. Doe*, the ruling that upheld the rights of undocumented students to a free public education. In order to understand the effect of this court case in the current political climate, anthropological research with educators and administrators in two large border school districts provided insights into the convergence of education, immigration, and language policies (Rabin, Combs, and González 2008). An anthropological perspective can incorporate a moral discourse embedded in critical research focusing on equity and justice. A critical ethnographic methodological stance is an acknowledgment that language policy is not simply official but that these governmentalities are the accumulation of circulating discourses around language, immigration, globalization, and nation-state formation. Within the discourse of workplace raids, heightened border enforcement, and restrictions on public benefits, students are forced to live invisibly. Any chance encounter with any state or legal institution, even a traffic ticket, may have unexpected and negative consequences. For example, one high school student in Tucson, Arizona, was arrested in his high school for possessing a small amount of marijuana. His parents were called into the school

office and the police, on ascertaining that they were in the country illegally, picked up the other children and turned over the family to the border patrol. This had a chilling effect on the local high school students, and they protested the actions of the police in a peaceful march. As a countermanifestation to this march, a group of protestors insisted that the police must be vigilant about federal law and turn over all suspected undocumented persons to federal authorities. Holding signs that read "Adios illegals," "Illegals out of USA," "Zero tolerance for illegals," "We can make our own burritos," and "Keep our kids safe—deport the criminals," the group delivered a signed petition urging police to change their policy to require officers to call border patrol every time they arrest somebody they discover is an illegal entrant (McCombs 2007).

These high-profile incidents and the inevitable ensuing public outcry result in a school environment in which many undocumented students do not experience school as a place where status distinctions are truly irrelevant. Compounding the vulnerabilities of students is the awareness that they may come home to find their parents gone, snatched by immigration authorities. One teacher explained how one particular family had discussed contingency plans for the children, specifically instructing them where to go and where they might find a safe harbor if they ever came home to find their parents had been taken. For the children of the undocumented, the threat of a parent's sudden disappearance is an unconscionable everyday reality.

Undocumented students are acutely aware that they must keep their legal status "invisible" and that even as children, they must look over their shoulders. One teacher interviewed described just such an experience; she related a classroom assignment in which her students were to interview their parents about their family history. In the case of one student, the teacher told us,

> When he came back, first he had told me he was born in Mexicali . . . and so then he comes back the next day and he says, "No, no my mom said to tell you I was born in Tucson." . . . Then, the next day he comes back and he's like, [whispers] "Miss, Miss, *no es cierto*. I was born in Mexicali but my mom doesn't want you to know."[2]

This story speaks of the damage done to children who must betray either their family or betray the trust of their teacher and their conscience.

Following the road into a child's-eye view of immigration, we found another phenomenon reported: that of children playing "la migra" during recess on the school grounds. Instead of playing the old chase game of cops and robbers, children enact the stealth and surprise tactics of "la migra" and run for their lives when they are found out. The irony here is that by enacting the role of "la migra," these children appropriate the voice of authority, the voice of legality as a

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2. The interviews and data in this section appeared in Rabin, Combs, and González (2008).

weapon to wield against their own powerlessness, inverting a discourse that is double-voiced and heteroglossic.

But further damage is done to children as anti-immigrant conceptualizations of the deficiencies of students and their families are embedded within school discourses. One teacher, in describing the safe haven that respects students language and culture within their curriculum, contrasted her current school with her previous work site, saying,

> I was in a deseg[regation] school . . . where kids from close to this part of town were bussed over . . . and it was very much . . . "those kids shouldn't be here, they should speak English," you know, "they're dirty, the parents don't volunteer, they don't do their homework," and it was very separate. . . . there was probably a mixture between documented and undocumented students in that group but they were definitely categorized as the ones whose parents didn't care, that didn't come to school . . . all of the negative stereotypes that we've all probably heard were definitely being used in that building at the time. And so, I think it kind of depends on where you're at, and this [school's] culture definitely doesn't support that kind of behavior from the professionals that work here.

There are more complications of undocumented students in schools. Another teacher noted how difficult it is for parents without legal status to wield any kind of power and affect the school, a common fate among those who have not accrued the dominant social capital. He said,

> Here, in our schools (on this part of town), where the immigration is so high, they fear the system because the system is not their friend, it's the enemy. That's one more obstacle they have to overcome in surviving on a day to day basis. . . . If you have a school on the other side (of town), you don't have an immigration issue. I mean, the parents are working, they're professional, parent picks up the phone, calls the principal and says, "Hey, you've got a teacher there that's not doing their job." Boom. That principal's on it. Because they know . . . the consequences of not taking action. Here a teacher can badmouth a kid, come in unprepared and no one's picking up the phone to complain to that principal.

This teacher encapsulates the range of ancillary repercussions from the fear of being too visible. Too much visibility in terms of complaining to a principal about inadequate school conditions, too high of a profile in any state institution, compounds the fear of a backlash.

In many ways, anti-immigrant discourses paint the entire Latino community with the same broad brush because it is often difficult to know which students are legal and which are not. Many teachers in our research indicated that immigrant students are often the brightest and the best, motivated and eager to succeed.

One elementary school teacher in our focus group expressed her frustration upon learning that one of her top former students received a scholarship to the University of Arizona and then could not attend because of his undocumented status.

> Our whole goal should be to, to build and help responsible students grow up, and here's a very intelligent kid who's worked really hard and he's ready to work harder, he's not going anywhere, he's not going back to Mexico. Everything that we invest in that child is going to be in the United States.

A high school teacher expressed similar sentiments after he discovered several of the students in an after-school advance placement preparation group were undocumented.

> So, they're not all language problems and they really do come across the whole range. Some of them do have problems, some of them have learning disabilities, some of them are abused at home, some of them have parents who have drug problems. But there are kids who overcome all these obstacles, are good students and deserve to go to college. It would make a great contribution to the community and the country as a whole, so why turn that down? It's a loss to everyone here when you start throwing people like that out.

There is awareness that academic achievement is not dependent on immigration status. In an excerpt from the *Arizona Republic*, a Phoenix-based newspaper, one local school district debated the merits of passing a resolution in favor of the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) act, which would allow students who entered the country illegally as children to legalize their status and qualify for in-state tuition, financial aid, and scholarships. The article states, "At this time of year, when students near graduation are filling out applications for college admission, scholarships and financial aid, Marina Acosta, a senior at Carl Hayden High, said some undocumented students are wondering why they should bother. . . . In voting in favor of the resolution, board member Jarrett Maupin challenged people to look into the eyes of the district's students and see if they can tell the difference between a legal resident and an undocumented immigrant. 'You just see hope,' he said" (Lujan 2007).

Anti-immigrant measures that penalize students beg the question: can teachers realistically preach education to students as a way to better their lives when even community college, which could be an option, would mean out-of-state tuition and no financial aid for an undocumented person? Why bother with AP courses and college preparation? This foreclosure of educational futures truncates students' aspirations and interrogates the democratic ideal of education as the great equalizer. Yet in many circles, lack of academic achievement is a marker only of individual effort and lack of future planning.

An Anthropolitical Perspective on Language, Immigration, and Education

Ana Celia Zentella, the linguistic anthropologist, coined the term *anthropolitical linguistics* (1997) to denote the complex connection between language, political economy, and social identities. From an anthropolitical perspective, Zentella affirms (2005) that we hope "not only for increased test scores and improved graduation rates, but also for a profound rethinking of the purpose and impact of schooling, with particular attention to the role of language and literacy. A school that takes its power seriously and commits itself to guard against recruiting Latino children to be complicit subjects in their own devoicing and failure must challenge anti latino stereotypes and expose the many disguises of the dominant discourse of English hegemony" (180).

An anthropolitical perspective on language and education acknowledges that neither language nor schooling are neutral sites and that both are implicated within contested and contesting discourses of power. Bilingual education, for example—as evidenced by its dismantling in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts—is about much more than pedagogy in schools. The passage of referenda in these three states played on voters' fears about immigration, special "entitlement programs," and about "freeing students from the shackles of bilingual education" (Unz 1997). Few understood the theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings of bilingual education, that is, that strengthening the first language of a child facilitates the learning of a second language. Voters opted instead to send a message that English was the language of the country and was to be demanded at the expense of sound pedagogy and that educational rights were to be trumped by linguistic gatekeeping. For example, in November 2000, Arizona voters passed Proposition 203, a law that replaced bilingual education with the unproven method of structured English immersion (SEI). In one sweeping sea change, all English-language learners in Arizona were automatically placed in SEI classrooms unless their parents had obtained waivers. Post–Proposition 203 research found that "SEI teachers are largely unaware of the model and unprepared to teach it effectively, that training in SEI strategies has been haphazard, that interpretation of the law's waiver system by State education officials has seriously reduced the number of students eligible for the school's dual-language program, and that forcing English learners into SEI is traumatizing some of them and distressing their parents" (Combs et al. 2005:701). These antibilingual education initiatives raise questions about the civil rights implications of these laws as well as the dominant discourses that do not validate languages other than English as pedagogically valid. Language ideologies that denigrate Spanish and hence Spanish speakers link language with political economies in nefarious connections. Newt Gingrich, in a statement from which he quickly backpedaled, stated that the United States should abolish bilingual education so that people are not speaking "the language of living in a ghetto" (Think Progress 2007).

An anthropolitical perspective does not go far enough, however, if it does not ask to make the link to practices in schools and communities. One measure of engaging anthropolitical perspectives has been the series of "In Focus" essays published in *Anthropology News*. In the first essay, authors Ana Celia Zentella, Bonnie Urcuioli, and Laura Graham (2007) dispute the language assessment questions in the U.S. census, arguing that they reflect a correctness ideology that language can be measured in discrete levels of correctness—very well, well, not well, not at all—and that individuals can easily make these distinctions. These assumptions are problematic and may result in reinforcing social inequalities because of the close correlation between assessment of language, assessment of class, and assessment of race. A further problem concerns the category of *linguistically isolated* households, a term that reflects the misguided idea that households can be islands unto themselves with no social interaction through any English channels. In the second essay, Alexandra Jaffe (2007:10) argues that anthropologists must "pull together the ethnographic examples, narratives and rhetorical strategies that will collectively advance our ability to speak persuasively about linguistic diversity and social justice to a variety of different audiences." Drawing on an ethnographic study of performance and argument in a working-class bar (Lindquist 2002), Jaffe argues that the recognition that attitudes about the languages other people speak are intimately tied up with their own constructions of self along racial, class, ethnic, and linguistic lines (Jaffe 2007). Both of these illustrations pull us back to the idea of "applied" work: how do we as anthropological social critics bridge the divide between explanation and application, between theoretical and critically engaged concerns, and ultimately between "pure" and "applied" theory?

Returning to the quote by Terry Eagleton, as critical researchers, we must reiterate, "There is nothing academic about those struggles, and we forget this at our cost" (Eagleton 1976: v). An engaged anthropology cannot be content with only academic and institutional laurels but must confront and take responsibility for the real-life effects of anthropological theorizing and the practicing of anthropological theories. As anthropologists, we must challenge cultural analyses that disadvantage youth from nondominant populations by deconstructing the categories that devalue their communities and educational possibilities.

The critical question that we must face at this time is why the insights of anthropology of education have not had more effect in U.S. schools. This is a complex issue and one that the Council of Anthropology and Education has addressed through a series of ad hoc committee reports and initiatives on anthropology and educational policy. In one position paper (E. T. Hamann, K. S. Anderson, B. A. U. Levinson, C. Cannella, M. Pollock, and S. Wright, unpublished manuscript, 2007), the authors are wary that "the value of our multifaceted, holistic approach to the study of policy and policy processes in education has not come to be seen as valuable in

understanding and making policy, by either those in the halls of power or those on the 'street level.' That we have much to say does not mean that we are much heard." However, they go on to note that there are deeper issues that have gone unexamined in terms of complicating the perceived influence of anthropological research in significant educational debates. For example, the position paper notes that when the flagship journal of the field, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, published a call for papers for a special issue on the effect of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policies on schools and minority youth, to the surprise of the editorial board only a very small number of papers were submitted (Valenzuela, Prieto, and Hamilton 2007). As editors, they asked, "Do districts and schools fear being exposed by researchers as they work under pressure to make improvements? Is a lack of funding for long-term qualitative research the culprit? Are ethnographers largely disconnected from policy discourses surrounding NCLB? Or is qualitative research on the effects of NCLB unusually mismatched to the timing of policy needs" (Valenzuela, Prieto, and Hamilton 2007:2)? These queries point to issues that have always concerned advocacy anthropology: who has access to resources, in whose interest is research undertaken, and how can policy be research driven in a way that is respectful of and responsive to communities? As mentioned earlier, we must be aware that anthropological critiques can be co-opted when they legitimize specific political objectives. Our anthropological lens must be focused on ourselves, on our discipline, on exposing discourses that thwart equity and access to resources, and on recognizing the importance of educational enterprises within all of these.

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Engagement, Gentrification, and the Neoliberal Hijacking of History

by Michael Herzfeld

Drawing primarily on fieldwork in Greece, Italy, and Thailand, I examine the use of historic conservation to justify gentrification. This commoditization of history expands into urban design a classification that serves the goals of neoliberal modernity. By thus refocusing the classic anthropological concern with taxonomy on the analysis of the bureaucratic production of everyday experience and knowledge, I explore a new global *habitus* in which dominant interpretations of history spatially reinforce current ideologies. Historic conservation often provides an excuse for intervention into urban life. In a revision of high modernism's focus on science, logic, and efficiency, this trend invokes "the past." But which past? The concept of "heritage" is grounded in culturally specific ideologies of kinship, residence, and property, but the universalization of the nation-state as a collectivity of similar subunits has given those concepts globally hegemonic power. In consequence, phenomena that governments treat as "merely" cultural or symbolic are not taken seriously as sources of poverty and subjection. By juxtaposing historic conservation and gentrification with a critique of the public management of knowledge, I thus sketch a critical trajectory for anthropological engagement in "the politics of mereness" by asking who defines what matters in residents' lives.

Many ethical issues in anthropology arise from a conflict of values that in its complexity far exceeds simplistic dualisms of good and evil. Such is the relationship between historic conservation, an ethical good from the perspective of both archaeological scholarship and ideological patrimonialism, and respect for established, living communities whose existence is sometimes threatened by planners' desire to monumentalize and compartmentalize and by national governments' prioritizing of collective over local goals. At the same time, it is important to recognize that localist ideologies may also turn repressive, especially in relation to minority groups and the economically weaker segments of dominant populations, so that simply reversing the priorities—elevating the local over the national, for example—does not automatically resolve injustices.

The sometimes mutually opposed ethics of conservation and of housing rights thus frequently come into conflict at multiple levels. That conflict sometimes turns violent and is usually highly acrimonious, given that both sides regard their immediate preoccupations as representing the highest good. On the one hand, we find a rhetoric of heritage held in trust for future generations and representing a collective past and present identity; on the other, we find an equally unyielding rhetoric concerned with human dignity and legal rights. Such confrontations are especially heated when, in the context of neoliberal concerns with efficiency, governments and private enterprises treat conservation in purely economic terms, whether as an expense to be contained or as a source of profit. Real estate speculation and the added value of heritage force prices and rents into wildly unpredictable but usually dramatic escalation. The impulse to preserve, the desire to render comfortable, and the sheer need of a place to serve as home are three human trajectories that converge, sometimes with tragic consequences, wherever relatively poor people live in areas earmarked for "urban improvement"—a euphemism, as Neil Smith (2006) reminds us, for the disruptive force of gentrification.

I start this discussion from the premise that all conservation involves some degree of selection and often also of actual physical modification. That being the case, I also take it as axiomatic that all conservation schemes can, to some extent, be adjusted to meet the needs of local populations and that under ideal conditions, those populations can be trusted to invest in the continuing upkeep of the historical fabric as long as they have reason to feel that it in some way belongs to them.

But this is not the usual perception. On the contrary, both state-sponsored historic conservation and—perhaps especially—capital-driven gentrification almost always bring the

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tragedy of eviction in their train. Only when householders are also owners, and thereby able to improve their own economic condition along—and through—the increased value of their properties, can they avoid being cast on the rubbish heap of history. This happier scenario does occur. It happened, for example, in the small Cretan town of Rethemnos, where I conducted research on the impact of historic conservation laws in the 1980s (Herzfeld 1991); not only were the residents owners of their homes, but by the time the value of real estate had really begun to escalate in earnest, they had become savvy entrepreneurs fully aware of the material advantages of living in houses acknowledged by the authorities as "historic" and greatly attractive to (especially) foreign tourists. The locals flourished as hoteliers and shopkeepers, and their once dilapidated old houses, now blessed with the empowering label of "Venetian" (or at least "traditional"), captured both the imagination and the cash the tourists brought.[1]

But in most places—such as the communities in Rome and Bangkok where I have worked more recently—the effects on a population predominantly made up of renters has been nothing short of catastrophic (see Herzfeld 2003, 2006, 2009). In Rome, in the central district of Monti (located roughly between Santa Maria Maggiore and the Colosseum), the escalation of prices resulted from a rash of real estate speculation. In Bangkok, political and symbolic claims to the highly visible segment of the old Siamese capital and dynastic monumental complex in which the Pom Mahakan community lived were linked both to concerns about potential drops in property values and to the authorities' desire to create a sacred space that would be off-limits to ordinary residents.

These two cases nevertheless do have a common dimension. Because the preservation of heritage has been the motivation for both, I argue that the rather academic-sounding topic of heritage and history is not irrelevant to the needs of the victims. Indeed, there are two excellent reasons for pursuing it: first, because its allegedly overriding importance is used as a justification for occasionally horrendous acts of violence and dispossession, and second, because the reaction to it often includes a form of fervent localism that all too easily translates into ethnic prejudice—in a word, *racism*—in a dynamic that further isolates the victims and also turns them into potential victimizers as well.[2] Even when local residents make an appeal to national sentiment as a justification for their struggle, they may at least implicitly exclude others. "We are Thai people," said the residents of Pom Mahakan, even as their leaders also sought to emphasize their Buddhism-based Thainess through

acts of charity (especially toward the victims of the 2004 tsunami in the largely Muslim and Malay-speaking segments of the southern part of the country). When such declarations do not swiftly morph into forms of intolerance in practice, we may be able to recognize the wisdom and restraint of particular local leaders; the more negative result, in which localism becomes a form of exclusion, often instead follows the bad example set by municipal or national politicians. These are unequivocally matters that deserve and indeed demand serious analysis, and they bring into sharp focus the key dilemma with which I opened this discussion: in a contest between living people and objects from the past, need one side vanquish the other for a persuasively ethical solution to emerge?

Most evidently at stake here is a choice between economic and other values. The globally dominant economic ideology we usually know as neoliberalism opposes the interests of local people and favors those of speculators and bureaucrats, subjugating the residents' lives to impersonal imperatives masquerading as "improvement" and "development."[3] (Its local representatives usually claim that they are upgrading the quality of the neighborhood, but it soon becomes apparent that they have neither consulted the local residents nor tried to live among them in order to appreciate the importance of place in their sense of collective identity.) This is not a conclusion to which a scholar would necessarily come through study in the library, but anthropologists, working in the field, rapidly undergo an intense socialization into precisely these dimensions of the conflict.

Indeed, a seriously engaged anthropology capable of opposing such trends does not, necessarily, or even easily, arise from carefully programmed applied work. Instead, it emerges from the serendipitous nature of field research itself. For potentially hostile critics, especially officials whose entire outlook is circumscribed (or, rather, shielded) by what Richard Wilson and Jon Mitchell (2003:10) have called "documentary legal fetishism" and who work within a tradition of legal positivism in which definitions trump narratives,[4] such a rejection of

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1. Being "Venetian" was considered an advantage because, especially in contrast to the despised label of "Turkish" (i.e., Ottoman), it placed the owner's cultural capital squarely in "the West" and thus aligned the owner with the dominant ideology of the Greek nation-state. The label of "traditional," while less useful in securing funding from the national archaeological service, played an important role in promoting boutique hotels and tourist gift shops.

2. On homelessness, see Desjarlais (1997) and Marcus (2006); on gentrification, see Smith (2006).

3. The term *neoliberalism* is a generalization that incorporates several distinct ideological strands. For present purposes, however, I prefer to treat them all as sharing the common argument that freedom of choice and opportunity should render questions of economic justice irrelevant (or, at best, constitute true economic justice); in virtually all versions, the weak go to the wall. This, for example, is the logic of "improving a neighborhood," a rhetorical strategy that disguises the brutality of the eviction of those unable to resist the economic might of the financial speculators.

4. For a critical discussion of another instance of legal positivism, from Greece, see Pollis (1987). In the Pom Mahakan case, the legal decision that a "public park" (*suan sattharana*) and a residential presence were mutually incompatible seems to have sprung from this decision and forms the basis of the most recent official attempts to expel the residents (I return to this development later in the article). The residents had earlier countered such implications by creating their own "public garden" (also *suan sattharana* in Thai), but the authorities had quickly destroyed this evidence of an alternative perspective and dumped truckloads of garbage onto the residents' creation in order to give greater symbolic and material

formal method must itself seem suspect, and anthropologists usually have a hard time explaining the value of their work to bureaucrats of this persuasion. Anthropologists also risk alienating well-meaning activists. These activists, who have often enjoyed a long association with NGOs, sometimes hold a narrowly Western-derived view of social justice. This orientation sometimes leads them to look for finite solutions and to "detemporalize and decontextualize" in ways that conflict with perspectives derived from the experience of long-term, deeply engaged fieldwork.[5]

My active participation in the struggle of the Bangkok community of Pom Mahakan to remain located on its present dwelling site, in the middle of a monument claimed as historic by the national ideology and the municipal authorities, thus elicited skepticism from positivistic social scientists, members of the public, and numerous officials, all of whom raised doubts that I would have good, uncontaminated data. How, they variously demanded, could I expect to be objective when I was so passionately committed? That question further highlighted for me the fact that an objectivist (Bourdieu 1977: 3–4) position was not merely untenable but was in fact part of the problem. The residents of Pom Mahakan, a largely recent accretion of residents from around the country and now occupying a piece of prime real estate between the circumvallation of the old Bangkok royal city of Rama I and one of the most important remaining canals, find themselves in a fight against administrators who have largely persuaded their public of the unimpeachable rationality of legal arguments that are, in reality, embedded in arbitrary definitions and circular arguments.

The positivism of official discourse is thus central to the residents' problems, although they have developed a remarkable capacity to adapt it to their own purposes. Like the inhabitants of so many other Thai communities facing eviction, they live in a world in which the concept of "data" (*khaw muun*) has been hypostatized by market forces as a weapon of the extraordinarily strong—as a justification for sometimes violent depredations against the poor. I found it interesting that they and their supporters often in turn invoked the notion of data to describe the key elements of their self-defense and came to realize that they had little choice but to follow this modality in a contest largely dominated by a positivistic state modeled on colonial prototypes.[6]

To those who questioned the scholarly appropriateness of my direct involvement in the struggle of the people of Pom Mahakan, I answered in their own terms—those of data quality. Above all, that engagement allowed me access to information (a much better word than *data*) I would otherwise never have been allowed to acquire, especially after I joined them in their barricaded community on the day they thought the authorities were about to "invade," with possibly violent and even fatal repercussions. In response to the objections, I began to wonder whether the so-called objective judgment demanded by my critics might perhaps be dependent on *not* having enough information. This is especially ironic in that quantity seemed to be a key concern of theirs. Charges that Pom Mahakan contained "only" 282 people, or that the residents of the house in Rome where I became similarly involved in a struggle against eviction were "only" 10 families (and not especially poor at that), represent *significance* in terms of numerological incantation capable of eliciting strong public support for the purported logic of a stance that actually opposes the interests of that same public by overlooking the emblematic importance of a small sample.

Small, however, does not necessarily mean insignificant. What was done to the people of Pom Mahakan could a fortiori happen to much larger populations, and indeed that appeared to be the longer-term plan. There are many such small communities along Rajdamnoen Avenue, and all of them, although to varying degrees, thwarted the planners' desire to create order (*khwaam mii rabiab*) and beauty (*khwaam suay ngaam*) by removing the messiness of human presence. Pom Mahakan was evidently the leading domino, and its fall would have been the signal for a massive intervention all along that wide thoroughfare. The threat of even wider repercussions also lurked not far below the surface of official pronouncements; indeed, the leaders of Pom Mahakan insisted that their case was part of a larger pattern demanding solidarity among the poor (a strategy that helped to cement their alliance with numerous other communities similarly resisting eviction and contributing labor and moral support to the Pom Mahakan cause). In the same way, the besieged denizens of the historic center of Rome quickly latched on to a friendly politician's pronouncement that they represented an "emblematic" example of a once dominant social formation.[7]

Furthermore, the idea that such a small community was intrinsically unimportant illustrates a key dimension of the local "politics of significance" (Herzfeld 1997), locally orchestrated in terms of a populist anti-intellectualism typical of the stance of then prime minister Thaksin Shinawatr. Thaksin often lumped academics and NGO activists in a common roster of enemies; indeed, his most energetic critic and favorite target before his fall from power during the 2006 coup was an anthropologist, Thirayuth Boonmee.

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force to the destruction. Questions of legal theory have real implications for the way events unfold.

5. I take this expression from Lynn Meskell's (2009:xxxiii) critique of theories of social justice that seem especially incompatible with debates over the complexities of heritage management and ownership.

6. I use this rather cautious formulation because Thailand was never officially a colony of any foreign power, although it has certainly been subject to strong external interference by Western colonizers and their local client elites. See Herzfeld (2002), Hong (2004), Jackson (2004, 2007), and Thongchai (2001, 2002).

7. The politician was then senator Athos De Luca, a member of the Green Party and something of a housing rights activist as well as a conservationist (see Herzfeld 2009:278). For a useful account of a major phase in the development of solidarity among Thailand's poor, see Massingham (2003).

Such anti-intellectualism is particularly hostile to disciplines like social and cultural anthropology, with its insistence on what outsiders often see as trivial or abstruse detail. Nationalists are especially allergic to disciplines that, through their very practices, combat their numerological dismissal of minority population as, quite simply, too small to be worth bothering about, and they find it very easy to appeal to populist notions of "science" in order to portray anthropology as concerned with the trivial, the anecdotal, and the merely silly.[8] Such mischievous misrepresentations easily gain wide public purchase because they appeal to the currently world-dominant definition of common sense. There is thus always both pressure and temptation to surrender to this way of thinking and to renounce the technical concerns of our discipline in order to meet the criterion of social relevance.

One of the planks in the populist platform concerns the notorious academic penchant for obscure language. Whether such language is ever necessary is a good question, requiring a thoughtful and case-specific response. Tactically, there seem to be good reasons to avoid it; it has exposed anthropology to a great deal of undeserved ridicule. On the other hand, the use of jargon does not automatically disqualify the ideas it is used to express. We cannot afford to throw out the scholarly baby with the bathwater of obscurantism.

The differential uses of history to challenge the heritage industry illustrate this key point. It is not as though the idea of heritage is unimportant to the anti-intellectual forms of populism; on the contrary, it is the linchpin of some of the most egregiously chauvinistic ideologies in the world today. Its emotional appeal gives archeology a powerful grip on the collective imagination, sometimes investing historically debatable territorial claims with apparently incontrovertible academic authority (see, e.g., Abu-El Haj 2001; Hamilakis 2007: 14–15). But the notion of heritage itself requires careful analysis rather than—to suggest a useful antidote to the epithet "jargon"—sloganeering. If we want to avoid Eurocentrism, we should be especially careful not to forget the roots of the concept of heritage in specifically Western notions of inheritance and kinship; some of the terms used for it—*patrimoine* in French, *patrimonio* in Spanish and Italian—make that even clearer and invoke specifically patrilineal norms in the bargain.[9] The universalizing of Western concepts has not ceased simply because some anthropologists and others object to it.

It is no coincidence that heritage has also gained great prominence as neoliberal forces—as in both Rome and Bangkok—have seized on the commercial value with which it invests what had hitherto been treated as dilapidated old properties, or, in Thompson's (1979) term, *rubbish*. It is thus especially important in this particular arena that our strictly scholarly work should not be shunted aside in favor of pop-

ularizing and simplification. We should not passively accede to the assumption that small communities are irrelevant to the future of humanity; the questions they raise about official historiography are often a salutary reminder that humanity has more than one narrative up its sleeve. In this sense, defending such communities becomes a defense of the scholarly enterprise itself.

I did not begin work in Pom Mahakan with any intention of becoming embroiled in its politics. Indeed, I did not really intend to work there at all. I was conducting research on the Rattanakosin Island Project, a development plan for the old dynastic capital of Thailand that, I thought, would give me useful insights into the links between present-day politics and the significance of historic buildings, and I had been looking at several other communities. I was invited to Pom Mahakan after some NGO activists, knowing that a certain Harvard professor was around, had apparently decided that getting me involved might bring some symbolic weight into their court. But the benefits were not one-sided. It was only when I acceded to an invitation to visit the community during a time of protest that I began to realize that this was the chance I had been awaiting.

Not only was the community seemingly obsessed with history, because its leaders realized that historical claims offered what was probably their only realistic chance to force recognition from the municipal authorities, but also they were glad to have whatever symbolic capital they thought I could bring to bear on the local authorities. Even more important, they were pleased that I did not immediately promise them that I would support their cause—indeed, I had told them I would not do so until I had examined their situation to my own satisfaction. I pointed out that there were sometimes public imperatives that could conceivably override the demands of local community interests, and I wanted to think about that possibility. I explicitly framed my caution about not making rash promises in contrast to the operating mode favored by politicians. In the end, however, I quickly decided that the construction of an empty lawn in place of a vibrant community had nothing to recommend it, especially when set against the sheer suffering that forced relocation would entail.

Thus, I did not pursue engagement for its own sake. I did, however, discover that scaling the size of my "field site" down to this tiny community actually intensified my access to intimate information, placed my work more palpably in the midst of a nationwide network of activists and students, and allowed me to view the entire Rattanakosin Island Project from the perspective of some of its economically least privileged residents. It also proved to be a remarkable microcosmic mirror for almost the entire range of Thai politics. In other words, the reduced scale served my research well; less was more. The criterion of sample size was spectacularly irrelevant to the depth of insight and access to which I became privy.

To be sure, the idea that this was an "insignificant" com-

8. I have elsewhere discussed these tactics in the Greek context; see especially Herzfeld (2005:138).

9. For a more extended discussion and further references, see Herzfeld (2009:3, 313).

munity—that it was too small to be worth bothering about, given the huge problems in Bangkok's slums and the much larger eviction plans that were already in motion elsewhere— was clearly an issue for the residents themselves; they saw themselves as emblematic of "small folk," although from my point of view that was precisely what made them more interesting and representative of the population at large. In a sense, those who felt that other, larger sites with more obvious problems—abject poverty, drugs, frequent violence—deserved more immediate attention were right. But it is important to remember that I did not enter Pom Mahakan as an intentional activist; I became involved in their cause through the gradual development of friendships and scholarly interest.[10] If their problems were going to prove more manageable, so much the better; their solution might then become a model for tackling similar problems on a larger scale. This perspective apparently, and I suppose understandably, particularly displeased some of the bureaucrats, who at the very least faced the risk of an increased work load as the potential significance of Pom Mahakan for the larger scale of social activism became increasingly clear to the public.

The residents of Pom Mahakan themselves were the main reason for my decision to endorse their project of becoming guardians of the historic site in exchange for the right to continue living there. They were certainly not as desperately poor as the more indigent residents of Klong Toey, the most notorious Bangkok slum, but with an adult unemployment rate estimated at around 70%, they were certainly in trouble. They dealt with their problems collectively; whenever a family was in difficulty, the entire community would meet to help it overcome its problems. Again, the community had formerly been prey to a fairly serious drug problem, which was one of the scourges of Klong Toey; this gave their bureaucratic opponents a handy weapon that the latter were quite willing to use. But in fact the community had already dealt with this issue in impressive fashion—and, interestingly, in a way that showed that the leaders, at least, had important and socially useful connections with the national police.

These leaders had collaborated with local police representatives to pressure the few pushers who had been active in the community into either leaving or abandoning their trade. This project was accomplished with none of the violence of Thaksin's infamous "war on drugs." Instead, several of the community leaders were given the status of "community police" (*tamruat chumchon*) and were given powers of arrest after being trained by local police with whom they thereby established what was to prove a useful rapport in the longer term (and indeed up to the present). They forced the few

pushers who were active to decide between leaving the community and desisting from their trade, and they conducted educational sessions to make sure that parents and children were aware of the dangers—including that of social exclusion—that drugs represented. By the time I arrived, it was clear that the problem no longer existed in any substantial sense. Bright-eyed, clean children and adolescents ran happily around the community's spaces, the clearest evidence—as was pointed out to me—that this place was virtually drug free.

Some municipal officials nonetheless continued to claim, mendaciously, that the drug problem had persisted and typified the community. At the very least, these officials were guilty of ignorance; more uncharitable interpretations nevertheless might seem justified in view of their clear desire to be rid of the Pom Mahakan community once and for all. One very high-ranking city official gave the drug issue as a key reason for which I should avoid Pom Mahakan altogether. This particular official was later seen walking past the community as though no one she knew lived there, a stance that enabled her to persist in her politically useful ignorance of the actual situation but that signified to the residents little more than a refusal on her part to acquire any knowledge that might cause her to change her mind.

My interest in Pom Mahakan was undoubtedly inconvenient for many—if not all—of the municipal bureaucrats. The tiny community was already a thorn in their side as they sought to take effective control of the symbolically important dynastic center, and they only wanted to be rid of this nuisance—for that is how they clearly perceived the community. At least for the moment, they were thwarted, although the final outcome is still not certain as this article goes to press. Slated to be the first of many communities in the project area to undergo forced relocation, presumably in part because it was among the demographically smallest and economically weakest, Pom Mahakan had managed to galvanize public opinion and to deploy an impressive array of academic support to a point at which the authorities felt compelled to resort to legal devices instead of the relatively easy path of direct violence.[11]

A strategic focus on history gave the residents the cultural capital they needed to carry their cause into the public arena. The resulting expressions of support, which came from a wide range of academics and NGO activists (and many who were both) as well as members of the royal family and foreign observers who had learned of their story, clearly served to delay and deflect the bureaucrats' plans. The community, and those of us who worked with it, built up a "current" (*krasae*) of public opinion that was to prove crucial in "buying time" (*soea waelaa*)—a tactic used not only by the communities but

10. Compare, for example, the massive problems of the drug-infested slums of Klong Toey (Bangkok's port area) and the heroic efforts of the famous Father Joe Maier (see Maier 2002). Father Joe himself did not have time to invest in Pom Mahakan. He did tell me, however, that he had no objections to my own involvement, simply recognizing that the sheer scale of the difficulties of Klong Toey precluded his extending himself any further.

