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*The Applied Anthropologist* publishes peer-reviewed articles, commentaries, brief communications, field reports, and book reviews on a wide range of topics. The journal's focus is on cultural change and adaptation in the modern world. It explores how humans approach, analyze, and develop solutions to cultural, ecological, economic, and technological problems. The journal is supported and underwritten by the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. Guidelines for authors, electronic access to back issues, and further information about the society is available at [www.HPSfAA.wildapricot.org](http://www.HPSfAA.wildapricot.org). Membership information is available by contacting Dr. Merun Nasser at 303-449-0278 or at [merun@worldnet.att.net](mailto:merun@worldnet.att.net).

# The Applied Anthropologist

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## POINT-TO-POINT

PETER VAN ARSDALE



ANDREA AKERS

We are pleased to be able to present this first volume of *The Applied Anthropologist* under our editorship. A thirty-year record of publication is significant in any field, and with the changes that have been occurring with electronic media, it is doubly important that we keep pace. This is the first full-scale e-publication to be sponsored by the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology, and one of the first among peer-reviewed journals of anthropology.

Over the years work by (and about) many of the international leaders in applied anthropology and related social science disciplines has appeared in these pages: Meta Baba, John van Willigen, Robert Hackenberg, John Bodley, Michael Cernea, and Peter Kunstadter are representative. Equally important has been the work of individuals known nationally for their accomplishments: Muriel Crespi, George De Vos, David Fetterman, Tom Greaves, Tony Paredes, and Merrill Singer are representative.

Editors of *The Applied Anthropologist* and its predecessor, the *High Plains Applied Anthropologist*, have been particularly pleased to publish the work of researchers, field workers, and activists who are not often in the limelight, yet who have made stellar contributions behind-the-scenes, at the grassroots, or in the classroom. Many have been members of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology or other LPOs. Many work outside academia. Some have been members of groups traditionally marginalized or excluded from scientific discourse.

The present volume features the work of applied social scientists and activists who are clearly in the forefront. A complementarity of interests is seen as the articles by Pedro Oliveira and Howard Stein are compared. Both are looking at clinical anthropology through new lens; both rely upon their knowledge of psychology. A complementarity of interests also is seen as the articles by Mark Harvey and Arthur Scarritt are compared. Both are concerned with marginalized peoples and the racialized hierarchies that confront them; both are critical of neoliberalism. All four of these authors are empirically rigorous, as primarily qualitative methods are employed in their endeavors.

Commentaries and integrated sets of book reviews have been a long-standing feature of this journal. The materials included in this volume are exemplary. Riall Nolan tackles the issue of "buried bodies" in the field of development. Why haven't we, through institutions, been able to translate more of our research into meaningful changes? Whom do we tell? Julie Reyes tackles the issue of a "culture of ethics." How does this culture emerge institutionally, nurtured by social networks? How can its lessons better be applied by anthropologists? Through a recent book, Walter Littlemoon and Jane Ridgway address boarding school trauma in their recount of a remarkable Lakota life story; Larry Van Horn, Kathleen Sherman, and Kreg Ettenger offer insightful interpretations in turn.

Several colleagues served as peer reviewers for two or more of the articles and commentaries that appear in this volume, and we would like to express our profound thanks: Kreg Ettenger, Ph.D.; Joanne Moore, M.A.; Teresa Tellechea, Ph.D.; Amy Van Arsdale, Ph.D. Moore and Tellechea also serve as Associate Editors.

--Peter Van Arsdale, Editor-in-Chief

--Andrea Akers, Managing Editor



# The Applied Anthropologist

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CLINICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: APPLIED PARTICIPANT  
OBSERVATION AND THE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH  
PRACTITIONER MODEL

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

## ABSTRACT

In the field of medical anthropology, intersections between anthropology and mental health are more easily found in the work of psychotherapists and psychiatrists than clinical psychologists. Although clinical psychologists seem just as interested as other applied mental health professions in integrating "culture" into everyday practice, the experimental nature of clinical psychology, and in particular the applications of the Anglo-Saxon research-practitioner model of clinical psychology, seem to relegate ethnography to a secondary position. While other qualitative methodologies are gradually conquering a place in clinical psychology research, ethnography is still reluctantly engaged in the work of clinical psychology researchers. This article is the first of a series of explorations proposed by the author, based on "Community Psychiatry and Clinical Anthropology" (Jadhav, 2001). It proposes an idea of clinical anthropology as a particular interaction between the research-practitioner model of clinical psychology and everyday participant observation that can serve both research and practice in clinical psychology and applied medical anthropology.

**KEY WORDS:** participant observation, research practitioner, clinical psychology, clinical anthropology

Clinical psychology trainers and textbooks invariably talk about the scientist practitioner model as key to the values, competencies and contributions of the profession. The origins of the model are usually traced to the Boulder Conference on Graduate Education in Clinical Psychology in 1949 (Committee on Training in Clinical Psychology, 1947; Raimy, 1950; see also Benjamin and Baker, 2000). This conference developed a model of education and training rather than a model of professional practice. Simply put, it called for clinical psychologists to be trained both as scientists and as practitioners. But it gave relatively little consideration to the actual integration of science and practice in everyday clinical work (Shapiro, 2002:232).

In a piece suggestively entitled *Community Psychiatry and Clinical Anthropology*, Sushrut Jadhav, psychiatrist and medical anthropologist, uses a narrative account to compare experiences of clinical practice in London and Bangalore (Jadhav, 2001). Jadhav sets out to explore questions in the field of community psychiatry in Bangalore, India and London, UK, that puts in evidence continuities and discontinuities between professional and lay expertise. The data stem from clinical histories and interviews with peers.

The piece starts with an outpatient visit in Bangalore where Jadhav and his colleagues are on a journey to administer a depot injection to a psychotic patient. While some colleagues set off to look for the patient who had gone astray, the author stops in at the local shop. Here, Jadhav finds out that villagers have hidden the patient at

the site of the medical van. We are then transported to London, sixteen years later, where the author is working as a community psychiatrist in a deprived area of West London. While interviewing a young white-Briton man in a community setting, the patient tells Jadhav it is time for mental health professionals to tell the government what they want, rather than serving as its messenger. The patient informs Jadhav that it is jobs and financial support they need, not a psychiatric diagnosis that may jeopardize the chances of future employability even more. Bearing one particular clinical case in mind and reflecting on the diversity of the role of the clinician in Bangalore and London, his paper concludes with a set of critical questions for thinking about culturally sensitive clinical practice.

The present paper is the first of a series of explorations by the author on the intersection of medical anthropology and daily practice in clinical psychology feeding directly on the questions advanced by Jadhav around an idea of clinical anthropology (2001). Starting from one of the questions posed by the author, "What are the cultural variations in the relationship between patients and clinicians?", I will extend this question into a reflexive enquiry of how participant-observation as practiced by anthropologists, and participant-observation as described by clinical psychologists in the cognitive-behavioural therapy model, need to come together. Standard divisions must be set aside between formal research and everyday clinical practice.



Clarification of the relation between clinical psychology and culture is required at this stage. Although clinical psychologists seem just as interested in bringing “culture” into everyday clinical practice (Kazarian and Evans, 1998) intersections on medical anthropology literature and clinical psychology research seem to stem predominantly from the work of psychiatrists and psychotherapists (e.g. Davies, 2009; Krause, 1998, 2001; Jadhav, 2001, Lester, 1997, 2000; Littlewood and Dein, 2000).

In this paper, I advance several hypotheses for the current lack of integration between the two disciplines as well as some suggestions on how to move integration forward. First, I suggest that as a research practice, ethnographic-based work on medical anthropology may present a particular set of challenges for integration into mainstream clinical psychology research. Second, I suggest that standard divisions found inside clinical psychology between formal research practices and everyday clinical practice, materialised by the ever-growing pressures felt in relation with institutional ethics committees, may partially obfuscate the research component of participant observation that accompanies all forms of clinical practice. Third, by providing a brief auto-ethnographic exploration of questions stemming from my role as a clinician in a London-based Early Intervention service, herewith described as an integrating component of that practice, I suggest that participant observation as practised by anthropologists is a valid metaphor for imagining a better integration of science and practice in clinical psychology work.

## MODELS, METHODOLOGIES AND TRAINING

Although qualitative methods have been expanding in psychology and the social sciences in general (e.g., Hammersley, 1992), with psychologists gradually combining ethnographic methods and cognitive theory (Woods, 2010), clinical psychologists have yet to take to ethnography as a research method *per se*. To understand why, we must look into what the distinctive features of the research-practitioner model are and how it shapes the training of clinical psychologists. To my knowledge, despite the growing expansion of qualitative methodologies in clinical psychology research and training, one cannot complete a doctoral thesis in clinical psychology by using ethnography as the method of choice. An idea of evidence-based practice dictates that clinical psychologists should operate through a set of practices that are assessed by experimental procedures such as “randomized control trials,” often taken as the gold standard of clinical research and set against less “objective” methodologies (Sharkey and Larsen, 2005).

Related mental health fields, however, such as counseling psychology and social work, tend to utilize qualitative

methods more extensively than clinical psychology. A large component of the so-called “identity” of the field of clinical psychology is that it adheres more closely to the medical model than these other mental health disciplines, so clinical psychologists and their research colleagues tend to use quantitative methods more extensively. Quantitative methodology aligns more closely with an idea of psychology equated with forms of clinical practice stemming from the medical model.

Training in the research-practitioner model may encompass (and in countries like the UK, it invariably does) a division between learning to audit –(e.g., writing up clinical case studies) and clinical research *per se*. Pre-set distinctions between auditing, research and the writing up of individual case studies are not a constitutive part of ethnography *per se* or of the training of anthropologists in general. Ethnographically, the logic of research seems to work in reverse: an ethnographic piece can set itself simultaneously to accommodate a contextual description of a service (including individual case histories) and the wider aspects of socio-cultural enquiry (e.g., Larsen, 2004, 2007a, 2007b).

