

Ethics and Dual-Identity Professionals

Addressing Anthropology in the Public Sector

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Of note in anthropology's recent ethics discussion is the extent to which, to paraphrase my CEAUSSIC colleague George Marcus, ethics is the language of disciplinary controversy. Present ethics controversies, in particular having to do with the security sector, conform to this observation insofar as we have used "ethics" as the primary discursive

to the future. To simplify, in this formulation anthropology is classical fieldwork or it is nothing, anthropologists go "to the field" to collect data and produce ethnographic narratives of fieldwork or they are not anthropologists, and ethnographers typically carry their field notes back to relatively autonomous universities for further enrichment and as members in good standing of the "intercommunicating cluster" of their peers, to borrow Margaret

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frame to define and defend disciplinary boundaries and to restore anthropological "matter out of place." Ethics, in a nutshell, tend to be shorthand for what we treat as the minimum and necessary sufficient identity of anthropology. In this way, if ethics debates help us come to terms more clearly with anthropology's distinctiveness as a particular sort of social science, and with its particular circumstances of practice at any given moment, then they have been worthwhile.

However, ethics debates also sometimes become rearguard actions, invested in the notion of a transhistorical core disciplinary identity as an academic moral order of sorts, and as consistent from the past, through the present,

Mead's term. Guild-like discussions of our own code of ethics as the one and only standard that need apply to the person deemed "professional anthropologist" have tended to follow this course.

Ethnography and the Code

A trend in successive revisions of the AAA Code of Ethics has been to narrow ethical concerns to equate "anthropological work" with "ethnographic work." Along with this we have built our code primarily around our ethnographic relationship with the "research subject." This relationship is important, but it is not the whole story, nor does it really help to enable what is in fact distinctive about ethnography. As UC Irvine's Center for Ethnography puts it,

"There is no single definition of ethnography or uniform practice of ethnographic method," and yet it continues to be widely practiced because it is creatively gener-

ative and because it is productively responsive to unpredictable and emergent social circumstances and change. Ethnography is not an insular practice, nor is it just our own, since ethnography is increasingly employed outside the university.

Our revised February 2009 code of ethics in fact significantly expands appreciation for a wider range of anthropological practice. However, despite noting other relevant codes from the likes of the Animal Behavior Society or the American Board of Forensic Examiners, the 2009 version remains essentially a gate keeper, addressing the ethics of our discipline as a stand-alone occupation. We would be well served to more clearly articulate our ethics with respect to a multidisciplinary context, including their relation to other ethical standards out there. Our code's preamble already observes that anthropologists are "members of many different communities," but we must also recognize that these communities compose more than just the discipline's various sub-fields. They include other professional, advocacy and activist contexts that are entirely beyond any rearguard definition of our own pursuits.

Balancing Multiple Identities

Beyond the academy professional anthropologists are rarely engaged simply in "doing anthropology." Their anthropological work is inextricable from a variety of other goals and professional contexts. But anthropology has been very slow to think seriously about the ethics of dual-identity professionals, despite the many available precedents. Medical doctors, for example, also work for the military. They are given the room to balance their job descriptions and the Hippocratic Oath. Mental health professionals work

for corporations, and lawyers work for just about everybody. Some social sciences, such as psychology, express greater comfort with professional dual-identity than we do. Unfortunately, at present our ethics conversation has not balanced the patrolling of our disciplinary boundaries with the varieties of ethical and legal



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requirements within which extra-academic anthropologists now routinely work.

The majority of anthropologists currently working in the security sector are not employed in the role of field worker. They are, instead, engaged with activities related to policy work, training and education, or function as analysts, as the AAA Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Communities (CEAUSSIC) outlined in its November 2007 report. When people engage in data collection in this sector, it most often takes the form of organizational study of the same institutions employing them. At the same time, as dual-identity professionals—at once anthropologists and consultants or civil servants—practicing anthropologists working in such environments have additional ethics guidelines and institutional review boards (IRBs) to negotiate from the military, the Department of Homeland Security, national laboratories, and other contexts. Our code of ethics makes no note of the ways these multiple ethical frameworks might intersect or overlap, and the implications of this.

Ethics and the Public Sector

In practice, dual-identity ethics are commonplace. Any research anthropologist working for the US government is held accountable to the human subjects "common rule" 45CFR46, issued by the Department of Health and Human Services in 1991. This rule lays out extensive steps for federally funded researchers working with "human subjects" to submit proposed research for evaluation by IRBs. Additionally, anthropologists working for the National Park Service, or any other agency

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that receives federal funding, must comply with 1990's Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. This stipulates a much more specific and extensive set of requirements to be met with respect to Native American "cultural items" than does the AAA code, and does not conceive of native peoples as "research subjects." These are but two examples. Anthropologists who work in the public sector could hardly be said to be groping around in the ethical dark, but our code of ethics does not complement these alternative guidelines so much as it competes with them.