11. See especially Herzfeld (2003). The community achieved a rather sudden visibility, partly (but only to a small measure) as a result of my own writings in local newspapers, interviews with journalists, engagement in highly publicized academic conferences on its plight, and the management of a contact with the United Nations Committee on Cultural, Economic, and Social Rights in Geneva.

also by their opponents in the city bureaucracy. Over the several years from the period of my main fieldwork to a series of brief subsequent visits, for example, I noticed that *tuk-tuk* (three-wheel taxi) drivers, initially unaware of the community's name or even of its existence, began to recognize both (and perhaps knew me as someone who was helping the community, a point of sympathy because most of these drivers were economic refugees from the poorest part of the country).[12]

The resulting visibility has certainly fended off immediate violence, but questions about the future of the community persist. Despite the socially more sensitive policies of one recent governor of Bangkok, Apirak Kosayodhin, the situation remains precarious, especially as—in an act of high-modern bureaucracy that exemplifies the difficulties they face—a court ruling has recently gone against the residents' right to remain on the site on the grounds that it is incompatible to have a community and a public park in the same space. Whether this latest setback, a perfect example of legal positivism in action, will prove fatal, it is now at least somewhat more likely that the residents' demands for decent compensation will not go unrequited if they are finally forced to move out.[13]

This, then, is a local case that shook the conscience of a nation—so much so that even at an early point I was asked to write (or find someone to write) an article for a new periodical, *Thailand Human Rights Journal* (Herzfeld 2003), the first issue of which was intended to cover all the major cases current in Thailand. Pom Mahakan had certainly captured national attention.[14] The involvement of numerous students—at least four master's theses were written about the site (one of which has been published in minimally updated form [Thanaphon 2007])[15]—and the interest displayed by journalists, many of whose newspapers had initially been hostile but were won over by the dignified but impassioned self-presentation of the community leadership, have not only changed the trajectory of the community itself. The increased

visibility that the community thereby gained also enhanced a lively public discussion about the meanings of democracy, participation, and many of the other buzzwords that could, under the right circumstances, become central foci for a larger public awareness of the great disparities of wealth that exist in the country as well as of the ways in which the national history is constantly rewritten with the intention of excluding or marginalizing those groups that lack effective power.

Some years before my work in Bangkok, I had become involved in the struggles of an even smaller group of people in Rome—effectively 10 families living in a single large old house in a side street called Via degli Ibernesi. The house had been subdivided into apartments many decades before, and its residents formed a tiny microcosm of what many local observers regarded as the typical Roman neighborhood, a mixture of people of differing economic status and background. Pom Mahakan and the Via degli Ibernesi cases shared a set of important features: a small and thus manageable case that stood some chance of succeeding; visible positioning in the symbolically charged historic center of a capital city; social status that sets the group off in style and culture from both the entrepreneurial classes and the local bureaucracy; an internally somewhat diverse population; and intelligent, flexible leadership.

I would like to highlight just one of these key features. Pom Mahakan sits beside the main avenue leading down to the symbolic heart of old Bangkok, the Grand Palace, in an area much frequented by tourists and largely occupied in the daytime with a host of bureaucratic and entrepreneurial offices and in a zone of rising real estate values. Although many of its newer homes are decrepit, it boasts several wooden houses that are representative of the major phases of central Thai vernacular architecture over the past two centuries. In Rome, Via degli Ibernesi, with a commanding view down to Piazza Venezia, similarly occupies prime real estate, and the *palazzo* (residential building) in question forms part of a historically interesting architectural complex. The residents of both places have lived in far from ideal conditions—in Pom Mahakan most live in what are virtually slum conditions, while in Via degli Ibernesi the owners' tactics included refusing to make basic renovations in the hope that dilapidation and the absence of modern conveniences would eventually drive the residents away.[16] But in neither case were the residents the poorest in town, and in no sense were they collectively dysfunctional.

Despite my growing engagement, which began in Rome and positively erupted in Bangkok, my final goal has remained the elucidation of the processes of transformation taking place in local understandings of history and temporality—in the politics of the past. This academic commitment is not antithetical to the presentist politics of my engagement. On the

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12. Matters are somewhat more complex, however, because most *tuk-tuk* drivers were and are Thaksin supporters, whereas the community, having eventually been helped by prominent members of the proroyalist Democrat Party and having adopted the role of guardians of a royal architectural heritage, have found themselves aligned more convincingly, although still somewhat ambiguously, with the present government.

13. The Thammasat University archaeologist Pthomrerk Kedudhat has turned his considerable energies to community advocacy, and one of his projects concerns a close examination of the possibilities for revising the legal obstacles to the community's desire to remain on the site. Now (2009) that the same party (the Democrat Party, *Paakh Prachaathipat*) controls both the government and the municipality, there may be better opportunities than ever before for promoting such an initiative.

14. I accepted the invitation myself, and the article appears as Herzfeld (2003). For reasons that were never fully explained to me, the journal was forced to cease publication immediately after the release of that first issue.

15. This volume is of more than incidental ethnographic interest in the context of the politics of knowledge, because the author cites my Greek work (Herzfeld 1991) as a source of theory but makes no mention at all of my involvement with the community.

16. When I told one of the Via degli Ibernesi leaders about my experiences in Bangkok, she remarked—immediately recognizing the parallels between the two cases—that truly the world was a village.

contrary, I see social life as entailed in a complete and un-hierarchized mutuality of theory and description, structure and agency, and rules and practices—parallel binary pairs to which one can easily fit the relationship between the academic analysis of changing temporalities on the one hand and the political commitment to those whose lives were disrupted by these changes on the other. For if the academic commitment had something of "structure" and "convention" about it, this gave shape and manageability to the struggles into which I was increasingly drawn; those struggles and my involvement in them, on the other hand, both shaped and changed the horizons of my research. Such a direct experience was in itself an arresting, pragmatic demonstration of the practice-theory thesis that structure and agency/practice are but two sides of the same coin.

I do not wish to imply by this discussion that we should never carry out "applied anthropology."[17] But we can and should distinguish between an anthropology that sees inter-vention as its immediate and primary goal and one—this is what "engaged anthropology" means to me—that instead al-lows involvement to emerge from the academic pursuits that both led the scholar to that particular site or group and offer illuminating insights into the dilemmas faced by informants.[18] This practical perspective, which more fully allows for a care-ful appraisal of the ethical complexity of such situations as those considered here, reflects the way in which the experi-ential reality of social structure always (and only) emerges in the actual performance of social interaction—in everyday life and in field research—and in which it is made palpable by creative play with its conventions (Giddens 1984:25–28; Herz-feld 2005:37, 183–199). Such a position, I suggest, goes far beyond the usual call to adopt a code of ethics. It enjoins continual watchfulness and a realization that the ultimate

ethical betrayal is to close the books on a case still in con-testation or to assume that ethical principles are clearly de-fined and beyond discussion. I do not intend to oppose the idea of an ethical code here, but I do want to suggest that the bureaucratization of ethics can result in highly unethical or amoral stances and in forms of exclusion that have some-times deeply painful consequences.[19] Stakeholders, bureau-crats, politicians, even speculators—all have their points of view. To try to capture the entirety of this complicated mixture as a reified "culture" or to summarize an appropriate response in terms of a fixed ethical code merely occludes the all-important detail through which we can begin to understand the situation as a process and a dynamic. I propose the term *essentialist relativism* for the reduction of these complexities to a single, static culture because it suggests that the entire situation is off-limits for anthropological critique, especially by outsiders. *Critical relativism*, by contrast, engages not only the analytic but also the political response of the anthropol-ogist. The latter, more faithful to the model of observer *par-ticipation*, a term nicely echoed in NGO rhetoric,[20] also rec-ognizes the inevitability of having to perform and—in more genuinely creative moments—to *deform* the conventions that regulate protest and debate, thereby actively contributing to political as well as cultural processes of change.[21]

Here, the creative invocation of historical "rights" offered a usable and often surprisingly flexible argument against an unsympathetic state in the one case (Pom Mahakan) and the privatization of public space in the other (Via degli Ibernesi).[22] Both the state and the entrepreneurs depend on a prefabri-cated past, producing a logic that local activists have learned to deploy against its source. I saw this in my Greek work (Herzfeld 1991), where residents could relate the historic sig-nificance of their houses to the dominant state historiography in a number of contrasting ways: those who wished to de-molish and replace them called them "Turk houses," a truly derogatory term in the context of Greek nationalist rhetoric, whereas those who thought to benefit from the largesse of the national archaeological service in order to transform their homes into hotels were quick to embrace the "Venetian" (and thus "Western") label instead. Residents became particularly practiced at exploiting this binarism; because most of the houses could not be dated with any precision, they were some-

17. But I do remain deeply suspicious of the genre (for useful critiques, see Escobar 1995, Ferguson 1990, Fisher 1995, and Gupta 1998).

18. History is inevitably contested. Anthropologists have known this for a long time, and the Sahlins-Obeyesekere debate (see Borofsky 1997; Obeyesekere 1992; Sahlins 1985, 1995) shows that they have themselves been far from immune to such contests—indeed, its obviously ideological contours also show rather dramatically that the idea of an objectivist approach simply reproduces the socially embedded fact that our decisions about what constitutes historical truth are often determined by social and rhetorical positioning. Aristotle understood this well when he pointed out that "metaphor" was always something *other* people did in contrast to one's own expertise in the literal truth (Lloyd 1990:21). The sheikhs studied by Shryock (1997) similarly understood this principle in rela-tionship to their own segmentary decoction of the unitary pretensions of the nation-state into which a Eurocentric modernity had dragged them. It is not—contra the apparently willful misunderstanding of certain critics of a context-sensitive approach (e.g., D'Andrade 1995)—that facts do not matter, but that, as Giambattista Vico pointed out in an explicitly anti-Cartesian argument (see Herzfeld 1998:76), *facts are representations,* and as such, they have a material existence in the socially experienced world. Factuality is thus, to continue the same conceptual line, emergent in scholarly and political practice alike. When we examine the conse-quences of historic conservation and gentrification, we are faced with a selective culling of historical data for the purpose of buttressing argu-ments about "rights," "local identity," and so forth.

19. This, clearly, is a key problem with the requirements of committees, such as the Institutional Review Boards in the United States, that are charged with overseeing social science research on individuals and groups. These committees' procedures often seem geared more toward protecting our institutions from legal liability than toward deflecting potential harm to our interlocutors, significantly dubbed "human subjects" for the com-mittees' purposes.

20. "Participation," too, is nevertheless subject to various forms of manipulation. All such terms, wherever they occur, should be examined in terms of how they are used in specific contexts.

21. This is a crucial aspect of what I call "social poetics," which is intended as a theory of cultural change over the long haul as well as of micropolitical interaction (Herzfeld 2005:183–191, 198–199).

22. See Low and Smith (2006).

times able to make choices between massive modification (even including demolition) accompanied by a rhetoric of modernization on the one hand and careful preservation accompanied by a rhetoric of heritage and high culture on the other, according to what they saw as being in their best economic interests.

An ever-present danger is that in fighting the state in these terms, residents end up having to collude ideologically with it. The leadership of Pom Mahakan is at least partly aware of this danger, which represents what Verena Stolcke (1995; see also Holmes 2000) has identified as "cultural fundamentalism," although their loyalty to the fundamental institutions of the Thai state, and especially to the monarchy, is not negotiable and should not be doubted. They have identified the age of most of the older buildings on the site in terms of "reigns" (the dynastic succession), thus tying their fortunes to those of official historiography. In a country with strict laws protecting the monarchy from criticism and with a culture of consensus in public display and debate, the most effective strategy is always to represent one's cause as a refraction of the larger national (and royal) interest and to suggest that criticism of that cause therefore represents an offense against the latter. The deployment of unity, expressed through the use of national flags and royal portraits, is the only acceptable mode of protest, both because of the residents' own expressed sentiments and because, whether or not it works, that modality is at least seen as ethically and legally unassailable.[23]

Hostile officials, on the other hand, dispute the community's status on the grounds that it is an agglomeration of people of very different backgrounds and places of origin. They also invoke the absence of documentary evidence of ownership and point to the considerable number of longterm squatters—squatters, be it noted, who were warmly welcomed by those already living on the site and who have contributed signally to the development of the sense of community that the municipal authorities' pressure tactics have only intensified still further.

It is the municipal bureaucrats' hostility that compels the Pom Mahakan leadership to play in the unifying conceptual field of dynastic succession and Thai nationalism rather than in that of distinct but overlapping histories and identities.[24]

Yet at least one of the leaders appears to be fully aware of the dangers of such an assimilationist approach, and in fact the small community museum—also protectively labeled "pavilion of the community's local knowledge" (*saalaa phumipanyaa chumchon*) in invocation of a current form of political correctness—contains plentiful materials that record the residents' struggles. Similarly, when I told the leaders that some officials appeared to dismiss their claims to community status on the grounds of multiple origins and that this seemed inconsistent with the assimilationist national self-image and ideology, the word *diversity* (*khwaamlakhlaai*) was suddenly part of the local vocabulary. Official rhetoric can be countered with language that expresses the internal tension between hierarchy and egalitarianism, or between cultural unity and creative difference, that is the hallmark of collective self-conception in the modern Thai polity.[25]

There is a parallel here with the way in which residents of Roman complexes like the building in Via degli Ibernesi lay claim to being the last of the ancient Romans. Here, the residents, disaffected by the apparent indifference of national politicians, are tempted into collusion by the political heirs of Mussolini and the pre–World War II fascists—politicians who are not averse to exploiting the disjunctures between national and local levels of identity and political action.[26] Yet here, too, even those who were loudly criticized by leftist neighbors for their alleged collusion with a nasty form of rightist politics were acutely uncomfortable about the identification. What is an anthropologist to do in such cases? It is no use pretending to be neutral; even seeking balance is a political act. I involved two left-leaning and ecologically minded senators in the struggle; one of them also participated, along with other representatives of the governing coalition, in a press conference at which they were an important counterweight to the presence of neofascist leaders and operatives.

Clearly we cannot decide questions of social justice on the basis of political party affiliations. On the other hand, we can insist that a wide range of conceptual alternatives be deployed so that social actors can make well-informed choices. Globalization is a fact of life. But is does not have to be a *neoliberal* fact of life; indeed, it has been around for far longer than any currently dominant economic ideology. Moreover, the availability of choices means that we, too, have opportunities to

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23. When the Pom Mahakan residents requested the active support of the United Nations Committee on Cultural, Economic, and Social Rights in Geneva, the committee's letter was copied to the king. This allegedly infuriated municipal officials, but there was nothing they could do about it, and it afforded the residents some impunity in their ongoing struggle against eviction.

24. Byrne (2009), also writing about Thailand, develops a related position, suggesting that scholars should incorporate local understandings of cosmology in their engagements with historic conservation. While I warmly endorse the overall thrust of his argument, I find it ironic—and indicative of the larger context that we all must confront—that to advance it, and perhaps also impelled by the interesting but risky comparison he attempts between modern Thailand and medieval Europe, he deploys the category of "popular religion," a term that can inadvertently suggest a

hegemonic categorization of official ("Buddhism") and local ("animism") as conceptually separate and mutually exclusive domains that happen to "overlap and entangle" (for an excellent critique of this dualism in the context of Greek religious practices today, see Stewart 1989). To be sure, he then forthrightly and quite rightly concludes that the alleged incompatibility of ritual with science is "one of the conceits of Western modernity," a point that makes his overall position much clearer. The Pom Mahakan residents and Thai positivists who invoke "Buddhism" to justify their conceptions of "data" show that active conceptual *bricolage* both dissolves such binaries and redeploys them for political ends.

25. I discuss this tension as it plays out in Pom Mahakan in a recent paper (M. Herzfeld, "Paradoxes of Order in Thai Community Politics," unpublished manuscript).

26. For an example of this, see Herzfeld (2009:283).

demonstrate that a social ethic based on principles of mutual tolerance and respect and on the complexities of anthropological knowledge can have a genuine appeal and perhaps thereby also a lasting impact on the configuration of people's lives. The task before us is both clear and urgent. It is to make such complexities accessible and interesting to multiple publics at a time when they are being cynically targeted for the seductive and perhaps irreversible addiction of false simplicities.

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Norwegian Academic Anthropologists in Public Spaces

by Signe Howell

There is a long-standing tradition among social anthropologists in Norwegian universities of participation in debates about current social, cultural, and political issues. I shall examine some of the background to why anthropologists have chosen to play this role and consider some of the practical, professional, and ethical aspects of "engaged anthropology." I shall also consider why the Norwegian public is so open to anthropological comments. A few topics have tended to attract the most anthropological contributions. These are issues to do with development aid, politics regarding the minority population of the Sámi, and questions pertaining to "multicultural society." These topics are all controversial and highly sensitive or have been so at various times, and they all challenge a Norwegian sense of identity as well as a strong feeling of the moral responsibility of ethnic Norwegians to others less fortunate than themselves. My findings are based on interviews with some of the most actively engaged anthropologists in recent years in order to get their point of view about their experiences. It transpired that they are motivated by a desire to communicate a nuanced perspective. However, not only is the role personally challenging, it can also be fraught with contradictory demands.

Since the 1960s, many social anthropologists at Norwegian universities have, from time to time, stepped down from the ivory towers of academia in order to participate in public debates about current social, cultural, and political issues. As a result, the discipline of anthropology is relatively well known in society at large, and the four university departments are attracting large numbers of students. The following statement made in 1995 by a journalist of a major national newspaper is illustrative: "In the nineties there seems to be a little anthropologist living inside each one of us; he keeps house where the little sociologist moved out" (Harket in Melhuus 1999: 66). The validity of this statement was confirmed in 2005 when another major national daily published the list of the 10 best-known intellectuals in Norway. Two of these (Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Unni Wikan) are professors in my department at the University of Oslo. The year before, Wikan received the annual prize of the Freedom of Expression Foundation for her outspoken participation in the public debate about immigration, and Eriksen has received the University of Oslo Award for Excellence in Dissemination of Research. By comparison with other countries, this is nothing short of sensational. But these two are not alone. Many other anthropologists participate actively in the media whenever they feel that their research-based insights might contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the questions being debated. Many are highly critical of specific policies; others wish to broaden the discussion—to cast a somewhat different light on an issue. This they feel they are able to do because of, not least, the comparative perspective integral to the anthropological enterprise. Some simply wish to fulfill their obligation as university academics to disseminate their knowledge.[1] Some take the initiative by writing a *kronikk*—an established literary genre in Norwegian media akin to the American op-ed article (see below)—in a national or local newspaper, or perhaps they submit a letter to the editor. Others wait to be approached by a journalist from radio, television, or the print press. As a result of their visibility, anthropologists are regularly contacted by a range of different groups (e.g., government and local government departments, NGOs, or the numerous voluntary associations of civil society, such as the Rotary Club, Red Cross, pensioners' clubs, and student associations) to give lectures, to act as "experts" in a formal sense, or just to proffer their opinion on specific issues.

In this article I wish to examine some of the background behind why anthropologists play this role of public debaters, and I consider some of the practical, professional, and ethical

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1. Current legislation concerning universities states that university academic employees have three duties: to teach, to do research, and to disseminate the results of their research to a wide audience outside the university.

aspects of "engaged anthropology" as experienced today. I shall also consider why the Norwegian public in particular is so open to anthropological commentary. Despite the number of topics that may potentially be subjected to critical comments by anthropologists, there are some themes that attract the most contributions, and I shall concentrate on them. These are issues to do with development aid, the minority population of the Sámi, and questions pertaining to the "multicultural society" that has come into being following the recent influx of immigrants and asylum seekers from countries outside Western Europe and North America. These topics are all highly sensitive—or have been so at various times—and they all challenge what one may call a Norwegian sense of identity as well as a strong feeling of moral responsibility among ethnic Norwegians to others less fortunate than themselves—whether these live inside or outside the national boundaries.

Being only a small-time player in the field, I decided when planning this article to approach some of today's most highly profiled anthropologists and elicit their experiences of engaging in public debate. Under the circumstances, this seemed to be an appropriate anthropological approach. Although my sample is small,[2] it includes the most active social commentators and critics, so their thoughts on the topic are of interest and relevance to an understanding of the broader picture. I constructed a short questionnaire that was followed up (whenever possible) by a conversation, and I present my findings later in the article. I conclude with a discussion of an example of my own involvement as critic of a popular travelogue written by a Norwegian journalist. Before I present my questionnaire and discuss some implications of the responses, I will give a brief historical background to the contemporary situation. I must emphasize that despite the visibility of academic anthropologists in public forums, this activity is not included as part of the teaching of anthropology. A few panel debates aimed at students on the topic of the anthropologist as public critic have been organized in my own department, but for an anthropologist to take on the role of commentator on aspects of contemporary life is a matter of personal choice—encouraged, no doubt, by the role models of his or her teachers.

Background to Anthropologists' Engagement

The engagement of Norwegian anthropologists in public debate has a long tradition that can be traced back to the early

2. They are Trond Thuen (University of Tromsø); Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Aud Talle, Halvard Vike, Unni Wikan (University of Oslo); the late Marianne Gullestad (Institute of Social Research, Oslo), who, sadly, died shortly after the Wenner-Gren symposium; and Arne Martin Klausen (emeritus professor, University of Oslo). They were given the article for comments before I finalized it. In addition, I have discussed the topic more informally with several colleagues at the University of Oslo. Many others could have been contacted, but work done by the above anthropologists is representative of recurrent themes and dilemmas.

days of development aid and to the plight of indigenous minority populations inside and outside of Norway. I will deal briefly with each.

Issues of Development and Development Aid

When the Norwegian government embarked on their first effort of development aid in 1952 through a fisheries project in Kerala, South India, two Norwegian anthropologists immediately offered their services by suggesting that they might provide some ethnographic background that would help the bureaucrats and technical experts make relevant and useful decisions. They were Guttorm Gjessing, professor at the Oslo University Ethnographic Museum, and the young Fredrik Barth. They were both turned down, although Barth was offered a clerical position at the project office in Kerala, where he could "collect anthropological material in the evenings and week-ends" (Kjerland 1999:322). This experience was regarded as indicative of the official attitude for many years to come. Undaunted nevertheless, from the late 1960s until the present day (reaching a peak of influence in the 1980s), the voices of anthropologists have been among the most critical of Norwegian development policy and the implementation of actual projects.

Despite their active engagement in the media and in forums where development policy was discussed, anthropologists disagree as to how much notice has in actual fact been taken of their opinions (Kjerland 1999). Critical voices are, of course, not always welcome. Arne Martin Klausen's fieldwork on the Norwegian fisheries project in Kerala, which resulted in the report *Kerala Fishermen and the Indo-Norwegian Pilot Project* (1965), was so unpopular that the NORAD leadership tried to prevent him from continuing the research. Barth and Klausen were the two most audible voices during the 1960s and 1970s, and they were joined by Marxist-inspired younger anthropologists during the 1970s and 1980s. The gist of their criticism was directed at the reigning belief that technical assistance would solve local problems and contribute to development. Projects would continue to fail, they argued, unless proper account was taken of local and social institutions and cultural values. Anthropology, they further argued, was the discipline that has made the study of these its main theme, and anthropologists were therefore the most appropriate experts to provide the knowledge required to implement successful projects. Some of their critical arguments were finally listened to. In 1987, Klausen was asked by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to "assist the Ministry in the formulation of a manual for taking account of the sociocultural parameters in development projects" (Kjerland 1999:339; Melhuus 1999:67). Subsequently, his report was translated into English and published by UNESCO (Klausen 1995), which shows that some of those in power took it seriously. Klausen's report was a contributing factor to setting "culture" firmly on the agenda in public debate in Norway, first with regard to development aid and, more recently, with regard to the non-Western im-

migrant populations in Norway.[3] The anthropological debate about the meaning of culture and the role of culture in society was taken up in the media and has at times become quite heated, between those who argue that "culture" is a central empirical dimension of social life that cannot be overlooked and those who claim that the concept has become drained of any meaning and ought to be discarded (see also Melhuus 1999:69). However one views the usefulness of the concept of culture, there is no doubt that today culture is a concept that is on everybody's lips when development aid or the integration of immigrants is being discussed, and for that anthropologists are largely to thank or blame.

Ethnic Conflict: The Sámi and the Alta Dam

In 1978 Norwegian parliament approved a proposal to build a hydroelectric power station with a large dam in a part of northern Norway that was Sámi territory. This became the most controversial energy project in Norwegian history, not least because it activated for the first time the Sámi population. It also activated a large number of others, including environmentalists, politicians, various radical groups, and anthropologists from the newly established University of Tromsø, located in the region, where a research group on Sámi culture had recently been established by an anthropologist (Harald Eidheim). The resistance was based on concerns about, and infringement of, Sámi's rights to land, water, and natural resources. It culminated in 1981 in a huge demonstration that involved 600 police and the forcible removal of many demonstrators. Hunger strikes followed, and the media attention was enormous. The anthropologists engaged themselves actively on the side of the Sámi and provided conceptual ammunition and empirical background information. Many demonstrated, spoke at public meetings, and wrote letters to the newspapers.

Others preferred a more academic approach and organized two conferences (1979 and 1981) on the question of Sámi culture and Sámi rights that had large international participation and that resulted in one major publication (Thuen 1980). Two anthropologists (Ivar Bjørklund and Terje Brantenberg) undertook a study of the anticipated effects of the dam on reindeer herding that was used in the ensuing lawsuit. The British anthropologist Robert Paine, with fieldwork experience from the region, worked closely with his Norwegian colleagues and wrote a report on the conflict for the Norwegian high court. Although the demonstration failed and the dam was built, the event served to activate anthropologists and Sámi alike, and their engagement in turn alerted the Norwegian government to the plight of the Sámi at the same time that several university anthropologists became active in the fight for the rights of indigenous peoples everywhere.

Subsequently, anthropologists were used as consultants by a committee established by Parliament to investigate the Sámi situation—their culture, social institutions, and practices—with a view to granting them legal rights to land and self-government. However, for whatever reason, no anthropologist was invited to sit on subsequent committees to map Sámi languages and culture (T. Thuen, personal communication).

Norwegian anthropologists had already been active in indigenous rights before the Alta incident. The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) was established by Helge Kleivan in 1968 following a conference of Americanists held in Stuttgart that year when the plight of Amazonian Indians was publicized. Since that time, IWGIA has expanded and has become one of the largest organizations anywhere working on behalf of Fourth World people on every continent. Throughout this period, the leaders of IWGIA have been a mixture of activists and university anthropologists, and there is an IWGIA branch at each of the four anthropology departments in Norway.[4] One of its founders, Harald Eidheim, retired professor from the universities of Tromsø and Oslo, said in a recent interview that "one cannot be an anthropologist without becoming involved in those questions of rights that are relevant for people" (Lillegraven and Sørhaug 2005). Although not everyone takes up such a challenge, the spirit of his opinion is one that is shared by most.

Ethnic Relations: Integration or Assimilation of Non-Western Immigrants?

The third main arena in which anthropologists have stood forth as critical, but constructive, social commentators concerns attitudes toward, and treatment of immigrants (and more recently refugees and asylum seekers) from countries outside Western Europe and North America. People who looked and dressed differently from ethnic Norwegians and adhered to different religions and cultural practices began to arrive in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and today they represent approximately 7% of the total population and make up nearly 20% of the population of Oslo. This is a dramatic development in a country that until the 1970s had been remarkably homogenous and that, comparatively speaking, has achieved a well-developed social-democratic welfare system with an egalitarian ethos, not least with regard to gender. To accommodate people from distant and unknown lands, many of whom did not understand or share the Norwegian ideology, became a major concern for the authorities. More recently, especially as the result of an Islamization of large sections of the Muslim population, an emergent racism directed at Muslims is observable—a situation that has activated several anthropologists.

Just as in the early days of development aid, the Norwegian

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3. Norwegian development aid has been, ever since it started, a controversial enterprise. Unlike the situation in many other countries, it has a high profile in political and media debate, and Norway spends a relatively high proportion of GNP on it.

4. For various administrative reasons, the headquarters of IWGIA are today in Copenhagen, but Norwegian anthropologists continue to be active in its work.

authorities relied on a narrowly defined understanding of technical expertise, so also in their early dealings with non-European immigrants. Initially, social anthropologists were not included in the category of experts whose insights were thought to be useful, but they quickly came on the scene as critical commentators. As they had argued with reference to development aid, they now argued that the authorities displayed little or no understanding of questions about cultural complexity or about the constituting importance of indigenous values and practices regarding personhood, gender, family and kinship, and economic practices. As problems of integration became apparent, several anthropologists emerged as social critics. Again, their voices were received with mixed feelings by other "experts" and the politicians, but during the 1990s, several academic anthropologists became very well known in the media because of their persistent and controversial contributions to the debate. The best-known today are Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Unni Wikan, and Marianne Gullestad, all of whom have published a number of academic and more popular articles and books on the topic (e.g., Eriksen 2001; Eriksen and Søheim 2006 [1994]; Gullestad 2002, 2006*a*, 2006*b*; Wikan 2002, 2008 [2003]). Not always in agreement with each other, their appearances on radio and television, their many *kronikk*, letters to the newspapers, appearances in debates with politicians and representatives of various immigrant organizations, and talks in numerous public forums have provided the Norwegian public with much food for thought. Although these are the most well-known anthropologists in Norway (it provoked little surprise when Wikan and Eriksen were included in the group of best-known public intellectuals), many other academic anthropologists from time to time take on the role as social critics of the so-called integration and immigration politics. Trying to combat racism, these anthropologists have stood forth seeking to relativize cultural understanding among the Norwegian population. In the words of Eriksen, a firm advocate of academic public engagement (Eriksen 2006), his involvement "has always been driven by wishing to explore what links all humans together, what we have in common, rather than focus on what makes us different from one another."

At the same time, it is clear that while these anthropologists see their task as one of education and instilling tolerance, they also face the personal and ethical challenge of taking a normative stance and, more disturbing personally, of having to come to terms with their disapproval of some of the cultural practices that they try to defend. Until recently, anthropologists saw their roles as relativizing cultural values and practices regardless: to present unfamiliar beliefs and practices from the native's point of view. Today the situation is becoming somewhat more complex because of their own lack of wholehearted acceptance of some of the practices. This raises a number of ethical dilemmas that several of the respondents to my questionnaire mentioned. Muslim gender practices can be particularly provoking to female anthropologists, not least because Islamization is increasing in Norway

as it is in the rest of Western Europe. The most eye-catching manifestation of this is the increase in the number of Muslim women who wear the head scarf. More serious is the continued practice of enforced marriage and the occasional honor killings of resistant daughters. The various forms of female circumcision that some migrant communities (mainly Somalis) are known to practice, despite a Norwegian law that forbids it, regularly catches the attention of the media. To try to argue if not for tolerance but at least for cultural understanding of these practices is particularly challenging, rendering the anthropologists vulnerable to personal verbal and even physical attacks. At the same time, to criticize alien practices renders them vulnerable to criticism by their colleagues.

Forums for Engaging in Debate

Some anthropologists write about a wide range of topics of public debate and not just those that are closely linked to their own research, and as a result, they emerge as so-called public intellectuals. But most do not move outside their particular field of expertise. There are several different ways anthropologists engage as social critics. The most common form employed is to write a *kronikk* and submit it to a national or regional newspaper. As mentioned above, the *kronikk* is an established literary genre in Norwegian newspapers and journals—similar to the op-ed in American newspapers, but with no equivalent in the British press—on a theme of current interest and written not by a journalist of the paper in question but by someone with special knowledge about the theme. *Kronikk* occupy an allocated place in the newspaper, usually next to the lead editorial. There is a long tradition in Norwegian public life for various kinds of experts—including university academics—to write a *kronikk* on a topic that they feel strongly about or that they think might interest the public. It is usually a polemical piece intended to throw new light on a controversial issue. It often leads to debate in the form of a response *kronikk* by someone who disagrees, or it may lead to a series of exchanges of letters to the editor. Several anthropologists who took advantage of this well-established tradition made their name as public commentators through the use of a *kronikk*. If the topic is felt to be of broader interest, print or radio journalists may ask the author for interviews. Once an anthropologist has caught public attention in connection with a particular topic, journalists are made aware of her existence and tend to contact her again on related issues whenever they become "hot."[5]

Because anthropologists have achieved such a high profile, not least because their angle is often read as rather original, anthropology departments have become a regular source of information and comment for journalists. Journalists are of-

5. The recently deceased anthropologists Marianne Gullestad and Jan Brøgger were both contracted by *Aftenposten* (the major Norwegian daily paper) to write a *kronikk* on whatever topic they felt strongly about whenever they wanted to.

ten in search of controversial opinions that will heat up the debate, and they have learned that anthropologists can be relied on to come up with a somewhat unusual slant on a topic. Frequently they are in search of some "exotic" information on more sensational topics such as sex and marriage, magical practices, food taboos, and so on. However, if they oblige, anthropologists run the risk of becoming figures of fun, especially if they try to relativize Norwegian cultural practices. But in more serious debates, anthropologists who have shown themselves willing to speak up are often called on to comment and to participate in radio or television debates on very short notice.

The Questionnaire

In order to delve more deeply into their motivations and experiences, I undertook a small investigation among those well-known anthropologists who have been most active in public debates in recent years to learn about their experience of being "engaged anthropologists." I asked them to reflect on this in response to a brief questionnaire and followed up on their replies with a conversation in person, by phone, or by e-mail. Before commenting on their answers, these are my questions.

1. How do you interpret the expression *engaged anthropology*?

2. Can you say something about why you began to involve yourself in nonacademic forums and/or media?

3. How would you characterize anthropologists' contributions to contemporary social issues? What can we contribute that other social scientists cannot (i.e., does anthropology matter)?

4. Is Norway special in any sense? Do you have any thoughts about why anthropologists are so "visible" here?

5. Is it correct that anthropologists have engaged mainly in questions that are directly of relevance to the sociocultural situation in contemporary Norway? What, if any, consequences does that kind of engagement result in that are different from earlier days when anthropologists wrote about "exotic" peoples and argued for cultural relativism? Does this shift affect the public's understanding of what anthropology is?

6. Please list the topics that in your experience are the most popular.

7. In what ways have you engaged yourself (e.g., through writing *kronikk*, writing popular articles for general readership, lectures to various organizations, political debates, radio/television, interviews in newspapers, serving as expert witness)?