Hence, difficulties of translation between the two groups, or obstacles for greater assimilation of ethnographic-based work by clinical psychologists may derive from the way the two professional classes are taught to think differently of what is encompassed in the term “research.” In the clinical psychologists’ case, such divisions are further consolidated by a distinction acquired developmentally, that is, as a function of a training that asks of the trainee clinical psychologist to show proficiency in dividing between practices of auditing, research as practice, and clinical practice as something different from both. Here, matters conflate. Even if a clinical psychologist cannot still complete a doctoral piece by using ethnography on its own (as an independent meta-method) the idea of participant observation as a specific method is a recurring motif in cognitive-behavioural therapy.

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is the model of therapy with which clinical psychology is more often associated. Under the auspices of the evidence-based principle embodied by the research-practitioner model, CBT is what clinical psychologists are supposed to practice when working in a therapeutic capacity (Shapiro, 2002). Yet are CBT authors and anthropologists thinking similarly when evoking an idea of “participant observation”?

In a seminal text on cognitive therapy, extending the implications of the role of the cognitive therapist in applied practice, Safran and Segal openly address the role of the cognitive-therapist explicitly as a kind of “participant observer” (Safran and Segal, 1990: 80, 84, 144, 250). Only by taking the role of participant observer, we are told, “can the therapist pinpoint in greater detail the behaviours





and communications that create the pull the therapist experiences and explore the cognitive processes linked to the patient's interpersonal style" (*idem*: 80).

Participant observation in CBT literature, stemming from this work, seems to address a form of inquiry by which one comes to better grasp the patients' interpersonal scheme (e.g., Safran and Segal, 1990). Participant observation in anthropological literature, often taught through Spradley's seminal book (1980), has a much broader definition. It is the methodological toolkit by which anthropologists come to simultaneously engage in activities appropriate to the situation and observe the activities, people and physical aspects of the situation (Spradley, 1980:54). In so doing, participant observation in anthropology extends far beyond individual assessment of inter-personal factors to a broader assessment of the socio-cultural context of which patients and clinicians are part.

Bearing in mind the differences between the two kinds of participant-observation herewith described (which is the same as saying, the point where they conflate), I will start sketching a third question: "What kind of clinical cultures are we actively contributing to create, in new clinical models such as EIP, when the two kinds of participant-observation converge in daily practice?"

## INTERVENING EARLY

Early Intervention in Psychosis is a relatively new approach within the mental health paradigm. The Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre in Melbourne (EPPIC), which opened in 1996, provided the model for many of the Early Intervention teams that came after it. EIP specialist teams focus their work around early detection and treatment of the first episode of psychosis. The primary aim is to provide sustained care to service users throughout what is called the "critical period" (the few years following the onset of psychosis) and to work with the service-user towards the establishment of a "relapse-signature" that can help prevent or minimize future relapses (Birchwood and Jackson, 1998). Duration of untreated psychosis (DUP) is at the core of the model and a substantial argument for the implementation of EIP teams stems from the recognition of the negative impacts of delay in initiating treatment for younger people affected by psychotic disorder (e.g., Yung et al., 2003).

After a referral has been accepted, service-user involvement with an EIP team generally starts with a multidisciplinary assessment of mental state, risk factors and support needs. By and large, the approach focuses on medication with atypical anti-psychotics and an attempt to ensure sustained therapeutic engagement by shifting the discussion away from strict diagnosis to a broader, psycho-social view of the person. In this respect the role and the

skill of the case manager or care-coordinator are vital. The second phase in working with an EIP service-user tends to focus on mood monitoring, medication concordance, individual CBT-based therapy, psycho-education for care givers and co-construction of a multidisciplinary (MDT) health care plan. Clinical psychologists often take a dual role in EIP teams working both as psychologists/therapists and case managers, generally emphasizing either of the roles according to the specific needs of a particular client.

Within the context of EIP work, working as a psychologist on a West-London based team, I frequently engaged with clients who, soon after their first contact with the service, would question me or other professionals on ideas of CBT and EIP treatment which they had obtained through internet searches. Conversations on matters of psycho-education, including printed or online information about EIP, made it clear to me that across the board of professionals we did not have the same views on how to interpret psycho-educational material available to patients, let alone how to convey this information to patients. By and large, despite the "biopsychosocial" model we are all supposed to work with, my views were that my peers' interpretation of psycho-education were excessively medicalized, inasmuch as others felt that I tended to read psycho-education too "psychologically." As the result of these observations, it made sense to develop the practice of holding joint initial assessment meetings with the care-coordinator in order to assess more comprehensively the kind of knowledge that service users were encountering, its sources and its potential effects on their appraisal of their own situation. In time, this line of enquiry became "second nature" and ran in parallel with the standardized elements of a psychological assessment of psychosis.

By the time of initial psychological assessment, service users were frequently found to have been exposed to at least three sources of information: (a) information conveyed by previous teams and previous health professionals (e.g., general practitioner), (b) information conveyed by other members of the EIP team (family worker, consultant psychiatrist, care-coordinator or case manager and support/recovery worker), (c) information researched independently by service-users, generally obtained through internet searches via one of the more popular search engines.

As the result of these developments, all of the assessments conducted within this EIP team, from the general (multi-disciplinary) to the specific (CBT), came to incorporate an element of analysis of the knowledge that the service user had internalized through various sources (including internet access, psycho-educational leaflets or through direct verbal education from other professionals).

Qualitative literature that focuses on patient interpretation of explanatory frames of psychosis is often produced retrospectively, with the patient describing what they be-





lieve or have come to believe about psychosis “with hindsight” (Davidson, 2003; Larsen, 2007b, 2004). In conducting a literature review, I found no resources on patient interpretation of EIP psycho-educational materials at the point of entry to an EIP team. Drawing from anthropological ideas about online ethnography (Hine, 2000), I conducted an exploratory survey of internet material. The first aim of this survey was to try to imagine, through an experiment of online participant observation, what kind of meaning-making EIP information would offer itself as, for someone new to EIP. The second aim of this survey was to make better sense of how patients and professionals were processing online EIP psycho-educational material, something that I carried on assessing in everyday clinical practice.

## PSYCHOSIS ONLINE

Hence, the three online domains searched were selected through a practice criterion, as a function of the inter-cross of the three forms of participant observation so far mentioned: 1) participant observation focusing on ideas on EIP and CBT derived from initial contacts with patients; 2) participant observation focusing on observed, shared contacts between patient and other professionals; 3) participant observation on case discussions and MDT meetings. “Psychosis,” “Early Intervention in Psychosis,” and “Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy for Psychosis” were the three online domains selected for this survey. A total of forty-three online documents ( $N=43$ ) covering these three domains was gathered through searches using two of the most popular internet search engines (Google and Yahoo). An initial survey of data available online indicated fewer documents available on “CBT for psychosis” than either of the other two domains, and more documents available on general CBT than CBT for psychosis. It was therefore decided to include in the investigation documents on general CBT, but only when these documents incorporated at least some reference to the application of CBT to psychosis in the text. An indexing system was employed to label data extracts. Documents were coded by identifying letter(s) and number: *P*=document on Psychosis; *EIP*=document on Early Intervention in Psychosis; *T*=document on cognitive-behavioural therapy. Numbers were applied sequentially across each data source. Data pertaining to the three main domains was divided into segments and inter-crossed with a view toward identifying common themes running across the three domains.<sup>1</sup>

In trying to capture the common themes to this information, I tried as much as possible to look at it with the sense of familiar unfamiliarity that would characterize a patient at the point of entry with EIP. A reflexive double-hermeneutic exercise took place between practice and

online exploration. Over the process, I wrote down my hypotheses of what the common themes were and rewrote them when identifying something in my interpretation which sounded too much like the language of an “expert,” rather than the language of a patient at the point of entry in the EIP model.

The most striking theme emerging from the data was the repeated use of prevalence statistics as a major form of on-line psycho-education about psychosis. The use of statistics on prevalence of psychosis cuts across the three domains considered, yet it is particularly prevalent in web information on EIP. In EIP websites, information on prevalence generally constitutes the opening material for the psycho-education section of the website. The use of information on prevalence denotes a tension between presenting statistical facts in a way that avoids stigma (for example, addressing psychosis as a more common problem than people may think and one that cuts across different socio-economic and ethnic groups) while simultaneously validating psychosis as a “real” problem that needs special attention (i.e., raising awareness of psychosis):

### *Extract 1: EPPIC website/Factsheet*

Psychosis is most likely to occur in young adults and is quite common. Around 3 out of every 100 young people will experience a psychotic episode. Most make a full recovery from the experience (EIP32).

### *Extract 2: Care services Improvement Partnership/GP guidance leaflet “Emerging Psychosis & Young People – What you need to know”*

Psychosis is one of the most serious conditions that can affect a young person: suicide – 10% lifetime risk; usually within first 5 years; highest risk at first relapse. 88% end up with no job - a path to social exclusion. Its first appearance can be bewildering for an individual. As GPs we are often the first point of contact with a health professional. There is overwhelming evidence for the benefits of intervening early in the illness: suicide risk is halved; over 50% will secure a job; if caught very early, it is possible to delay or, better, prevent the onset of a disabling psychotic illness (EIP21).

### *Extract 3: PEPP website (Prevention and Early Intervention Program for Psychoses)*

Who is at risk?

Well over 1% of the population will develop a psychotic illness sometime in their lifetime. Young people (men age 16-25 and women 16-35) are at particularly high risk. The risk is further increased with positive family history of a similar condition, and illicit drug abuse





(including cannabis). An individual at risk can have the first episode triggered by even mild use of illicit drugs, excessive alcohol use, or stress. Individuals with all levels of intelligence and from all social backgrounds can be affected by psychosis (EIP22).

Turning from web information on Psychosis and CBT towards specific EIP websites, the emphasis of the material switches to the promotion of early detection. EIP websites deliberately target the cohort between late adolescence and earlier adulthood. In trying to meet the language of this generational group, it makes use of youth-oriented slogans on the meaning of psychosis:

**Extract 4: Fraser South/Early Psychosis Intervention Website**

Psychosis sucks!