The ethical standards of other intercommunicating clusters of which anthropologists form a part, and with whom we also communicate, are at present entirely outside the scope of consideration of our own disciplinary ethics. Our ethics remain insulated from the kinds of dual-identity relationships that anthropologists outside of (and increasingly within) the academy routinely confront. Perhaps our code of ethics needs to be more conversant with the varieties of ethical standards and processes that inform these other communities of practice. And perhaps we would be better served not to insist on its exclusive primacy at the expense of a broader extra-disciplinary ethics conversation. AAA's 2009 code views our ethics as "providing a framework, not an ironclad formula," which leaves the door open for us to begin to articulate our own disciplinary norms in ways more consequential for the diverse contexts of anthropological practice that exist today.

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Ethical Research across Power Divides

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A code of ethics for any field must be tailored to fit the world that its practitioners encounter. Today many anthropologists "study up" and "study through" to navigate the intricacies of society, politics, finance and policy. Building on Laura Nader's concept "studying up"—analyzing the powerful actors of complex societies—Cris Shore and Susan Wright describe "studying through" as tracing "policy connections between different organizational and everyday worlds even where actors in different sites do not know each other." Ethnographers who "study through" follow these policy connections, carrying out field research among the (multiple) actors and sites to which the connections take them. This approach, which many anthropologists today pursue, is ideally suited to studying much of the contemporary world—from global-local interactions to the new institutional fusions of state and private power that today govern many arenas of life. We need acknowledged methods and ethics that appreciate the challenges of working in and across diverse and dynamic field sites, not to mention across power divides.

I began my career doing fieldwork of a fairly traditional kind in an urban setting in 1980s Poland, examining how people mobilized their social networks to survive in an economy of shortage. Informal

studying how donors and recipients connected with each other via policy, politics, programs, organizations and networks. In this environment, characterized by often unequal financial, political and social relationships, did I have the same responsibility to donors (with the purse strings and presumably the power) as to aid recipients (presumably the disenfranchised)? If not, what were my responsibilities to each party, and how would that affect the relationships I formed and the work I published?

The first thing one learns in interviewing donor officials (in fact, most government officials) is that they are taught to deal with any nonofficial who wants information from them for potential publication by using the practices and ethics of journalism. Specifically, officials expect to establish ground rules with outside interviewers regarding how information acquired in an interview will be used. I responded to this expectation by adding to the anthropologist's standard self-presentation (that I am an anthropologist, with whom I am affiliated, my funding sources, and the ends for which information is gathered) practices and ethics adapted from journalism. At the start of each interview my "source" and I came to an agreement about whether the information provided would be "off the record" (used to advance the researcher's understanding or acquire other sources), "on background" (used without attribu-

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practices that ultimately moved the society in profoundly un-Communist directions were the focus of my research. The cornerstone ethical principle I affirmed in my work was that every anthropologist's first responsibility is to those whose lives and cultures we study. This seemed unproblematic until the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and I began to explore the world of Western aid and advisers that converged on the region thereafter.

Studying aid processes—which I did in the 1990s in Poland, and also in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Russia and Ukraine—meant

tion), or "on the record" (used with attribution).

Pursuing research in this way—within a well-established tradition that had clear expectations for the researcher and source—helped me clarify my own sense of what it meant to work across a power divide, and to publish writing critical of those from whom I sought information. The reactions by donor officials and organizations when I was critical of aid projects defied any notion of their disenfranchisement, and reemphasized the fact that they did not lack avenues to publicize

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counter-opinions or defend their policies.

In my current work, employing practices and ethics from journalism is just as crucial. My forthcoming book *Shadow Elite* deals with the privatization of official information, as manifested both in the players who have privatized it and in the system that enables them to do so. (One example of the latter is the increased contracting out of federal government functions in the United States.) In studying both the players and the system, I gleaned information through numerous interviews with individuals ranging from government and contractor officials to investigators and the players themselves—in addition, of course, to a wealth of published documents. It is difficult to imagine doing this work responsibly and effectively—or any research that studies up or studies through—without borrowing from journalism's modus operandi and concepts of ethical practice. To reflect the realities of today's anthropology, perhaps our ethics code should more directly acknowledge these interdisciplinary engagements.

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