8. Do you feel that your contributions have any effect? Are you listened to? Ought anthropologists to feel a responsibility to engage in public debates? Is this something we should include in our teaching?

9. What do you regard as the biggest challenge to publicly expressing your opinion? Do you feel that it compromises the complexity of your knowledge by trying to simplify or provide quick answers?

10. Ought anthropologists to engage themselves more as generalists and proffer opinion about matters that are not necessarily within their expertise, that is, become "public intellectuals"?

11. Is there a price to pay for your visibility? Is it worth it?

The Responses

Rather than simply discuss the answers according to the numerical order of the questions, I will draw out some points from the responses that I find of interest and relevance to the overall question of the anthropologist as social critic. No great divergence in the responses emerged, although those interviewed chose to emphasize different aspects of the practice reflecting their varied experience in entering the controversies of the world outside academia. To take on the role of public anthropologist brings up several important questions regarding professional integrity and ethics, the consequences of which are not always straightforward or predictable; each anthropologist must decide for herself or himself how far they are willing to go and how far they are willing to compromise the complexity of their knowledge in favor of getting a message across. Most are aware that it is a balancing act and that one risks falling between two stools, failing to convince the general public and, at the same time, losing the respect of one's colleagues. Partly because of this, most prefer to take the initiative and write something, rather than being interviewed, as they can control what they say. The experience of being misquoted, often for the sake of journalists wishing to dramatize the debate, is provoking.

All the respondents emphasized that to them, "engaged anthropology" meant to use one's anthropological knowledge and insight to contribute to public debate as well as to disseminate one's findings more generally. It is a way to provide "feedback" to the general public. On the more controversial issues, most agreed that it is hard to avoid being normative, but that this is acceptable as long as one is explicitly reflexive about this. Several made the point that it is the comparative dimension of anthropology that gives us an edge over other social scientists; in the words of Talle, it can effectively be used to throw light on our own society. Everyone expressed an opinion that ideally, anthropologists ought to be engaged in wider social debates but that not everyone has the personality or the ability to make this a viable option. Several replied that they had been attracted to anthropology as part of a youthful idealism, a desire to try to make the world a better place. For example, Gullestad, a prolific academic and popular writer on contemporary Norway, said that anthropology for her was a way to actively contribute to enhanced understanding about Norwegian social and cultural life, to promote a new reflexivity in the "educated classes" about their own understandings and opinions, and to help to deconstruct

"cultural blindness." Dissemination of her research was an integral part of her professional career. Gullestad received three prizes for her active involvement in public debate and for bringing her research to bear on the issues. Today, she maintained, the biggest challenge for Norwegian anthropologists is to combat racism and to overcome the division between anthropology "at home" and "abroad." It is worth noting that until she wrote critically about Norwegian expressions of racism, Gullestad encountered only goodwill. Once she addressed the question of an emerging racism (2002, 2006*a*), however, she was subjected to angry comments about "condescending professors" and similar expressions of antagonism.

All those interviewed agreed that in cases where the anthropologist has research-based knowledge about a particular controversial social, cultural, or political issue, she or he ought to enter the debate, minimally through a letter or *kronikk* in a newspaper, in order to cast a more informed light on the public debate. Several maintained that there is no good reason why this kind of "popularizing" should compromise one's research as long as the anthropologist is explicit about his/ her motives. They were not in agreement, however, on how much anthropologists should be "public intellectuals." Several argued that anthropology is, among other things, a way of thinking or having a particular gaze, and that this can be applied with benefit to many different issues about which they do not necessarily have research-based knowledge, and also that as public intellectuals, anthropologists may provide a corrective to received wisdom. Implicit in the discipline, says Eriksen—the most ardent supporter of the anthropologist as public critic and as popularizer (Eriksen 2001, 2004, 2006*b*)—is the firm notion that all humans are of equal worth and that there are many paths to the "good life"; in other words, he advocates applied cultural relativism in daily life. Anthropologists have the eyes (and ought to have the courage) to point out that at times, the emperor has no clothes. However, all those interviewed emphasized that anthropology is a generalizing discipline and, as such, may usefully be brought to bear in many different contexts. Others raised the point (often heard in the corridors of anthropology departments) that we should be more selective in what we choose to comment on in order to avoid being thought of as "all knowing" and thereby lose credibility.

According to Gullestad, it is not so much a question of whether anthropologists ought to be social critics but that those who enter into sensitive public debate must be prepared for a "media storm"—especially when they take sides. In fact, ensuing turbulence and trouble are what all those interviewed raised as the downside of sticking one's neck out. Wikan has received threatening letters and much hate mail from irate members of the public who object to her widely broadcast views on Muslim immigrants—especially her persistent critical remarks about the treatment of women in Muslim communities inside Norway. Others feel that the main problem is being misquoted and misrepresented and thus vulnerable

to much unfair criticism. Gullestad suggested that universities ought to provide some training in how to handle the media. There must be some kind of institutional support system, she argued, that will come into operation on such occasions. She argues that given the fact that universities want their academic staff to play a more active role in the dissemination of their research findings and to enter relevant debates, the universities must play their part and train and support the researcher. It can be tough to suddenly find oneself in the center of a controversial public debate. Talle, with many years of fieldwork in East Africa, where various forms of female circumcision are practiced as a matter of course, has on several occasions been caught in the middle of furious media storms when she has tried to explain to a highly normative and moralistically outraged public that the question is more complicated than they think. In particular, some years ago she was made the butt of severe personal criticism by one high-profile activist. She found the experience so disturbing that she refused to participate in media interviews and decided instead to write a book on the topic for the general public (Talle 2003). At the same time she has talked about her understanding of the "problem" to Norwegian politicians and governmental authorities anxious about this operation being carried out inside Norway and to various public health organizations that are formulating policy and drafting guides for practice for health workers, believing that in this way she has more chance to be heard properly and to exert some influence.

However, not all anthropological involvement in illuminating current social practices results in the person becoming a media figure. Some find that their contribution can be at least as effective by establishing good rapport with those in power and that through this, they try to exert influence on policy decisions. This is the case with Halvard Vike, whose long-term research on public health in Norway has made him a popular speaker at a range of workshops and conferences of bureaucrats and politicians (local and national). Observations made during fieldwork have made him highly critical of much contemporary practice, and he is not reluctant to express his opinion to those directly involved. However, rather than closing ranks and dismissing his analyses as interference by an outsider, those concerned have received his work with interest. Not politically active, Vike was the only outside "expert" invited to the 2006 preelection policy meetings of the Labor Party. His opinions about the health service were taken seriously by high-ranking politicians, including the prime minister. Vike thought that one reason they seemed to value his analysis was that they respected that his insight was fieldwork based, not the result of large-scale surveys. Vike first caught the attention of the general public in 1998 as the result of his active involvement in the making of an eight-part television documentary for Norwegian public television titled *Power and Politics* that cast a critical gaze on Norwegian political life. He claims not to feel restricted in his research by his involvement as advisor. Gullestad, on the other hand,

preferred to maintain her status as an outsider and declined invitations to be included in working groups organized by political parties, but she gave talks to such gatherings.

Why Are Norwegian Anthropologists So Active in Public Life?

To the question of why anthropologists in Norway occupy a rather special position in public life, the respondents all emphasize the fact that Norway is a small country and that because of the relatively egalitarian social order, everyone feels themselves to have some kind of personal stake in national development. All made the point that the social sciences have played a rather special role in the development of the Norwegian welfare state. By abolishing private education and giving children from nonacademic and/or economically poor families the opportunity for further and higher education, the population today displays a relatively high level of education, and there are few class boundaries. A large number of people take an active interest in politics and in social and cultural questions (see Lien, Vike, and Lidén 2001). By and large, Norwegians display an open attitude to learning and knowledge, or at least knowledge understood as "useful."[6] Unlike the populations of many other countries (including the United States), Norwegians do not distrust the state but feel that it genuinely works toward a better life for all. There is thus a market, and a tradition, for media debate about social issues, and academics as well members of the general public do not hesitate to join in the debates. Historically, social scientists made their mark in the corridors of power. Since the 1930s, economists and sociologists—together with psychologists and members of the medical profession—have been active in the development of the modern Norwegian welfare state. Politicians and bureaucrats were quick to see their potential usefulness, and a close relationship between the social-democratic government, the civil service, and academic social scientists developed. They shared an idealistic vision of the future, and research-based knowledge was regarded as an important tool to achieve their aims. Politicians and bureaucrats perceived professional knowledge and research findings as necessary contributions to the achievement of progress, and they were eager to draw on new findings from the universities in order to make rational decisions.

Representatives from the above academic disciplines were the main propagators of information of how to develop the Norwegian state in the most beneficial, appropriate, and equitable manner. As well as acting as advisors, many were also active in the media, and, importantly, they were listened to. The anthropologists came late into a public arena already familiar with academics as participants in developing policy

6. It is fair to say that the population at large has an ambivalent attitude regarding intellectuals. While their knowledge is respected, there is at the same time a profound skepticism regarding what many characterize as "useless knowledge."

and acting as social critics. Undoubtedly, Klausen's and Barth's engagement in debates about development aid contributed to anthropologists being included in the group of academic experts. Barth also made a television series in 1979 titled *Their Lives and Our Own* (Barth 1979) in which he captivated the Norwegian public with tales from his fieldwork in numerous exotic places. His attempts to educate them by insisting on "the natives' point of view" clearly had some effect—if only to alert the public to cultural differences. Today, anthropologists with fieldwork experience from the Third World are eager to disseminate knowledge about life in distant parts of the world, but perhaps not surprisingly, Norwegians (and Norwegian media) are more interested in their own problems than those of the unknown others. Therefore, the most visible anthropologists in the public arenas today discuss issues relevant to contemporary Norway. While Norwegians continue to feel a strong sense of moral obligation to help those less fortunate than themselves in the poor south, they are less curious about social and cultural realities beyond the anecdotal. They want aid money to result in improvement, but care less about the ethnographic details that are of relevance for achieving it.

What, If Any, Effect Does the Engagement Have?

Given the general positive attitude of Norwegian politicians and bureaucrats toward social scientists in general and the media's increasing use of anthropologists, one might expect that the anthropologists whom I interviewed would express their active engagement as social and cultural critics as a positive experience. However, all were cautious in assessing the influence they may have had. Those who have acted as advisors in some capacity based directly on their research competence felt that they were listened to and that they probably have influenced future policies or decisions in some small way. In the words of Talle, "I feel that my book, and commissioned reports, on female circumcision have had some important effects in certain arenas of relevance, for example in the Directorate of Health." She and the others are much less certain about the effect of their engagements in the media. Eriksen, the person who most qualifies as a public intellectual, concludes that many years of trying to communicate the essence of an anthropological approach in a balanced manner can easily be destroyed by "the appearance of some zealots whose extreme positions nourish the less liberal attitudes among large sections of the population." He has in mind here a noticeable hardening of attitudes toward immigrants.

The desire of the media for controversy, conflict, and quick answers can prove counterproductive. The anthropologist may emerge as just an entertaining figure spouting weird examples and providing amusing analyses of Norwegians' way of life. On the other hand, Wikan, with many public appearances on issues of immigration, feels that despite distressing personal attacks, she, like Talle, has nevertheless been

able to exert some influence on policy. On a different note, to be a well-known commentator may benefit the anthropologist in his or her research. For better or worse, Wikan's status as a public figure, for example, has given her access, denied to others, to several highly controversial court cases that involve people from the immigrant communities (Wikan 2008 [2003]).

In addition to the academic anthropologists' visibility in public debate, many former students with postgraduate degrees in social anthropology occupy senior and influential positions in a range of governmental and nongovernmental organizations as well as in a number of institutions of applied social science research, and their voices are often heard in the media. They contribute to confirm the general public's belief that anthropologists are active and insightful commentators on contemporary life.

As I have shown, the public engagement of academic anthropologists in Norway has confined itself to critiquing Norwegian practices. None of those interviewed have engaged in a similar critical manner in the countries in which they do fieldwork. To do so raises different ethical and practical considerations—to what extent can one justify such engagement when one is a visitor and researcher is an important question. What might one hope to achieve through direct confrontation with powerful local institutions—and at what cost—is another. To my knowledge, this is not an issue discussed among Norwegian anthropologists. An added factor that perhaps keeps foreign anthropologists from criticizing practices in the country where they wish to continue to undertake fieldwork is a fear of being denied future research permission—an understandable but less laudable consideration. The closest I got to such a position was when I wrote a highly critical chapter on the situation of the Malaysian aboriginal people for the edited volume *Indigenous Peoples of Asia* (Howell 1995). Whether or not as a consequence of this, when I applied for a research visa the year after, it was not granted. More recently, I was approached by two Malaysian lawyers who were acting on behalf of local activist groups who were fighting against the building of a dam that would entail the involuntary resettlement of some of the aboriginal people that I have studied. I was asked whether I would be willing to act as an expert witness when the case comes to court. I had no hesitation in agreeing. Such a forum, it seems to me, is a place in which one may bring to bear one's ethnographic knowledge, perhaps to some effect, in a situation where the other—and powerful—parties are largely ignorant of the social and cultural institutions and practices of those affected.

Conclusion

Following the great success of *The Bookseller of Kabul* by the Norwegian journalist Åsne Seierstad (Seierstad 2003), which rapidly was translated into English and a number of other languages, many Norwegian social anthropologists felt distinctly uncomfortable. Superficially, the book resembled an anthropological study. Based on staying with the bookseller's family for "several months," Seierstad wrote a book about the Afghan way of life. By and large she is critical of what she observed, especially in matters pertaining to gender values. She makes little or no attempt to contextualize what she saw, and she reports her informants' intimate acts and their (often assumed) thoughts and feelings, apparently without any reservations as to the methodological and ethical implications of her approach. Media response to the book was entirely positive until the bookseller himself objected strongly to what he regarded as Seierstad's betrayal of himself and his family. At that point a media storm erupted, with people arguing strongly both for and against the enterprise.

Together with a colleague, Kathinka Frøystad, I felt compelled to enter the debate. We wrote a *kronikk* for a major national newspaper (Howell and Frøystad 2003) in which we argued that the book fails to take account of the "natives' point of view," being rather the author's unreflected interpretation of what she had observed. Moreover, and more dangerously to our mind, her interpretation corresponded to that of the majority of Norwegians (and of the populations of other Western European countries and, not least, the United States). It thus does little more than confirm prejudices about Afghanistan and Islamic family life and gender relations. We questioned the ethics of criticizing those who had opened their home to her, and we questioned the depth of her knowledge given her ignorance of the local language and a manifestly shallow understanding of Afghan social organization. However, we did not criticize the enterprise as such, and even congratulated her on her achievement. Personally, I would have preferred to make a more outspoken attack, but I was restrained by my coauthor and other colleagues who argued that a serious anthropological critique would lead to counteraccusations of elitism, or even jealousy (because anthropologists do not write popular books that sell in such numbers). Shortly afterward, Wikan also wrote a *kronikk* in the same newspaper making points similar to ours, and Eriksen pointed out that an "orientalizing temptation" is always present in accounts (i.e., Seierstad's book) that blur the distinction between fact and fiction. Subsequently we were criticized in an article in *Anthropology Today* for being "rather restrained in [their] response to—much less shaping of—the debate" (Myhre 2004:18). The crux of the criticism against us—aimed admittedly at an anthropological audience—was that "the affair is of interest as much for its acts of omission as for its acts of commission" (Myhre 2004:21).

The case was interesting to me. I agree with Myhre that our criticism of the book was not forceful enough, and this caused me to reflect further on the reason for our "cowardice." This, I think, can be traced back our sense of insecurity in relation to the nature of the criticized object itself. We worried that our objection to Seierstad's account could be construed as simply protecting our disciplinary territory. She had engaged in something approximating ethnographic fieldwork and written a book that was an approximation of an anthro-

pological study. To criticize it more severely than we did would, we thought, diminish the force of our argument and raise countercriticisms of academic superiority and protectionism—which did in fact happen. This was a somewhat different situation from that often faced by Norwegian cultural critics. Rather than commenting on ignorant, misguided, or unfair practices in our own society, we were criticizing someone who might by others be perceived as a competitor to our own discipline. In retrospect I think we could have handled our engagement better and been more assertive in defense of the anthropological method.

I choose to end here. The case of *The Bookseller of Kabul* (Seierstad 2003) may seem somewhat peripheral to the major concern of anthropologists as social critics; however, it illustrates the dilemmas inherent in using one's knowledge to step outside the comfortable life of academia. To stand forth as a critical commentator on unacceptable or controversial practices is a difficult balancing act in which ethical, disciplinary, and collegial concerns must be taken into consideration. As our criticism of Seierstad's book demonstrates, we ultimately failed to satisfy both the general public and our colleagues. This is a risk anthropologists always face when choosing to take a stance. Nevertheless, in Norway, at least, anthropologists have embraced the role of social critic; it has a long tradition and it is one that new generations of academic anthropologists continue to perform.

Acknowledgments

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On Ethnographic Sincerity

by John L. Jackson Jr.

This essay posits sincerity and humor as linked ways of politicizing the interactions that underpin all ethnographic encounters. This politicization is contrasted with conventional anthropological pre-occupations with authenticity (and fetishizations of ethnographic writing), and it demands attention to the human bodies that constitute ethnographic intersubjectivity. Combining a discussion of Habermas's public sphere with the exploits of a nineteenth-century African American mesmerist and protoanthropologist, Paschal Randolph, I argue against one kind of "occulted anthropology" (the disembodied version attributed to Habermas) for an agential variety exemplified by Randolph's differently framed investments in the political powers of occultist possibility. Instead of being seduced by would-be objective attempts to access a disembodied (i.e., universal) subjectivity, I argue for a Paschal-like reclamation of the vulnerable ethnographic body (in all of its contingent particularity), a reclamation that fuses rational minds to laughing bodies while opening up space for a critique of potentially impoverished conceptualizations of politics and political activity.

It was anthropologist Carolyn Rouse who most recently reminded me to think more substantively about the analytical dangers that arise from downplaying the heuristic importance of humor. We were on a panel at an American Anthropological Association (AAA) meeting, and she was talking about ethnographies that made her laugh, productively and profoundly, even when treating ostensibly tragic or disturbing topics. Her point resonated with many in the room. Hazards and lacunae emerge when ethnographers underestimate the extent to which humanity's existential difference is constituted, at least in part, by our uncanny ability to find the smallest incongruous comedic pathway through even the most horrific of life situations, a capacity hinted at and colloquialized in the vernacular adage about laughing to keep from crying.[1] However, this is not just laughter as a mechanism for repression and strategic amnesia, although that clearly gets bundled into what the aforementioned phrase implies. The laughter Rouse was invoking also indicates a kind of vulnerable and vernacular pleasure that ethnographic accounts can document, a pleasure that pivots on people's stubborn recognition of their own continued worth despite external threats of devaluation and marginalization—maybe even because of those threats. Antaeus, the Libyan giant of Greek mythology, epitomized a physicalization of this paradoxical endowment, seeming only the stronger in battle each time his opponent slammed his body down into the earth.

A call for the methodological utility of humor—for a mutually beneficial analytics and politics of the ludic—demands that ethnographies do more than just "break your heart," a differently compelling mandate offered up by Ruth Behar (1997). Ethnographic work might also actively solicit a kind of compassionate and empathetic guffaw at the many ways in which people hold fast to a sense of robust selfhood, fending off the potentially dehumanizing slide into an anguished and pathological embrace of one-dimensional victimhood. The intersubjectivity that constitutes ethnography's experiential core is a fecund space for thematizing and recalibrating the political implications of fieldwork-based research predicated on cultivation of an intimate relatedness that is only vulgarized with apolitical euphemisms about "building rapport." What is this "rapport," which George Marcus (1998) famously conceptualized as "complicity," and what are its politics? Might that be one of the first things anthropology reexamines when assessing its own discipline-based social and political engagements?

Anthropology has become fiendishly self-reflexive, a trait heightened and refined with the "writing culture" moment of the 1980s and 1990s, when anthropologists and their critics laid bare the various rhetorical strategies used to produce certain kinds of textual authority. Even though the ramifications of these deconstructive gestures sought to engage the methodological and epistemological totality of the ethnographic experience, the discursive endgame of the finished monograph (maybe a too-easy and reified prey) was pedes-

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1. Erve Chambers (1989) compares ethnography to comedy in a fairly systematic way. His work emphasizes the formal/structural similarities between the two genres as opposed to highlighting their substantive and necessary cross-fertilizations.

talized for subsequent toppling—over and against a more sustained set of conversations about the quotidian, affect-laden, and ethical demands of working as an ethnographic data gatherer. Of course, "the field" was constantly invoked and theorized, mostly as trope and mystification, the messiness of which was deemed flattened out and papered over by the conventional narratologics of ethnographic writing. The discipline has done a sophisticated job, in my opinion, of thinking through the politics of cultural representation, and that discourse/practice continues to push the traditional limits of our writerly genre in productive, challenging, and sometimes wonderfully frustrating ways. But I want to offer up a very preliminary and schematic discussion of what I am calling "ethnographic sincerity" to suggest the ethicopolitical purchase of focusing an analytical eye on potential problems that accrue from underthematizing the substantive (seemingly extraethnographic) relationships forged between anthropologists and the anthropologized.[2] I want to begin an argument that labels such ethnographic contact a kind of epistemological ground zero for engagements with the politics of anthropological knowledge production today.

It has become cliché to invoke the politics (not to mention the ethics) of participant observation, anthropology's quintessential methodological gesture; its inadequacies and mystifications are far too ripe for justifiable picking, especially given common stereotypes (fair or not) about the discipline's traditional unwillingness, formally and systematically, to train graduate students in ethnographic methods. Even as late as the mid-1990s, when I was just starting graduate school, would-be cultural anthropologists were taught to envision fieldwork as a kind of trial by fire, a rite of passage you did not prepare for so much as simply endure and survive, on the fly and by the seat of your pants. We registered for mandated courses that required us to write research proposals delineating our game plan for "the field" and linking our immersion in a particular geographical locale to a set of questions, concerns, and theories that might help us to explain what about that place was important to think (and think with). But we did not really operationalize or theorize the pending methodological moment much more than that. How could we? Each student would plop down in such a decidedly distinctive political, cultural, social, and environmental landscape. The experience of fieldwork would be an unpredictable cocktail that only became the more capricious when combined with the idiosyncrasies and psychologies of all the individuals involved: dissertators conducting their research and the various research subjects asked to suffer our foolishness.

2. Fran Markowitz and Michael Ashkenazi (1999) compiled an important anthology of anthropological negotiations of sexuality in the field that speaks to one of these seemingly extraethnographic (because bracketed out of most monographs) themes. Bill Maurer (2005) uses the notion of "post reflexivity" to talk about a kind of ethnography that cares less about deconstructing its own authority claims and more about dealing with the field's bounce-back/constructive powers of interpellating the anthropologist.

When my students today ask me to parse the difference between urban anthropology and qualitative sociology, especially if ethnographic researchers from those two disciplines are working in the same locations and on ostensibly comparable issues, I sometimes (purposefully provocatively) chalk the actual distinction up to discrepancies in how the two domains approach the ethnographic project itself, our respective assumptions about methodological rigor and validity. We both can "do" ethnography, but the differences are striking. And we see some of that quite conspicuously on the printed page—in the difference, say, between sociological appendixes that take us through a step-by-step unfurling of the conceptual and methodological maneuvers of the sociological researcher and an anthropological privileging of textual offerings that can sometimes make the methodological backstage (the "who," "how many," and "for how long" kinds of questions) tenaciously murky, a technique for both enthroning "theory" and concomitantly protesting, at least orthogonally, more obvious and positivist genuflections to the superiority of bench sciences and their representational conventions.

We can see that same sociological/anthropological difference on just about every single page of most monographs, and that presentational distinction is a valuable weapon in ongoing attempts at interdisciplinary policing. It might sound unfair, indeed even ludicrous, but I want to claim that some of these disciplinary differences are a function of the fact that anthropology is a potentially more hopeful (or, even better, more hope-filled) disciplinary formation than sociology, using "hope" in ways that lean heavily on Vincent Crapanzano's (2003) attempt to thematize hope as a powerful analytical rubric for reimagining ethnographic possibility.

In distinguishing desire from hope, while conceding their ongoing and sloppy (if somewhat understandable) conflation in the literature, Crapanazano notes social theory's relative underappreciation of hope. It is too cagey, protean, ephemeral, and autonomous to be domesticated into the kinds of notions that provide anthropological theorists with conventional forms of would-be certainty or predictability. "In its worldly manifestations," he writes, "[hope] may be quite specific, edging on desire, as when a lawyer hopes to win a case or a father hopes to have a daughter. Or it may be open-ended, lacking final definition, vague . . . and subject to chance" (Crapanazano 2003:7). Its semantic expansiveness is an asset that for some only serves to spoil the anthropological project. Furthermore, there is the inescapably seductive danger of "false hope," against which Crapanzano calculates true hope as a fusion of realism with "social change, progress, and even revolution."

My reading of *sincerity* (and its ethnographic significances) would wire questions of realism and political possibility to Crapanzano's ambitious reclamation of hope as a valuable anthropological rubric. It is a version of this *hope* that allows, I would argue, for that laughter in the face of calamity that Rouse demands. We are talking about the importance and

inescapable ordinariness of affect, something central to an ethnographic praxis that is always funny and traumatic, poignant and mundane—all in the selfsame instant. It emphasizes some of how anthropologists and their informants embody an equally affective subjecthood during the ethnographic encounter. "The politics of ordinary affect," writes Kathleen Stewart, "can be anything from a split second when police decide to shoot someone because he's black and standing in a dark doorway and has something in his hands, to a moment when someone falls in love with someone else who's just come into view. Obviously, the differences matter. The politics of any surge depends on where it might go. What happens" (Stewart 2007:15). This might move us to examine "what happens" (and/or does not) when the ethnographic sparks start flying in the intersubjective collision that is anthropological research, an anthropology that defines its difference from most other versions of the social scientific enterprise (at least in their overly scientistic iterations) as marking time between a version of ethnography seen as a transparent window into a discrete, passive, and objective social world and a contrasting variety considered something more like a black box of feedback loops, inter/subjective contaminations, and almost unteachable artistry. This is an anthropology that no longer just flies headlong into the delusional fantasy of political self-evidence and clarity. Instead, it tries to heed Virginia Dominguez's call to rescue anthropology from its growing political irrelevance by paying particular "attention to the presence or absence of love and affection in our scholarship— at all stages in the production of our scholarship" (Dominguez 2000:388).

My too-quick leaps (of faith?) from *hope* to *affect* to *love* are all gestures in the direction of grounding a conceptual distinction between sincerity and authenticity, two related lenses for spotting "the real" and its varying implications for ethnographic research. That "writing culture" moment privileged "authenticity" as a Trojan horse for falsified renditions of ethnographic authority, which necessitates that we ask ourselves "what happens" when we move our discussion of realism's stakes from authenticity to its "cognate ideal," as Trilling once put it, *sincerity*. What do we gain, and what do we lose? And why does this differential potential offer a drastically newfangled commitment to "the political" in anthropology today? To begin an admittedly incomplete answer to that overly ambitious question, I am going to leave the contemporary moment, this version of the ethnographic present, for a digression through the affect-laden and hope-saturated in/sincerities of an African American protoanthropologist from the mid-nineteenth century, Paschal Randolph.[3]

Paschal Beverly Randolph was a self-educated African American born in downtown Manhattan in 1825. He was raised on a patch of what was then a teeming, soot-filled slum

known as Five Points, where several of the city's most dangerous and sometimes bloody streets intersected. Not at all atypical for the time period, Randolph's mother died of cholera when he was only 6 years old (during the epidemic of 1831), and the story of his father, of "the Virginia Randolphs," seems to have been made up by Paschal himself out of little more than wishful dreams.

Despite his humble and poverty-stricken beginnings, by 1855 Randolph was a world-renowned transatlantic sex magician who practiced alchemy, numerology, and various forms of astral projection. He also represented an early, preinstitutionalized version of American ethnography. His mid-nineteenth-century research trips through Western Europe, Egypt, and the Turkish Empire netted him powerful fetish objects and potent talismans: magic mirrors that one magnetized for clairvoyance (to gaze into the future or the past) by carefully ejaculating on their surfaces; hashish that Randolph personally mobilized to free himself from earlier "slavery" under the negatively "vampiric" powers of spirit mediumship; a variety of crystals, magnets, and newly learned meditative techniques that allowed practiced men to engage in sexual intercourse for seemingly extraordinary amounts of time, techniques he sold through the mail as part of his "sex science" system—and for approximately five dollars a secret.

Historians of religion have characterized the rise of occultism (i.e., mesmerism, animal magnetism, etc.) in nineteenth-century America as an instantiation of "the flight from reason," a time of increasingly irrational commitments to mysticism and superstition (as a function, at least in part— and somewhat ironically—of advances in scientific technology). But I am particularly interested in the political service to which sex magic, spiritualism, and even (to a different extent) occultism were put by the likes of Randolph, mediums who channeled historical figures such as Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Martin Luther, and Socrates in aid to the abolitionist cause, these long-dead spirits deployed to rail against the injustices of racial slavery and female disenfranchisement.

Even after Randolph denounced and recanted spiritualism (which, he claimed, evacuated his soul and individual subjectivity in the name of "uncontrollably foreign forces") and began the occultist search he would bequeath to the likes of Madame Blavatsky, of Theosophical Society fame, his continued use of magic/mediumship as a civil and political tool in debates about the future of the nation-state, law, and governance were clear examples of the extent to which "the public sphere" was soaked through and through with more than just finely sifted Habermasian hyperrationalities. According to Russ Castronovo (2001), nineteenth-century America's farfetched, pseudoscientific, and illogical politicking (the kind that Randolph exemplified) was actually more in line (not less) with Habermas's irredeemably abstract definitions of civic engagement and its privileging of disembodied and passively immaterial citizen subjects—"human beings pure and simple," as Habermas put it, without a trace of the confusingly salient social baggage that comes with actual embodied po-

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3. For much of my biographical information on the under-studied Randolph, I use his own writings and the useful biography written by John Patrick Deveney (1997).

litical existence (i.e., sexualization, racialization, class-based differentiation, etc.). Indeed, Habermas's public sphere was always what Castronovo labels an "occult public sphere," demanding members to embrace a form of humanity stripped of everything that gives social intercourse its specificity and value.

The common caricatures we proffer of Habermas and the forms of sociality that he conceived as being birthed from a thoroughly modern public sphere are inadequate models of political subjectivity/possibility. We often invoke a Habermas who glimpsed the emergence of the modern public sphere in European coffee houses about a century before Randolph first journeyed there, a public sphere supposedly enabled by capital and ordered by principles of rationality and articulate debate. Habermas envisioned a civil conversation hostile to status-based authorities, immune to irrationalities and unfalsifiable claims, purged of groundlessly unexamined or superstitious beliefs. Of course, many scholars have argued that an irrational sophism and exclusionism (far more pronounced than Habermas recognized) has fundamentally overdetermined the public sphere as a discursive and political space, but Castronovo's wrinkle also emphasizes the degree to which Habermas himself constructs a public sphere that sneaks occultlike properties and priorities through the back doors of those very same eighteenth-century coffeehouses.

Randolph was a follower of more famous clairvoyants and spiritualists, such as Andrew Jackson Davis and John Murray Spear, people who combined mesmerism and Swedenborgianism into a spiritualist practice complete with séances, automatic writing, spirit channeling, crystal gazing, and other techniques for communicating with the deceased. This included spirit photography, a nineteenth-century method for documenting and capturing communiqués between the living and the dead. Indeed, technology itself was always folded into the spiritualist cause. Magnetism and electrification were usually the motifs of choice—and more than just metaphorically. Mesmerism harnessed magnetic and electrical forces, the newest discovered technologies and units of power, for access to faraway temporal (not just spatial) distances.

The process of communicating with dead spirits (whether photographed or not) was considered—according to cultural historian Jeffrey Sconce (2000)—a kind of spiritual telegraphy: the telegraph was then a new and seemingly magical device used to help Americans talk with one another across vast geographical distances. And the deployment of science (electricity, magnetism, physics, biology, etc.) served as backbone to the new media then undergirding claims for spiritualism's scientific legitimacy. It only took photography about 10 years to hitch itself to the spiritualist bandwagon, and by the mid-1880s, photography was being institutionalized in parts of Europe as a genre of transparently self-evidential fact in legal proceedings even as mesmerist, spiritualists, and magnetists used the same photochemical principles to capture the ephemeral movement of spirits and their smoky auras (Tagg 1993). And this distinction was always couched as a difference

between fact and fiction, science and hucksterism, (false) hopes and in/sincerities always dangling in the balance: spiritual photographers reduced to insincere frauds preying on the naive hopefulness of the living.

The history of photography has wended itself around this paradox between its seemingly iconic/indexical properties and its more fancifully artificial/rhetorical rendering powers. Theorist Roland Barthes (1981) offered up one of the most interesting musings on the inextricable linkages between photography and magicality even as he further canonizes the medium's claim to self-evidential and transparent "proofing," of authenticating "what was there" over and against the constructedness of artistic "representation." Barthes famously distinguishes the *studium* (obvious and conspicuous aspects of what any photograph indexically and objectively captures, including cultural contexts informing the material culture depicted in the image) from the more romantic and subjective (and privileged) *punctum* of a photographic image, which he likens to a wounding and pricking of the viewer by that invisible (and repressed) ultimate signified of all photographs: death itself. This is a punctum that almost always seems to emerge, unpredictably, from the photographs themselves, as though a product of their own volition mixed with the idiosyncratic subjectivities of specific viewers. In some ways, according to Barthes, all photographs are spirit photographs. No matter what they ostensibly depict (the embrace of lovers, a tractor in a field, children playing soccer), they are really just showing us death, the dead, and ourselves as always already dead. They are little more than pictorial archives of our own existential impermanence.

Barthes actually wants to have it both ways: photographs as a magical and "private reading" (looking at a photo, he says, is always a personal viewing) as well as a factual authentication of that which was—that which has been. Even though such an assessment still traffics in realist assumptions about photography's ontological solidity, these same assumptions allow the image to signal our own pending doom. (For Barthes, it is the image of his own dead mother staring back at him as her preadolescent self.) We are already looking at a ghost, seeing death, spying a reminder of our own too-soon demise. No matter what the studium of the picture ostensibly showcases, it is always, simply, us watching our own obliteration, something like that time-traveling guinea pig in Chris Marker's 1963 film *La jetée*, the one who as a child witnesses himself getting killed as an adult—an image he cannot get out of his head, even before he finally deciphers its true profundity. This marking of death, according to Barthes, is an unflinching fact as inescapable and self-contained as the sixteenth-century double-ledger bookkeeping that Mary Poovey (1998) argues is equally a function of discursive force and self-delusion (not just simplistically self-evident and undisputable numerical truths about the economic world of hard and fast material items existing beyond the bounds of the ledger's carefully handled pages).