Pendragon's story: In my opinion psychosis sucks! Some times I even dress myself in bags in subconscious fear of my disability taking control. Right now it's hard getting through the day to day events that roll through my head. Like the 'voices' that tell me to end my life. Even ones that tell me I'm no good, are getting worse. I still control them and continue taking my meds. It does get a little better with every new thing I accomplish. Going day to day is how I survive (...). I don't like change. Change scares me. I've never figured out why. I guess it's 'cause it brings about new energy. If you don't believe in energy it's alright. It's just something that I believe helps me get along with less struggle (EIP27).

Life stories like the one above are found in most EIP service websites. Life stories generally reflect the unexpected nature of psychosis and the stigma that goes with it: a recurring motif is the story of a service-user in their twenties or early thirties who starts by noticing some subtle changes in the world around them but decides to keep a secret of it until symptoms become too difficult to hide. Life stories work as a way of introducing awareness of early warning signs and overcoming feelings of shame and stigma that surround asking for specialized help. Hence, whereas general web information on psychosis tends to focus on symptoms at its critical stage, EIP web-information shifts the focus from symptoms to early signs:

**Extract 5: PEPP Website/psycho-educational leaflet**

Prodromal symptoms may include: depression and anxiety, suspiciousness, sleep disturbances, decline in functioning at school or work, poor attention and concentration, unusual perceptions, unusual beliefs and general peculiarities in behaviour, loss of energy and motivation, difficulties in thinking, social withdrawal and loss of interest (EIP 21).

**Extract 6: Rethink Website/Early Intervention**

The early warning signs of psychosis are vague and sometimes hardly noticeable. There may be changes in the way people describe their feelings, thoughts and perceptions (EIP17).

**Extract 7: EPPIC website/Factsheet 1**

The early signs may be vague and hardly noticeable. There may be changes in the way some people describe their feelings, thoughts and perceptions, which may be come more difficult over time (EIP32).

Of all the categories that underlie the model of psychosis offered on the internet, the "prodrome" (the first phase of a psychotic episode) remains the least explicit. On the one hand, most documents emphasize the importance of early detection and rate the duration of untreated psychosis (DUP) as one of the major contributory factors to minimising the long-term impact of psychosis, hence the importance of detection in the "prodromal" phase. On the other hand, material available on-line also alludes to the onset of the prodrome as hardly noticeable by service-users and closest relatives. In the final analysis, the overall message for service-users and care givers seems to be to: a) acknowledge something which, except in rare and dramatic cases, manifests itself in subtle ways and b) acknowledge something that, however subtle at the start, can become extremely hard to recover from if left untreated.

Another identified theme was the continuity and interchangeability of roles within an EIP team. For example, the role of the clinical psychologist and the role of the care-coordinator (sometimes called case manager) are presented as interchangeable insofar as the care-coordinator is typically portrayed as offering one-to-one "counselling" and the EIP clinical psychologist serving as the case manager. The blurring of these two roles is also extended to beliefs about how outcomes are achieved. Whereas both "EIP" and "CBT" data sources were found to make use of service-users' life stories to explain and define successful outcomes, "EIP" presented successful outcomes as part of an integrated package of care where what is therapeutic is not found in any discrete piece of intervention at a certain point in time (e.g., psychological therapy during the critical period), but is found in the multidisciplinary strength of multiple interventions combined:

**Extract 8, EPPIC website, Early Psychosis e-News 23**

Steve was in the early stage of recovery when he was referred to the ORYGEN Group Program by his case manager. He was experiencing derogatory auditory hallucinations for a major part of each day. The voices had interfered with his concentration at university and in





relationships to the extent that he had deferred his final semester of study, and was spending most of each day alone in his bedroom. The computer games he had previously spent a lot of his spare time playing were now too upsetting for him, because he had distressing ideas of reference to them.

Steve and I met to discuss the group program. The case manager and I had previously discussed groups as a way to support Steve to maintain day structure and social contact in a supportive environment, as he continued to experience positive symptoms. Steve presented as anxious and overwhelmed, and reported that he didn't want to come to groups, because people there would be unwell and that would make him uncomfortable. We agreed to revisit the idea of group attendance if he changed his mind (EIP 34).

Steve's story continues over another two pages. We are told that in the sequence of contacts with the case manager, Steve eventually joins a music group with other service-users. Within the EIP team, Steve received other interventions described as "medication, psycho-education, supportive psychotherapy and behavioural skills training." As a consequence, it is reported that Steve's auditory hallucinations decreased. We are informed that Steve and his case manager worked on breathing techniques and as a consequence, his social anxiety in the group also decreased. In time, Steve started to attend other groups. Throughout Steve's narrative of recovery, there is no mention at all of any particular form of psychological therapy (CBT or other) or psychological intervention provided by a clinical psychologist or another CBT trained professional. The outcome is finally described by a social worker involved in the case as a result of the multiple interventions combined and of the systemic liaison among the different professionals involved:

**Extract 9, EPPIC website, Early Psychosis e-News 23**

Key factors that facilitated Steve's recovery included:

- Setting clear goals for group participation;
- Flexibility of the group program to provide groups which catered to his strengths as well as supporting him through new challenges;
- All group workers being aware of Steve's goals;
- Regular liaison between group workers about his progress;
- Regular liaison between his case manager and group program keyworker;
- Case manager integration of knowledge about group participation into case management sessions;
- Steve's own recognition that group attendance would be a valuable tool for him in his recovery (EIP 34).

From the point of view of the potential service-user trying to learn about therapeutic approaches to psychosis such as EIP or specific psychological therapies, the information gathered leaves a gap in terms of the relationship between EIP and CBT. Web information on CBT is generally around "psychopathologies" with a focus on depression or anxiety. When psychosis is mentioned as an object of CBT treatment, it is generally afforded less detail and space than anxiety-based or depression-based disorders. When EIP web information mentions therapy, CBT for psychosis as a distinctive approach within therapy is hardly mentioned. In the few documents encountered on specific CBT for psychosis, the EIP approach is rarely mentioned while CBT is presented as an intervention in its own right with no immediate liaisons between professionals described as significant in terms of possible outcomes.

Is the virtual world of EIP a world of its own that should not be taken as a direct reflection of practice or is there a strong possibility that the gaps between the information found online mirror gaps in the connection between the different disciplines, and professionals, currently working in EIP?

**OBSERVING AND PARTICIPATING: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEFINITION OF CLINICAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

EIP is not above critiques on the potential evangelical aspects of it as a model (Pelosi and Birchwood, 2003). At present, the idea of a prodromal period (a latency or dormant period preceding a full blown first episode of psychosis) that needs to be identified as soon as possible, in order to promote a better recovery, is actively practiced through online psycho-education and direct contact with EIP professionals.

In a new model of clinical practice, EIP clinical research has affirmed its strength mainly through the use of quantitative randomized control trials, while still falling short in various forms of qualitative research. This makes the purposeful conflation of two forms of participant observation operating simultaneously (one focusing on the patient, one focusing on the larger clinical model of which patient and clinician are part) all the more necessary in daily clinical practice. Genuine ethnographic work focusing on the understanding of EIP online psycho-education, for patients at the point of entry in an EIP team, is absolutely germane at this point. Online information is abundantly "out there", shaping the realities we encounter in "offline" clinical practice, and being shaped by it in return. To circumvent this element is to circumvent the question of "what kind of variable are we" in the set of variables played between patient and professional in a model of intervention actively creating the realities it sets out to identify. I believe that the tension between identifying realities considered psycho-pathological and





contributing to create psycho-pathological realities by disseminating further information on psychosis, cannot be resolved. Yet the tension can be made clearer if participant observation as practiced by anthropologists is better integrated as a component of clinical psychology practice and research.

Further integration can be rendered systematic through an idea of ethnographic action-research, (Marcus and Tacchi, 2004). As with any other form of ethnographic action-research the example here described follows a particular cycle:

1. Planning research: comparing and contrasting different notions of the person circulating across professionals in everyday EIP practice;
2. Conducting research: comparing and contrasting different readings of psycho-educational material by different professionals in an EIP team and EIP service-users; gathering online psycho-educational material; finding ways of making aspects of EIP psycho-education “familiarily unfamiliar” in order to gain insight into the patients’ perspectives;
3. Analyzing data: e.g., undertaking an exploratory survey on EIP psycho-education from the imagined patients’ viewpoints;
4. Taking action: conducting joint assessments with other professionals with a view to exploring interpretations of psycho-education fed to the patients; increasing meetings of professionals with a view of promoting reflexivity in the team around differences found in how ideas of EIP are being acted upon across professionals of different disciplines.

As far as standard clinical psychology research is concerned, beyond the obvious difference of doing away with distinctions among auditing, research, and everyday clinical practice, this form of applied participant observation genuinely works as a cycle going from step 4) to step 1) with individual cases in mind. The flipside of this approach is that it often asks the clinical psychologist to renounce the position of CBT expert he or she is often called upon to embody, and assume a position closer to a systemic or cultural consultant. It privileges meaning over authority. In all aspects, an idea of ethnographic action-research brought to daily practice mirrors the pursuit of the core competencies associated to the research-practitioner model in clinical psychology, as mentioned by Shapiro:

1. Delivering assessment and intervention procedures in accordance with protocols;
2. Accessing and integrating scientific findings to inform healthcare decisions;
3. Framing and testing hypotheses that inform health care decisions;

4. Building and maintaining effective team work with other healthcare professions that supports the delivery of scientist-practitioner contributions;
5. Supplying research-based training and support to other health professions in the delivery of psychological care;
6. Contributing to practice research and development to improve the quality and effectiveness of psychological aspects of care (Shapiro, 2002: 234).

I finish the article by going back to the narrative with which I started. London and Bangalore, as substantially different cultural contexts, inevitably ask of the clinician all sorts of changes in terms of practice. Yet neither asks of the clinician a change in the basic methodological posture of a clinician who, like Jadhav and others (including myself), is both a researcher informed by anthropology and a mental health practitioner. For this kind of clinician, participant observation, understood in the broader sense of anthropology, invariably comes to inform the small acts of everyday clinical practice -- except that there is nothing small about these acts.