Randolph does not seem to have been an avid practitioner

of spirit photography, but he did consider his sperm-soaked magic mirrors "a sensitive surface upon which the attendant dead could, can and do, temporarily photograph whatever they choose to." If talking to the dead was explicitly considered telegraphy, even Randolph's magic mirrors could be understood as would-be photographic surfaces for mechanical reproduction of the spiritual realm, a space wherein the hyperagential occultist and protoanthropologist conjures up the disembodied other.

Photographs also provide a suggestive example for parsing the conceptual distance between authenticity and sincerity as analytically useful categories. For most people (other than Barthes, perhaps), it would seem odd and illogical to call a photograph sincere or insincere. They might consider the photographer or the photographed medium sincere or insincere (depending, say, on whether they genuinely believe in the veracity of their captured imagery or are more cynically exploiting trickery for monetary gain and public notoriety). However, the inanimate pictures themselves are less obviously capable of such self-conscious subterfuge. If anything, the sincerity of the people involved (photographers, photographed subjects, and even third parties sizing up the finished product) is assumed to authenticate or deauthenticate the photographs either as genuine reflections of spiritual communications, spirits leaving their photographic likeness on a rickety séance table, or as purposeful/inadvertent effects of a camera operator tampering with the celluloid.

Though tethered in some fundamental ways, the in/authenticity of the photograph and the in/sincerity of the photographer translate into a cavernous agential divide. When Paschal, for one, turns his back on spiritualism (or a version of it) in the 1850s, it is precisely because he wants to defend himself from the inanimateness of mere photographs, from being spiritually and subjectively evacuated, rendered nonconscious, left empty and open for another agential being (from another dimension) to control. In fact, he claims to have spent much of the first half of his entire life under the thumb of hostile spiritual entities, a somatic automaton unable to refuse the bidding of powerful others.[4] As a response to that spiritual enslavement, his form of occultism emphasized the active and purposeful use of magic forces as opposed to just mediumship/self-thingification. Randolph justified renunciation of his prior spiritualist practices by maintaining that he did not want to be reduced to a receptacle for others' subjectivities, a mere predication, a different version of Peter Schwenger's tear-filled thing (2006), just a photographesque reflection of another's reality.

4. Randolph was one of the first to propagate the occultist idea that there are not just dead people's souls out there waiting to dialogue with mortals; there are other beings, he argued, "passing" for dead people, taking over mediums like Randolph, and sometimes controlling them even if the medium ostensibly is not in trance. That, Randolph says, is what happened to him during the entire first half of his career, helping to explain (he says) his infamous reputation as odd, unpredictable, and angular.

Randolph was far too proactive for that. He spent the Civil War agitating for abolition (even if he sometimes seemed to challenge more radical stances on the matter held by the likes of Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison, both duly impressed by Randoph's intellect and rhetorical abilities). The Civil War, of course, saw a major uptick in spirit photography because people wanted to speak to dead relatives—especially those soldiers killed in battle. And they also wanted to see them, to take one last look at their dead. For Randolph, the end of the Civil War was also an important watershed moment. He used the era's newfound potential (and racial optimism) to segue from spiritualism to more mundane (and this-worldly) exploits (before his subsequent occultist turn), moving to New Orleans and teaching newly freed slaves to read and write—that is, until wealthy Creoles drummed him out of town for his odd Christianity, a version still steeped in Randolph's desire to fend off external forces threatening to deny him agency.

To talk about the politics of ethnographic writing in terms of authenticity alone, I want to argue, is akin to dehumanizing and thingifying the ethnographic project/subject. It debases and vulgarizes the ethnographic encounter itself, concocting an occult intersubjectivity wherein the denied coevalness that characterizes our field's traditional discursive offerings ironically functions as a more accurate temporal architecture for a form of vampirism that would deny the mutually cathected ethnographic moment its due. This reduces the people we work with—sometimes even as political allies—into political objects no less inert for their ventriloquized placeholding as reflections of others' ethnographic and ideological interests. An attempt to remember the significance of laughter, love, and the everydayness of affect is an important methodological, epistemological, and political intervention, a differently animated ghost in the ethnographic machine. To talk about the ethnographic value of sincerity along with authenticity is to poke and prod at our field's undertheorizing of research methods and procedures during ongoing anthropological debates about "the real."

This is not just a way to say that "building rapport" is a euphemism for lying and misrepresentation, for dissimulation and insincerity. The stakes of sincerity rely on more than just exposing Malinowskian monographs for their bracketed-out xenophobia (Malinowski 1967). Clearly, sincerity is a multipronged aspect of Derek Freeman's revisitation of Margaret Mead's work in Samoa; his criticism of Mead's findings and the scholarly challenges to his critiques are good reminders of the secrets, subterfuges, and suppressions (what Diane Nelson would call "duplicities") that function as inescapable scaffolding for any ethnographic edifice (Freeman 1999; Mead 1973). But that is not why sincerity is key. David Stoll's (1999) controversial exposure of Guatemalan activist Rigoberta Menchú's autobiographical embellishments pivot on some of the same vulnerable ground as do the accusations against Chagnon's supposed political complicities in South America (Tierney 2000) and the exposure of Project Camelot's cold

war efforts (Horowitz 1967; Price 2008). All of these are moments when purported sincerities (of everyone involved, including whistle-blowers and revisionists) are clearly at stake, but an emphasis on sincerity is also about recognizing that the other sees us coming and confounds us, sometimes with the very same tools ethnographers use. Indeed, the intersubjective space of ethnographic encounters today is almost always a Rilesian "inside-out" moment: the academic researcher finds research subjects that are already researching themselves and, increasingly, researching us, too (Riles 2001).

The canonized Geertzian (Geertz 1973) distinction between twitches, winks, and fake winks can be productively read as further highlighting the analytical purchase of sincerity (especially on the part of those winking and fake-winking informants). For Geertz, thick description gets us from wink to fake wink, which helps us to expose the native's funny bone—so that the anthropologist appreciates the subtlety of a joke that might already be a "burlesqued burlesqued" wink (Boon 2000:436), something potentially lost on the humorless ethnographer. But that thickness is also a function of how multiply saturated, how affected such an encounter is for everyone—the anthropologist trying to change the world (one ethnographic landscape at a time) and the informant, sometimes attempting to do the same (while negotiating the pluses and minuses of having a seemingly well-intentioned anthropological interloper looking over her shoulder).

Anthropologists still teach their students about "primitives" who look quite skeptically (even horrifyingly) at the camera's blinding flash, a flash that is imagined to literally "confine" the spirit of the subject being captured on film. What reclaiming a marginalized figure like Randolph demands, à la Fatimah Tobing Rony's (1996) theory of minoritarian countervisualization, is that we look at our ethnographic practice with a "third eye"—a seeing that imagines the power of ethnography (like photography) to rely less on overcommitments to ethnography as self-evidential indexicality (one seductive way to increase our field's political relevance and profile in a world that values the assumed hardness of science) and more on a notion of fieldwork that counters anthropology's traditional ability to turn our interlocutors into mediums, passive receptors for the discipline's cultural constructions. We should cultivate a healthy fear of ethnography and its tooeasy obviousness, its taken-for-granted transparency. What gets devalued in our discipline when authenticity stands as the only way to spy the "real"? What deformed notion of valuation do we champion when the very nature of the ethnographic encounter is bracketed from discussions of anthropology's political import? What "dismal science" does anthropology become when it fails to truly interrogate the political coefficients of its first-order interaction/s with "the other" in the field, when the knowledge culled (or the political structure reified or railed against) distracts ethnographers from much of what constitutes human specificity? Instead of just talking about native forms of "gift exchange," let us also theorize (not just thematize) the many gifts that we give and receive, ethnographic exchanges that grease the wheels of ethnographic knowledge transmission (Jackson 2005). These are gifts that produce the very possibility of data acquisition and political praxis in an ethnographic context. They are specific and tangible, categorizable and individual—like the bodies of those giving and receiving them.

Clearly, anthropologists must feel that they have bigger fish to fry in the face of the hegemon that is a global "neoliberal dispensation," a moment when the privileged form of "political" freedom seems crammed into the singular God-given right to consume—and, for the very poor, to imagine future consumptive possibility. But just as postmodernism (somewhat counterintuitively) might be said to anticipate (and clear the way for) neoliberalism's master narrative and hyperreductionism, so too might we consider the inconspicuous rafters of any ethnographic interaction to be a staging area for the kinds of Faustian pacts with unfreedom that allow institutionalized disciplines to have their political cake and eat it too.[5]

There is, of course, a politics to building rapport, and it implies more than just the negligible cost of doing ethnographic business as usual. The experiential practice of participant observation and its discursive congealment, the ethnographic monograph, combine to produce what Eve Sedgwick (2003) might call a "periperformative" mix that aspires to describe a social landscape while simultaneously producing a node of politically charged intercultural contact that is the enabling "ethnofiction" for anthropological attempts at political interventionism of any sort: tackling whatever aspect of "modern blackness" might account for what transforms a peaceful hillside community into a space of hyperviolence (Thomas, forthcoming); arguing for a version of Islamic subjectivity that can confound stereotypical Western conceptions of ethnic/political difference (Varzi 2006); offering an ethnographic rendition of environmental racism's dangers and southerners' organized responses to such threats (Checker 2005). In all of these instances and the many more anthropologists negotiate, there is a need to think through that moment of contact itself (an anthropologist and a murder victim's widow, an anthropologist and an Iranian filmmakermartyr, an anthropologist and a community activist, etc.), not to cultivate the kind of solipsistic and metaethnographic navel-gazing the discipline gets lampooned for producing. Instead, it is about recognizing that the anthropologist is always a political actor in the everydayness of her practice (in a way that demands unpacking and explicit articulation) each and every time she sits at a community board meeting, watches a local rally, or asks the most idle of clarifying ques-

5. This evocative connection between neoliberalism and postmodernism is compellingly marked by Graeber (2001). And bell hooks (1992) has one of the most evocative and oft-cited discussions of "eating the other" outside of anthropological engagements with the literality and metaphoricity of cannibalism.

tions. The unit of analysis is not the anthropologist but instead the collision she is a part of—whether intended or not.

Sincerity, which I have defined (in other contexts) as a category of existentially inescapable doubt only retroactively coated with too-easy certainties (a self-delusional reading of the other's purported insides/intentions), is a way to flag the kinds of potential dissimulations and duplicities that always map our fears of betrayal, uneasiness, and confusion across the ethnographic axis that links, however temporarily, informant and anthropologist. To highlight the sparks that fly from such seemingly ephemeral and quotidian (and obvious) social relations that open up space for anthropological knowledge production is usually understood as a postmodernly depoliticizing act, reflexivity as an excuse for political inactivity. What manner of irresponsibility and self-aggrandizement would allow an anthropologist to obsess over the intersubjective discomforts and disconnections hovering beneath the surface of a seemingly necessary ethnographic encounter with, say, human rights activists putting the pieces back together in Darfur? Not to mention the fact that such matters of interpersonal angst and uneasiness are considered more rightly the province of psychology. However, I want to make a case (still, admittedly, somewhat half baked) for the anthropological social critic whose engagement with the world begins by treating other subjects/informants more robustly as fully embodied and affective interlocutors even when the ostensible stakes of the fieldwork we conduct seem so urgent. Anything else risks operationalizing and institutionalizing a form of political engagement within the discipline of anthropology that would already be cut off at the experiential knees. Anthropologist Saba Mahmood (2005) makes an argument for how shallow definitions of "the political" (i.e., Western conceptions of female agency mobilized as a universalist analytic for understanding Muslim women's commitments to Islam) deprive others of true agency by dismissing their choices as ideological brainwashing operating at cross-purposes to their true interests.[6] Of course, this is the quintessentially ethnographic move, challenging the hubris of those who would offer their peculiar cultural predilections as universal facts from a precultural realm. To be a critical citizen of a shrinking global world is to heed this deconstructionist call, especially given our increased exposure to cultural difference and to powerful claims for normativity that would dress those cultural mandates in nature's too-tight clothing.

As someone who uses anthropology to think critically about race/racism, I am also convinced that deconstruction alone will not provide us with much political traction. We can win the polite public debates about "race" and demand it be labeled a social construction (and the AAA's current traveling exhibit does quite a bit to further popularize that

6. Wendy Brown (1995) makes a similar kind of argument (in terms of structure and implication) about the blind spots and ethnocentrisms of human rights discourse.

position), but race continues to function as it always has—only the stronger, some might argue, for the constructionist double-talk its least generous adherents can disingenuously deploy. Karen Fields (2001) goes so far as to argue that anthropologists have double standards when it comes to race, challenging the rationality of what she calls "racecraft" (the mystical and erroneous belief that race is simply biology) while allowing "witchcraft" its cultural/rational legitimacy as a counternarrative of causational possibility. According to Fields, this is a profound contradiction at the core of the anthropological project, one that demands resolution. As others have made abundantly clear, using Stephan Palmié's (2007) provocations as their lightening rod, race (and its mobilization/recuperation in contemporary genomics) does not simply function analogously to witchcraft within the contemporary intellectual moment. As just one point of profound difference, it is deployed by many scientists and medical doctors today as a hypermaterialist/real mechanism for treating sick patients and tracing historical lineages, which exposes just some of deconstruction's political insufficiencies.

Unlike discourses of "authenticity," which seem to close off critiques of identity politics at the limits of deconstruction, "sincerity" provides a mechanism for asking how the deconstructed identity continues to powerfully/unfairly structure people's lives and life chances even after the emperor's nakedness has been noted and reported ad infinitum. There is something to be said for shifting the meta-anthropological discussion from ethnographic authenticity to ethnographic sincerity, but not as a plea for more truly sincere ethnographers. Our sincerities probably do us (and all of our many ethnographic *thems*) more harm than good, but the point is to ask what culling sociocultural knowledge through immersion-based participant observation might leave in its wake. Those remainders help to refract the central riddle of the anthropological puzzle: what makes humans human. They also demand that we see our subjects as more than just informants, even more than just too-narrowly conceptualized "political" actors, even if we cannot simplistically embrace "friends" as an unselfconscious replacement.

In such a context, the ethnographic recognition of an uncanny emic-cum-etic humor is no smoking gun, because it also implies a kind of nervous joke making, a laughing to keep from talking—or to hide otherwise awkward silences. (Lanita Jacobs-Huey [2008] writes about African American comics and their responses to 9/11, one powerful distillation of what comedic nervousness looks like in a contemporary American context.) It may demand that the anthropologist become a comedian himself, or that she study religious believers, as Marla Frederick (2003) might recommend, from the inside out, as a believer herself—and not just from some distant point of respectful exteriority, curiosity, and secular alienation. Roxanne Varzi (2006) unfurls an Iranian landscape that is very personal and intimate even as it attempts to write about the possibilities of a future Islamic democracy. These

researchers are offering up a critical and engaged anthropology that is much more than ideological cant and ethnocentric hubris. For such scholar-activists, the personal is political—not a personalized way out of the fray, but the only safe and ethical space from which to fire off substantive ethnographic salvos.

Many anthropologists call for a more relevant anthropology, for a renewed guildwide investment in the political implications of our efforts/offerings and for a greater appreciation of what can happen when cultural research and political activism meet. To achieve this (and to utilize it most humanely), we must also think about all the many ways in which the potential "political" of anthropological engagements necessitates more than just reductionism, more than abstracted and disembodied Habermasian political figures haunting the public sphere and ethnographic field site. The longing for a postracial, asexual, and universal ethnographic researcher privileges an apparition that unproductively occults the anthropological project. Indeed, our investments in ethnographic research/writing need not fall prey to that brand of occultist evacuation (no matter how popular such aspirations have become in the age of Obama). Paschal Randolph's is still an "occult public sphere," but it fights for a sloppy and irreducibly entified/somatic existence over abstract levelings and emptyings of any kind. It demands to be taken seriously and laughed at, productively, in the selfsame instant. We need a notion of the political that is committed to the gunk of ethnographic practice and that constructs an anthropology that will not finesse its manipulations and machinations with antiquatedly nonreflexive rhetoric about rapport as some kind of mystical mind-melding, anthropological angels communicating without the noises and distractions (of, say, race and gender/sex) caused by physical embodiment (Peters 1999). This would be the beginning of a radically engaged (in every sense of the term) anthropology disconnected from the reifications and dehumanizations that sometimes pass for politics all along the ideological spectrum. It could be an anthropology that better facilitates cultural critique and collaborative action by way of the empathetic connections that sharing a sincere laugh, even in the face of certain death, implies.

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The Perils of Engagement

A Space for Anthropology in the Age of Security?

by Jonathan Spencer

In the winter of 2006–2007, British anthropologists became embroiled in a series of protests about a planned research program on "radicalisation" to be jointly funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. By linking research on so-called Islamic radicalisation to UK intelligence and UK counter-terrorism policy, the program, it was argued, posed unacceptable levels of risk to other researchers. This paper draws on the author's role in unsuccessful attempts to mediate between the academic critics and the funders, contextualized within a fuller account of the political and ethical implications of researching issues of "security." The paper concludes with some reflection on the hazards faced by the author's Sri Lankan colleagues, for whom issues of security are quite simply matters of life and death.

Pnina Werbner starts off a recent provocative article with the stark question, "Can there be an engaged public anthropology of global Islamic terror?" (Werbner 2010:193). Or to put it another way, can we have an anthropology that engages with people who think in terms of "global terror" without compromising our intellectual agenda, the safety of the people we work with, our personal safety, and our ethical safeguards? This paper tells the tale of my experience as an anthropologist working with the biggest funder of social science research in the United Kingdom, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), on the development of a collaborative research program on issues of security and "radicalisation," a program shared with people who behave as if they really do think in terms of "global terror," the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The research program in question generated considerable controversy from the start, and my quixotic attempt to persuade the powers that be to rethink its shape and purpose ended in resignation from the body overseeing the program's development and further protests from the anthropological community. Parts of my story overlap with Werbner's article, but where she expands her argument to take in issues such as the relationship between anthropology and journalism, I try to focus on the practical and political difficulties that follow from the decision to engage when the circumstances are unpropitious and the institutions you are engaging with are potentially unattractive.[1]

My tale, then, is not a happy one, but one reader of an early draft of this paper has suggested it is a very *British* tale of unhappiness. The institutional structures within which it takes place and the sheer cosiness of the relations between government, research agencies, and senior academics are peculiar to the United Kingdom. The policy issues the research was intended to address are, superficially at least, somewhat different from those raised by U.S. debates about engagement with national security agencies. Even the cultural style, the tortured institutional embarrassment that rules a simple apology out of the question, can be seen as somewhat British. Or so I am told. The issues at stake are issues of ethics and safety on the one hand, but they are also issues of engagement. Do we have a responsibility to engage in dialogue with government agencies even where we disapprove of their overt policies? Is there a danger of drifting into irrelevance if we refuse to engage?[2]

In the immediate aftermath of the 2007 launch of the Human Terrain System (HTS) project, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) executive board issued an important statement that, as is now well known, suggested that participants in the HTS project might well contravene the

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1. There are some minor differences of chronology in Werbner's version of the story but no substantial differences in our interpretation of what happened and what was at stake.

2. Even assessing what "really" happened in a story like this is far from straightforward. Many of the documents I used to write this paper originally reached me by e-mail; others were posted on the Web sites of different agencies. But, as I discovered late in the editing stage, these are prone to morph or disappear altogether quite quickly, the evanescent evidence thus reproducing the more general murk of the story itself. In this respect readers are cautioned to take the access dates in my footnotes quite seriously: not everything that could be found on the original dates is still retrievable.

AAA code of ethics. There are two points in that statement that frame the problem addressed in this paper. As well as raising issues of ethics, HTS threatens the safety of other anthropologists, and the people studied by anthropologists, working outside the project. But at the very end of the statement, the board concludes that "anthropology can and in fact is obliged to help improve U.S. government policies through the widest possible circulation of anthropological understanding in the public sphere, so as to contribute to a transparent and informed development and implementation of U.S. policy by robustly democratic processes of fact-finding, debate, dialogue, and deliberation."[3] The question I would ask is this: Is it possible for anthropologists and other critical social scientists to contribute to policy making in the sort of polarized political landscape created by the Bush and Blair administrations' contentious military adventures in Iraq and elsewhere?

A Brief History of the ESRC

The United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council currently spends around £180 million ($360 million) a year on social science research and training. As well as funding individual research projects, it also supports linked programs and specialist research centers. It is by far the biggest source of support for PhD students in the social sciences. It makes a very big difference to our lives. In April 2006, the total value of ESRC research projects across Britain's 19 or so anthropology departments was £3.6 million (Mills 2006). In my own department in 2007–2008, with 15 or so full-time academics, we spent £630,000 of research income, of which £580,000 came from ESRC and its sister organization, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

Even the name "Economic and Social Research Council" tells a political tale. The United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council was originally founded by the Labour government of the mid-1960s as the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), taking its place alongside equivalent bodies for research in medicine and the other sciences. The SSRC's status—funded directly from the government's science budget but ostensibly independent of political interference—is nicely summed up in an acronym from those times, QUANGO (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization). By the 1970s, the right-wing press had QUANGOs in general and the SSRC in particular firmly in its sights. As Margaret Thatcher took control of the Conservative Party, those around her attacked the SSRC, partly for wasting public money on

obviously "frivolous" research projects. A few anthropologists were caught in the cross fire of these exchanges.[4]

Within weeks of Thatcher's election victory in 1979, the SSRC budget was slashed as a symbolic gesture of Conservative triumph. Two years later a commission was appointed to investigate the SSRC with a view, it was widely whispered, to recommend its abolition. The SSRC survived the commission's report, albeit by agreeing to be renamed as the ESRC (the claims to "science" in the old title apparently being too much for one of Thatcher's ministers). In the years that followed it adapted itself to the new political climate, deliberately moving funding into empirical research (rather than speculative areas of theory) and explicitly pitching the usefulness of its research to Britain and the British economy (Spencer 2000).

In the course of these adaptations, the ESRC acquired a rather difficult, often agonistic, relationship with its academic constituency. Its forms and procedures were famously complex and often baffling. Its policy shifts, especially in graduate training, often required universities to restructure their own programs at short notice. Academics developed a substantial, often rather sullen, folklore around the actant known as the ESRC, a semi-mythological creature with known likes and dislikes, expectations, and appetites. Somewhere in all this but often forgotten by its critics, it continued to support a large amount of excellent critical social research.

The ESRC's financial fortunes changed with the election of Tony Blair in 1997. The new government was enthusiastic about science in general and especially enthusiastic about the contribution social science could make to public policy. The ESRC's budget doubled in the first decade of New Labour, as did the number of social researchers employed directly by central government. "Evidence-based policy" was one cliché of the moment. Another was "knowledge transfer," the need not merely to learn new things about the world but also to be more effective in disseminating those new things to people who could go on to make something useful of them. As "knowledge transfer" was a key government concern, government departments as well as government-funded researchers were both enjoined to show commitments to linking research and practice. Not surprisingly, one of the easiest ways to set up such commitments was by linking government-funded research with different bits of government; for example, in the 2007–2008 financial year, the ESRC spent £4 million on knowledge transfer and another £7 million on joint ventures of one kind or another, including a highly successful program of research projects jointly funded with the Department for International Development.

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3. American Anthropological Association Executive Board statement on the Human Terrain System Project, October 31, 2007. http://www.aaanet.org/issues/policy-advocacy/Statement-on-HTS.cfm (accessed March 15, 2009).

4. The two anthropological projects I can recall being singled out for criticism around this time were John Davis's research on Libyan politics and economy under Qaddafi and Frances Pine's work on household and gender relations in pre-Solidarity Poland (Davis 1987:13). The greater bulk of criticism, though, was reserved for sociology, a boom subject in the expansion of British universities in the 1960s and 1970s but which was seen by the political right as a haven for Marxist propagandists.

At this point I need to inject a note of positionality, for I too became a minor player in the social science boom of the Blair years. In 2001 I was invited to join one of ESRC's standing committees, the Training and Development Board. Over the next 4 years I attended countless ESRC meetings, visited a dozen or more institutions as part of ESRC teams sent to check on their graduate training arrangements, assessed applications of all sorts, and even gave a great deal of my own time to the Sisyphean task of attempting to redraft some of the ESRC's legendarily long and baffling forms.

In all this I learned quite a bit about the ESRC. Early on I had the revelation that, to paraphrase Margaret Thatcher, there is no such thing as "*the* ESRC," there were just individual men and women who made decisions on behalf of the ESRC, nearly all of them sensible and fair-minded academics acting in good faith as committee members and peer reviewers. The full-time employees of the ESRC were most often a likeable bunch—some very able indeed—but all, so far as I could tell, were trying to be responsive to the needs of the wider social science community. I did discover one unremarkable thing, that British social science, taken as a whole, is a creature of quite limited horizons. It follows that the ESRC, as a microcosm of British social science, inclines to a condition that I came to call "institutional parochialism." Like all organizations, it often turns to the same names and faces that its officers already know. Academics with experience of carrying out research beyond Europe or of working in a non-European language are relatively thinly sprinkled across ESRC's boards and committees. In the 1980s, parochialism—the contribution of any research project to the prosperity of what came to be called "UK plc" (the equivalent in the United States would be "UK, Inc.")—was an explicit policy priority. Parochialism is not a matter of quite such explicit commitment any more now that policy makers have discovered the global and ESRC has set its sights on "the international." But quite often it remains part of the habitus of those who work with and those who work for the ESRC.

Radicalisation

In October 2006 the front page of the *Times Higher Education Supplement* carried the headline "Life-Risking 'Spy' Plan Pulled." The accompanying story concerned a new research program called "Combating Terrorism by Countering Radicalisation," jointly funded by the ESRC, the AHRC, and the FCO. A series of papers for the program had been circulating on the internet in the previous week. Originally they had been e-mailed to a closed set of would-be applicants for funding from the program, but someone had forwarded them out into the world, where their arrival was met by a storm of consternation.

The specification for the program looked very strange indeed. It consisted of a very brief overview paper accompanied by 10 separate documents, each setting out either a regional or a country study. Each country or region was introduced

by a crisp financial note ("Budget: up to £100k"), followed by 20 general questions, some of which appeared in yellow highlight and bold font. In each case the general questions were followed by a handful of specific questions for the particular country, for example,

Pakistan
iv. determine the key issues concerning the general population, including analysis of local v global topics, (to indicate where PREVENT intervention strategies might have a disproportionate influence); urban v rural; political, social and economic factors; male v female; age variations; which groups (political, religious, social protest) are currently driving the main debates; the impact of globalisation; and effectiveness, availability and types of representational structures;
vii. name the key figures (moderate and extreme) and key groups (including charities and proselytizing religious groups) influencing the local population on each of the issues;

and then finally some even more specific questions:

In addition:
- assess the effect of AQ/terrorist propaganda on the wider population;
- assess the degree to which the armed forces have been radicalised;
- assess the role of madrassa as radicalising factor;
- to what extent is radicalisation caused by radicalised individuals from the Pakistani diaspora returning to Pakistan?

How best to sum up the spirit of this strange assemblage? It certainly makes very little effort to pander to the usual niceties of academic argument ("assess the effect of AQ/terrorist propaganda on the wider population"), while readers unfamiliar with the nuances of UK counter-terrorism strategy would be hard pressed to make sense of the references to "PREVENT intervention strategies" and other bits of advanced security-speak. A strange jumble of typefaces and highlighting gave the whole thing the feel of an unfinished draft while, however you look at it, the language and questions seem to come from somewhere close to the world of intelligence.

The very ineptness of the presentation invited a certain healthy derision. As one distinguished historian of the Middle East put it, "Names, organisational details, social base, contacts . . . you feel they would have asked for map co-ordinates if they could get away with it." But the way in which the documents became public suggested a more worrying agenda. The original package of documents had been sent out to an e-mail list of around 80 academics, some from security studies but most with obvious area-studies connections. They were accompanied by an invitation to one of two apparently closed "information seminars" for would-be applicants, one in Edinburgh and one in London.

Where had all this come from? An internal briefing note described the program's rationale pretty clearly:

> This is a co-funded initiative with the FCO that will aim to identify the drivers facilitating radicalisation in three regions (the Gulf, Central Asia and Southeast Asia) and seven country case studies identified in the FCO PREVENT strategy and/or those regarded by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) as current or potential sources of terrorists and terrorism. This will both serve to assist in targeting strategy and identifying areas where terrorist support or activity is likely to increase. The project will also examine the success and failure of counter-strategies that have been deployed in the various countries to date.[5]

It quickly became clear that the program had been developed and sent out into the world without the scrutiny of any of the ESRC's various boards and committees. Not only that, it was unclear if there had been any academic input at all in preparing the program documents. This seemed a major departure from normal ESRC practice.

The papers for the program escaped from the charmed circle of the original 80 invitees around October 13, 2006. A storm of protest followed. There were a number of issues that were seen to be problematic. At one end of the spectrum, for some there should be no connection between academic research and agencies like the Foreign Office. Others thought this connection was defensible, but the link beyond this to the intelligence agencies represented at JTAC was a step too far. Specialists objected to the implicit narrative about "radicalisation" which ran through the initial call for applications, and saw the call as academically compromised in the very way the problem was framed. There was very wide agreement that the explicit link between academic research, intelligence, and counter-terrorism policy, posed serious risks of guilt by association to all the other researchers in the countries listed, whether funded by the ESRC, simply working out of UK institutions, or (like my friend Ravindranath, whose fate I discuss later in the paper) working with British researchers. A week later the *Times Higher Education Supplement* reported that "the ESRC this week delayed the project to enable further consultation as a result of serious concerns raised by academics."[6] The same day, John Gledhill, the chair of the Association of Social Anthropologists reported to anthropology Heads of

Department that he had just been told by the chief executive of the ESRC that the programme had been "pulled."

Radicalisation: A Critical Reassessment

A few days after the apparent withdrawal of the program, I was asked by the ESRC if I would help rescue the situation by finding some way to keep the link between researchers and the FCO open without fatally upsetting the academic community. I agreed with some reluctance to get involved.

The ESRC, it quickly turned out, had not decided to "pull" the program after all. Instead, it had decided to go ahead with a bigger version of the program but one that was reconfigured in order to avert any recurrence of the earlier criticisms. Why? ESRC and AHRC, it was explained to me, had signed up to the original partnership with FCO for a number of reasons. Partnerships with government departments were good news for the research councils in general: it enabled their money to stretch further, and it won them brownie points in the eyes of the Treasury. A strategic partnership with FCO at a time when issues of security and terrorism were very high on the public agenda would be especially timely. Finally, and crucially, we were in the period immediately before one of the government's Comprehensive Spending Reviews (CSRs)—a once-every-3-years process in which all branches of government have to set out their plans for future activity and discover their allocation of resources for the next 3 years. The ESRC had done very well in previous CSRs under New Labour, but it could not afford to be seen to "let down" the FCO in such a high-profile policy area so close to the 2008 review.

The redrafting of the program specification was the work of a committee that grew as the work progressed. The first meeting was on November 28, 2006, and involved myself, the chair of ESRC's Strategic Resources Board (who had taken charge of the ESRC rescue effort), a senior ESRC staffer, and a Foreign Office researcher. A larger version of the group—with a security studies academic who was to act as director of the relaunched program, two academic representatives from AHRC programs, another ESRC board member (with a background in international relations), and John Sidel, professor of international politics at the LSE—met on December 8 and again finally on January 9, 2007. Sidel and I were the only members of the committee who had experience conducting research in the sort of places covered in the original program specification.[7] Both Sidel and I felt that, for all the

5. According to the UK Government Intelligence Web site: "JTAC was established in 2003 as part of the development of co-ordinated arrangements for handling and disseminating intelligence in response to the international terrorist threat. It is a multi-agency unit, staffed by members of the three Agencies [MI5, MI6 and GCHQ], the Defence Intelligence Staff and representatives from other relevant departments including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office, and from the police." http://www.intelligence.gov.uk/agencies/jtac.aspx (accessed October 31, 2007). MI5 and MI6 are the domestic and international wings, respectively, for UK Intelligence. GCHQ is the agency that monitors communications for intelligence and protects the government's own data.

6. http://www.thes.co.uk/story.aspx?story_id = 2033290 (accessed October 29, 2007).

7. Sidel had just published a monograph on religious violence in Indonesia (Sidel 2006). Of the group that worked on the redraft of the program, he was the only member with any substantial background in the study of Islamist politics. I had written intermittently over the years about political violence and about religion and politics in Sri Lanka. I had just started trying to get a better understanding of the internal dynamics of Sri Lankan Islam as part of my new project on the role of religious organizations in the conflict there, but I could hardly claim established expertise in this area.

stupidity of the original call for proposals, there were good reasons to try to keep open channels of communication between academics and policy makers, even when the academics were suspicious of the broad direction of policy. Apart from Sidel, a relative innocent in dealing with the research councils, the main criterion for inclusion on the committee seemed to be prior involvement with some other loosely related ESRC or AHRC committee or program.

Institutional parochialism was, then, a serious constraint in the redrafting work, but it was a relatively trivial constraint compared to those presented by FCO. My initial suggestion was for FCO to withdraw as far as possible from any role in commissioning the research itself, but instead to be heavily involved at the dissemination end of the program. Although fragments of this idea survived into the final specification, the basic approach was emphatically not what FCO wanted. They wanted specific answers to their specific questions (and they were clearly anxious about being associated with public events at which speakers might just possibly be less than supportive of the UK government line). The FCO contribution to the original program budget, it became clear, had been raised internally on the promise of eliciting quite specific answers to quite specific questions within a very tight time frame. The money had to be seen to be spent within the 2007–2008 financial year (or the budgets from which it was raised faced the possibility of clawback in future years). So there were two reasons for rushing the redrafting: FCO's own internal budgeting constraints, as well as the research councils' desire for their relationship with FCO to be tangible and clearly visible in time for the spending review.

The specificity of the questions asked was not the only problem with the first version of the program. As the original whistle-blowers had pointed out, the whole project seemed to be based on a set of unexamined assumptions about what the empirical problem was and how it had to be understood. The documents tell a simple story. The problem is something called "radicalisation," which is a process that happens to Muslims and which, in its causes, is more or less completely endogenous to the Muslim population. So, for example, the South Asia case studies made no reference to discrimination against Muslims, or anti-Muslim violence in India, no mention of the Kashmir problem or the BJP. Throughout the documents, Western adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan are not allowed as legitimate causes of radicalisation (but "the perception" of them might be). There is no space in that set of questions for the familiar situation in which a government or an interest group uses the specter of Jihad as camouflage for its own more narrowly instrumental experiments in domestic repression. Moreover, the structure of that document suggested a naive commitment to methodological nationalism at its battiest. One of the most striking aspects of the kind of spectacular violence the program sought to understand, as both Olivier Roy and Faisal Devji have argued, is its deterritorialized nature (Roy 2004; Devji 2005). But the FCO is in the business of nation-states, so if the FCO has desks in its

office called "Nigeria" or "India," each of these will serve as the source of their own questions, and if colonial history means no one in the office knows much about, say, francophone West Africa, so it is that those countries do not get questions of their own, whatever may be happening there.

The revised specification that was agreed in January 2007 was of course a compromise between the different interests in the committee. The original FCO shopping list of questions and countries was replaced by a much wider (and more coherent) geographical remit, with encouragement to researchers to think about transnational connections and relationships. Comparative projects were welcomed, although the attempts to extend the remit beyond Islamic radicals were less than convincing. It was made clear that the "radicalisation" narrative might be problematic and should be challenged where necessary by researchers in the design of their project. And there were several reassurances about issues of ethics and risk which Sidel and I had insisted had to be included in the specification. Early in the document it was made clear that

> New primary research is welcome within the programme, subject to careful assessment of the potential risks to researchers, research subjects, and other stakeholders. However, the initiative does not seek to commission long-term in-country fieldwork in highly sensitive parts of the world.

In addition,

> The Research Councils expect all applications for funding to be prepared in accordance with the ESRC Research Ethics Framework. The topics to be investigated within this programme may pose special methodological, political and ethical challenges and the Commissioning Panel will expect proposals to address these challenges explicitly. In particular it will be looking for candid assessments of possible harm or risk, and imaginative methodological responses to these assessments. Risks need to be assessed for a wide range of potential stakeholders - research subjects, researchers themselves, other governmental and non-governmental agencies, and other social researchers working in the region. There are particular risks associated with research access in certain parts of the world, and research which might threaten the long-term viability of other researchers' work in particular settings will not be funded.[8]

All that was left was the addition of a paragraph from FCO setting out its relationship to the program. The FCO paragraph arrived a few weeks after everything else had been agreed, with the warning that the text was non-negotiable. It started unpromisingly:

> The FCO is committed to outstanding research in support of policy making. The FCO's interest in this initiative stems

8. ESRC "New Security Challenges: 'Radicalisation' and Violence—A Critical Reassessment. Specification," March 2007.

from the recognition that independent, high-quality research on radicalisation issues is vitally important to supporting and informing UK Counter Terrorism policy overseas. In support, in particular, of the Prevent strand of that policy,[9] the FCO seeks to use research to increase its knowledge and understanding of the factors associated with radicalisation in those countries and regions identified as high priority.

Sidel and I immediately objected on the grounds that by explicitly making the research program part of a wider counterterrorism policy, this particular paragraph would undo all the work that had gone into the redrafting and pretty much guaranteed further objections. We were supported in this by other members of the committee. Although a few small concessions were made in the days that followed—the final version omitted reference to research "supporting" UK counterterrorism policy, and the rather creepy reference to "the Prevent strand" was expanded and fleshed out—what arrived in late January was pretty much what came out in the final specification in March.[10]

When the word came that the program would be launched with the FCO link to counterterrorism intact, Sidel and I formally resigned from the committee and sent one final message out to the governing council of ESRC and AHRC. In that message we concentrated on the issue of risk and the necessity to keep some visible distance between the explicit agenda of academic researchers and the agenda of the British government in counter-terrorism policy. We have never received any reply or formal acknowledgment for this message. The program was launched. The ESRC was inundated with protests from senior academic figures and from professional bodies. Research was commissioned, although key areas in the world (Europe and South Asia) were covered by non-academic research bodies (Demos and the International Crisis Group), suggesting that few established academics working in those regions had responded to the call.

Implications

Of course the big shadow of the war haunts all of this, making it hard to separate everyday infelicities from the grand designs of geopolitical conflict. One of the many depressing legacies of the neocon moment in U.S. foreign policy is the credibility

it has given to conspiracy theory as a mode of explanation.[11] In what follows I shall set out some of the implications—ethical, practical, intellectual and political—of the story I have attempted to tell. I shall concentrate on three clustered sets of issues. One is politics, in terms of the political justification for funding research about other people and their politics. Security would seem a powerful card to play on behalf of social scientists interested in out-of-the-way places, but can we live with the consequences of framing research in terms of security? A second is ethics, in the now conventional (but often counter-intuitive) sense of procedures, codes, and committees. My third concerns the virtue of disengagement, an academic luxury that I suggest is a source of critical purchase we take too easily for granted.

Politics

There is a longer story here. In September 2006, just before the first row blew up, the *Guardian* Education section carried a short report detailing the ways in which the research councils, and AHRC in particular, were planning to use "security" as a key issue in their bids for the next government spending round. Under the heading "Terror studies: security could open funding doors," the article concluded

> There is reason to take the government's interest in terrorism research seriously. The research councils, more than ever, have to answer to the Treasury about the usefulness of the research they fund. A security angle may be just the crutch they need to justify parting with their sought-after cash.[12]

What are the implications for a discipline such as anthropology of such an approach? Is there a place for us in an age of security? What happens to our practice if we engage with programs, such as the radicalisation program, that essentially single out a whole segment of the population as researchable in the name of "security"? I would like to be able to say that what you get in this situation is likely to be bad anthropology, but I can sense the ghost of Evans-Pritchard shaking his head even as I say it (cf. Van der Veer 2010). From the 1920s onward, a great deal of the material support for anthropological research has been justified in terms of supporting policies—indirect rule, anti-communism—we might now feel somewhat uncomfortable with. Is "security," as a rationale

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9. For more information on the Government's Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Prevent strand, see http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism-strategy/ (footnote from original).

10. The full text was found at http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/current_funding_opportunities/New_Security_Challenges.aspx?ComponentId = 18575&SourcePageId = 5433 (accessed November 27, 2007).

11. For a very different take on the project—one which in my view overestimates the coherence and consistency linking different interventions—see Jeremy Keenan's commentary in *Anthropology Today* (Keenan 2007). Keenan's central claim, that the initial ESRC-FCO call was "designed to meet the needs of [FCO's] US ally" (2007:26) and specifically to inform interventions in the Sahara-Sahel that he documents elsewhere in his article, is puzzling when we remember that the original call made no specific mention of Islamist activity in southern Algeria and the neighboring region.

12. "Terror studies: security could open funding doors." *Guardian*, September 5, 2006. http://education.guardian.co.uk/egweekly/story/0,,1864526,00.html (accessed November 5, 2007).

for funding research, any different from its Cold War predecessors?

Three points can be made here. The first is that our colleagues in international relations, political science, and to some extent development studies do not completely share our qualms, even when they share our politics. The demise of the Cold War opened the way for a new wave of so-called critical security studies, work that seeks to unmask the rhetoric of security as well as investigate the apparatus of security. A great deal of this research has been concentrated on Europe and European topics, but recently a further critical strand has appeared in development studies, a strand that questions the rhetoric of human security and so-called humanitarian interventions as modes of global governance. The first strand is identified with the Copenhagen School gathered round Ole Waever, the second with figures from development studies such as Mark Duffield (e.g., C.A.S.E. Collective 2006; Duffield 2005). But however critical these strands of research, in the end their object of study is usually the apparatus of security itself, not the men and women defined in advance as a potential problem for "security," nor the implications of making the very process of research itself part of the apparatus of security.[13] And it is unclear how stable the "critical" perspective is, now that a new Manichean divide has replaced the old Cold War divisions between friend and enemy.

The second point is that the use of security as a rationale for supporting research has different implications in different institutional settings. In the United States, the old Cold War programs such as Title VI—which provides much of the support for training in non-Western languages in American universities—have been around so long they have long since been "domesticated" by liberal academics (to the occasional rage and consternation of conservative critics such as Stanley Kurtz).[14] Historically, Britain's approach to funding research in the more out-of-the-way corners of the world has been less systematic and much more ad hoc. This means that resources cannot simply be routed through tried and tested conduits: instead, structures have to be created to address the real or imagined needs of the policy crowd.

Third, up to this point I have been working with a rather simple-minded idea of "engagement" and of the usefulness and potential instrumentalization of academic knowledge. If Mosse's recent brilliant analyses of the place of "policy" in development work (Mosse 2005, 2006) expose the ways in

which the language of policy does *not* inform on-the-ground practice, so it is that many researchers have stories of the ways in which their findings, although commissioned by policy makers, were adroitly ignored if they challenged the current political orthodoxy. In this case, the main point of the project for all the participants was not what might be discovered about the world, still less the difference it would make to future policy. What mattered was opening up certain relationships and keeping those relationships alive.

Through all the tortured arguments about the "radicalisation" initiative, I was puzzled why ESRC had clung so tightly to their rather shaky relationship with FCO, even when it was clear that this was doing serious damage to their reputation in the academic community. The answer emerged little by little in late 2007 and early 2008. In November 2007 Gordon Brown made his first explicit allusion to the ESRC project in a House of Commons statement on national security. Outlining what he called a "generational challenge," Brown promised

> Building on initial roadshows of mainstream Islamic scholarship round the country, which have already attracted more than 70,000 young people, and an internet site which has reached far more, we will sponsor at home and then abroad, including for the first time in Pakistan, a series of national and local events to counter extremist propaganda. The next stage will draw upon the work commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council, King's College and the Royal Society for Arts on how best to deal with radicalisation at home and abroad.[15]

A few weeks later, it was announced that "global security" was one of four interdisciplinary research themes that were to receive huge ring-fenced budgets in the Research Councils rewards from the Comprehensive Spending Review.[16] This, I realized, was the elephant in the room when we were drafting our revised program specification. It was not the FCO program itself that mattered, it was the fact that security was a theme at the very heart of the Research Councils' bid for funding for the next 5 years. If the FCO collaboration failed on the eve of this funding decision, a much bigger plan might collapse with it. In March 2008, the government published its national security strategy document, which identified what it called a "diverse but interconnected set of threats":

> They include international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, conflicts and failed states, pandemics, and trans-national crime. These and other threats and risks are driven by a diverse and interconnected set of underlying

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13. The Prevent strategy, which aims to anticipate acts of violence by building better sources of information within local Muslim communities and which was a very new initiative at the time of the original ESRC-FCO call, has since been heavily criticized for its inherent stigmatization of all Muslims as potential terrorists (e.g., Kundnani 2009). The cack-handed logic that makes Prevent counter-productive for community relations initiatives also makes it fatal for research practices that rely on a degree of trust between researcher and researched.

14. S. Kurtz. Studying Title VI. *National Review Online*, June 16, 2003. http://www.nationalreview.com/kurtz/kurtz061603.asp (accessed March 16, 2009).

15. Gordon Brown "Statement on National Security." November 14, 2007. http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page13757.asp (accessed November 27, 2007).

16. Melanie Newman, "Major Fillip for Research," *Times Higher Education Supplement*, December 14, 2007. http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=310161 (accessed March 15, 2009).

factors, including climate change, competition for energy, poverty and poor governance, demographic changes and globalisation.[17]

And the Research Councils announced the details of their £113 million 10-year program on "global uncertainties" at the same time. The program was to be coordinated by ESRC and genially if rather counter-intuitively bundled "terrorism" in with "poverty" and "climate change" in a rather precise copy of the government's security strategy themes.

Ethics

Two years before this all happened ESRC had unveiled a new set of requirements for ethical overview of the research it funds. In a characteristically weighty and characteristically prescriptive document, the ESRC Research Ethics Framework (REF) sets out some minimal procedural requirements for handling ethical issues in social research.[18] At the heart of this is a committee structure for ethical review that must be adopted by all research institutions under ESRC's remit. The FCO radicalisation row was one of the first opportunities to put the framework to the test, and ESRC was quick to point to it in their response to critics of the programme: "We have already identified some of the potential ethical issues for projects under this programme and we will be reminding institutions that they need to make sure that their ethics committees have the relevant expertise to judge projects under this initiative."[19]

While this structure might be thought to provide reassurance to those concerned about the ethical implications of individual projects, it completely fails to address the question of ESRC's own responsibilities in this area. It turns out that the ESRC Research Ethics Framework has very little to say about risk to researchers and makes no reference whatsoever to the ethical responsibilities of the ESRC itself. In the world as conceived in the ESRC REF, ESRC is not an ethical agent, and its actions have no ethical implications or effects in the world. In effect, ESRC stands completely outside its own favored machinery of ethical governance, and therefore has no sense that its own decision-making requires ethical scrutiny.

This makes perfect sense in terms of the institutional politics of the world of ethics committees, whose remit is as much to do with protecting institutions from legal challenge as it is to do with anything covered by the everyday sense of "ethics." In this situation, invocation of the Research Ethics Framework is ESRC's own way of saying it cannot be deemed responsible for anything that happens in the course of the program: it has required individual research organizations to

put procedures in place, and this is ESRC's guarantee of ethically correct research practice. Structurally, this resembles the figure of sovereignty as sketched by Carl Schmitt (and more recently Giorgio Agamben): the sovereign stands outside the law, so sovereignty cannot itself be bound to the law (Agamben 1998; Schmitt 1985 [1922], 1996 [1932]). But while that might seem to get ESRC off the hook by passing responsibility down the chain to individual research organizations, what if something does indeed happen that can be traced back to a decision of ESRC's? How can ESRC demonstrate its own nonculpability? The answer is that it cannot do this within its own structures and procedures. This became apparent as soon as we raised the question of risk to researchers after the appearance of the FCO paragraph. Sidel and I could not get anyone on the ESRC side to respond in a substantive way to this particular issue. Subsequent attempts by the professional associations to engage in dialogue on the topic of risk were similarly frustrated. Having refused to acknowledge the existence of an issue, ESRC could not talk about it without admitting their earlier refusal.

This aspect of the story should raise troublesome issues for those colleagues who believe that tighter ethical codes are the best answer to the securitization of anthropology and the other human sciences. My experience of ESRC's own use of its Research Ethics Framework as a shield against criticism is one, but by no means the only, reason for my scepticism about those procedures which have recently been felicitously described as the "new bureaucracies of virtue" (Jacob and Riles 2007; cf. Lederman 2006). ESRC's Research Ethics Framework, concerned as it is with the protection of institutions from external challenge, offers no assurance to those concerned about the behavior of other researchers, or about the irresponsible actions of funding agencies. Moreover a strict insistence on informed consent and the protection of the interests of research participants would make it very difficult for me to write this paper. At the first meeting I attended with representatives from ESRC and FCO, I explained that I was only able to play a role in the rescue operation if everything—all discussions, agreements, and disagreements—were frankly recorded, open, and transparent. If anything went wrong later, I wanted it to be clear who had done and said what. I regard that opening speech as a license to tell my tale now that the dust has settled, but no one has signed a consent form, and I doubt very much they would agree to participate if I had offered them that option before we started our drafting meetings. In truth I see the interests of at least some of the "research subjects," if that is what the FCO and ESRC officials are in my story, as openly antagonistic to the interests of the community I see as the primary audience for this paper—my academic colleagues in anthropology and area studies.

The Privilege of Disengagement

Why did I ever agree to get involved? Personally, I was especially dismayed by the extraordinary clumsiness and, for

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17. National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom: Security in an Interdependent World (National Security Strategy 2008:3).

18. http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/research_ethics_framework/ (accessed November 22, 2007).

19. This passage was used in a string of near-identical letters sent out from ESRC in response to objections from disciplinary associations and individual researchers.

want of a better term, stupidity of the original program. But I felt that policy makers in this area need more and better communications with academic experts, including anthropologists in some cases.[20] This, of course, is not quite the same thing as presenting academic researchers with shopping lists from MI5; in attempting to use academic researchers as proxy intelligence agents, or so it seemed, the danger was that academics would withdraw from all engagement with agencies such as FCO. I was also concerned that the furore might weaken what limited authority anthropology might claim as a source of insight on politics in general and political violence in particular.

Here is one story that ran parallel with my involvement in the ESRC/FCO fiasco, and partly explains these motives. In December 2006, with a small group of colleagues from Japan, Norway, and Sri Lanka, I helped organize a training workshop at the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka. For 2 days we worked with a group of junior and senior academic staff from three Sri Lankan institutions: Peradeniya itself, which is the oldest university in the country and which, while predominantly Sinhala Buddhist in its makeup, includes a significant number of Muslim and Tamil students; Eastern University in Batticaloa, which had just celebrated its twentieth anniversary and which is now almost entirely Tamil; and Southeastern University in Oluvil, which had split away from Eastern at the height of Tamil-Muslim tension in the East in the 1990s and which is now almost entirely Muslim. The workshop was organized as part of a new consortium project designed to encourage cooperation in social science capacity building between the three institutions and that had been set up with an explicit goal to "de-ethnicize" the country's universities, which had become de facto zones of segregation in the years of civil war. Its theme was conducting social research in crisis situations.

The workshop itself was, in my view, a brilliant and heartwarming success, with groups of senior and junior researchers, from all ethnic backgrounds, working up research designs on pressing local topics. (My favorite was a proposed piece of research on the everyday experience of crossing security checkpoints in the contested areas of the East.) I was particularly pleased to welcome the Vice Chancellor of Eastern University, Professor Ravindranath, to the workshop. Ravee, as he was known to his friends, had been having a hard time recently. The campus of his university was bang in the middle

of one of the most volatile areas of the country, and in the previous 2 years, rival paramilitary factions had been competing for symbolic control of the institution.[21] A few months earlier, someone had abducted the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. When he was released 10 days later, with a chilling message from his captors that his Vice Chancellor should resign immediately or face the consequences, the Dean promptly left his job and fled the country. Since then Ravee had also left the campus and had been trying to carry out his job from the capital, Colombo, over 100 miles away from the university itself.

A few days after the workshop, on Friday, December 15, I was traveling in a car with another academic friend, who took a series of calls on his mobile phone. These concerned Ravee's security arrangements: my friend had been using his own contacts with senior members of the security forces to get a better sense of who they thought were behind the threats Ravee had been receiving, and he called Ravee to pass on what he had learned. Two hours later, on his way out of an academic meeting in central Colombo, Ravee disappeared. He has never been seen again.

My colleagues and I reacted as best we could to Ravee's disappearance. Having checked with Ravee's family, we put together a letter calling for his release and, with the aid of the internet, swiftly assembled 100 signatures from prominent academic figures across the world. Amnesty International issued a statement, as did the U.S.-based Scholars at Risk program. After a slow start, the international media caught up with the story. My colleagues from Norway and Japan made early and frequent contact with senior figures in their foreign ministries and embassies. But I found it embarrassingly difficult to get hold of anyone who could help at the British High Commission in Colombo. Eventually, after a frustrating week in which messages were not passed on and e-mails were not answered, I called my MP in his office in Edinburgh, and he promised to put an immediate call through to the FCO minister most involved with Sri Lankan issues.

I have four reasons for closing with this story. First, it reminds us of the terrible danger some of our friends and colleagues live with in trying to keep alive their universities and research institutes in the context of war and everyday terror. Visitors like myself, who can walk away from the situation when it suits, have a profound responsibility to protect those whose hospitality makes our own work possible. Second, it illustrates why those visitors might sometimes benefit from quick access to representatives of our foreign ministry. It was very striking how much better the Norwegians and Japanese seemed to be at keeping communications open between their foreign ministries and academics with local ex-

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20. In his response to Werbner's article, Robert Hefner (2010) makes the point that anthropologists in the United States did engage with the dangerous simplifications guiding foreign policy after 9/11, and while the policy remained intact, the anthropological contribution did make a difference of sorts (Hefner 2010). Charles Tripp, a distinguished scholar of Iraq, has a gloomier assessment of the impact of academic knowledge in his account of a specially arranged briefing for Tony Blair and his senior ministers on the eve of the invasion: "Blair seemed wholly uninterested in Iraq as a complex and puzzling political society, wanting confirmation merely that deposing Saddam Hussein would remove 'evil' from the country" (Tripp 2007:30).

21. I allude to this poisonous sociality in the closing chapter of a recent book (Spencer 2007), written just before Ravindranath was abducted. For a fuller account see Walker (2010).

pertise.[22] Third, in retrospect I am struck by how unprepared and—frankly—unskilled I was in this situation. As rumours and messages came back to us in murky ways in the weeks that followed Ravee's disappearance, apparently straightforward "correct" gestures took on more worrying implications. The international publicity had rattled the group holding Ravee, we were told; they were worried that if he was released there would be yet more unwelcome attention. Before releasing him, they were said to be seeking reassurances he would leave the country and keep quiet about what had happened. In that case, had our open letter to the press, with its glittering signatories, made his situation worse? Another story, which dented the warm liberal glow that attended the success of our December workshop, was that the abductors had been excited by the evidence of Ravee's international collaborations: one motive for the abduction was to get their hands on the endless flow of kroner, yen and pounds that must be on its way to him from such well-positioned supporters. Did that mean all our efforts and plans to help build capacity in war-affected parts of the university system were only going to endanger the lives of the people we were working with?

"In the social sciences," Bourdieu (1990:1) reminds us, "the progress of knowledge presupposes progress in our knowledge of the conditions of knowledge." Indeed. In writing this paper I have deliberately tried to take on the challenge posed by Harper and Corsín-Jiménez (2005:11), who make a strong case for anthropologists to commit to "the possibility of ethical uncertainty," an uncertainty grounded in our awareness of the limits of our knowledge of any political or ethical field. If I felt I was unskilled in finding my way through this deadly situation, I felt equally unskilled in maneuvering my way in the far-from-transparent world of ESRC and FCO. The decisions I made in hindsight seem too often to be based on misapprehensions of what was at stake, of who was doing what, or of the institutional constraints within which we were operating. As such, too much emphasis on individual ethical judgment rather misses the point: judgment operates in a field that is intersubjective, saturated with the workings of power, and never based on perfect knowledge of an ethically simple situation.[23] The best we can hope for is not so much being "right" but simply being "less wrong" than the last time. Appeals to ethical codes and the other safe boundaries we generate to keep virtuous "us" safely removed from unvirtuous "them" deaden our ability to reflect on ethics as a kind of skilled practice.

Fourth and finally, Ravee's fate reminds us of the privilege of non-engagement. One of the striking features of the situation at Eastern University was the way in which local political entanglements and alignments seeped into all aspects of university life. Undoubtedly Ravee wanted his university to be "engaged" in matters of local importance and to act as a center for resources and expertise in the area. One of our first conversations had been about the way in which the big international NGOs had completely ignored local researchers and local expertise in their response to the tsunami in 2004. But to be effective, that kind of engagement is in fact premised on disengagement at another level. To be useful as a source of critical knowledge in times of political and humanitarian disaster, researchers such as Ravee had to be able to operate as far as they could outside the agonistic claims of local politics. That kind of disengagement and the freedom for critical research it affords is a privilege most researchers in the global North too easily take for granted.

Acknowledgments

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22. At that time the Nowegian special envoy to support the floundering peace process in Sri Lanka was a trained anthropologist with many years experience in applied work, Jon Hanssen-Bauer.

23. Just such a presumption of ethical simplicity lies at the heart of Scheper-Hughes's "rivetingly intemperate" (Laidlaw 2002:327, n.2) but much-cited article on the project of a "militant anthropology" (Scheper-Hughes 1995).

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Toward a Critically Engaged Ethnographic Practice

by Kamari M. Clarke

This article interogates what it means for anthropologists as "social critics" to be engaged in documenting efforts that not only have explanatory power but connect that power to praxis. The key here is to recognize how delimiting innocence and guilt in the context of war is clearly a political act that is not without problems. It involves identifying our public spheres and determining what has happened to those publics within which we speak. I suggest we first rethink what it means for ethnography to serve a public domain within which we speak. This involves rethinking what it means for ethnography to serve a public domain as a mechanism of engagement with all types of subjects—victims, warlords, negotiators, intermediaries, child soldiers, and even so-called terrorists. In this regard, I suggest that return to the intentions at the core of the anthropological code of ethics, codes that guide our commitment to our informant publics. By locating the limits of our code of ethics we can rectify the ways that the history of anthropological engagement in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been preoccupied with documenting "local" peoples as the "authentic" voices to be protected and understood while it has excluded other interlocutors. By rethinking the ethics of research we can use the tools of our discipline in principled forms of engagement with a range of publics.

The recent debates over the appropriateness of embedded American anthropologists serving U.S. military interests in Afghanistan and Iraq have raised some of the most controversial ethical questions in American anthropological circles today. Similarly, among Africanists, recent discussions about the U.S. Army's involvement in outposts throughout Africa have raised concerns about the extent to which ethnographic knowledge should or should not be used to serve the interest of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), one of six of the U.S. Department of Defense's regional headquarters. My own dilemma relating to the practice of ethnography and its application arose when I received an e-mail from a U.S. Army Study Office agent inviting me to participate in a 1-day seminar on "Extremism in West Africa: Groups and Conditions that Enable or Inhibit Them." As described, the meeting's objective was to consider the "potential activities of extremist groups" in West Africa with the goal of brainstorming with other "knowledgeable people about the possible directions these groups may take in the future." The objectives outlined aimed to protect the innocent through educating frontline decision makers who might benefit from the insights of experts in academia. This attempt by governments to gain

intelligence from its specialists, whether government employees in the intelligence community or academics working in area studies, has its history in the development of a key field of study—anthropology. Called the "handmaiden of colonialism,"[1] anthropological knowledge has been known to have contributed to the colonization of various peoples in the global South and, of late, to the occupation of regions in the Middle East, Africa, the South Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean. These formations, mostly a result of U.S. occupations, have sparked vehement opposition in the anthropological community to the sharing of knowledge with such occupying forces. Some have responded with organizational boycotts, while others have engaged in petition-based protests. Further, public outcry led to the development of a code of ethics insisting that, given the history of anthropological knowledge used in particular regions by a potential foreign occupying agent, anthropological ethnographers today should be engaged in technologies of data procurement that study or protect the marginal or serve the disenfranchised. Such standards trace their origins to the inquiry of previous generations; to conflicts over colonial ethnography, for example, as well as to wide-scale reactions to the power abuses of Nazism.

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1. This phrase, often nonspecifically attributed to Claude Lévi-Strauss, was popularized by Talal Asad (1973). James Hooker (1963:455) used a similar construction, "handmaiden of colonial governments."

Today, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Code of Ethics has been radically revised (see American Anthropological Association 2009), and its uses are understood in terms that distinguish the powerful (the U.S. Army) from the powerless (civilians, often in the global South, but also those marginalized in the North). Similarly, many maintain that the imperative of ethnography is to protect those "locals" who are disenfranchised. The implication, of course, in protecting or studying only the "locals" or the "marginalized" is that those locals seen as engaging in the destruction of others—the victims who become killers, following Mahmood Mamdani (2001)—have been identified as those who do not merit study; they exist below the ethnographic radar and are neither to be understood nor protected.

Determining who the disenfranchised are, however, is a complex endeavor, for it often involves looking past models of individual criminal responsibility alone to articulations of root causes in which guilt or innocence exceed the enactment of individual violence. Going beyond individualization of responsibility and covering macroforces that shape the conditions under which perpetrators enact violence can move contemporary anthropology toward a more engaged form of social criticism. For unlike the past, in which ethnographers of Africa were hired to document strong supple rural systems under stress without noticing colonialism or larger spheres of power, ethnographers of Africa today are enjoined to document and help analyze conflict of various kinds. In my case, in response to the invitation by the U.S. Army, I willingly participated as a result of my conviction that principled anthropological engagement was critical for highlighting the dangers of additional military forces on the African continent. The possibility of not engaging at all, as a result of anthropological boycotts and petition campaigns, of not offering input or an alternate vision in the midst of the growing military complex under the leadership of George W. Bush made my intervention all the more critical. This is a reality that needs more attention in the academy but that requires asking what are the contexts in which such forms of engagements are important.

I shared insights on the macropolitics of violence in West Africa but was careful not to disclose information that might negatively affect the populations with whom I work. I was conscientious about protecting the names of my informants and those who wage war against them. Instead, I emphasized the larger conditions within which contemporary violence is made to thrive. This educational mission was not only directed to academics; it was also intended to inform members of the army—strategists and various decision makers working on the ground—whose sense that violence in sub-Saharan Africa was actually initiated by warlords alone.

This article examines the public face of ethnography and interrogates the paradoxes of action and inaction central to the moral and ethical codes in the field. One example to consider is ethnographic responses to violence and poverty in the Sudan; another pertains to the reconfiguration of the postcolonial African state and ways that violence becomes a trajectory of our inquiry but rarely a trajectory of our intervention. The Nuer of the Sudan, a key anthropological object, has long served students of anthropological inquiry (see Evans-Pritchard 1940; Hutchinson 1996). However, as we see with changes in the region, some of the Sudan's "local people" are "victims" of colonialism who have also become killers engaged in the restructuring of the postcolonial state. The same is true in Uganda, where child soldiers have been heavily involved in war efforts in the north but are themselves victims of childhood abduction (see Clarke 2007).

At root is the "new scramble" for African resources: international corporations, whose missions go well beyond those of the state, work alongside various state and nonstate actors to procure and trade arms in exchange for mineral resources. This violence goes well beyond explicit forms of embattlement; it represents both the forms of symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991) that maintain violence of the postcolonial condition as well as the forms of violence within which ethnography participates. At issue is the complicity of ethnographic inaction. Even as ethnography requires a modicum of action through which to document and theorize social problems, its actors—ethnographers, who have deep knowledge of the histories and sociocultural and political contexts in all regions of the world—have been disengaged from the creation of public policy. But also at issue are corporate actors whose objectives are often commodity extraction and material self-interest. Unless they are stipulated as engaged in the "anthropology of corporations," however, most ethnographers today, like ethnographers of the early to mid-twentieth century who neglected the relevance of colonialism, omit ethnographic framings that explore political economies of violence and their cultures of capitalist inequality. Additionally, the reality of failing to assign responsibility to offending companies themselves is itself an action. Here I interrogate what it means for anthropologists as "social critics" to be engaged in documenting efforts that not only have explanatory power but that connect that power to praxis. The key here is to recognize how delimiting innocence and guilt in contexts of war is clearly a political act that is not without problems. It involves identifying our public spheres and determining what has happened to those publics within which we speak. I suggest that we first rethink what it means for ethnography to serve a public domain as a mechanism of engagement with all types of subjects—victims, warlords, negotiators, intermediaries, child soldiers, and even so-called terrorists. In this regard, I suggest that we return to the intentions at the core of the anthropological code of ethics, codes that guide our commitment to our informant publics. By locating the limits of our code of ethics, we can rectify the ways that the history of anthropological engagement of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been preoccupied with documenting "local" peoples as the "authentic" voices to be protected and understood while it has excluded other interlocutors. In this way, by rethinking the ethics of research and broadening our con-

cerns to larger strategic collaborations, I suggest that we use the tools of our discipline in principled forms of engagement with a range of publics, including the state, our corporations, and those nonstate actors whose actions may produce violence.

The next section outlines one example of history, politics, and power relations within which a particular axis of engagement might be manifest. In the remainder of this article, I focus on the first principles "deemed fundamental to the anthropologist's responsible, ethical pursuit of the profession"—those pertaining to "relations with those studied."[2] Distinguishing between victims and perpetrators, between those in need of information and those whose privacy should be protected, highlights the central problematic in boycotting meetings that engage the army and explains why I accepted the offer to share some of my ethnographic knowledge and political criticisms with U.S. Army decision makers. I end by highlighting the limitations of the AAA Code of Ethics to define new terrain within which contemporary ethnographers might engage. This final section addresses how an engaged anthropology might assist our attempts to understand particular paramilitary operations alongside new supranational institutional forms of governance in which innocence and complicity are never clearly demarcated.

Contemporary Ethnographic Engagements and Histories of Violence in Africa

At the close of the Cold War, a growing arms trade began to fuel African conflict zones in which rebel groups were vying for regional power. Throughout the 1990s, in regions such as Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Uganda, these conflicts and their resolutions found little international support for mitigating the colonial and economic production of volatile war lines despite obvious connections to global trade circuits. This is especially true in comparison to the significant international brokering at the end of the Cold War and the formative international justice interventions at the end of World War II. What resulted were extreme disparities in the lived worlds of national communities in which rich African leaders and business people closest to postcolonial power participated in the disenfranchisement of a growing underclass. In some sub-Saharan African countries, large segments of the population were subject to various forms of violence and death at the hands of particular ethnic or religious groups. And today, many suffering from poverty remain external to regimes of health and the amassing of wealth, while a small number remain at the center of new nodes of power. Indeed, we are witnessing the reconfiguration of the African postcolonial state in which African governance is being increasingly con-

2. AAA "Principles of Professional Responsibility," http://www .aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmnt.htm.

trolled by nonstate actors and transnational circuits of capital engaged in economic speculation and investment. And we are witnessing a range of new enforcement domains where the management of violence is being shared by larger rule-of-law institutions.

Although more than 10 civil wars have been fought on the African continent over the past 2 decades and have been facilitated by the management of new paramilitary enclaves, many of these struggles—often fought in the name of ethnic strife and religious politics—have actually been rooted in mineral resource management and encouraged by economic speculation and capitalist logic. As a result, the African continent now leads the world in innovating various forms of international criminal adjudication, such as hybrid courts and international tribunals, which sit alongside various national and "traditional" forms of justice, truth, and reconciliation. Moreover, international treaties are increasingly being linked to democratic restructuring mandates as multiple brokers—including postcolonial state actors in Africa and elsewhere—compete with NGOs and paramilitary forces to control the terms of governance. Thus, signed and ratified treaties such as the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court are actually weakening the capacities of African states to protect their borders, manage their populations, and control their markets and currencies (Hansen and Stepputat 2005:32) even as regional competitors strengthen their own attempts to consolidate power for resource control.