If participant observation, as an ongoing assessment of a larger context intermarrying practice, should be seen as lesser a form of research is a moot point. It may just help to close some of the gaps of the clinical psychology research-practitioner model as an idea that, in the words of Shapiro himself, “gave relatively little consideration to the actual integration of science and practice in everyday clinical work” (Shapiro, 2002:232). Further explorations will extend the critical questions advanced by Jadhav (2001) around an idea of clinical anthropology as a meeting point between medical anthropology and ideas stemming from the clinical psychology research-practitioner model.

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#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup>To facilitate the presentation of results, Early Intervention in Psychosis material is fully referenced in the text rather than in “References Cited.”

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POETRY OF APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY AS LIFE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT: SOME EXAMPLES FROM AMERICAN BIOMEDICINE

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## ABSTRACT

I argue that an applied anthropologist's poetry (and other art forms) can be used as a tool of ethnographic imagination, insight, empathy, understanding, interpretation, explanation, and action/ intervention in day-to-day collaborative work. Such poetry can be understood as an expression of the applied anthropologist's use of the self (countertransference) in consulting, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary teamwork, development projects, and the like. I further argue that the humanities (poetry, fiction, film, music, visual art, sculpture, etc.) can help to humanize technologically-oriented and productivity-driven physicians and their relationships with patients (and, by extension, all professional relationships) by enhancing the quality of physicians' experiences. I use three of my clinically-based poems to illustrate how this approach unfolds in bringing to life physicians' clinical work in a safe, non-judgmental learning context. I conclude with some suggestions for generalizing this approach more widely in the practice of applied anthropology.

**KEY WORDS:** medical education, self-reflection, residency training, clinical anthropology

"It is difficult to get the news from poems; yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there." (William Carlos Williams, "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower," In *Journey to Love*. New York: Random House, 1955.)

## INTRODUCTION: A METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION

This paper introduces a new tool or method an applied anthropologist can use to supplement more conventional ethnographic methods: the use of his or her own poetry (or other art form) that is stimulated in response to working with people on applied anthropological projects in healthcare settings. The goal of such an approach is to enhance the life quality of the practicing physician and, in turn, the quality of the physician's relationship with patients, the patients' family members, fellow healthcare professionals, and in fact the others who are part of the physician's network of relationships. I argue that, perhaps counterintuitively, the poetry of the applied medical ethnographer can contribute to *methodology*, and in turn to a deepening of relationships, data, explanations, and collaboration. I wish to emphasize from the outset that the central theme of this paper is not poetry per se, but on poetry as one among many possible manifestations of the applied ethnographer's use of self in collaborative work with physicians and other healthcare professionals.

The specific *cultural content* of this paper derives from my work for forty years as a clinical teacher with physicians at various stages of their training (medical students,

interns [first year of residency or apprenticeship], and residents [second and subsequent years of apprenticeship]), and with faculty physician colleagues. The three examples presented later in the paper are drawn from Family Medicine. However, if the proposed method is valid, it could be transposed from American (US) biomedical settings to virtually any applied project and context.

I first raise the question of why physicians could benefit from such life quality enhancement. The paper continues with a discussion of the use of the applied anthropologist's poetry as an extension of the disciplined use of the self on applied projects. I then present three poems and a discussion of each, to illustrate how this process is operationalized. Finally, the paper concludes with the question of the applicability of this approach in any applied anthropology relationship, team, or project.

## LIFE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT WITH PHYSICIANS: WHY THE NEED?

The reader might wonder why physician interns, residents, faculty, and community doctors *need* life quality enhancement in the first place. The popular American stereotype is that of "rich doctors" who, apart from their time in the outpatient and inpatient settings, live a life of luxury. This picture is far from true. Physicians constantly see, touch, and cope with those facets of life that most other Americans seek to avoid. Further the life of medical students (Shapiro 2009) and of apprentice and community physicians (Stein 1990; Hafferty 1998; Haidet and Stein



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2006) is not only one of dealing constantly with infirmity, death, decay, body fluids, uncertainty, and lack of control, but is also one that is often psychologically brutal, degrading, and dehumanizing. The current system of medical education contributes to if not creates the need for life quality enhancement among healthcare professionals. Johanna Shapiro succinctly describes the institutional, interpersonal, and inner world of physicians-in-training:

“Part of the socialization process in medicine often means that conversations about the heart of doctoring – the emotional demands of the profession triggered by overwork, stress, loss, uncertainty, suffering, and death – are rarely discussed. Even when they are addressed, physicians often do not feel they have permission within the profession to fully articulate their distress and must rely on routine formulations, depersonalization and distancing, or humor, forms that do not adequately speak to their real confusion and suffering. The result can be burnout, including emotional exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and depersonalization, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of personal accomplishment as well as a more existential diminution of values, dignity, spirit, and will, ‘an erosion of the human soul’ (last phrase as quoted in Malasch and Leiter 1997: 17).” (Shapiro 2010: 500).

A common adaptation medical students, interns, residents, and practicing physicians make is “ignoring, detaching from, and distancing from emotions” (Shapiro 2011:326). To these I would add unconscious defenses such as repression, dissociation, denial, splitting, and projection. The result is a combination of not feeling, not recognizing, and not expressing emotions, producing a kind of induced alexythymia (Shapiro 2011).

Clearly, what Fred Hafferty (1998) calls the “hidden curriculum,” and what I have called the “meta curriculum” (Stein 1990), are a different order of learning from the explicit curriculum. In fact the emotionally shaming and deadening experience of medical education ironically undermines the formal curriculum and espoused values of scientific curiosity and rigor, rationality and objectivity, compassion and empathy. As a result of psychological adaptation to the culture(s) of biomedicine, there is a significant deficit in the life quality of physician and physician trainee experiences.

The espoused value of empathy is especially important in doctor-patient communication, as will be demonstrated in this paper. It refers to the capacity for participating in another’s feelings and ideas, while still maintaining a boundary between self and other. Unfortunately, empathy is sabotaged in day-to-day clinical teaching relationships.

Certainly today all medical school curricula feature training in physician-patient communication. The long-dominant physician-, disease-, and technology-centered model has, at least officially, been supplemented if not supplanted by the patient-centered model, if not the even more recent relationship-centered model that encompasses all participants in the care of patients. The current behavioral medicine/mental health component of medical education increasingly encourages clinicians to share their experiences and feelings with colleagues and patients (e.g., in the Balint Groups present in many Family Medicine residencies).

In recent years the official accrediting bodies of American undergraduate (medical school), graduate (intern and residency), and discipline-specific (e.g., Family Medicine) medical education have emphasized the importance of the social and behavioral sciences in all phases of physician training. Likewise there has been a burgeoning of programs and courses in the medical humanities and biomedical healthcare ethics in medical schools and residency training programs. The problem, however, is that the emotionally valent “hidden” or “meta” curriculum noted earlier tends to subvert these ideals and formal curricula in the day-to-day relationships throughout the long apprenticeship phase of clinical training.

Increasingly, medical training and corporate-based medical practice press physicians to see larger numbers of patients in ever-shorter periods of time. The industrial language of “production,” “production reports,” and “productivity” crowds out the humanity of physician and patient alike. Further, the electronic medical/health record (EMR/EHR) is often enlisted in the service of the industrialization of medicine, leading to the truncation of imagination and relationship into ever-more simplified clinical stories, protocols, disease codes, and check-lists. These contribute to the deterioration of physicians’ life quality.

## METHODOLOGY, THEORY, AND RATIONALE

How can an applied anthropologist address and attempt to reduce this deficit? Let me place the question in a broad context. Historically the ideological objective/subjective divide has long characterized and plagued the natural, social, and clinical sciences. C.P. Snow explored the history and consequences of this chasm in his 1959 Rede Lectures, *The Two Cultures*. By contrast, I argue that (1) what we often disparagingly call observer/researcher “subjectivity” can in fact provide crucial clinical/scientific data that enhance rather than detract from what we call “objectivity,” and that (2) all knowledge is “personal knowledge” (Polanyi 1974) infused with values (Bronowski 1956). Following the line of thought from Kant to Freud and Devereux (1967), I argue that all knowledge of others



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and of the external world is mediated by the self of the observer/researcher/clinician. The answer to the question, "Where are the data we seek?", becomes at once internal, between, and outside. Paradoxically, what Erik Erikson (1964: 53) called "disciplined subjectivity" becomes a research tool of greater, rather than necessarily diminished and distorted, knowledge of others.

Pursuing this perspective, I "use" my own clinically-based poetry as a guide not only to my own personal internal world, but also to the world of physicians, patients, and families via this internal world stimulated by my relationship with these others. Poetry, as well as the other arts, then can become a vital research tool of the observer/researcher/clinician. Epistemologically, this poetry is a distillation and condensation of experience into metaphor. It also constitutes a kind of analysis, albeit in non-linear form. Later I give several examples of my clinical poetry, and my use of it in clinical teaching, to illustrate this process.

This would seem to give some credence to the admittedly controversial position of English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in his 1821 essay, "Defence of Poetry," in which he proposed that "[P]oetry is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred." If not the singular "centre and circumference" of all knowledge, then poetry can at least be construed to be a different and complementary way of knowing – and contributing to knowing – what Octavio Paz called "the other voice" (Paz 1991).

This would in turn offer a new perspective on the epigram from William Carlos Williams that prefaces this essay: "It is difficult to get the news from poems; yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there" (1955). Poetry, at least some poetry, can indeed provide ethnographic "news" (data) – knowledge of reality – but it is a source of ethnographic "news" that differs from the standard. What is found in poetry is in fact indispensable knowledge and wisdom to help us construct a more comprehensive picture of cultural reality. If I may rephrase this point in the at-times complicated vocabulary of our field: Greater access in oneself to the polyvocality of the (applied) ethnographer is an instrument for understanding more deeply the polyvocality of the informant(s)/team member/colleagues – and for responding to it in the service of more mutually comprehending collaboration and project enhancement. Thus this approach, if valid, should yield enhancement of life quality to individuals, groups, and the tasks themselves, through personal and group insights facilitated by the use of the ethnographer's poetry.

## HOW WE UNDERSTAND OTHERS AND HELP OTHERS TO FEEL UNDERSTOOD

Let me further situate the ethnographer's poetry in an

applied clinical context. What is the relationship between (1) the self of the applied anthropologist, (2) the people with whom he/she is working on some project, and (3) the nature or the problem or task they are addressing? The conventional anthropological answer is a caution, a warning: "Beware of the anthropologist's self and its biases" (similar to Freud's admonition against countertransference in the therapist). Here, the goal of self-reflection is vigilance and subtraction. While partly true, it is an incomplete statement.

For the self of the applied anthropologist is *also* the ultimate instrument of perception, observation, interpretation, explanation, understanding, and collaboration (Devereux 1967; La Barre 1978; Boyer 1999; Ogden 1989). Operationalized, this means that the emotional impact of "the data" upon the applied ethnographer in turn becomes part of, and further generates, cultural data. Stated differently, looking "inward" is a means of more clearly looking "outward." In practice, how does one do this? It is a matter of attending to one's own thoughts, daydreams, fantasies, images, and bodily sensation *while* one is attending to another person or to a group of people. The poem, as a form of understanding or comprehension, emerges from this dual (dialectical) attentiveness.

Here, the applied anthropologist's role is less exclusively "doing" as it is also a way of *being* in relationship with others and being attuned to one's inner resonances with that relationship. The anthropologist is thus both witness and collaborator, and the poem generated in the anthropologist is a way of bearing witness, whatever else it may also be.

John Van Maanen writes that the ethnographer represents "the social reality of others through the analysis of one's own experience" (1988: ix). The applied ethnographer further gives voice to and interprets the experience of others in part by reflecting upon and interpreting self experience. He/she often tells them what they already know but had not consciously thought about and put into words.

Through empathy, the applied ethnographer reflects upon oneself as if he/she were the other. Beyond observing and interviewing others, one *imagines* them as well. It is as though the applied ethnographer helps to create or expand mental space at once in oneself, in those with whom one is working, and in the relational region between them.

For me, writing and using poetry in my work with physicians, is simply one more facet or instrument of on-going participant observation fieldwork in our working relationship on a project or task. Through my clinical poems, I try to process and put into words the thoughts, emotions, fantasies, anxieties, conflicts, and values of physicians, so that they may in turn take them in and reflect on them. This mental process of self-reflection can be visualized as an ever-



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expanding spiral, where reflection on the part of one member of the relationship spawns further reflection on the part of the other. (Ideas in the previous three paragraphs are indebted to email conversations with Carrie M. Duncan and Michael A. Diamond.)

I am arguing, then, that poems by the ethnographer generated "in the field" are not extraneous or a distraction, but constitute crucial data about relationships with others, and about the group being studied/consulted with/helped (cf. Boyer 1999). Poetry can be understood as "reflective data," as a product of mindfulness. The applied anthropologist reflects internally upon the conscious and unconscious resonance between self and work with others, and in the process learns something simultaneously about self, others, and his/her relationship with them. Poetry is thus one example of the use of the applied anthropologist's self in collaborative work. As such, this poetry is both art and science. I have most recently addressed this process in *Insight and Imagination* (Stein 2007a).

Before I present three examples of this process, let me try to evoke how I think this process takes place in my clinical teaching of Family Medicine residents. To put it rather formulaistically, how do I get from the "story-in" phase (where I take in the physician's story) to the "poem-out" phase (where I am moved to write a poem), and later to its use by the physician, the group, or myself? To begin with, I have an experience – say, a conversation with a physician about a patient, participation in a case conference or a physician's lecture presentation, or even recognition of a recurrent theme from living in Family Medicine. I then both consciously and unconsciously mull over the experience, sometimes for a few hours, sometimes for months, even years. I allow myself, so to speak, to resonate emotionally with both the person or group, and the subject matter on which we are working.

In other words, I take in, ingest, the story and the relationship with the person or group with whom I am interacting. To continue the metaphor: I then both consciously and unconsciously digest and metabolize the material I have taken in. It interacts with my empathies, sensibilities, interpretive skills, emotions, personal history, and the history of my relationship with this person or group. Sometimes from this mulling-over emerges a poem. Ethnographically, the poem is a product of immersion, relationship, and my inner processing. In turn the poem then becomes new data about the relationship and about the person(s) with whom I am interacting. It is a distillation or condensation of this experience. It literally grew out of their experience, their sharing it with me, and my reflection upon it, so that when I give it back to them in the form of a poem, it is both theirs and mine – ours.

Further, when offered back to the individual or group whose information and relationship gave rise to it, this poem produces further insights, understandings, emotions, and perspectives that the recipients take in and process, and in turn ideally leads to a greater sense of well-being in the recipients. This process enhances the quality of life of the physicians with whom I consult and whom I teach. They feel heard, understood, attended to at a deep emotional level. Their anxiety thus contained and processed, they can listen and interact more empathically with their patients and others.

I put their inchoate – hitherto unthought and unfelt – feelings and words are put into compelling metaphors, images, and language. They recognize themselves in them. Moreover, they may in turn develop additional insights, awareness, and compassion, once their stories are returned to them. They also appreciate knowing that I will share (anonymously) their stories and the poems with others, that their experiences will benefit other physicians.

I now turn from theory and method to three poems that came into being in applied anthropological situations in healthcare. They will be used to both illustrate and test the approach I have thus far taken.

## THREE POEMS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Why We're Here

Change accrues like ice  
Wraps itself around  
Tree limbs and branches  
Until they sag.  
Some break from the strain;  
Others somehow hold.  
New rules, new routines,  
New procedures, new technology –  
Just when you've mastered one change,  
Another comes along like an ambush.  
After a while, it's almost easy  
To forget why we're here:  
To care for sick folks –  
For a lot of the poorest ones,  
We're the end of the line.  
Sometimes we have to remember  
To remember, that what we're here for  
Is just to do the right thing –  
That stays the same.

When I wrote this poem, I hoped that it would strike a "responsive chord" among physicians I knew who were reeling with change and constantly re-adapting to it. It was as if there now was *only* change, and no "base line" to build upon. I could not know how much the poem would resonate



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with physicians beyond my personal circle. I originally wrote this poem as a Christmas 2007 gift to the members of the Enid Family Medicine Clinic, Enid, Oklahoma, a rural family medicine residency training site where I had been teaching for thirty years. I had long admired the medical, nursing, and administrative staff for their dedication to caring for sick people in rural Oklahoma. Their devotion inspired me. In part, I identified with them, and reflection upon that identification provided me insight into the emotional landscape of their work-world. In this poem, I imagined myself as one of the clinic personnel, and projected what the workplace experience might be like. The physicians in the Enid program care for patients both in the outpatient/ambulatory clinic and in the hospitals.

This poem was first published in the fall of 2008 in *Blood and Thunder: Musings on the Art of Medicine*, a medical humanities annual of the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine, Oklahoma City. Almost immediately thereafter it was included in the new issue of *OU Medicine*, the official publication of OU Physicians, Oklahoma's largest physician group (Stein 2008 a&b). I felt at once surprised, honored, and understood. They incorporated my poem about their world into their world, and it became an expression of their voice as well as mine. My voice helped to give them voice. It articulated thoughts they might have not yet put into words.

I soon realized that the recognition was mutual. Several physician colleagues told me that they "saw themselves" in the poem, that they felt understood. They expressed their appreciation for my "finding" and recognizing them in their world and understanding them. They said that I accurately depicted their plight, that I understood why it was increasingly difficult for them to live up to their ideals as professionals whose main purpose is to take care of sick people. This same response occurs when I read the poem to and with physicians in other medical settings.

American physicians feel beset by relentless change – which includes constant software updating of their electronic medical records, and new communication technology such as the availability of clinical information on hand-held smart phones. With the technological changes come the demands of increased "productivity" (seeing more patients in less time, bringing in more income). As a result they feel dehumanized by their own organizations. "Taylorism" (named for Frederick Winslow Taylor and the "principles of scientific management" he introduced to American industry early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and assembly-line thinking has industrialized medicine, and in turn has largely deprofessionalized medical practice. Through the poem, physicians appreciate that their situation, anxiety, demoralization, and trap are recognized and heard. They feel that poet has empathy for them. They begin to reflect on their situation – to think

about it – and feel somewhat less isolated. The poem helps them to reaffirm their priorities, and to give words to how difficult it often is for them to reconcile professional ideals with corporate demands.

With poems such as this, I often receive the comment from physicians that its discussion provides "a completely different perspective" and "helps us to step back and put patient care into context/big picture, something most of us need to do more of."

## 2. Appointment at the Doctor's

She tries to hold her life together  
With baling wire and duct tape.  
Sometimes it stays, other times  
It unravels and breaks apart.  
She and her mother – a grocery store  
Cashier and a housekeeper –  
Are the sole providers.  
They can't afford a car,  
And get around town by asking  
Relatives for rides and taking the city bus.

It is a blustery winter day;  
Her youngest of three kids  
Is sick with high fever, cough,  
Aches, kept her up all night.  
She called the doctor's office  
In early morning and was worked in  
Their schedule today. Her mom  
Stayed home and watched  
The two other kids. She bundled  
Up her little son and walked  
To the first bus stop. They waited.  
The bus was late – like it was sometimes  
Early, you could never count  
On the schedule. Then there was  
The transfer, and waiting for  
The second bus. At last they walked  
From the bus stop to the doctor's  
Office, more than an hour late  
For their appointment. The receptionist  
Scolded her for being late; so did  
The nurse after her. They called her  
Difficult, unreliable, inconsiderate.  
Didn't she understand what a schedule is for?  
Someone in the back of the clinic  
– a doctor, a nurse? –  
Overheard the clamor, and said,  
"Let them stay. We'll work them in.  
You never know what some people  
Have to go through to get here."



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This second poem was inspired by the confluence of many events, people, and roles into one recurrent situation. It is about the lives of patients and their families that physicians do not see, often do not think of, lives often quite opaque to the outpatient clinic or hospital. It is about the occasional absence of compassion and empathy on the part of some (e.g., receptionists, nurses, in “the front” of the outpatient clinic), and the presence of compassion and empathy on the part of others (e.g., doctors and nurses in “the back” of the clinic, where examination rooms are located and where medical care takes place). It is also about physicians and nurses realizing, through the poem, that they sometimes “bend the rules” of the clinic to accommodate patients’ very different realities. The poem affirms their compassion. As far as it goes, this is true. But much is different from what it seems.