Contrary to the perception that neoliberal policies are in play in the regulation of economies such as those of the Sudan and regional areas in and bordering the DRC, we are seeing what Janet Roitman (2004) refers to as alternate regulatory domains in which very powerful arms and military brokers harness power through highly formalized underground economies. In October 2008 the Pentagon, in response to these and other perceived paramilitary and Islamic nodes of power in Africa, launched AFRICOM, part of a global agenda for the U.S. war on terror and control of religious extremism. AFRICOM is the first such U.S. command on the continent, but there are already significant centers in the Middle East, South Asia, and elsewhere. The Bush administration had planned to put in place an interim headquarters in Stuttgart and to establish five new, small military bases in North Africa, "possibly Tunisia, West (either Ghana, Liberia or Senegal), East (likely around the current U.S. taskforce in Djibouti), and southern Africa (perhaps Botswana) with a further chapter in Addis Ababa" (De Lorenzo, McNamee, and Mills 2007). Although there is broad consensus by panels of experts in which I have been involved that such centers would create more problems than they would solve, the Bush administration until as late as January 20, 2009, was charting a path to add to the already established U.S. military presence on the continent.

As of today, a base of 1,800 troops has already been established in Djibouti as well as in the recently created (2005) Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI). An addi-

tional 4,200 troops, spread throughout Egypt and other north African regions, are within striking range. And there is a significant U.S. military presence in Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. In 2005, the initiative was extended to cover Algeria, Senegal, Nigeria, and Tunisia, with another fleet permanently stationed in the Gulf of Aden. United States government officials maintain that these deployments are intended to bolster Africa's weakening state capacities and insufficient military force to address challenges to its resources. Some suggest, however, that the primary objective of the TSCTI is related to oil procurement and to limiting Chinese influence over the supply. This is further evidenced by the U.S. Army's newly established (2004) intelligence and research wing. Although its purported function is to protect U.S. security interests in the region, the research wing is in fact engaged in dialogues with various Northern academics—social and political scientists, historians, and especially anthropologists—with the goal of anticipating and advancing its broader U.S. interests.

Accession to these United States and U.S.-led military plans and operations has divided African leaders and policy makers on the continent, where there is also tremendous opposition. This is seen in the rejection of a U.S. military presence by South African and Nigerian governments and in the vows by the leaders of Mozambique, Botswana, and Zambia to resist the setting up of U.S. bases in their countries. Yet unlike Middle Eastern and Eastern European scholars, whose engagement with regional issues has been much more salient in the 20 years since cold war interventions in Africa ended, Africanist anthropologists have been late to intervene. The Bush administration's announced plans for AFRICOM also spurred debate in the academic world around American foreign policy strategy and engagement. These debates have brought into play two dueling approaches, one advocating further U.S. bases and a higher-profile presence in Africa for more direct military action, if needed, and the other contesting such militarization and instead promoting nonmilitary interests in Africa. At the intellectual center of U.S. military expansionist policies are conservative think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Center for Security Policy. President Bush hailed AFRICOM as an initiative that would bring "peace and security to the people of Africa" as well as promote "our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa."[3] The Obama administration's position differed sharply.

According to a February 2009 press release issued by the acting assistant secretary for African affairs,

> an important step was taken in early 2007 when the decision was made to create a Department of Defense Unified Combatant Command for Africa—the U.S. Africa Command, or AFRICOM. This decision to create AFRICOM marks the

beginning of a new era where African security issues can be addressed from an Africa-centric perspective. AFRICOM is a new type of command that will focus on building African regional security and crisis response. Its objective is a more secure Africa, but it is not expected to have any assigned forces to the African continent. Rather, AFRICOM is a headquarters staff that coordinates the kind of support that will enable African Governments and existing regional organizations to have greater capacity to respond in time of need.[4]

This new emphasis on a regional security response system without American troops is a hopeful policy shift toward managing recourse struggles and postviolence conflict that, long after the Rwandan genocide, continues to create regional violence.

The Political Economy of Northern Interests in Africa

AFRICOM is said by many to have been designed shortly after Ugandan miners found "black gold" in the western region of the country and Tanzania announced the availability of commercially viable oil deposits along its coast. A case in point would be the mid-November 2007 organization of meetings between the U.S. Army's research wing and a select group of Africanist academics in an attempt to understand Africa's northern, southern, eastern, and western geopolitical regions. But in response to this call, a loosely convened group calling itself the Network of Concerned Anthropologists circulated a petition calling on anthropologists to pledge their nonparticipation in U.S. military activities by refusing to engage in research and other activities that contribute to counterinsurgency operations in the war on terror (Network of Concerned Anthropologists 2007).

What are the terms of anthropological engagement here? The above initiatives speak to the central concern of this article: the connection between ethnographic knowledge and engagement (praxis),[5] with engagement at times being enacted as principled nonengagement. As stated, the expression of popular anthropological engagement against U.S. military action has ranged from public protests, teach-ins, and educational research to petition writing and circulation, but it has not transcended the liberal parameters of democratic discourse. That such (non)engagement is deemed principled rests on an assumed obligation to victims of war. Yet often the perpetrators of war are themselves conflicted actors embattled in practices whose causes are far from evident and demand further inquiry.

According to Marshall Sahlins, the U.S. military focuses on portraying anthropology's practical contribution as "collect-

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3. "President Bush Creates a Department of Defense Unified Combatant Command for Africa," White House press release, February 6, 2007. http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/02/20070206-3.htm (accessed December 1, 2007).

4. http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2009/117326.htm (accessed February 27, 2009).

5. *Praxis* is a central term popularized by early Frankfurt school scholars to highlight the necessary interrelatedness of theory and practice as a form of engaged politics. See Horkheimer and Adorno (1972 [1947]).

ing cultural data for winning local 'hearts and minds'—which is again aid to serve the goal of improving American counterinsurgency and pacification efforts. This is also described as inculcating respect for the local culture among U.S. military personnel or even as providing a sense of cultural relativism." As he observes, "Of course it is the opposite of cultural relativism—cultural cynicism one might call it—since the object is to appropriate the cultural practices of others to one's own purposes, notably the purpose of dominating them."[6] Sahlins's observation, like other AAA statements against the U.S. war in the Gulf States, Afghanistan, and now Iraq, suggests the importance of disengaging from military operations.

Sahlins continues by noting that "the priority of the military mission over the welfare of the local people" and that "this kind of relation to the local people would hardly get through an [institutional review board] review on human subjects." Notwithstanding his rejection of such engagement with the military, an unstated assumption here is worth making explicit because of its widespread relevance in anthropological circles, that these "local people" do not include members of militias committing violence or even high-ranking government officials, whether they came to power through military coups or democratic force. "Local people" are thus portrayed as being on the same side as seemingly progressive anthropologists. However, this assertion can be detrimental in its attempt to limit the wide range of ethnographic engagements that are possible in the complex domains of preemptive installations, esteemed sites of resource wealth, and in the formation of regional, local, and international actors engaged in negotiating the terms for access.

American Anthropology and the Politics of Ethics: The AAA Code of Ethics

The AAA Code of Ethics was adopted in May 1971 as "Principles of Professional Responsibility," amended in November 1986,[7] redrafted during the period from January 1995 to March 1997 by the Commission to Review the AAA Statements on Ethics and approved in June 1998, and most recently revised in 2009. In February 2009, the AAA executive board approved several proposed amendments to the 1998 version of the AAA Code of Ethics. These changes were introduced

for discussion at the association's business meeting in November 2007 when anthropologist Terry Turner recommended restoring certain articles pertaining to the "circulation of knowledge" addressed in the 1971 version.[8]

The executive board established an ethics task force to review the recommended changes, to consult with other bodies of the AAA, and eventually to hold a vote for adoption by AAA members by November 2010 (Plemmons 2009). This renegotiation of code terms reflects recent attempts by a range of anthropologists to loosen the grip of leadership in the association. Like many American professional codes, the AAA Code of Ethics recognizes that anthropologists, as members of multiple groups, such as the family and religious communities, carry with them individual ethical principles and presumptions; its public statements of morality, however, assume that the code represents shared principles. Ethnographers often have to make choices that compete with the rules laid out in the code, so new changes were designed to provide guidelines for making decisions responsibly. As stated in the preamble of the Code of Ethics approved February 2009 (sec. I), in addition to their moral obligations to more personal groups,

> anthropological researchers, teachers and practitioners . . . also have obligations to the scholarly discipline, to the wider society and culture, and to the human species, other species, and the environment. Furthermore, fieldworkers may develop close relationships with persons or animals with whom they work, generating an additional level of ethical considerations.
>
> In a field of such complex involvements and obligations, it is inevitable that misunderstandings, conflicts, and the need to make choices among apparently incompatible values will arise. Anthropologists are responsible for grappling with such difficulties and struggling to resolve them in ways compatible with the principles stated here.[9]

In ethnographic fields of inquiry, we are told that the purpose of this code is to foster discussion and education, and although the AAA will not adjudicate claims for seemingly unethical behavior, we anthropologists are to take the principles of the code as tools to develop and maintain ethical frameworks "for all anthropological work" (end of sec. I). However, it is clear that in a rapidly changing world, in which different anthropologists engage in various activities, the assumption that a professional organization can and should

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6. Marshall Sahlins, in a blog dated November 7, 2007, re "AAA Board Statement on HTS," http://aaanewsinfo.blogspot.com/2007/11/aaa-board-statement-on-hts.html; his comment was posted 10:56 a.m. the next day (accessed December 26, 2007).

7. The 1986 version of the "Statement on ethics: principles of professional responsibility" included the following article under the section "Responsibility to the Public" (sec. 2.d): "As people who devote their professional lives to understanding people, anthropologists bear a positive responsibility to speak out publicly, both individually and collectively, on what they know and what they believe as a result of their professional expertise gained in the study of human beings. That is, they bear a professional responsibility to contribute to an 'adequate definition of reality' upon which public opinion and public policy may be based." http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmnt.htm (accessed February 28, 2009).

8. See "Acknowledgments" in American Anthropological Association (2009), the 2009 version of the "Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association." Also, for the full text of the resolution introduced by Terry Turner, see http://aaanewsinfo.blogspot.com/2008/09/proposed-changes-to-aaa-code-of-ethics.html (accessed February 28, 2009).

9. "Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association," approved February 2009. http://www.aaanet.org/issues/policy-advocacy/Code-of-Ethics.cfm (accessed February 28, 2009). All subsequent quotations are from this version.

broker such ethical power is naive at best. Instead, it is useful to see the code for what it is: an instrument through which to make sense of the world theoretically and practically and to govern action using a range of mentalities, techniques, and rationalities.

In the introduction (sec. II) to the 2009 code, anthropology is defined as having its roots "in the natural and social sciences and in the humanities, ranging in approach from basic to applied research and to scholarly interpretation." Here it is clear that the foundations of the discipline remain deeply empirical. The AAA's view of that discipline further represents that "the generation of anthropological knowledge is a dynamic process using many different and ever-evolving approaches; and that for moral and practical reasons, the generation and utilization of knowledge should be achieved in an ethical manner" (sec. II). In the realm of research, the first principle is that anthropologists "have primary ethical obligations to the people, species, and materials they study and to the people with whom they work." The subsequent second to sixth principles highlight the importance of anthropological researchers.[10]

Since 9/11, the U.S. Army has increased its engagement

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10. The first principle articulates the ethical obligations of anthropologists (sec. III.A.1): These obligations can supersede the goal of seeking new knowledge, and can lead to decisions not to undertake or to discontinue a research project when the primary obligation conflicts with other responsibilities, such as those owed to sponsors or clients. These ethical obligations include:
• To avoid harm or wrong, understanding that the development of knowledge can lead to change which may be positive or negative for the people or animals worked with or studied
• To respect the well-being of humans and nonhuman primates
• To work for the long-term conservation of the archaeological, fossil, and historical records
• To consult actively with the affected individuals or group(s), with the goal of establishing a working relationship that can be beneficial to all parties involved
The subsequent second to sixth principles highlight the importance of anthropological researchers (sec. III.A.2–6):
2. In conducting and publishing their research, or otherwise disseminating their research results, anthropological researchers must ensure that they do not harm the safety, dignity, or privacy of the people and animals with whom they work, conduct research, or perform other professional activities, or who might reasonably be thought to be affected by their research.
3. Determin[ing] in advance whether their hosts/providers of information wish to remain anonymous or receive recognition, and mak[ing] every effort to comply with those wishes.
4. Obtain[ing] in advance the informed consent of persons being studied, providing information, owning or controlling access to material being studied, or otherwise identified as having interests which might be impacted by the research. . . . It is the quality of the consent, not the format, that is relevant.
5. Adher[ing] [in covenantal relationships] to the obligations of openness and informed consent, while carefully and respectfully negotiating the limits of the relationship.
6. Not exploit[ing] individuals, groups, animals, or cultural or biological materials [and] recogniz[ing] their debt to the societies in which they work and their obligation to reciprocate with people studied in appropriate ways.

with anthropologists—among other researchers and experts such as linguists and policy makers—resulting in the formation of the Human Terrain System project (HTS). News of the HTS and its relation to the U.S. military war of aggression in Iraq has shown how the deployment of new governance measures has far exceeded the study of Iraqis for the sake of understanding in order to rewrite Iraq's national constitution and reorganize its "civil society." The new measures appear to involve the formation of various military units to better control, monitor, or organize new forms of state building, which in turn entails finding more effective strategies for military action.

This phenomenon has raised heated debate among AAA members as well as among general communities at large, prompting the executive board to deem "that the HTS project raises sufficiently troubling and urgent ethical issues to warrant a statement from the Executive Board at this time."[11] As a result, on October 31, 2007, the board, under the leadership of Alan Goodman, released a statement of resolution concluding

> (i) that the HTS program creates conditions which are likely to place anthropologists in positions in which their work will be in violation of the AAA Code of Ethics and (ii) that its use of anthropologists poses a danger to both other anthropologists and persons other anthropologists study. Thus the Executive Board expresses its disapproval of the HTS program.

The statement made clear that anthropology "is obliged to help improve U.S. government policies through the widest possible circulation of anthropological understanding in the public sphere" and to engage in the "development and implementation of U.S. policy" through the democratic process. It is in this way that "anthropology can legitimately and effectively help guide U.S. policy to serve the humane causes of global peace and social justice." The board disapproved of HTS in particular "in the context of a war that is widely recognized as a denial of human rights and based on faulty intelligence and undemocratic principles." HTS was thus presented on ethical grounds, owing to "grave concerns" with the currently articulated HTS project, which it called "an unacceptable application of anthropological expertise."

The conditions of ethical concern were enumerated as follows. (1) "As military contractors working in settings of war," anthropologists would have trouble sufficiently distinguishing themselves from the military, thus placing "a significant constraint on their ability to fulfill their ethical responsibility as anthropologists to disclose who they are and what they are doing." (2) Given their "responsibility for negotiating relations among a number or groups, . . . HTS anthropologists

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11. American Anthropological Association, "Executive Board Statement on the Human Terrain System Project," October 31, 2007. http://www.aaanet.org/blog/resolution.htm (accessed December 26, 2007; at this writing, this page is no longer available).

may have responsibilities to their U.S. military units in war zones that conflict with their obligations to the persons they study or consult." (3) The ethical imperative of voluntary, informed consent is compromised, because "HTS anthropologists work . . . under conditions that make it difficult for those they communicate with to give 'informed consent' without coercion, or for this consent to be taken at face value or freely refused." (4) There is a "risk that information provided by HTS anthropologists could be used to make decisions about identifying and selecting specific populations as targets of U.S. military operations"; this "would violate the stipulations in the AAA Code of Ethics that those studied not be harmed" (sec. III.A.1). (5) The program's conflation of "anthropologists with U.S. military operations . . . may create serious difficulties for, including grave risks to the personal safety of, many non-HTS anthropologists and the people they study."

These rationales highlight the challenges of ethnography in violence-related operations. A program such as HTS is said to offend key tenets of protection in the AAA Code of Ethics that are very much in keeping with the establishment and maintenance of the rights and protections for all humans enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and with the related implication that to contravene those principles is to remove first-generation rights. As we shall see in the next section of this article, the assumption that these rights should at all times override second-generation rights, such as economic and cultural rights—the right to live free from poverty, and in the context of the full expression of one's social world—must be critically rethought.

AFRICOM and Principles of Professional Responsibility

Constructed when anthropology was an elite discipline, the 1971 Principles of Professional Responsibility, now known as the Code of Ethics, set in place social rules to protect local peoples from the abuses of colonial states as well as structures of accountability to the peoples being studied. The recent AFRICOM initiative raises concerns analogous to those that prompted the AAA to create its Code of Ethics. The details of future military and nonmilitary conduct of the Africa Command are unknown because that body's management wing will be controlled unilaterally by the Pentagon, putting the participation of African-based governance and its local communities secondary to the operation of this supranational initiative. At the time of this writing, the AAA executive board has not directly ruled on AFRICOM itself. However, the mobilizations of the ad hoc Network of Concerned Anthropologists and their commitment to disengagement from military participation highlight a key trend in anthropological engagement. The 1980s break from serving as the "handmaiden of colonialism" and anthropologists' later engagement in oppositional and antiwar positions represent a new trajectory

over the second half of the twentieth century and the basis for twenty-first-century organizing.

The critical issues under debate are far more complicated, however, than these oppositional movements suggest. For instance, such positions do not take into account the complex location of power and the structures of domination whose inscriptions go well beyond those directly engaged in enacting violence. Still, anthropologists have often been involved in documenting those data sets that can be disclosed, because their ethical responsibilities have been harnessed by a public set of principles—to protect local peoples, to maintain their anonymity. As the preamble to the AAA's "Principles of Professional Responsibility" states, the goal of ethnography is to study the "processes and issues affecting general human welfare." In fulfillment of these principles, though, anthropologists are enjoined to do damage neither to those whom they study nor, insofar as possible, to their scholarly community. Where these conditions cannot be met, the anthropologist would be well-advised not to pursue the particular piece of research."[12]

But what of the need for ethnographies of war written from the other side? Resource wars and new imperialist interventions are connected to disclosure and alliances (or not) with subjects in interesting ways and remain important components of understanding and addressing root causes of violence of all types. Carolyn Nordstrom's *A Different Kind of War Story* makes clear that "an ethnography of war is not the same as the ethnography of the effect of war on a particular locale" (1997:78). Here, although we get the story of violence from various ambits, diverse notions of political violence are explored. It is the suffering of the articulated victim to be protected that looms large. But what of the story of men from Serbia who voluntarily participated in wars that followed the breakup of the former Yugoslavia—or of men who fled those wars (Milicevic 2006)? How might participation in war be explained through the eyes of volunteers or draft dodgers? And what of victims turned killers, such as those child soldiers in the DRC who have been engaged in submitting testimony to explain their inculcation into the military countermovement? What of the U.S. Army soldier or marine fighting the U.S. war on terror—one of the most imperialist resource wars of our time—whose story has yet to be incorporated and represented fully in ethnographic accounts? What of the smugglers and paramilitary intermediaries in the work of Janet Roitman (2004)? Yet these are not the types of subjects with whom anthropology has been traditionally engaged. Rather, the voice of Western sympathies with "victims" have often been articulated through popular ethnographies of the 1980s and 1990s. The voices of the so-called perpetrators

12. American Anthropological Association, "Statements on Ethics: Principles of Professional Responsibility, adopted by the Council of the American Anthropological Association May 1971 (as amended through November 1986)." http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmnt.htm (accessed December 19, 2007).

themselves have yet to be fully engaged and developed. And the complicity of corporations that further provoke resource violence remains underexamined.

What kind of engagement, then, might be at the center of an anthropological intervention that goes beyond public social criticism? I ask not because I have a principled disagreement with the ethical-political position taken by the AAA but because the history of anthropological ethnographies of war reflect the wide-ranging positions taken by the AAA, a professional organization that purports to serve a broad spectrum of people differently located in the landscape of knowledge production and political causes. To establish terms of ethnographic and professional engagement that delimit action based on core principles that are not universally shared by its broad and diverse membership is to represent the problematic roots of anthropology in which its role as executor for colonialism represents the elite or the local underclass of a given group or society. It seems to me that in the project of rethinking the underpinnings of the code, a first step is to revive the study of inequalities that were once, for example, at the center of 1960s British social anthropology (e.g., Rhodes-Livingston Institute) or to revisit the work of 1970s U.S., French, and UK Marxists once at the forefront of political economic inquiry that formed the basis for interrogating social inequalities. It is essential today that we incorporate a lineage of engagement that takes seriously the insights of social criticism and that also examines the complexities by which seemingly "local people" are on opposing sides of many issues.

Ethnographic ethics have historically been concerned with the lifeways of "local peoples," always identifying "local" as those underprivileged whose circumstances resemble an absence of power. This one-sidedness points to limitations in the field and our need to push beyond them. The perspectives of American anthropologists are no different, and it is therefore important that we recognize how and why anthropologists are engaged in various political positions for different ends. Some have loyalties to Iraqi, Sudanese, and Rwandan former perpetuators of violence—even "freedom fighters"—and see this affiliation as a political entitlement of sorts.

An Anthropological Approach to Ethnographic Engagement

In keeping with Laura Nader's (1972) provocative "Up the Anthropologist," it is clear that contemporary anthropological studies have heard the call to move beyond studying the underclass or the traditionally identified "innocent" informant. I suggest that like the new trends of widespread students engaged in joint professional training spheres combining law and anthropology, medicine and anthropology, or environmental studies and anthropology, ethnographers similarly must learn multiple field languages—of law, of medicine, of science, or of business—that govern the regimes of practice within which we work. This work involves using these knowl-

edge regimes and fields of study to understand not only particular social norms but also to move toward new ways of opening proficient discussion in the fields in which we claim scholarly specialization. Ethnography is now being used as much in corporate domains; spheres of political governance; and judicial, NGO, and war contexts as it is in the lives and practices of disenfranchised farmers and divinatory healers. And these newly expanded iterations are being deployed to capture the complex study of emergent markets. Consequently, ethnographic techniques are being developed that at times involve more participant observation and engagement on the part of the increasing number of PhD's in anthropology who are pursuing adjunct professional degrees.

A case in point is my own return to further professional training after receiving my PhD. In 2002–2003, I pursued a Master in the Study of Law degree at Yale Law School. There, I developed a technical understanding of the foundations of law—those principles of law in which first-year law students at Yale are trained. This study provided firsthand insights into the making of legal minds who would go on to engage in the widespread export of American jurisprudence in the field sites in which I work as well as to participate in different advisory roles for legal, nongovernmental, and governmental projects. Today, increasing numbers of legal anthropology scholars are using their legal training to work with NGOs, state bodies, or with international institutions such as the World Bank and the World Heath Organization. Yet legal anthropology emerged from a multilayered trajectory that tended to separate legal practitioners from legal scholars. The first significant body of scholarship in the field came from E. Adamson-Hoebel's (1954) "neo-evolutionist" perspective, which located transformations in the law as adaptation to changes in the means and relations of production. He argued that all societies followed a single path of development from primitive (e.g., hunting and gathering) to more advanced (e.g., agriculture, industry) economic modes.

Adamson-Hoebel's (1954) evolutionary trajectory was soon overtaken by a new anthropological preoccupation: that of disputes.[13] Laura Nader's "Village Projects" dispatched graduate students to small-scale societies to collect data on dispute processes (see Nader and Todd 1978) and stimulated a florescence of related studies (Abel, Felstiner, and Sarat 1981; Canter 1978; Collier 1988; Mather and Yngvesson 1980; Moore 1978; Roberts 1979; Starr 1978, 1989, 1992; Yngvesson 1985, 1988). In this body of work, disputes were conceived of as processes and emphasis was placed on the individual disputant and his/her decision-making process. By the end of the 1970s, dispute processing had become the dominant subject of legal anthropological inquiry and had established new directions in legal pluralist theory (Moore 1977, 1978).

Contemporary changes in law making are profound, and ethnographic approaches are becoming equally innovative.

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13. Gulliver's "Social Control in an African Society" (1963) built on the work of Llewellyn and Hoebel (1941) and Gluckman (1955).

Today, though cultural anthropology lies somewhere between humanities and social sciences, its professional principles have been central in debates about and constraints on its own disciplinary purview. The merger between theory and practice, objectivity and subjectivity, continues to shape new projects and the tools that ethnographers bring to bear to the fieldwork terrain. In this way, the type of training that ethnographers bring to the field is growing, particularly with regard to those with joint advanced degrees and professional degrees.

Over time, cutting-edge scholars have conducted ethnographic studies that explore multiple legal formations in newly developing transnational realms. With publications in the late 1990s and early 2000s from scholarship by Annelise Riles (2001), Sally Merry (2006), Richard Wilson (2005), Susan Hirsch (2006), Jean and John Comaroff (2006), Laura Nader (Nader 2002; Nader and Todd 1978), Mark Goodale (2008, 2009), Elizabeth Drexler (2008), Carol Greenhouse (2005), and Bill Maurer (Maurer and Schwab 2006), among others, legal scholars and anthropologists began to use ethnography to examine the ways global and local connections are mediated by political institutions, organizations, and practices as well as by agents working on behalf of state institutions. Significantly, subsequent generations of anthropology PhD graduates with law degrees from Yale Law School—Donald Brahman, Jed Kronkite, Galit Sarfaty, Daryll Li, Anya Bernstein—and others from Duke, Jason Cross among them—all scholars and legal practitioners, represent a new generation of ethnographers who are versed in both regional anthropological work and in legal professional training. By mobilizing forms of inquiry that highlight spaces of legal engagement and put into practice a form of ethnography of international relations, this new generation of young scholars is carving out a new domain of praxis that connects law with ethnographic analysis and public policy projects.

The absence of American anthropologists from the creation of and influence over concepts for the 1948 UDHR is noteworthy (Goodale 2008). The profession changed significantly over the four to five decades that followed. This absence is important to mark, given the fear that the globalizing impact of such principles would negatively affect local communities and the reality that the UDHR's construction of universality out of locally shaped conceptions that became hegemonic. However, the increased merging of professional and scholarly projects has facilitated ethnographers' contributions to social action in ways that could be conceivably imagined as educational and even progressive. In order to reflect the realities of inequality and violence in the social worlds we study, contemporary anthropology has also been engaged in reconceptualizing violence in social and political domains and representations of it thereof (see Appadurai 2006; Das 1985; Hansen and Stepputat 2005; Tobias 2006). For postcolonial interlocutors engaged in the production of anthropological and ethnographic knowledge as well as in the perpetuation and silencing of violence, easy criticisms of inequality and affiliation and the assignment of local/marginal/dominated/

black/brown categories are far more complex. Historically, anthropology has approached inequality as a theoretical agenda, while its critical engagement has mostly hovered over its objects as mere commentary. As we know, social violence and its threats do not represent a sociocultural exception to be studied outside of local cultural processes. Such scholarship has not contributed to the reduction of the very violence that it studies; instead, social violence has been understood in relation to the workings of religion, ethnicity, and the economy. However, the contemporary literature on violence has shown that it is intrinsic to modernity—the modernity of poverty, of race, of sexual exploitation, of science; it is the articulation that designates those who are deserving of recompense and that facilitates other exclusions in the process. Violence is an inseparable feature of modernity in the contemporary world; it is often an extension of the inequalities of modernity and cannot be disengaged or disarticulated from them. Nevertheless, both in and beyond the academy, ethnographers today are under increasing pressure to engage in various social projects and with diverse publics—the military, corporations, and judiciaries. Advocacy and participatory research may challenge ethnography on the one hand yet also appropriate it for new social uses on the other. To what extent, however, do current anthropological ethics restrict the spaces of investigation, collaboration, and even transformative praxis in war-torn contexts in which many militia members are both victims and perpetrators? How might a rethinking of AAA ethical codes turn a constrained yet narrowly engaged anthropology into a field of vibrant theory and praxis, one whose ideological positioning is less restrictive and, where relevant, more directed toward various forms of social action? What does it mean for American anthropologists to move toward a more engaged anthropology at a time when American military clout is being exercised globally both to support various perpetrators of violence and to defend some of its victims? And how can contemporary engagements with violence of all forms—social, economic, political, symbolic, and explicitly physical—be situated in a variety of emerging social fields? Anthropologists engaged in the revision of the Code of Ethics have attempted to address the problem of social action in the newly introduced article 2 (American Anthropological Association 2009), under "Responsibility to the Public." There they state, "In relation with his or her own government, host governments, or sponsors of research, an anthropologist should be honest and candid. Anthropologists must not compromise their professional responsibilities and ethics should not agree to conditions which inappropriately change the purpose, focus or intended outcomes of their research." This addition highlights the value of disclosure and integrity as important.

In his seminal work *When Victims Become Killers*, Mahmood Mamdani (2001) interrogated the complex complicity of those who engage in violence, stressing the need to look actively to the ways that colonial inscriptions and their contemporary manifestations are part of the explicit enactment

of this violence. In the Sudan—as in other postcolonial and sub-Saharan African contexts where the complexities of agency and the complicity of violence are at once deeply historical and clearly embedded in related contemporary "dilemmas"—the specter of the victim rests alongside a range of institutional and individual phenomena. Burgeoning resource extraction and the military deployed to protect it through force, however, can no longer remain apparitions—specters of a sort that loom in the shadows but whose effects underlie forms of political economy.

In the past decades, most cultural anthropologists have sought to understand structures of power without significantly intervening in the substance of study. While thus preserving our interest in the relationships between culture and power, the insights of ethnography as a discipline have rarely moved beyond social criticism. Indeed, social activism is often left by the American anthropological academy to development organizations, human rights NGOs, or the political scientists or journalists who often represent the face and controversies of public policy. Abandoning the possibility of praxis has gravely reduced the relevance of anthropology in a world of complex social dynamics. Our tool kit of ethnographic methods—the long-term and detailed forms of collecting data that emerge from the voices of a people—has neither served nor protected the disenfranchised nor does it have the structural design to do so. For while over the past two decades, institutions such as the World Bank or social work institutions have looked to ethnographic methods for cultural explanation, more recent reflexive inquiries, or complex theoretical articulations about the transnational and global arena, are often not the useful insights that our legal, activist, political science, and journalistic collaborators look for as they, too, search for deeper meaning (Paine 1996).

Many would insist that poststructuralism makes action impossible because each construct is a reconfiguration of domination of sorts that does not help to pinpoint complicity. When violence is seen as a form of politics and action, however, and its study is taken up both as a way to document and understand such actions as central to daily life, then collaborating with others in order to mitigate against tyranny in an age of extremism, resource wars, and current agendas of imperial intervention presents an important ground for merging theory and praxis. To identify some of the most central issues of our time by illuminating only the processes through which these practices are taking shape is to engage in theorization that has its place in the contribution of scholarly knowledge. To keep all ethnographic insights in the domain of theory and observation, however, is to participate in the complicity of reproduction in which one documents various forms of violence and powerlessness by providing the means to measure its significance.[14] However, the tenets of its reproduction remain intact.

For central to this process of knowledge production are core issues related to Northern economic interests in places such as sub-Saharan Africa and other regions in the global South, the Middle East, and Latin America. Thus, linking anthropological ethnographic pursuits to public engagement allows us to bring various forms of epistemology—academic and nonacademic, Northern and Southern—into conversation with a wide range of actors engaged in perpetrating different forms of violence. To this end, a more engaged anthropology can incorporate into our understanding of violence those realities that shape how and why perpetrators and victims alike are ideologically and pragmatically aligned; but it must also mean taking steps before injury occurs, not simply afterward, through theaters of justice or AAA statements.

Toward an Engaged American Anthropology

Military action in Iraq or in the Sudan that offends our moral consciences should provoke more than the signing of proclamations pledging disengagement with American war efforts. Anthropologists so inclined must be willing to engage with key government policy and decision makers on both sides of the aisle and to see the various social processes (democratic or nondemocratic) in which those differently positioned are also engaged.

There is no formula for engagement, but the options must go well beyond nonengagement with military forces as the basis for praxis. Considerations vary with the contexts at hand and should not be foreclosed by a fixed professional code-based dictate. In this regard, ethnographers can document empirically the realities of social power—enfranchisement, inequality, and power abuses—in order to intervene before and during conflict contexts. The form and structure of the problem should be identified according to ethnographic insights that shape how those findings might be used to participate in locally relevant politics. Collaborative action, larger forms of mobilization, strategic forms of writing, and documentation are all useful strategies for consideration. Others abound and can be generated through internal processes of negotiation and assessment. For those interested in such uses of critical theory, considerations for action range from the contextual relevance, the potential impact and transformative possibilities, the pinpointing of domains of support, and the highlighting and consideration of relevant threats.

I recast the role of ethnography as a technology of knowledge and power whose methods can capture the complexities of ruptures and entanglements or histories of violence of all forms and suggest lessons that might be learned from these complex social contexts. Meeting this challenge means ex-

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14. In the 2009 revision to the code, an entire section on the dissemination of results has been added to the 2009 version. See "VI. Dissem-ination of Results" in the code (American Anthropological Association 2009). They mark a shift toward sharing knowledge to broader audiences while also making a point against working in the field covertly.

amining the relationship between theory and praxis as the basis for mainstream anthropological inquiry as well as exploring the range of imbricated inquiries that influence research, writing, and practice—our codes of regulation and our modalities of inquiry. And, just as ethnography has responded to the challenge of understanding new engagements with transnational connections, neoliberal governmentality, and empire, and has fostered the burgeoning study of various appendages, so too must understanding violence in those field sites involve new considerations. We must rethink the role and limits of anthropological ethnography by exploring the ways that knowledge-producing mechanisms such as ethnography are enmeshed within relationships that require thorough explanation. Such an approach to *engaged anthropology* follows a tradition with a broad-ranging genealogy from the history of applied anthropology to public anthropology to anthropology and activism to militant anthropology. Yet as I have indicated, there is no one definition of engaged anthropology. Its specific meanings are shaped by the contexts from which their dilemmas emerge. The engaged anthropology I suggest addresses the conceptual distinction between theory and praxis, the perceived gap between embedded and empirical work. This gap, with its ghosts of objectivity and insistent hierarchy, has produced stereotypes that suggest that "applied anthropologists"—nonobjective and nontheoretical—are void of legitimate conclusions. Such compartmentalization is false and has no place in the context of an unfurling new world order in whose presence anthropology has a far from public face and risks becoming divided between those in "ivory towers" and those who are exiled from academia because of the work they do. Instead, what is needed more than ever is social theory practically applied in a way that enables transformative possibilities that move us from merely documenting or disengaging to taking the practice of ethnography to its limits. In other words, those interested in the project of engagement can use their field knowledge and technical advisory capacities to attend to social inequalities.