When I work in Family Medicine departments and clinics as clinical teacher and ethnographer, I listen to stories told by everyone. I try to understand and experience each viewpoint. For instance, if receptionists are occasionally brusque and sharp toward patients, in a way they are also “set up to fail.” Receptionists are often seen by physicians and nurses as villains, e.g., people who do not schedule enough patients, or too many; people who put phone calls through to “the back” when they should “take care” of them themselves; people who are abrupt and rude with patients. Receptionists often feel that they can do nothing right. They think they are following or enforcing rules, only to be told that they are violating them. They have much responsibility but no power.

They are literally in the middle. They are “the front line” – a military term – at the boundary between the outside world and the medical/ scientific world. They are both gate and gatekeeper. When I give poems such as this to receptionists, they come to see themselves as others see them, and tell me further stories. They come to better understand their situation – the pressures and constraints of the job – and to feel understood, acknowledged as persons, not mere functions.

Both physicians and receptionists come to “see themselves” and their situations in this poem, and begin to wonder whether it is possible to have a clinic where “heroes” (in this instance, physicians and nurses) do not presuppose “villains” (in this instance, receptionists). Physicians begin to wonder whether it is possible that there is enough empathy to go around to include everyone.

One physician friend read the poem after I told him that I had handed copies of the poem to the receptionists. At first he humorously and defensively remarked that I was fomenting a rebellion, and then said that he realized the multiple demands he and other clinicians in the clinic put on

receptionists who had no power of their own in return. He said it gave him something to think about. Several physicians said that the scenario in the poem got them to thinking about situations they had taken for just-the-way-life-is for many of their patients.

A Latina American physician who had grown up very poor, told me in a tearful voice that my poem had depicted the real world of her childhood – a world she shared with many of our patients, and one she could address in patient care. Many physicians who read the poem told me and others in their discussion group that they saw the clinical world differently now, at least for a time. I felt affirmed in turn that the poem was emotionally and organizationally useful.

### 3. Christmas Eve in the Hospital

Christmas Eve, sometime after midnight,  
A young Mexican woman and her baby boy  
Enter the hospital ED. \* A pediatric intern  
Is on duty, her turn to work the ED.  
She imagines home, her husband,  
Their baby, their tree.

She examines the sick baby boy,  
Starts preparing paperwork  
To admit him to the hospital.  
Her supervising physician  
Interrupts her sharply:  
“We’re on divert, we’re full,  
No room tonight – send her  
To another hospital.”  
“How can we do that!”  
The intern protests in horror,  
But to no avail. All she can do is to  
Tell the mother in halting Spanish,  
“We’re sorry, but you’ll have to try  
The hospital across town.  
I’ll call to see if there’s room.”

Ten years later, another Christmas Eve,  
This time she is surrounded by family.  
Images of that long-ago Christmas Eve  
Percolate up, as if it were  
Happening again today,  
Unfinished with her.  
It is like this every year.

\* ED is a hospital emergency department, formerly called ER, emergency room

# The Applied Anthropologist



HOWARD F. STEIN



Poetry of Applied Anthropology...

This poem draws upon a story that a pediatrician told me and a group of other healthcare professionals many years ago – a story she needed to tell and retell, a story she needed to be heard (contained, witnessed). It is a harrowing story, a tale of trauma, as much for the physician as for the baby and his mother – though traumatic in a different way. The physician yearns to be understood and to somehow find rest – salvation – from the haunting. The poem is about stories within stories, about how a clinical story that is troubling enough on its own, becomes catastrophic and unthinkable because it has cosmic and religious significance. The story and the poem are also about outsidership – the ethnicity of the mother and child, the resident physician who was unable to live up to her calling (“vocation”) as a physician and as a Christian.

The clinical case does not so much resemble as enact, relive, the Christmas drama of the itinerant couple of Joseph and Mary looking for shelter on the eve of the birth of the Christ Child. In the Christmas myth, the innkeeper who had no room in his inn, could at least provide them a barn, a manger with straw. The physician did not even have that consolation, that compromise, for the mother and her sick baby. She was compelled to send them across town to an unknown fate. As a resident, a trainee, she did not have the authority or power to make an exception to the rule, to improvise a temporary hospital “manger” for the sick baby. Physicians are trained to control, to expect to take charge, but she could do neither.

To compound the situation, hospitals are fraught with patients' and families' expectations of magic and miracle around Christmas. If ever biomedicine were more myth and rite than science, it was now, the eve of the birth of the Savior and of salvation. I have written about this in another poem (Stein 2006). In the present story and poem, the physician was helpless to save the baby, and by implication (via projective identification), turned away Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. She felt devastated. Her clinical deed was intolerable, unimaginable, *unforgivable*. Her tearful recounting of the story to a group of fellow medical practitioners in January, not long after Christmas, gave her a measure of relief (guilt, shame, remorse, anxiety), but I am certain that it did not resolve her vortex of emotions. She felt grateful for others to have heard the story. She would not be quite as alone.

As for the others, the listeners, they were able to find themselves in her, identify with her, simultaneously as clinicians and as Christians of many denominations. I was also one of the listeners, who, although neither a physician nor a Christian, was immersed and steeped in the worlds of both. Her telling of the story moved me to tears, and eventually to write a poem with which many physicians would

identify – and then tell stories of their own. I had been a witness to the telling of a cosmic, not merely medical, tragedy. I knew that I had to record and preserve it, to give it voice. The poem represents my attempt to document that moment.

The poem would help later generations of physicians to emotionally (re-)connect to their lives and practices during the Christmas season. They recognize themselves in the poem that recognizes one of them. They would say to me, in so many words, “That could have been me.” Further, the poem, and our discussion of it, becomes a point of departure for sharing their own experiences and stories about the practice of medicine during Christmas and other emotionally-laden times of the year.

## CONCLUSIONS AND BEYOND

In this paper I have attempted to explicate a method to help improve the life quality of physicians – those with whom I work, and beyond. I have tried to show how what occurs within me emotionally as I work as an applied anthropologist with physicians is not entirely my own property, but is the product of my relationship and collaboration with them. Although at one level the poetry is “mine,” at another level it constitutes “them-in-me,” or “ours.” After I have written a poem, I often use it in working with the people with whom the poem emerged. Alternately, I also try to use it with a different “ours,” in a teacher-physician relationship that may be remote in time and space from the original situation and relationship that prompted the poem. Here poetry is simultaneously a tool of research, reflection, and collaboration.

Through verbal feedback from Family Medicine interns, residents, and faculty, I infer that this approach enhances their own life quality, and in turn, helps them to have a more empathic, compassionate, and self-reflective relationship with patients. Impressionistically, I suggest that this applied approach also helps physicians to understand their patients' situations – and to *want* to understand them. It helps to create mental space, so to speak, within the physician and in the physician-patient relationship. Put differently, perhaps my empathy for the emotional life of physicians becomes transposed into their empathy for the life experiences of their patients.

I believe that the approach offered here complements and enhances standard ethnographic methods in applied medical anthropology and in applied anthropology beyond it. It is an approach based on the internal processing of the applied anthropologist's experience in day-to-day collaboration. Such an approach is only possible by anthropological immersion in the group relationships around the task or project. Beyond individual life quality enhancement, this





approach enhances group relationships, morale, and task focus. Put differently, group life quality enhancement leads to project enhancement. A poem I might write mediates this process: the poem that is first prompted by group insights, conflicts, and metaphors, in turn helps to create a space in the group process for new, different perspectives, and sometimes leads to unthought-of solutions.

This process is akin to (1) my taking a photograph of them with my camera; (2) sharing the photograph with them and having a discussion about it; (3) offering the camera to them, resulting in their own photograph; which (4) they in turn share and discuss (I owe this metaphor to one of the reviewers of this manuscript.). The process becomes recursive, even a spiral of insights and increased empathy.

I wish to conclude by further individualizing and contextualizing this approach: for my main point is not so much the poetry of the applied anthropologist, but access to the self and uses of the self as one of the applied anthropologist's most valuable instruments of collaboration on a project. (For parallels of this approach with Donald Winnicott's "squiggle game" in psychoanalytic therapy with children, see Winnicott 1971; Stein 2007b). Other applied anthropologists may find writing a short story or novel, making a photograph or video, writing or performing music, or painting or drawing a picture, to be his or her preferred medium of discovery and representation. There is nothing unique or obligatory about poetry per se; it just happened to be my own idiom. Poetry is only one vehicle or instrument among many possible ones. The choice of mode is a matter of temperament, relationship, experience, and setting.

Finally, there are two complementary uses of the applied anthropologist's poem or other medium: (1) as a tool of one's own insight into people with whom one is working on a collaborative project (both those people who are a part of the "professional" team, and those who are a part of the so-called "indigenous" team); and (2) as a tool that itself is given to and shared with the other team members, and potentially becomes a part of the relationship, conversation, and work of the group. In either case, it is my hope that the approach presented in this paper will both (1) deepen the relationship among applied anthropologists and those with whom he or she is working, and (2) contribute to the quality of the project, the product, and the lives of all participants.

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# The Applied Anthropologist

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WELFARE REFORM AND HOUSEHOLD SURVIVAL IN A  
TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITY: FINDINGS FROM THE RIO  
GRANDE VALLEY, TEXAS

MARK HARVEY

## ABSTRACT

During the 1990s the U.S. experienced unprecedented levels of immigration from Latin America accompanied by the “feminization” of migration and significant growth in “transnational” communities. In 1996 the federal government passed welfare “reform,” significantly restricting immigrant access to public assistance. In this paper I present data from interviews with 62 families at the Texas-Mexico border to analyze how this affected household survival strategies. The findings indicate that membership in a transnational community strongly conditions survival strategies and the impacts of reform on them. I argue that when analyzed in its transnational context, immigrant-targeted welfare retrenchment functions to ensure that the costs of reproducing a cheap, docile, and flexible labor force remain borne by sending nations, immigrant families, and transnational communities despite increased settlement in the receiving country.