The discipline will only benefit from unraveling the basis for social injustice by taking legible public positions within relevant fields of social and political power. Scholarly theory that is critically and reflexively informed by efforts to rethink and generate new perspectives on social criticism and practice are key. The link between state-making and life-protecting mechanisms for guarding innocence is not always evident. Nowhere else is this dilemma made more obvious than in conditions of war. The ugly realities of war-engaged violence are not simply about the embattlement of those visibly wounded. War is about the use of violence to achieve particular ends—often land, resources, and the power to construct the rules of law and procedure related to procuring and controlling those resources in legal terms. At times, those who are the most complicit in brokering conditions for conflict—such as international and national governments—are also the most legally protected. This is the case in sub-Saharan Africa, where the colonial history of anthropological knowl-

edge and the realities of engagement (or lack thereof) have failed to transcend empirical conclusions that have characterized our discipline from the beginning. Thus, the site of an engaged ethnography is actually the site of the convergence of an engaged practice of knowledge making and sharing with a highly circumscribed decision-making process that considers how one shares that knowledge, on whose terms, and for what purpose. These queries are vital for exploring the ways we ask and answer questions and for the ways that we revisit those intellectual and practical histories that have influenced our practices and enabled various sites of inequality to flourish.

Acknowledgments

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Voicing Difference

Gender and Civic Engagement among Karachi's Poor

by Kamran Asdar Ali

This article addresses the challenges in our work as social critics and engaged anthropologists. Within this context, it will show how academically trained anthropologists respond to the tensions between cultural specificities and universal values that they encounter in their research. To develop the argument, the article relies on ethnographic research among women workers in Karachi's ready-to-wear export garment industry to show how lower-class women live and navigate the gendered public spaces in Karachi. Following this theme, the article introduces the process through which grass roots activists inspired by a language of universal rights and women's empowerment seek to address working-class women's social and work-related problems. However, juxtaposing this with women's own voices, the article shows that such developmental priorities may suppress women's own points of view. In doing so, it will foreground the larger structural forces that create socioeconomic uncertainties in their lives. It will then share women's own experiences to argue that these voices, while asserting their independence, their right to work, and their right to equal wages—a sign of contractual and assertive individualized agency—also simultaneously hint at their emphasizing of familial honor and respectability.

We are all quite aware of anthropology's historic commitment to cultural relativism, a dose of which every undergraduate is given in introductory courses. However, even people like Franz Boas and his students, the relativists par excellence, continued to speak out against colonialism, Nazi Germany, and of course racism. Similarly, much like our intellectual ancestors, many of us in the course of our daily practice as anthropologists (and citizens of given nation-states) take positions that are based on our own socialization as political and social actors and on the moral judgments to which we adhere (see Geertz 1984). Indeed, it is difficult to make pristine arguments about cultural authenticity as our lives "are already products of a long history of interactions" (Abu-Lughod 2002:787). Also, and importantly, arguments stemming from the rights debate, culturally situated as they may be, are sometimes essential tools for the poor and the downtrodden in various parts of the world. To argue with modern bureaucracies for economic distribution and social justice, one needs the language that modern states understand best, hence the recourse to universalisms based in the rights discourse (Chakrabarty 2000:85).

This said, many among us have not entirely given up on different life worlds "as products of different histories, as expressions of different circumstances and as manifestations of differently structured desires" (Abu-Lughod 2002:787). At times it is necessary to excavate these differences that are constantly marginalized by the narrative of progress and the construction of the modern citizen. There remains the anthropological impulse to pay attention to those lives that from within the narrative of progress (coterminous with the narrative of capital) and coexisting with it remind us of different ways of being human (Chakrabarty 2000:94).

Keeping the above argument in perspective, this article is a preliminary attempt (and by no means the first) to work through some of the challenges and tensions in our own work as social critics and engaged anthropologists. I will share my research on Karachi, Pakistan, to show how I have thought about issues related to gender and civic engagement. Here it should be mentioned that the politics of ethnic difference linked to urbanization and rural-urban migration has led to ethnic and social heterogeneity in most urban spaces of Pakistan.[1] In the early twenty-first century, Karachi remains the industrial, commercial, and trade center of Pakistan as well as its major port. On the one hand, spatially the city today is segregated into privileged neighborhoods with private security arrangements (a phenomenon that can be witnessed

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1. It was one of the world's fastest-growing cities between 1947 and 1972. With an annual growth rate of almost 5% between 1972 and the present, its population is estimated to have grown from 3.6 million to 13 million within this period (Zaidi 1999:81).

in other parts of the world) and independently managed social services. On the other hand, the phenomenal growth has resulted in the maldistribution of civic resources to the poorest of its population. In addition, Pakistan today is marred by sectarian and religious strife and also state violence against its own people in different parts of the country.[2] Although I will not discuss the various forms of violence that engulf the city, the article will implicitly acknowledge the presence of a multiethnic social milieu. Rather, I seek to concentrate on an aspect of Karachi's working-class life that is not always captured in the predetermined narrative tropes that form the basis of most research on the city.[3] In another article (Asdar Ali 2009) I do make the necessary argument that despite the depiction of conflicts based on ethnic identity politics and religious violence in literature on Karachi (and Pakistan), people from a variety of backgrounds and histories of urban life may also continue to participate in processes of shared lives, intermarriages, and cooperation in civic struggles. However, in this article based on ethnographic work among women workers in Karachi's ready-to-wear export garment industry, I particularly focus on how lower-class women live and navigate the gendered public spaces in Karachi.

In seeking to map out the complex and dynamic lives of poor women (and men) in Karachi's working-class neighborhood, I will use "fear" as one of the organizing categories to represent my research. My understanding also resonates with various popular genres of representation that take up similar themes. For example, in an earlier article (Asdar Ali 2004), I looked at how women's popular fiction deals with issues of women's domestic and public life in Pakistan. In that article I analyzed two stories that reflected women's anxieties around the issue of male betrayal and violence. The female protagonists in both stories were married to men who, in their terms, were not real men: one was impotent, and the other was more interested in other men. Within a hypermasculine and dominant heterosexual social more, such fantasies about "inefficient men" (the impotent, the homosexual), I argued, resonated with women's anxieties about the sexually threatening public spaces in which the readers of these stories would find themselves in their everyday lives.

Following this theme and pursuing my argument about violence against women, I will give details of my association with a group of activists who were inspired by trade union politics and left-wing ideology. Although always short of funds and resources, they continued to work with integrity, passion, and selflessness in a very hostile political situation. Their innovative politics was linked with the many efforts by international and local civil-society organizations to eliminate violence against women based on recognition of their rights as

citizens. They indeed followed a rights-based universalistic approach that is connected to the language of consciousness raising and women's empowerment (the buzzword in the development world). The activists that I worked with were influenced by approaches propagated by many internationally funded NGOs, including coalitions such as the International Network for the Rights of Female Victims of Violence in Pakistan or human rights organizations that seek to pressure the state to protect women from domestic abuse and other forms of systemic violence against them. Indeed, the group that I worked with received funding directly or indirectly from international development agencies such as the International Labour Organization and other private foundations in the United States and Europe that fund small groups in the global south that work on women's rights issues.

As important and essential as the task being performed is, I again argue that we need to also be aware that the narrative of universal rights is used in these civil-society groups to raise consciousness of poor and marginalized women. At times this tendency is akin to a universalizing narrative that privileges an assumed solidarity among women by abstracting out specific histories and local experiences (Butler 1998). As women's lives in poor neighborhoods in Karachi get enmeshed in the process of developmental priorities such as those carried out by the well-meaning activists whom I worked with, certain kinds of voices—the unruly, the contradictory—may remain suppressed. Following Abdul Maliq Simone's (2004) work on low-income communities in Africa, my concern in this article is to make visible and audible those instances that enable women (and men) in poorer parts of Karachi to create emotional fields that may help them restore connections to each other. I will further hint at the individuation process that is embedded in the language of universal human rights, a process that may undermine cultural practices by seeking to subsume difference into singularity (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004). By providing a critique of the universalistic rights-based agenda and a privileging of women's own voice, I will in conclusion argue that people who live in Karachi's poor neighborhoods, irrespective of the multiple sources of social frictions, may seek ways of reuniting tense relationships and find avenues to live with disagreements.

Women and Public Spaces

Literature on poverty in Pakistan clearly shows that the sharpest decline in the level of poor households in the country happened between 1984 and 1987 (46%–37%) because of heavy public investment in infrastructure, development schemes, and job creation (Zaidi 1999). These data suggest that in the 1990s this decrease was arrested, and poverty rates are climbing in Pakistan precisely when the state expenditure on the social sector is reduced because of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)–sponsored structural adjustment programs. These policies have manifested in increased inflation and reduced access to affordable health, education, and hous-

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2. There is a low-intensity insurgency in Baluchistan province and also a full-fledged war in the north of the country, where Islamist radicals are engaged in a fight with the Pakistani army.

3. However, do see Oskar Verkaaik (2004) for an excellent ethnography on the Muttahida Quami Movement.

ing, in turn severely affecting poor families and especially women as they become primary bread earners in a volatile economy (Sayeed and Khattak 2001).

Social changes in the last few decades in Pakistan have forced a large percentage of women from all classes to work in the traditional and nonformal sectors of the economy. In recent years, because of economic pressures and the dissolution of extended families in urban areas, many more women are also working for wages than in the past. Women are leaving domestic spaces to work in the expanding service sector as stenographers, telephone operators, bank clerks, and schoolteachers. Similarly, in urban areas, the poorest women leave their homes to work as midwives, domestic servants, urban laborers, sweepers, or nannies. More often, poor urban women remain at home and sell manufactured goods to middlemen for compensation (Lewis 2001).[4]

Of course, working-class women and their relationship to city life and those who are "unfamiliar" create their own sets of bodily and emotional disciplining (Najmabadi 1993). Poor women brave urban public transport systems without the social protections that class bestows on elite women. Urban public life in Pakistan for lower-class women does not always allow them the "pleasures" of the "modern": cinemas, cafes, parks, concert halls, beaches, or the promenade that they can enter at their own volition. Instead, poor women in particular may be subject to harassment in the narrow alleys of industrial townships, in long waits at the bus stops of the unpredictable public transport system, and in the discriminating work culture that they must negotiate in order to earn a living.

Within this social context, in 2002–2003 I conducted ethnographic fieldwork primarily in Organi Town, a large multiethnic working-class neighborhood in the northwest of the city among female and male workers from Karachi's diversified ready-to-wear garment industry.[5] The community I worked in was close to one of the main industrial areas, the Sind Industrial Trading Estate (SITE). It is home to more than a million poor of various ethnicities and nationalities (the 1980s and 1990s have seen the influx of lower-class Bangladeshis, Nepalis, and people from Myanmar). The increase in multiethnic and economically marginal population and the state's inability to provide housing and other social amenities to its populace have encouraged a privatized informal sector of land grabbing and allocation, resulting in the mushrooming

of unplanned squatter settlements that house almost 40% of the city's population (Zaidi 1999). As the size of these communities grew in the last two decades, large-scale industrial growth has also declined. Economic liberalization of the Pakistani economy in the 1990s under pressure from international financial institutions such as the IMF have left a deep impact on Pakistan's economy and the lives of these working poor. As suggested above, ther impact has primarily been on the employment sector, with rising male unemployment due to privatization, retrenchment of labor in the formal sector, and the lack of growth of new industries.

Since the early 1980s, the ready-to-wear clothing industry has absorbed a large number of female workers. The industry is characterized by a few large-scale manufacturing units that employ assembly-line production models, but by and large the industry thrives on piece-rate subcontractual work in small factories or on home-based stitching by women.[6] Part of my research was focused on a group of activists who were linked to a community-based association, the All Karachi Hosiery and Garment Labour Association. This group seeks to bring working women (and men) in the garment industry together on issues of workplace and domestic rights. Unionization of the garment industry worker is nonexistent, and any effort to organize workers is violently suppressed by factory management and by state functionaries. In response, some young activists have started to work in communities to explore whether community-based organizations of garment workers might be a more effective way to share experiences of female workers who work in different factories yet live in the same neighborhoods. The idea was to encourage a discussion of work and domestic conditions and to think of strategies to collectively counter and contest the problems that these women face in their daily lives.

In November 2003, I attended a workshop for women organized by this same group of activists. This particular meeting was restricted to women workers only. The women belonged to a range of ethnicities, age groups, and education levels. Most women who were present had worked as piecerate, home-based workers making paper flowers, filling match boxes, sewing prayer caps, stitching, embroidering, making hair bands—producing the same range of low-end consumer items as is found in any society. They were leaving their homes to work in the garment industry primarily to gain more wages and eventually marketable skills. After an entire day of discussing various problems women encounter in their workplace, homes, and communities, the workshop broke up into groups. The groups were given the task of identifying tentative solutions to their problems. There were seven groups in total,

4. Recent estimates put the level of female participation at between 15% and 20% of the labor force, which by all means is a conservative guess because traditional notions of propriety lead families to conceal the extent of work performed by women. The 1980 Pakistan agricultural census showed that women's participation in agricultural labor was 73%. The 1990–1991 Pakistan Integrated Household Survey indicated that female labor force participation in rural areas was 45% versus 17% in the urban areas; hence, a more realistic yet still conservative estimate of female participation in the labor force may be between 30% and 40% (Asia's Women in Agriculture, Environment and Rural Production: Pakistan; Sustainable Development Department, FAO of the United Nations).

5. I was assisted in the interviewing process by two assistants, one female and one male, who were from the area.

6. There are very few formal statistics on the ready-to-wear garment industry. Official estimates from 1995 to 1996 give a figure of 130 manufacturing units with an average daily employment of 13,713 workers. There is a fairly large informal sector in which a large percentage of working women are employed. Data, however, remain scarce on this issue (Sayeed and Khattak 2001).

and on top of each group's presented list of problems was the Urdu word *Khof* (fear).

The framing of their problem resonated with some of the research that has been conducted in Pakistan on violence and women's lives. In an unpublished research paper written for the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Nazish Brohi (N. Brohi, unpublished manuscript; quoted with permission of N. Brohi) provides data from a national survey to show that more than half of the women interviewed in rural and urban areas of the country complained of fear in their daily lives. The insecurity and worries in these women's lives, Brohi argues, comes from potential threats or violence that they suffered in domestic and public spaces.

A major worry for many women we met during our fieldwork was the challenge of traversing the public spaces that they passed through on the way to and from their workplace. On my visits to the neighborhoods in the Orangi Town area, I would negotiate the narrow unpaved lanes with houses built close together and be quite aware of the constant presence of men in the streets whiling away their time in front of shops, playing cards, or simply talking. Beyond this passageway, where constant neighborhood surveillance kept watch on women coming and going, there was also the more impersonal space of the busy marketplaces and bus stops. Women we spoke to complained that these open public spaces were where they most often encountered attempts to engage them in conversation, rude comments, touching, and in extreme cases the threat of bodily harm. The need to negotiate streets filled with the "unknown" and "unrelated" was something the women faced on a daily basis. Ethnic difference, cultural politics, gendered discrimination, and economic hierarchies are intertwined in the everyday experience of poor women's lives in Karachi.

One female worker whom we interviewed was Sufia, a widow whose husband had passed away three years before. She was a Bihari and part of a community of households that had a sense of being displaced as they arrived in Karachi in the early 1970s from Bangladesh.[7] Her parents, like many others, had minimal resources and decided to marry her off to the best suitor that approached them. Like Sufia, a number of women we spoke to were married in their early teens to men who were up to 20–30 years older than they were and who sometimes belonged to other ethnicities. This meant that by 2002–2003, some of the Bihari women had been widowed

for a number of years or had husbands who were unable to work because of illness or old age. One of the major concerns that these women related was the social and economic insecurity in their lives that had led them to leave home and find work in the first place. Many women who are not widowed also face the burden of abandonment by husbands who have married again or, increasingly, by men who have succumbed to drug addiction, which is rampant among the working-class men in today's Karachi (see below). Sufia's husband had suffered a work-related accident and had not been able to work for many years. She had started working so that her children could get an education and so that the household expenditures could be met. She found regular work in the garment industry, although the volatility in the industry cuts into her desire for a permanent job that offers long-term security. Now her children are a bit older, and she does worry about her daughters and their prospects for marriage. Yet she also worries about her daughters and herself traversing public spaces where unknown men stand at street corners and sometimes harass passing females. One day she described her dilemma in these terms:

> Even if we are covered and wearing our coats [overall that women wear over their normal clothes] and have dupatta [scarf] on our heads, they [the men] sometimes follow me and shout things at me, who will I tell, it is an impossible situation . . . working women in the eyes of these men are always disrespectable, only women whose husbands and brothers work are respectable.

Having said this, Sufia also has an explanation for why men lingered at public places: she would repeatedly punctuate her condemnation of men's action by saying, "If there are no jobs for them and there is also overall low level of education, these men are frustrated. If they have regular employment they will not think about women."

However, Sufia's statement about public harassment also sensitizes us to forms in which these women's interactions with various sites, routes, and spaces within the city are represented, commented on, and restricted within the larger society, raising questions about working women's place in the contemporary city (see Ong 1987 or Hewamanne 2008 for similar processes in the cities of global south). It is particularly important to see how these women's "freedoms" are read in terms of promiscuity by the dominant moral codes and to understand the processes that seek to discipline and regulate female bodies (Roy 2003). Clearly, the issue of societal concerns about female disorder, lack of control, and chaos emerges in such representations of the everyday that the women speak about. Public harassment and domestic surveillance of working women in Karachi's poor neighborhoods may serve purposes of control and management of female desires for specific urban freedoms.

Women's experience of physical and emotional threat in places like Orangi demands our attention, consideration, and sensitivity. However, the proliferation of the social phenom-

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7. During the civil war in the Pakistan/Bangladeshi war of Liberation in 1971, the Urdu-speaking population of the then East Pakistan had supported the west wing of the country in its political position to deny the Bengali citizens of the country the right of self-determination. Certain sections were also party to the brutal military action that the Pakistani government unleashed on the Bangali people. The community, consisting of mostly earlier Muslim migrants to East Pakistan from the Indian province of Bihar (but not entirely) eventually bore the brunt of Bangali retaliation and violence directed against the Pakistani government. Many lost lives and property and resettled in Karachi as refugees (twice displaced in 25 years).

ena of "fear" linked to the "risk" women face when leaving their homes and entering the public populated by "others" is an aspect of contemporary human condition that also needs our comment (Furedi 1997). As capitalism manifests itself in contradictory forces of hope and despair, constitutionalism (democracy) and deregulation, hyperrationalization and avant-garde experimentation, controlled markets and speculative exuberance, antimodern nostalgia and progressive narratives—all very much part of contemporary Pakistani society—it is no wonder that risk, uncertainty, and fear have become its constitutive cultural icons (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Masumi 1993; Stewart and Harding 1999). Harry West and Todd Sanders (2003) argue that the urban myths, conspiracies, and occult cosmologies that circulate in various cultures should not been understood in terms of dichotomies such as West and the rest, global and local, and modernity and tradition. They rather exhibit, West and Sanders suggest, different forms in which people seek to make sense of their everyday, where unknown and unseen extraordinary powers are in play that create unpredictable and sometimes harmful effects in their lives (West and Sanders 2003:7). More specifically, for women we spoke to, fear presents itself in multiple registers—the fear of poverty, the fear of unemployment, the fear of domestic violence, the fear of work-space abuse, the fear generated while traversing public spaces, the fear of random eruption of ethnic conflict that may engulf livelihoods and loved ones, and the continuous fear of sexual violence and bodily harm—and shapes their daily lives. These experiences also need to be understood within the context that the vocabulary of fear (and the related category of risk) is also deployed when there is an increased sense of social vulnerability about the present and the future.

Women and Their Lives

Let me now discuss women's lives through another example. Drug addiction was widespread among men when I visited in the Orangi area and elsewhere during the fieldwork. Female domestic servants whom I also interviewed in several middle-class households in Karachi constantly complained of their spouses' violence toward them and also of leaving them because of their addiction problems. Estimates for Pakistan give a figure of at least 1.5 million *chronic* heroin addicts; most are among the male working poor (http://www.unodc.org/pakistan/en/country_profile.html). The actual figure for drug abuse may be much higher. Before the late 1970s, heroin use in Pakistan was virtually unknown. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Islamic revolution in Iran coincided to make Pakistan a producer and internal market for heroin. Then the U.S.-supported Afghan war in the 1980s against the Soviet invasion created unprecedented infiltration of drugs (and weapons) into Pakistani society.[8] This trend has been

exacerbated recently by the ongoing war in Afghanistan in the post-9/11 period. The borderlands between Afghanistan and Pakistan are some of the areas where poppy cultivation and production of heroin continue literally unchecked. Pakistan's cities and rural areas remain a primary market for this drug trade.

To understand this social situation better, let me introduce Hasina Begum, a garment worker who raised her son almost single-handedly because her husband had never worked and lately had become an addict. She narrated a recent episode from her life by telling how her in-laws had collected some money and leased a taxi for her husband to drive. He, however, never helped financially with the domestic budget; rather, he started maintaining his habit on the side by selling the taxi's spare parts. Then he vanished for a couple of weeks. While traveling on a bus, her son saw his father lying unconscious on the side of the road and brought him home. The husband was nursed back to health and was fine for a few days, but then the violence and abuse started again. Her dilemma is that she cannot throw him out of the house because that would be shameful, and her son would lose his father. On the one hand, living with the man, according to her, had become unbearable. On the other hand, she felt responsible for his well-being and continued to care for him in her capacity as a dutiful wife. As much as we should empathize with her predicament of raising her son without any familial or spousal support in a precarious socioeconomic and cultural environment for women workers, we need to also understand the sheer hopelessness of men, such as her husband, who are left to die on the roadside everyday.[9]

Most men, of course, experienced the city with far more comfort and freedom than the women we met with ever did. Men traverse the public sphere without the same kind of bodily discipline and emotional restraint that women have to endure. Many find new spouses, abandoning their families to precarious futures, or they pursue the many pleasures that the urban environment offers. This contrast between male and female experiences can also be seen in an example from Ananya Roy's (2003) work on commuters who enter the lowest end of Calcutta's labor sector. Speaking of gendered elements in the urban experience, Roy shows how issues of sexual freedoms, moral economies, domestic responsibilities, work processes, and labor segmentation operate in such instances (2003:101–102). Working women's mobility in this milieu is constrained by moral discussions about their sexuality, their domestic responsibilities, and their potential for corrupting the public space by their presence (Roy 2003:125). Yet Roy in the same body of work also depicts the vulnerability of male work in the contemporary moment.

8. Profits from drug and weapons trafficking partly helped to finance the covert war in Afghanistan.

9. We may feel comfort in criticizing addiction as a self-inflicted habit conducted by irresponsible individuals. We could also look at increasing criminality in Karachi's social life in terms of delinquency and narratives of street gangs. But the structural features of increasing social and economic marginalization of the working poor should not escape our analysis.

This relates to the example of the unemployed, exhausted, and wasted body of Hasina Begum's husband. Roy makes the argument, which I follow here, that during her fieldwork, poor women depicted their husbands as dead (while they were alive) in order to furnish us with a critique of male abandonment and polygamy but also to sensitize us to men's withdrawal from the labor force because of layoffs, injuries, or old age. Similarly Hasina Begum was critical of her husband's abandonment of his duties as a spouse, and yet she was also sensitive to her own role as a wife, in the process making us further aware how male absence, addiction, and chronic unemployment contribute to destabilize domestic life.

It was obvious to us that although the unequal gender relations in these households is a given, we rarely question how it is maintained, how it is perpetuated, or how it changes with the social changes in society. Similar to the protagonists of the stories I discussed in the introduction, the women we interviewed had extreme frustrations and regrets in their public and private lives. However, most women were also acutely aware of the ways in which male unemployment and lack of education were affecting male behavior. Many attributed the teasing on the streets and also addiction (but not domestic violence) to a sense of hopelessness that had crept in among the working poor in their area. They complained about how male underemployment forces women into wage work to support household expenditures for rent, food, clothing, and, increasingly important, the education of their children. Here we clearly see the clash of the modernist ideal, where each generation does better than its predecessor, with the reality that men are not fulfilling the traditional masculine role of providing for and supporting their families. These harsh socioeconomic and "demasculinization" processes, among other things, do destabilize gender relations and undermine the harmony within the family structure, at times leading to violent effects within the domestic and the public realms (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000:307). Yet women's narratives of their personal lives, such as that of Hasina Begum, made it clear that along with conflict there may also be spaces of mutual dependence, respect, and caring that continues in these families.

Moreover, during our fieldwork, as women articulated their anxiety in relation to public spaces, these same women by and large seemed very confident about their public lives. As we spent time in the neighborhoods and work spaces and became accustomed to the daily rhythms of domestic and public life, we were sensitive to women's apprehensions yet also appreciated their sense of confidence. Most women we spoke to, while relaying their sense of unease about their experience of being harassed in public spaces, also told about the various ways they would answer back and scold those who made lewd comments. In addition, they thought that by going out of the house to seek employment, they understood society

and its problems much better.[10] They spoke about broadening their outlook and not being stifled while at home.

Of course all this was couched in a language of moral concerns regarding the kind of work they performed. It was always the *Jaiz* (meaning legal, but here used in the sense of moral as well) work that was stressed, and much rhetorical effort was also spent during the interviews to convince me, and perhaps themselves, that they were people of high moral character and did not lose their honor or respect if they worked in factories. In subtle ways, the larger constructed idiom of the "respectable woman" is constantly invoked in their self-presentations. Although in many cases they live as single parents and carry the burden of educating their children (because of their husbands' unemployment, addiction problems, or having taken another wife), they seldom speak about divorce or separation from their husbands. This does not, however, mean that women do not separate from their husbands or take sexual or social risks; it is just that their self-presentation is couched in certain moral terms. Women lead dynamic and complex lives that cannot be entirely captured in these pages. In addition to their invocation of fear, women also spoke to us about their desire to visit the cinema, to go to parks, and to visit cafes by themselves, and they questioned the unequal standard of social life that they have to comply with. There were also other sorts of pleasures brought up in our conversations; as much as their stories highlighted social worries and domestic problems representing distinct features of lower-class lives, for some the idea of visiting a neighbor, getting the daughter married, being able to afford their children's fees, or singing in the neighborhood wedding were part of a varied list of pleasures that sustained their day-to-day existence.

Such realities are shared and experienced by urban women and men who grow up on the proverbial other side of the tracks in Pakistan. After living and working in spaces such as Orangi, where there are distinct possibilities of people falling in love with the "wrong" ethnicity or having a heritage that is more similar than is acknowledged in the ethnically charged representations of such lives, it became clear to us that there is always a "somewhere else," an "outside" beyond the modalities of the organized attempts to help the poor and the vulnerable. The idea here is not to criticize the effort and enthusiasm of the young activist who had organized the workshops (or other such meaningful initiatives), nor is it to undermine the social reality of conflict and ethnic violence in these neighborhoods or in the larger city. However, women and men in the communities they live in continue to recombine contingent relationships—between bodies, spaces, signs, infrastructures—to connect with varied ways of life and different social actors (Simone 2004:22).

Similarly, in our conversations in the workshop that I attended in 2003, while discussing fear as a part of their social

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10. See Naila Kabeer (2000) for a similar argument for women who work in the Bangladeshi garment industry.

experience, women objected to suggestions of actively confronting issues of patriarchy and gender bias and even public harassment, arguing instead that they had other more important concerns to deal with first. Being themselves acutely aware of the living conditions that all shared in the communities that these women belonged to, there was on their part a willingness to work on the interpersonal and intra-community problems without interventions of formal laws and regulations that various civil-society organizations—and even the workshop organizers—would advocate. Like Sufia, whom we met above, many women understood the reasons for men's public behavior within a narrative of economic and social uncertainty in their lives. To take another above-mentioned example, Hasina Begum's critique of her husband's actions was intertwined with an empathetic gesture toward his condition. I argue that along with conflict, there may also be spaces of mutual dependence, respect, and caring that continues in these families.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article makes modest claims. By using "fear" as one of the organizing categories for the article, I sought to map out the complex and dynamic lives of poor women and men in Karachi's working-class neighborhood. I have done this partly by foregrounding the larger structural forces that create socioeconomic uncertainties in their lives and by showing the relationship between women and public spaces. To substantiate my larger argument, I also introduced women's voices on their social hardship that hinted at their reemphasizing familial honor and respectability. In such moments we may also notice a coming together of different worlds and impulses. Hence, women's assertion of their independence, their right to work, and their right to equal wages, a sign of contractual and assertive individualized agency, may cohabit with their desire to be modest, self-sacrificial, subservient, and humble.[11]

There may be value in rights-based politics propagated by activist women's groups that we worked with, and there may also be much to be learned from the politics of empowerment propagated by international agencies. Yet international funding initiatives for women in developing countries may also seek to organize the lives of poorer women in ways that are based in different geographies and cultural milieus (Spivak 1996). Further, within this context we should also take note of Wendy Brown's (1995) caution about the exclusionary aspect of liberal thought and the atomizing process of rights discourse. In a close reading of Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question," Brown (1995) shows how through the rights discourse bourgeois social relations become reified and naturalized and how in the process the state's collusion with social power is disguised as the neutral and universal representative of the people. Not only is individualism leading to effective

depoliticization of the social produced as solutions to social problems are pushed back on the ego, but an "illusory politics of equality, liberty, and community" is constructed that is contradicted by the "unequal, unfree and individualistic domain of civil society" (Brown 1995:114).

I open this line of argument to foreground a different register of sociality and individuality. I also seek to recall here Partha Chatterjee's (1993) rejoinder that it is crucial to investigate the narrative of the community that is unyielding in its constructions of the individual and the social and to scrutinize the disciplinary and hegemonic pressures of the modern state within a universalizing economy. Maybe such stories are necessary when our postcolonial dreams have been shattered and "the old language(s) of moral-political vision and hope are no longer in sync with the world they are meant to describe and normatively criticize" (Scott 2004:2). Instead of an opportunity to create grand narratives of change, resistance, and working-class solidarity (sometimes based on the invocation of rights), this may be a moment of introspection and rethinking. In addition to the above discussion on fear and violence, what may still need analytical rigor and empirical insight is to imagine a potential space—a possibility of sorts—of cooperation and mutual support for people from different genders (or ethnic backgrounds) who seek to share common destinies. This does not mean that all problems are solved or there is blind optimism, but it nudges toward a politics of hope, a spirit of co-living (instead of constant conflict) where disagreements can be lived within a general gesture of kindness and tacit concurrence with others about how to get by (Thrift 2005). This possibility may also be emblematic of contemporary Pakistan, where a diverse, multilingual, and ethnic population considers the challenges, pitfalls, and compromises of coexistence.

Finally, I do not have a clear-cut answer to the question of whether to intervene and advocate based on universalistic categories that show a road map toward emancipation and liberation (or at least a better life) or to take the vernacular voices and practices seriously in order to recognize their popular refusal to integrate into the available forms of middle-class identifications and moral truths (Scott 1999:215). In posing this dichotomy, I partially follow a much-cited article by the legal scholar Karen Engle (2001), who presents a comparison between the American Anthropological Association (AAA) 1947 statement on human rights to the United Nations and the 1999 AAA Declaration of Anthropology and Human Rights. Among other issues, Engle emphasizes the ongoing tension between American anthropology's long-term commitment to cultural relativism and the desire to act (to intervene) by some anthropologists from a given moral perspective. This, she argues, hinges on *our* tolerance of different cultures and political systems when they go against the universalistic principles embedded in the internationally recognized human rights declarations. Seeking to address similar tensions between cultural specificity and universal values in my own work, what I share above is how I, as an academically

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11. I am indebted to Dipesh Chakrabarty (1994) for this insight.

trained anthropologist, respond to or write about my research environment. This of course does not exhaust the range of ways that all of us engage with political and social events around us. What insights for activism we bring to those engagements as anthropologists or just informed citizens is a discussion that requires more thought and introspection.

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Tactful Criticism in Hong Kong
The Colonial Past and Engaging with the Present

by Alan Smart

Criticizing flawed social arrangements would seem to be a natural right. But when the social critic is not a citizen, engagement raises different ethical and methodological dilemmas. In formerly colonized contexts, particularly where anthropological knowledge influenced the practices of rule, can the outside anthropologist criticize? If so, how? Regardless of whether or not moral philosophy supports a right or obligation to criticize practices outside of the society in which the observer is a member, there are good reasons to undertake such social criticism in an even more careful manner than when doing it at home. This article argues that given the history of anthropological involvement in the critique and transformation of existing social and cultural practices in colonies, social criticism might be best done with a substantial degree of tact and consideration of the complex consequences. The nature of tact and its relevance to social criticism are explored. I then draw on my work on squatter settlements and public housing in Hong Kong to examine ways in which writing may serve to provoke critical reconsideration of phenomena that have been taken for granted.

Criticizing what we consider to be flawed social arrangements would seem to be a natural right, perhaps even a duty. Increasing the profile of social criticism grounded in the less ethnocentric perspectives of anthropology appears necessary for increasing the visibility and influence of anthropology and a responsibility for the discipline in an era when the commentary and advice of other social sciences is resulting in outcomes that many anthropologists abhor (Skidmore 2006). One result has been rapid growth in engaged anthropology (Low and Merry 2010, in this issue). Skepticism about engaged anthropology has centered on whether it can be objective. Proponents argue that engaged anthropology can result in better research and be ethically superior to narrowly academic anthropology. Taking a different approach, I argue that engagement when conducted away from home raises concerns that have not been adequately addressed.

When the social critic is not a citizen, engagement raises ethical and methodological dilemmas distinct from those of engaged research at home (Susser 2010, in this issue). Where locals were disenfranchised in the past, with authority in the hands of foreign elites who criticized local practices, can the outside anthropologist criticize? If so, how should it be done? There are good reasons to undertake such social criticism in an even more careful manner than when doing it at home. Given the history of anthropological involvement in the cri-

tique and transformation of social and cultural practices in colonial territories, social criticism might be best done with tact. Explicit criticism is only one way in which to engage. We can also write in ways that provoke critical reconsideration of phenomena that have been taken for granted. In my own case, I have felt reluctant to explicitly expound on what should be done. Instead, my social criticism has been pursued primarily through tacit or implicit meanings in my texts and how the stories I tell or the situations I analyze challenge what is taken for granted.

Social and Other Critics

What is meant by *social critic* as opposed to *critic* more generally? One could take it to mean any discourse that points out flaws, argues for reform, or rejects the validity of practices or institutions. Gavin Smith (1999:21), though, distinguishes between social critics and anthropologists who undertake "cultural critique" by deconstructing our categories and interpretations. Social critics have commitments grounded in social relationships; their critical activity supports groups whose concerns the intellectual attempts to broaden to transformative projects (Smith 1999:47). Cultural critique for Smith need not extend beyond an exercise in radical skepticism, while social critique requires efforts to harness analysis to the pursuit of real-world projects. It is the transformative intent of Smith's version of social critique that makes me hesitant about applying such efforts to societies of which I am not a member. Transformative political projects have

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caused intense suffering around the world through the "civilizing mission" and the "will to improve" (Li 2007). In some cases anthropologists supported such changes, perhaps more often they opposed them, but in any case, anthropological knowledge was regularly used as part of transformative projects (Barnett 1956), hurting the reputation of anthropology in many postcolonial nations. Can we be sure that anthropological proposals to transform flawed social arrangements will work out better this time, and if not, should we be more reticent in social critique when we ourselves need not live with the consequences? In what circumstances are outside critique and activist intervention more justifiable? For example, there would seem to be no comparable problem in criticizing the activities of agents of our society operating abroad. Indeed, there would seem to be no shortage of critical work that we could engage in even if we restricted ourselves to this kind of intervention, particularly for American anthropologists.

Charles Hale (2006:100) addresses the same problematic as Smith but with distinct conclusions. He contrasts cultural critique with activist research. Cultural critique "strives for intellectual production uncompromised by the inevitable negotiations and contradictions" entailed by activist involvement with political struggles. While activist research may be "compromised," it is enriched "by opting to position itself squarely amid the tension between utopian ideals and practical politics" (Hale 2006:100). Rather than opting for the desirability of one strategy over the other, "in the face of rightward trends in university and world politics, proponents of activist research and cultural critique need each other as allies" (Hale 2006:98). Cultural critique can be useful, but it is insufficient for projects of social justice and for the potential in political engagement to inspire theoretical innovation (Hale 2006:115).

Hale's argument takes us beyond the distinction between cultural critique and activist research. One limitation of cultural critique for political movements lies in its very intellectual attraction: deconstruction of essentialisms and suspicion of objective analysis. To have an effect and support the agendas of social movements an anthropologist is engaged with, it is necessary to return to "law, demographics, statistics, human ecology, geographic information systems, and other technologies of objective (no quotation marks allowed) social science" (Hale 2006:115). This move on Hale's part results from the previous distinction between cultural critique and other approaches to academic research. The activist may be attracted to anthropology as cultural critique, but the challenges of political transformation in alliance with movements whose members must "use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house" (Hale 2006:113) requires another tactical alliance with approaches that strive for objectivity. The dual division becomes a triad: cultural critique, activism, and what Hale calls "positivist social science." Social criticism differs from cultural critique not only in its linkage to transformative social projects but also in its recognition of the utility of empirical

analysis in these projects. Approached from the other direction, many engaged anthropologists argue that engagement improves the quality of empirical research by allowing access, generating novel questions, and focusing on issues central to everyday life (Calhoun 2008; Sanford 2006).

Social Criticism from Outsiders

Social criticism takes on a different meaning when directed by a member at his or her own society than when pursued by a nonmember. The philosopher Michael Walzer reverses the common view that critics are usually outsiders who obtain a critical authority from their distance and impartiality (Walzer 1987:38). Instead, Walzer suggests that most social critics are not disconnected analysts who appeal to universal principles but are more like

> the local judge, the connected critic, who earns his authority, or fails to do so, by arguing with his fellows. . . . This critic is one of us. . . . His appeal is to local or localized principles; if he has picked up new ideas on his travels, he tries to connect them to the local culture, building on his own intimate knowledge; he is not intellectually detached. Nor is he emotionally detached; he does not wish the natives well, he seeks the success of their common enterprise. (Walzer 1987:39)

Talal Asad (1986) also concludes that "a good critique is always an 'internal' one—that is, one based on some shared understanding, on a joint life, which it aims to enlarge and make more coherent" (156). A local expression of this position can be seen in Jennifer Mendez's (2008) experience in Nicaragua of being referred to as a *gringa metiche*, a "North American who is nosy or meddlesome" (154). Walzer locates "social criticism in relation to the bounds of membership (critics are insiders), power (critics stand outside the realm of power), and history (critics reveal society's inner truth)" (Balfour 1999:381–382). This account is related to his distinction between thick (maximal) and thin (minimal) moralities. Minimal moralities bridge cultural divides but are not themselves freestanding. The commonality that allows translation obscures the way in which the match relies on distinct maximal moralities. For Walzer (1994:11) the critical enterprise is "necessarily carried on in terms of one or another thick morality." Hope that minimalism, grounded and expanded, might serve the cause of universal critique is false. "Minimalism makes for a certain limited . . . solidarity. It doesn't make for a full-blooded universal doctrine"; the outsider can become a social critic "only if he manages to get himself inside, enters imaginatively into local practices and arrangements" (Walzer 1987:39). Here is an opening for engaged anthropologists who acknowledge the unfortunate colonial legacy of outsider criticism but feel an obligation to help those who they become involved with in their research. The ability to leave behind a mess one has helped create,

though, suggests that an "imaginative entry" is not sufficient legitimation.

Balfour (1999) suggests that Walzer's approach neglects the position of less privileged insiders such as African Americans. William Booth (1997) explores the application of Walzer's ideas to resident foreigners and suggests that earlier assumptions about the morality of excluding noncitizens from the political community have come into question in response to statelessness resulting from war and revolution and the intensification of international migration. This raises fundamental questions about whether national citizenship can justify exclusions that create the world's largest forms of inequality (Kipnis 2004). What Booth neglects is the history of privileged outsiders and their role in the "political community": Europeans and North Americans with extraterritorial judicial privileges in colonies who regularly took on "civilizing missions" to criticize and transform" less civilized" indigenous populations. Social criticism took on complex and ambivalent forms in the hands of even more "benevolent" individuals such as anthropologists, who employed social criticism against the colonial governance systems as well as against indigenous customs and practices.

Since Asad's (1973) collection, colonial influence on anthropology has become better understood through many studies of anthropology's involvement in the colonial transformation of the societies studied (Cohn 1996; Cooper and Stoler 1997; Dirks 1992, 1997). While transformative projects were more influenced by other agents, anthropological knowledge did sometimes have significant effects.

Dirks (1997) examines the ways in which the "relentless anthropologizing of India . . . served to misrecognize the social and historical possibilities for the nationalist awakening, even as it worked to reify categories of social classification" (184). He argues, for example, that the Indian government "sought anthropological justification for prohibition" (Dirks 1997: 191) of the practice called "hookswinging," where volunteers were suspended by iron hooks through their skin for several hours. Anthropological knowledge helped mask the coercion of colonial power, "its capacity to define what is acceptable and what is not, what is civilized and what is not, and why it is that the extraordinary burden of knowledge and responsibility is arrogated by the colonizer" (Dirks 1997:202). When custom appeared to challenge British rule or "violated the general principles of civilized morality"—as with hookswinging or *sati*, the burning of widows—the British felt they had to reform practices and often did so through "administrative judgements that were espoused in the guise of anthropological debates" (Dirks 1997:203).

Dirks's account, as well as other cases where anthropology contributed to colonial "reform," concerns administrative abuse of anthropological knowledge. Would the greater incorporation of anthropologists into colonial administration, as promoted by the Colonial Social Science Research Council (1944–1962), have removed the negative effect (Mills 2002)? Would cultural and social transformations have had better

consequences if the colonial governments had listened to recommendations from anthropologists despite the weak development at the time of our theories of social change? Did we really have the wisdom and skills to know what courses would in the long run be best for the people of colonized territories? Ultimately, it is hard to know. Urging changes on other societies, as opposed to simply pointing out the negative consequences of what was being done, seems fraught with risks quite different from those involved with promoting transformation within one's own society. The argument that researchers have obligations to the people they do research with requires consideration. Perhaps, though, such debts might be addressed by countering the actions of agencies from within their own countries rather than by direct criticism of other nations.

I do not raise these issues to argue that anthropologists ought not to criticize societies other than their own. Nor do I want to stake out an ethical position based on cultural relativism. Sally Merry's (2006) work on human rights does an excellent job of showing that cultural defenses against criticism of local practices are based on inadequate concepts of culture and therefore do not require anthropologists to defend cultural practices that harm women, for example. My argument is not really a moral or normative argument of any sort. I do find it useful here to show that some moral philosophers can support a position limiting social criticism to an act that should be conducted on one's own society rather than on others'. Walzer's perspective makes the point that if one wants to make moral claims in favor of social critique, opposing positions must also be taken seriously. In reviewing a variety of publications on engaged anthropology, I have yet to see the authors consider this kind of perspective. Those who have reservations about activist or engaged anthropology are assumed to either have an ivory tower outlook or be wrongheadedly positivist. Monique Skidmore (2006:54) approaches the issue when she confessed that she found that "the very question as to whether or not to be an engaged anthropologist (or not) is troubling to me." Her reservations, though, primarily concerned whether her research would cause risks for her informants, and her conclusion was that in "conditions of repression, terror, and civil war, there seems to me to be no ethical alternative to becoming engaged" (Skidmore 2006: 54). She does, however, suggest that engagement in the "daily battles waged against an oppressive regime" is properly "the task of the Burmese people," and documenting the suffering is the ethnographer's more appropriate role. Accessibility of our writing, then, becomes a key issue.

Instead of attempting to resolve these moral quandaries, what I suggest is more modest. Given the long and depressing history of outsiders criticizing and changing local practices in colonies and former colonies and the resentment often created among the citizenry of decolonized countries, criticism can often come across as *tactless* and insensitive. An anthropologist who desires or feels obligated to contribute in some way to social improvement might consider engaging in

social criticism in ways that are more tactful. The question, then, moves away from the arena of morality and toward either the question of tactics (what works best in a particular situation) or interpersonal relations. Tact is not at heart an issue of morality but rather one of politeness. A brief discussion of the nature of tact, adapted from a study by Smart and Hsu (2007), on the role of tact in the social definition of corruption situates subsequent discussion of my use of indirect forms of social criticism through narratives based on ethnographic and archival research. Returning to Gavin Smith and Charles Hale, my analyses do not fit neatly into the category of cultural critique because I believe that the effectiveness of my analyses depends on the extent to which they provide a more accurate account of the situations I studied. To be useful, anthropological accounts should first be accurate.

Tact and the Anthropological Enterprise

Erving Goffman pioneered politeness studies with examinations of how interaction rituals preserve people's public image or "face" (Goffman 1959). Subsequent work on politeness has mostly been carried out by linguists, particularly in the field of pragmatics. Politeness is a form of discourse that deviates from the assumption that human communication is "rational, purposeful, and goal-directed" (Mao 1994:453). Polite discursive forms are indirect, avoid offense, and adopt formulas that are often empty of new information.

In common usage, politeness is often thought to consist of conforming to social rules about proper behavior (Fraser 1990:220). This interpretation neglects skills involved in knowing when rules should not be followed and when it is safe to break them. As Janney and Arndt point out,

> Within a given culture, almost any normal adult can be polite in impolite ways, or be impolite in polite ways. The former is politeness from a social point of view, and the latter is politeness from an interpersonal point of view. . . . We will refer to the former as "social politeness" and to the latter as tact. (Janney and Arndt 1992:22)

For Fraser (1990:232), politeness should be seen as involving a tacit "conversational contract." Following formal rules of etiquette in a context of individuals with a close social distance can thus be interpreted not as politeness but as a deliberate attempt to mock or humiliate, as Garfinkel's students found when he set them the task of acting like boarders while at home with their families (Garfinkel 1967). Being polite is not simply following a general set of rules but operating effectively within expectations and being able to cope with lapses of tact and interactional breaches. Impoliteness is socially constituted, apparent only after subsequent interaction has failed to reinterpret it as conforming to expectations.

Leech (1993:132) offers a precise definition in his tact maxim: "(a) Minimize cost to *other* [(b) Maximize benefit to *other*]." For example, when A offers to give B a ride and B

responds by inquiring whether it will cause inconvenience, one response in conformity with the tact maxim is to deny any inconvenience because A is going in that direction anyway (even if this is not true; Gu 1990:244). This response is tactful because "it makes it easier for B to accept A's offer" by "minimizing the debt B owes A" (Gu 1990:244).

How does this relate to social criticism? In contexts where criticism comes from noncitizens directed at a society that formerly suffered from colonial domination, there is likely to be considerable resistance to accepting the criticism of Westerners who previously produced so much social and cultural trauma for society members or their ancestors. Even if only on pragmatic terms concerning what kind of critique might be likely to lead to positive change, sensitivity to the reactions of those being criticized is advisable. On the basis of the tact maxim, social criticism might be inherently beneficial, but if delivered in a fashion in which it avoids giving offense related to a history of disastrous externally driven social transformation, it might have a better chance of delivering the benefit while minimizing the associated cost. On the other hand, excessive indirection (such as cloaking social criticism in academic jargon and publishing it in obscure journals) might result in the message not being received at all.

While tact has largely been neglected by anthropologists discussing the ethics of critique, an important exception can be found in Michael Herzfeld's work on "cultural intimacy," which he glosses as "the sharing of known and recognizable traits that not only define insiderhood but are also felt to be disapproved by powerful outsiders" (Herzfeld 2005:132). Ethnographic research can unveil "dirty laundry" that some prefer not be "washed in public," but Herzfeld (2005:143) argues that "tact is not the issue" nor "the whole story: hegemony is the larger part of it." Acceding to demands that contentious questions should not be discussed by outsiders can support oppression of marginalized groups. He situates this argument in relation to the "hands-off" position in regard to political engagement by anthropologists: "First, its implications today generally strike us in retrospect as condescending: it expresses the tutelary power to safeguard the culture of exotic peoples because 'they' are presumed to be incapable of doing so. It also suggests a powerful impulse toward structural nostalgia in the form of preserving . . . the perfection of societies supposedly still untouched by the corrosive forces of modernity" (Herzfeld 2005:212). Is forbearance from criticizing the ways things are done among the people that you study, or even circumspection in how your criticism is presented, condescending? Does it deny our "hosts' wishes to be treated as moral equals" so that "such avoidance of criticism is not only condescending but inconsistent as well" (Herzfeld 2005:213)?

Herzfeld's argument is important. However, there are other nuances to be considered. One element of his argument against condescension is that "the defense of rebuffing foreign criticism as 'intervention in our internal affairs'—or, more fashionably, 'cultural imperialism'—identifies the majority (or otherwise stronger) population's perspective as that of 'the

nation'" (Herzfeld 2005:213). Even accepting that claims to sovereignty or even cultural relativism can be strategies by elites that neglect dissenting views within their society, this too casually dismisses cultural imperialism. In the nineteenth century, Britain was the foremost promoter of free trade not primarily because of greater understanding of theories of comparative advantage or from a more enlightened view of positive sum gains but because its naval and technological advantages ensured that it would benefit more from free trade than from imperialist carving up of the world. Similarly, complete openness in the transnational exchange of ideas and the rejection of any form of cultural protectionism would probably benefit the United States more than any other country. I do not conclude from this that anthropologists do not have a right to criticize actions or structures in another society. I accept Herzfeld's position that sometimes we have ethical obligations to criticize and engage politically, but this ethical position does not negate centuries of colonial oppression and the continued existence of global structural inequities. Given the legacy of arrogance and sanctimonious lectures to the locals about how they must change, it seems that even on instrumental grounds, our efforts to help may be more likely to bear positive fruit if we are conscious of the sensitivity of those we criticize and at the very least attempt to criticize tactfully. Hegemony may be a larger issue than tact, but some dimensions of hegemony are revealed in Westerners' lack of tact, and tact may serve an important role in allowing our criticism to be appreciated rather than rejected.

Criticizing Squatter Clearance and Corruption

I first felt compelled to offer social, as opposed to academic, criticism because of an ethical dilemma that emerged during my dissertation research on the demolition of a squatter settlement in Hong Kong. While studying the system of production and exchange of squatter dwellings, I discovered that some home purchases in the squatter area were strategic and driven by the desire to gain access to public housing in the event the squatter area was razed. Speculation over resettlement inflated the price of these illegal structures and in certain cases resulted in middle-class families buying a dwelling there or establishing a false residence through an arrangement with a squatter family. During my fieldwork (1982–1985), the population of squatters reached unprecedented numbers—above three-quarters of a million—at a time when illegal migration from China was high, and newspapers regularly referred to squatters as "queue jumpers" in the public housing system. I felt that I could not adequately describe the squatter economy without integrating analysis of the illegal squatter property market (Smart 1985, 1986), but I was worried that writing about it might be used to further stigmatize squatter residents as queue jumpers taking unfair advantage.

In dealing with this dilemma between my ethical commitments to intellectual honesty and to protecting those who had generously assisted my research, I was fortunate that there were regulatory changes in 1984 that made the former tricks impossible, thus reducing the danger of encouraging stigma. My answer to this dilemma was that in order to write responsibly about the "underside" of squatter housing, I had to show that breaking the rules was the product of a regulatory regime that almost necessitated such practices. Discrimination against those who had been resident in Hong Kong for less than seven years, and were thereby qualified only for very undesirable temporary housing (Smart and Chui 2006), threatened them with a serious financial loss and gave them an incentive to make arrangements with people who did not live in the squatter dwelling. These schemes resulted from the perverse and inequitable incentives of the regulatory regime rather than from the moral failings of the squatters. More generally, I emphasized the positive contributions of squatters in producing viable and vibrant communities and in contributing to the remarkable economic growth of postwar Hong Kong. Otherwise, my dissertation work concentrated much more on diagnosing the consequences of government policies and practices than on making explicit recommendations about what the government should do.

In later research with Josephine Smart on Hong Kong investment in small factories in China, I became aware of the importance of tact in both fieldwork practice and in writing about activities that were at least marginally illegal. Hong Kong petty capitalists were pioneers in investing in China after its initial openings to the capitalist world economy after 1978, and in a context of very poorly delineated property rights and other rules of the game, they developed coalitions with local social connections and local officials that "pushed the envelope" of what was legal, and they engaged in activities that could be interpreted as corrupt and exploitative of local labor and the environment (Smart and Lin 2007; Smart and Smart 1991, 1993). In this context, tactful performances were of great importance and were mobilized in the form of what is known as the art of *guanxi*, or social connections (Smart 1993; Yang 1994). As our key informants navigated this complex and risky environment, we realized that tactful performances were also a key element of our own fieldwork methods and influenced our writing about what we observed (Smart and Smart 1998). Our accounts of relationships between investors and officials could have been phrased in the normative language of denunciation of corruption and exploitation of workers—there was no shortage of such interpretations by journalists and activists. However, we felt that analyzing the operation of the transactional relationships and their emic understanding was a more useful contribution. In addition, explicit criticism of the Chinese government may endanger the chance for future field research, particularly if the critique is offered in a tactless fashion. This is one of the lessons of the Stephen Mosher affair, notorious among anthropologists working on China. Mosher was a Stanford anthropology doctoral student who angered the Chinese government by publishing photographs of forced abortions, and to add insult to

injury, he published them in a Taiwanese periodical. One result was the imposition of strong restrictions on anthropological research in rural China in the early 1980s, which convinced Josephine Smart and me that it would be safer to conduct our dissertation research in Hong Kong than it would be in China. This is not to say that anthropologists cannot offer social critique but simply to point out that tact and discretion may be crucial if one hopes to continue research there afterward. In contrast to some of the points raised about social critique and membership in a society, however, it is Chinese citizens who are generally at greater risk for criticism than foreign anthropologists.

Anthropology and Colonial Administration in Hong Kong

Anthropology may have less to apologize for in urban Hong Kong than in many colonies if only because the discipline was quite inconsequential. The New Territories, added by "unequal treaty" in 1898 for a 99-year lease and kept largely rural until the 1970s, were a different matter. For Allen Chun (2000), colonial policy in the New Territories attempted to administer society on the basis of local custom (Chun 2000: 16). They adopted a much greater degree of indirect rule than in the urban areas, the source of what James Hayes describes as "the great difference" between the two parts of the colony (Hayes 2006). Chun describes the experience of "late century British colonialism in Hong Kong as the realization in practice of a fundamental contradiction in the colonial state's effort to institutionalize the content of tradition using the methodology of a modern, disciplinary society" (Chun 2000:35). The ramifications of officially constructed "tradition" or "custom" in the administration of rural Hong Kong continue to the present. Merry and Stern (2004) have described how in the New Territories authorities refused to apply reforms of Chinese inheritance practices, which allowed equal inheritance among sons and daughters and which had been adopted in urban Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan; in doing so, the authorities "froze New Territories life in a mythic, imagined past" (395). This eventually produced a major confrontation in which village women allied with human rights groups and successfully changed the laws in 1994.

Colonial administration of urban Hong Kong took very different forms, although customary law still had an influence in marriage and kinship. The largest clashes about the reform of social practices have been centered in these domains, although questions of medical care and public health also generated important conflicts. The case of *mui tsai* will be used as an example. Footbinding and the banning of polygyny in the 1960s are other examples that could be considered if space permitted.

The controversy over *mui tsai* extended from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century and revolved around whether the transfer of female children from poor families to other households in exchange for a payment constituted slav-

ery (Pedersen 2001). The girl was required to provide household labor until the age of marriage and could not leave of her own volition before then. The Hong Kong government defended the practice against antislavery mobilization in Britain primarily on two grounds. First, the practice was presented as a long-standing Chinese custom that was distinct from slavery and had social merits. In 1921, the Secretary for Chinese Affairs argued that it benefited girls who would otherwise be left destitute or worse and that safeguards operated to ensure their welfare. The governor at that time opposed abolition or even strict forms of regulation because he feared that opposing the Chinese elites' views on this matter would alienate them and reduce the Hong Kong government's ability to govern Hong Kong (Ure 2007). In 1922, Winston Churchill, at that time secretary of state for the colonies, stated that "I am not prepared to go on defending this thing. . . . Put to the Governor my intention to state that no compulsion of any kind will be allowed to prevent these persons from quitting their employment at any time they like. I do not care a rap what the local consequences are. . . . You had better make that perfectly clear" (quoted in Ure 2007:27). Despite such strong messages, the controls adopted at that time were only modest regulations that were at best loosely implemented. Strong legislation only emerged 15 years later. Gavin Ure (2007) concludes that "The Hong Kong government's innate conservatism reflected that of the Chinese elites and its own long-standing and received wisdom that matters pertaining to Chinese tradition be best left alone" (71).

While anthropologists were not directly involved in the controversy, ideas about Chinese custom and tradition transmitted through the medium of China scholars (including early ethnographers) and their emphasis on the conservatism of Chinese tradition and the influence of training in Chinese language and culture for the Hong Kong government officers. These ideas of conservatism encouraged the use of the Chinese elite and the voluntary organizations that they operated for philanthropic purposes to help administer Hong Kong society while avoiding significant moves toward democratization (Carroll 2005; Sinn 1989). China scholarship tended to encourage noninterference in Chinese customs as long as they were not inconsistent with British interests, and they neglected voices for reform among the Chinese population. Does the anthropologically minded social critic side with the British missionaries who wished to free the *mui tsai* or the representatives of Chinese voluntary organizations in Hong Kong who argued that the practice provided for children who otherwise might suffer worse fates? Without attempting to adjudicate this particular issue, it highlights the consequences of engaging in social criticism from outside. If the officials had been right that heavy-handed intervention might exacerbate the unstable political situation in the 1920s, the results for the whole colony might have been considerable. Whether an early ouster of the imperialists from Hong Kong, certainly possible in an era when a general strike shut down the port and most of the economy for over a year, would have been

a "good thing" is similarly a complicated question given the trauma that the rest of China underwent for the succeeding decades.

Public Housing as Inevitable Colonial Benevolence

Alongside freedom (but not democracy) and the rule of law, the public provision of homes for millions of the Hong Kong Chinese was regularly presented as a hallmark of the positive nature of British colonialism. This form of discourse became particularly common in the decade-long transition to the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. Questioning the official narrative of how the colonial government embarked on the path to housing half of the population of Hong Kong thus potentially has substantial political stakes. It also provided an opportunity to engage in a variety of social criticism in the indirect form of using archival research to provide alternative interpretations of what produced the government's interventions into affordable housing and what light this sheds on colonial rule.

I became interested in the history of Hong Kong's public housing primarily out of curiosity. I found I could not explain the character of the squatter settlements without examining how public housing policy affected residents. The interaction also went the other way, because resistance to clearances and rehousing policies by squatters resulted in various changes in the public housing.

Although curiosity prompted my work, I realized that the practical stakes of housing policy in Hong Kong were immense. The supply of as much as half of all housing by direct government provision (currently just under 50%) in a colony that prided itself on adherence to laissez-faire economic principles is one of the key puzzles of Hong Kong's postwar development (Castells, Goh, and Kwok 1990). It also has broader significance because of the importance of accounts of Hong Kong's development and "economic miracle" that have been applauded by many neoliberal theorists, including Milton Friedman. Almost no aspect—social, political, or economic—of contemporary Hong Kong can be understood without consideration of the influence of public housing. Despite my realization that public housing had such consequences for Hong Kong's people (and indirectly, because of Hong Kong's role in facilitating the export-oriented "rise of China" since 1979, on the entire world), my motivations in undertaking archival work on the origins of public housing were primarily academic. One reason for this was precisely because of the high stakes: it seemed unlikely that any advice I offered for changing the housing system would be accepted or have any effect on a policy area already at the confluence of immense economic and political forces. Even if given the power to make changes, it would have been a major challenge to know how to proceed. For example, the public housing allocation system has been criticized for allowing tenants who became affluent to remain in public housing while poorer people wait

for years for a home. On the other hand, the absence of penalties against personal social mobility and the resultant social mix within housing estates has minimized the social stigma associated with living in public housing that is found so widely elsewhere, particularly in the United States. What policies should be adopted to resolve this dilemma? It is far from easy to resolve. Anthropological training hardly prepared me to offer clear and unequivocal advice on this or other issues where the implications for social justice are far from clear.

Reconsideration of the beginnings of the system might shed light on how Hong Kong's postwar path toward the expansion of public-housing provision had been initiated. In doing so, I also became aware of points at which other paths might have been taken, which in turn suggests contemporary options that had not received much attention. As Richard Harris (2004) states, "If we really want to understand why we live the way we do, we need to know the alternatives that have been supplanted, and why" (17). The complexity and significance of choices about housing and land development had become obscured by a dominant narrative about the origins of public housing in Hong Kong. I refer to this narrative as the "Shek Kip Mei myth," after the site of a huge fire on Christmas eve 1953 that has been taken as the point of origin of squatter resettlement and that begot the low-income public housing program and eventually the home ownership scheme and in the process changed everything about Hong Kong's society and urban form. In celebrating the golden jubilee of public housing in Hong Kong, the secretary for housing, planning, and lands described its beginnings in this way: "We built simple, low-cost shelters to a minimum standard to meet emergency needs resulting from a tragic Christmas night fire in 1953 in Shek Kip Mei" (Suen 2003:xvii).

Far from being "mere fictions" or errors, myths can be seen as part of "that small class of stories that possess both credibility and authority" (B. Lincoln, quoted in Schilbrack 2002: 8). Stories about the past provide understanding in the present and motivate personal and collective actions toward shaping the future. The Shek Kip Mei myth provides a powerful story of how a war-ravaged society beset by a flood of refugees, dreadful living conditions, and natural disasters took charge of its future, shaping its landscape with deliberation and compassion. Through these interventions, Hong Kong tried to elicit increased commitment from its residents, who were expected to reciprocate the beneficence of its rulers. Whether academics conclude that the resettlement program that started after the great fire on Christmas Eve 1953 should be explained by concern for the welfare of the fire victims or the badly housed population generally or how it cleared the ground for profitable private development or because it subsidized labor costs for the manufacturing boom, the core narrative of immediate response to a great disaster is generally not questioned. Nor is the inevitability of public housing as the only viable solution to the unmet demand for affordable housing doubted. The only issue was when and how the colonial gov-

ernment would step in and more recently whether they should step back out. One result of this is that another foundational myth of Hong Kong, firm adherence to laissez-faire or "positive noninterventionism," is preserved. If there were no viable alternatives to public provision of low-cost housing, then these principles were not compromised by this response to "market failure." As a consequence, the nature of Hong Kong's political economy need not be seriously reconsidered. One powerful myth helps to preserve another.

One possibility in relation to this mythical narrative would have been to offer a cultural critique of it. It is certainly insightful to deconstruct the story, to show the impact of dominant tropes such as the contrast between the danger, disease, filth, and chaos of the squatter settlements and the civilized order of European residential areas, or the obligations of the British to educate the Chinese in the proper ways of living and hygiene, using the new public housing as a school for teaching about the proper way to live and the obligations of citizenship (Ip 2004). This has been done to considerable effect in a number of studies. But it seems to me that a cultural critique does not possess the same potential as a realist study in which the adequacy of the dominant account is assessed in relation to the archival record. This was facilitated in this case by the remarkable frankness in the files that I explored. The question here is not whether the subaltern can speak but whether the colonial bureaucrat will speak (truthfully). He seems likely to if he is speaking confidentially among his peers, and the official minutes about responses to the squatter "problem" and the fires allowed fascinating access to such candid commentary.

Consider the following statements (Smart 2006:66). In 1949, the chief officer of the fire brigade proposed to spend a modest amount to lessen the serious fire risks in squatter areas. He stated that

> if an outbreak of Fire occurs in the Kowloon City Squatter area it will turn out to be one of the biggest Fire disasters on record. Nothing could be done to save or rescue the Thousands that are residing there. . . . If a large Fire does occur in this Squatter area as stated it will be nothing short of a tragedy and end up in a holocaust with a terrific loss of life. . . . To my mind the onus for the Tragedy will have to be borne by some one, as an explanation will be called for to explain what precautions were taken.

The deputy colonial secretary (ranked third in the Hong Kong official hierarchy) replied that "These shacks are entirely illegal structures and it is not up to Government to take measures for their protection. If a large number of them were burnt down we should probably have to take steps to assist the occupants in reprovisioning themselves, but we can hardly overlook the fact that the effect would be no bad thing politically" (Smart 2006:66). To be able to present a disturbing statement like this from archives may carry more weight than a critical deconstruction of published official texts about the history, as important as the latter are.

It was impossible for me to avoid a critical presentation of statements such as these in writing about them. Yet rather than emphasize my moral evaluation of the colonial mentality that could allow them, it appeared more useful to reconstruct the context in which it was possible to think in this manner and yet within a few years spend many millions of dollars on public housing for groups of people that were clearly in their lowest rank of priorities. I also discovered that other options, such as allowing the indigenous villagers of New Kowloon to build housing on their agricultural land, were not even considered. These villagers, who had the same treaty status as the rest of the New Territories villagers, were treated in much less equitable ways because of the proximity of their land to the urban areas. Thus, the findings of my archival inquiries provided opportunity to directly criticize the government of the day, but laying out the "facts" of the situation neglected in mainstream accounts made it possible to offer that criticism indirectly precisely because the injustices were so clearly laid out in the words of the decision makers.

In the preface to the book, I did feel an obligation to clarify its political implications because I was aware of alternative ways in which my own narrative could be framed, especially given the pressure that the public housing system had been under since 1997. I was concerned that one interpretation of the book might be that

> since there were alternatives to public provision of housing, . . . the expansion of the Housing Authority has been somehow duplicitous and recognition of this could provide political fuel for calls to dismantle it even more than has already been done. I would, however, like to suggest some rather different implications. It is that the beginnings of direct provision of multi-storey Resettlement housing involved the exercise of choice, an act of political will. While I have considerable reservations about how and why this was done, ultimately these choices allowed the colonial government to take control of the spatial and social development of Hong Kong, and have a considerable indirect impact on its economic development. The lesson is not that what has been done should be undone: it is that one of the roles of government is to make choices about the shape and direction of its development. If the contemporary Housing Authority is to be reinvented, as is probably inevitable, it should be done not because of the inevitable requirements of property markets, but because deliberate choices are made to improve the life and prospects for all Hong Kong's people. Preferably, this time the choices will be made, not by a small circle of elite officials distant from the people whose lives would be transformed by their decisions, nor by tacit collusion between government and powerful business tycoons, but with open and informed consultation with the people of this remarkable place. (Smart 2006:x)

This approach fits with the argument above about the desirability of tact when pointing out flaws. I was undermining a political myth that had become a significant element of the

social charter for the housing authority, an agency that despite its problems has helped millions of people. While I was in many ways inclined to let the story speak for itself, I was also concerned that it could be used in ways with which I would not want to be associated. So I became more direct and explicit but still avoided the temptation to tell people what should be done. Instead, I drew the relevant lesson that the history demonstrated the possibility and the desirability of the exercise of choice in the fundamental direction of development of a society.

Conclusion

While bad intentions were a major part of the colonial enterprise, even those who became involved with the best of intentions—even those fundamentally opposed to colonization in itself but hoping to ameliorate its effects—have demonstrably caused both deleterious outcomes and a residue of ill will from those being administered. We may be more enlightened now than we were in the past. It is also true that recommendations for the reform of flawed social arrangements by outsiders such as anthropologists are now usually recommendations rather than powerful projects that could be imposed in colonial contexts. However, the complexity of policy choices and the risks of unintended consequences are such that often the proper course is difficult to discern. Anthropologists may feel that their interventions in support of the exploited and disenfranchised are unlikely to have bad effects, and I presume that at least some of the academics involved in the design of earlier harmful structural adjustment programs also had good intentions. I personally would be less eager to offer advice if I believed that my recommendations would be put into effect in my own society. Reticence would seem to be even more relevant in offering advice about a society in which I do not permanently reside and thus in which I do not necessarily have to live with the consequences.

It might not simply be less arrogant and less offensive to offer social criticism against practices in other societies in more tactful and indirect ways, but ultimately it might also be more useful for the members of those societies. To engage one's energies in examining assumptions, to see what alternatives have been occluded by dominant narratives, to resurrect "forgotten obstacles and neglected forces" (Smart 1989)—these seem to be potentially very useful tasks by which the social critic from abroad can contribute to the reform of social institutions without necessarily adopting the voice of pronouncement on "What is to be done?" What can be hoped is that some of these efforts might be used by citizen activists in the service of progressive goals.

As the tentative tone of much of this article suggests, I am still far from decided about where anthropologists should stand on the question of being social critics of other societies. Certainly we have no shortage of things that should be changed at home, where engagement does not usually raise these kinds of concerns (although work with aboriginal

groups, for example, certainly may), but if we are to do research abroad, we also have obligations to the people we work with. How this issue should be resolved requires considerably greater analysis than is possible in a short article, including inquiry into appropriate issues in moral and ethical philosophy as well as social theory. However, rallying to the banner of engagement without considering the moral complexity of past interventions in the name of improving things is not good enough. Anthropologists need to deploy social criticism outside our own societies with considerable caution and with acknowledgment that the road to hell can be paved with good intentions. If we cannot confidently assert that our social analysis will not make things worse, then we should be very careful in suggesting what should be done. Being tactful might be a useful first step.

Acknowledgments

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