**KEY WORDS:** welfare reform, household survival strategies, immigration, transnational communities

## INTRODUCTION

During the 1980s and 1990s, the United States experienced unprecedented levels of immigration (Singer 2004). Primarily from Latin America, the “new immigrants” possess relatively low levels of “human capital” (Telles 2006), are comprised of relatively large percentages of women and children (Pessar 1999), and exhibit higher rates of welfare use than earlier cohorts (Borjas 1999). They also moved beyond California and Texas to establish transnational communities throughout the United States (Durand et al. 2005). For these reasons, among others, some scholars see the new immigrants as a drain on the U.S. economy and welfare state (Borjas 1999) as well as a threat to the hegemony of the “WASP” culture they hold to be the fount of the nation’s prosperity (Huntington 2004).

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The change represented the transition from a “welfarist” to a “workfarist” system of poor support (Peck 2001). The law was also an immigration reform act that placed significant new restrictions on immigrant access to welfare (Hagen and Rodriguez 2002). The melding of welfare and immigration reform in PRWORA was not surprising insofar as the goals of each policy arena overlap in at least three ways. First, both regulate the supply side of the labor market, securing cheap, docile, and flexible “labor without rights” (Krinsky 2007; Chavez 2008). Second, both function to “racialize”

their target populations as different and deviant (Omi and Winant 1994), thereby facilitating hyper-exploitation, political disenfranchisement, and social isolation (Fredrickson 2002). Third, both construct their targets as responsible for the increasing distress felt by workers and taxpayers under Post-Fordist capitalism (Chavez 2008; Kretsedemas and Aparacio 2004).

In this paper I present data from interviews with 62 families in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas (the “Valley”) to examine the impacts of welfare reform on household survival strategies in a transnational community. While transnational communities are not new, the concept of “transnationalism” is insofar as it emphasizes the maintenance of active social, economic, and political ties between immigrant communities and their nations of origin through the day-to-day activities of immigrants (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Glick Schiller and Fueron 2001). In short, transnationalism conceptualizes migrant communities as operating in two (or more) nations—i.e., in transnational spaces—at the same time. This allows them to combine resources from more than one national space as they struggle to survive and get ahead.

After a brief review of the literature and my method I document the survival strategies of respondent families with attention to how they are constructed in the transnational space of the Valley. I then explain how welfare reform was implemented and how it affected survival strategies. Finally, I discuss how the findings inform future applied research and policy development related to welfare

and immigration, emphasizing the need to move beyond approaches that blame poor mothers and immigrant communities for their condition.

## HOUSEHOLD SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN A TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Cash welfare assistance (AFDC) was never more than a minor and temporary source of income for the vast majority of families who ever used it. Rather, mothers always combined paltry welfare payments with formal and informal work, other forms of state assistance (e.g., Food Stamps, WIC), and participation in networks of reciprocal exchange. Importantly, access to each source depended, to some extent, on access to the others. For example, cash welfare supported participation in networks by allowing mothers to reciprocate by occasionally giving a friend who regularly provided transportation money for gas (Edin and Lein 1997).

The interdependent nature of these activities led some scholars to worry about the effects of welfare retrenchment on family well-being. Insofar as welfare reform shifted responsibility for meeting the costs of reproducing labor from the state to local labor markets and the private networks of families it raised concern that some families—those in the most depressed labor market areas and with the weakest network supports—would experience significant material hardships (Edin and Lein 1997). More specifically, Roschelle (1997) warned that restricting access to welfare in the wake of 20 years of Post-Fordist restructuring was unlikely to result in mothers finding gainful work. At the same time, she argued, restructuring had likely reduced the capacity of kin networks to “take care of their own.”

These concerns were particularly germane in places like the Valley in which the scarcity of work led to the development of survival strategies that are heavily reliant on network support and various forms of public assistance. These institutional factors are, in turn, related to the unusual way in which the Valley is incorporated into the U.S. political economy, i.e., as a transnational enclave to which migrant labor seasonally returns to “reproduce” itself (Burawoy 1976). A hallmark of its institutional structure is the informality that marks the operations of local governments and labor markets, particularly the *clientelism* around which they are largely organized (Montejano 1987; Maril 1989). The lack of good governance amplifies the role of the family and network ties in household reproduction. It also presents unusual sets of problems and opportunities to immigrant households, particularly those whose members include undocumented residents and/or adults with limited education and ability to speak English.

Two major opportunities or “advantages” are access to low-cost housing and work. As regards housing, unregulated developments known as *colonias* allow families ineligible for a mortgage to purchase land for, as one respondent put it, “\$50 down and \$50 a month for life” (see Pickering et al. 2006). Homeownership, in turn, facilitates the maintenance of multi-generational households in which members combine income from welfare for children, the wages of parents, and the retirement/SSI benefits of grandparents (Staudt 1998:62). As regards work, the Valley presents a vast informal economy that offers myriad opportunities for persons lacking legal documents, formal education, and English skills (Bastida 2001). Staudt’s (1998) survey of a low-income area of El Paso found that nearly 40 percent of households had a member who was working “under the table” for a formal company while 42 percent earned income from the “occasional” provision of services (p. 75). Importantly, the international border itself creates opportunities for informal entrepreneurialism. Staudt (1998) found that profits of 50 to 100 percent were garnered by individuals who purchased goods in Mexico and resold them in the U.S., often to neighbors, friends and relatives (see also Harvey 2011; Pickering et al. 2006).

Of course weak labor markets and governance regimes also present disadvantages, particularly to households that are not connected to local powerbrokers (i.e., “*politicos*”) who exercise significant influence over the distribution of jobs and public services (Harvey 2005; Maril 1989). More generally, the weakness of the public sector means that essential work support services of training, child-care, and transportation must be obtained informally from network members (Harvey 2011; Staudt and Capps 2004; Capps et al. 2004).

In sum, the Valley’s “social economy” (Nelson 2005) is distinguished by the extent to which households, from the elite and middle class to the poor, rely on combining access to federal programs (either as administrators, recipients, or both) with participation in highly informalized institutions whose day-to-day operations span the border. As such, it illuminates the ways in which survival strategies are embedded in place.

As noted, the welfare reform act was also an immigration reform act. The bulk of the estimated \$54 billion it promised to save taxpayers was to be derived from disqualifying certain immigrants not only from cash welfare but also from food stamps, SSI, and Medicaid (Tumlin and Zimmerman 2003). Insofar as new immigrants are concentrated in specific communities, the law targeted such communities, threatening to undermine household survival strategies not only by limiting access to welfare but (at the same time) by withdrawing monies from local economies that de-



pend heavily on federal welfare spending (Marchevsky and Theoharis 2006; Kretsedemas and Aparacio 2004). In the Valley, for example, a “huge” (according to one chain store manager) percentage of grocery receipts derive from food stamps. Similarly, medical professionals receive an outsized proportion of their revenues from Medicaid (Gawande 2009). Thus, the law had significant ripple effects in immigrant communities, reducing the capacity of private employers to hire and forcing layoffs in the public and nonprofit sectors at the same time as it forced mothers off welfare. This not only left immigrant households less likely to find work than they were before reform but, also, less likely to be able to obtain assistance from network members (Harvey 2011; 2005).

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The impacts of welfare reform are examined here through a case study of the two most isolated, poor, and “Mexican” (according to respondents) rural counties in Texas: Maverick and Starr. The transnational character of these communities is reflected in, among other things, data which show that approximately 37 percent of enumerated residents were “foreign born” and, of those, roughly 64 percent had not naturalized as U.S. citizens (i.e., they had retained their Mexican citizenship). Over 90 percent reported speaking a language “other than English” at home (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000).

The counties are of interest to theorists of “neoliberal globalization” insofar as that term is understood to reflect a process through which costs associated with the reproduction of labor are “off-loaded” or transferred both territorially, from “core” to “peripheral” nations, and institutionally, from the officially regulated spheres of the market and the state to the unregulated or informal spheres of the family and community (Peck 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2006). The Valley has long functioned as both a territorial and institutional space to which the U.S. has transferred some proportion of the costs of reproducing labor, i.e., as a transnational space in which hyper-exploited and politically disenfranchised migrant labor return for refuge and renewal (Burawoy 1976). As neoliberal policies continue to undo formal institutional regulations and disenfranchise new immigrants, the Valley may be a harbinger of the future of the U.S. interior.

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews that ranged from 45 minutes to over 4 hours and averaged 90 minutes with a nonrandom snowball sample of 62 households who were either enrolled in TANF at the time or had left the program. Respondents were recruited through contacts at nonprofit agencies, by research assistants, and by other respondents. Twenty-six households were single-female headed while 36 were married or co-

habiting. Thirty-seven respondents were born in the U.S. while 25 were born in Mexico. Among the Mexico-born, 8 were undocumented while 17 were legal permanent residents (LPRs) or naturalized citizens. Further, 45 of the respondents had at least one parent who was born in Mexico. Interviews were also conducted with 98 key informants including local political officials, workfare administrators and caseworkers, directors of third-sector organizations, and employers, among others.

## FINDINGS

### A. Welfare and Household Survival in the Valley

The capacity to combine participation in official work, informal work, reciprocal network exchange, and workfare in multi-faceted survival strategies varied enormously between the married/co-habiting households and those single-female headed. The former were organized around the regular migration of men out of the Valley to work in agriculture, construction, and demolition. Upon their return they collected Unemployment Insurance (UI) and food stamps, and performed informal work as mechanics, plumbers, and construction workers. When their UI benefits expired they went on welfare for two or three months before migrating again. Transportation and child care were not problems as they owned vehicles and relied on their wives/partners to care for their children. What is more, when emergencies struck they had broad networks (their own families and the women’s social networks) on which to draw for support.

In contrast, single mothers’ survival strategies were severely constrained, first by their reproductive labor and second, by the rigid gender segmentation of the labor market. Regarding the latter, although most respondents reported extensive employment histories their work was concentrated in the downgraded sectors of beauty, retail, fast food, home health care, secretarial, and child care (see Harvey 2011). Poor pay, working conditions, and unreliable childcare arrangements caused most to cycle in and out of the market and led some to pursue migrant farm work in a desperate effort to accrue cash. A 21-year-old mother of two described a trip to Colorado with her uncle and cousins to work “in the onions.” Her words indicate the strong work ethic expressed by most respondents:

“Well, it would be every day except maybe on Sundays ... and we’d go from like 5a.m. to 6p.m. or 7p.m. ... cutting onions.... It would be probably 80 sacks and we would get 60 cents per sack.... We would split up the money so it would be like \$25 a day ... and then having to go back to the house, wait for everybody to take a shower, and then just rest. Eat, rest and wake-up and go back and do the same thing again.”





Migrant work was not a viable option for single mothers to undertake on their own and those who tried returned to the Valley broke. Thus, their work was limited to what was available locally, often through network members. They sought to complement the inadequate income obtained from the jobs noted above with welfare and various forms of informal work, particularly cleaning houses for \$15 or \$20 each and baby-sitting for \$20 a night. In most cases this work was performed for network members and often done to reciprocate for services rendered, such as transportation, or to repay a loan. The most lucrative informal activity was "making plates," that is, cooking food to sell at schools and other centers of employment. Some respondents had regular customers whom they called in advance to "take orders" and a \$50 investment of food stamps in raw materials could reportedly yield \$200 in sorely needed cash.

The use of food stamps for plate-making highlights the extent to which TANF in Texas failed to provide families with enough cash to meet basic needs. This was due in large part to its history as a racially segregated agricultural state in which welfare payments were set relative to the earnings of tenant farmers and thus never more than a pittance (the maximum AFDC payment for a family of three was \$188 per month when reform passed in 1996) (Winston 2002). A mother who had received public assistance in Los Angeles recalled her first TANF check in Texas as follows:

"I remember the first check I got ... I got scared because over there I used to get \$500 and something [cash] and like \$400 and something food stamps and when I see here ... it said \$180 AFDC and \$180 of food stamps—Oh my God! I was going, 'What?' And I called and I say, 'What's this? I can't live with this!' They said, 'That's the only thing we can help you with. You're not in L.A. anymore.'"

This is not to say that cash welfare was unimportant. In addition to "paying a bill or two" and allowing the purchase of "things for the baby," prior to reform it was a *reliable* source of cash that facilitated access to other sources of support, particularly network support. As noted, network assistance was crucial to meeting their needs for housing, transportation, childcare, and access to work—indeed, roughly half of the single-female respondents lived in the home of a parent or sibling. It was not, however, free. Rather, mothers were expected to reciprocate for assistance by sharing their benefits and performing in-kind domestic labor. As regards the former, one woman who lived with her parents explained, "I give them my food stamps and [use my TANF to] pay a bill." Regarding the later, the following exchange was typical:

"[Interviewer:] Who provides your child care? [Respondent:] Well, right now my sister in-law. [Interviewer:] And how much do you pay her? [Respondent:] Ah, no, I cannot, I don't have the money<sup>1/4</sup>. When she leaves or has an appointment I take care of her kids or do things in the house. But I don't pay her with money."

## B. "You're Not in L.A. Anymore:" Workfare in Texas and the Valley

The impacts of welfare reform on households cannot be understood without examining program implementation in Texas and the Valley. By giving states control over TANF, evaluating their performance mainly in terms of caseload decline, and allowing them to transfer a large percentage of program funds to other areas of their budgets (Winston 2002) the federal government incentivized Texas officials to design a program that would push families off the caseload as quickly as possible at minimal cost (i.e., without providing training or support services). The negative impacts of this anti-investment "workfirst" approach were exacerbated in the Valley which not only lacked jobs but, also, a viable welfare-to-work service infrastructure (Capps et al. 2001).

State officials gave regional administrators responsibility for purging the rolls and used a mixture of fiscal "carrots" and "sticks" to encourage them to do so at the lowest cost (Harvey 2011). In short, deterring clients from accessing services for which they were eligible was the primary "service" delivered in Texas (Winston 2002). Deterrence was achieved through consuming respondents' time and resources in futile and punitive activities. For example, participants were required to spend six weeks performing a "job search" despite the fact that seasonal unemployment rates in the counties approximated 20 percent and employers preferred to hire through personal networks. As one Starr County participant stated: "There's not that many places here so where else do we go? They [caseworkers] would say, go to McAllen and all that." McAllen is located 40 miles outside of the county. What is more, those who lacked transportation or childcare were not exempt. As another respondent put it:

"They didn't care if you didn't have the means to go to their places. If you don't go, well, they take away the benefit. There were some girls that would go walking, or they would ride with another friend or something."

The hardships imposed by the search caused many to simply quit. Those who did not—or could not—quit were mandated to perform at least 30 hours per week of "voluntary community service" to work-off their families'





TANF and food stamps grants. According to respondents community service was more demanding than a “real job.” This was highlighted by “Celia,” who was required to perform 51 hours per week. Although she worked at a public office from 9am to 6pm Monday through Friday (45 hours) she needed to perform another 6 hours a week. She explained, “Well, they told me [to] do something else, like sell tamales or something.” Moreover, the rigidity with which this requirement was enforced resulted in her being sanctioned for factors beyond her control:

“Sometimes when [the office is closed for] a holiday... I have to make it up. For example, work on Saturday or working after 6 pm<sup>1/4</sup>. What is going to happen is that <sup>1/4</sup> they're going to reduce the grant by \$80 or \$75<sup>1/4</sup>. It's impossible.”

Further, inadequate treatment by some caseworkers also functioned to push families off the program. In Maverick County, respondents reported being misinformed about the effect of their receipt of TANF on their children. As one stated:

Others reported being “yelled at,” “humiliated,” and “disciplined” by some, although not all, caseworkers.

### **C. Exacerbating Inequality: The Differential Impacts of Reform on Households**

While the major note in Texas' workfare program was rapid caseload reduction at minimal cost, local administrators had a very limited amount of funds for education, training, transportation, and childcare. According to a former regional workfare administrator, however, the metrics by which they were evaluated (and fiscally rewarded or punished) encouraged the targeting of services to families with the most personal and private resources. Thus services tended to be directed away from clients perceived to be the “hardest to serve” and towards those most likely to deliver administrators a “performance” (see Harvey 2011; Harvey and Pickering 2010).

For example, the most successful respondent was a married man who had graduated from high school, had a solid work history and an extremely strong private network. He was chosen to receive a six-month on-the-job training placement at a nonprofit agency where he earned \$6.00 per hour—in addition to TANF and Food Stamps—while he learned new skills. He was eventually hired by the nonprofit as a regular employee, given more training, and two raises. He described his caseworker as “excellent” and praised the supervisor at his placement, noting: “He gave me the confidence and I went up there and I passed [an exam] so I got a different position and a better pay. Right now<sup>1/4</sup>I'm earning \$7.52/hr.... I think it's great.”

The overwhelming majority of TANF recipients however, were placed in community service, which was highly

effective at performing its deterrence function. In the words of many, it was a “hassle” and “waste of time.” As one married man who quit put it:

“It was too much<sup>1/4</sup> And then they want you to work for eight hours every day for free?... And if you don't do it they ... will sanction you?<sup>1/4</sup> They gave me and my family \$250 a month. It's not worth it.”

Like almost all married couple families who quit, the loss of \$250 had little impact on his families' survival strategy and no effect on their well-being.

Those harmed by reform were single mothers, many of whom never graduated from high school and lacked work experience and strong networks. They lacked the resources necessary to allow them to quit TANF as well as to complete its requirements (see Harvey 2011). Their experiences were captured in the case of a young mother of three whose own mother had died and who relied on her elderly grandmother for housing and childcare. Mandated to work from 3pm to 10pm five nights a week, she arrived home one night to find that her youngest child had not been bathed and the older ones had not done their homework. Concluding that the arrangement was untenable, she informed her caseworker that she would no longer comply with her work requirement. Rather than helping her obtain a “hardship” exemption, the caseworker threatened her with a heavy sanction:

“[He said,] 'Well, if you're not gonna do the hours then we're gonna cut your *food stamps*.' I said, 'What does food stamps have to do with [it]? That's for TANF.' And he said, 'Well, that's a new law right now over there in the food stamp office, if you don't do the hours they're gonna cut your food stamps and cut your TANF.' I said, 'Well how do you expect my kids to eat if we don't have food stamps?' And he said he didn't care, that we just had to do everything they asked [us] to do.”

The 2002 Farm Bill allowed states to sanction the food stamps of mothers who failed to complete work requirements. In contrast to TANF, food stamps were a pillar of household survival no family could do without for long. Indeed, those who reported being denied food stamps were able to prevent children from going hungry only by skipping meals themselves and relying heavily on their networks until their benefits were restored (see Harvey 2005). One mother stated that her children had gone hungry, breaking down in tears as she explained: “What happened was, I really don't have some money and I really.... It was embarrassing to go to a neighbor's house [again].”

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

A regional workfare administrator interviewed for this study stated she had a message for TANF participants who could not find work in the Valley: “Just move!” While this



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Welfare Reform...

often makes sense for householders with high levels of education and access to well-paying careers, the findings indicate this was not feasible for the many families whose survival strategies were embedded in the social economy of the Valley.

By consuming time and resources that could otherwise be dedicated to performing “real” work and in-kind network exchange, welfare reform reduced the ability of Valley families to sustain multifaceted survival strategies. And while many were able to quit the program without experiencing significant disruptions to their survival strategies this was not the case for the most isolated single mothers who, unable to meet program requirements due to the lack of state investment in support services, were often sanctioned and suffered material hardships as a direct result.

The variation in outcomes suggests that the impacts of reform on households are determined by the *interaction* of factors constituted at three institutional levels: 1) state workfare policy; 2) local labor market and administrative conditions; and 3) households and their networks. Texas officials used their control over TANF to fund politically popular property-tax cuts for middle class homeowners (Winston 2002). Similarly, regional administrators extracted fiscal benefits from the program by strategically distributing resources to select families—thus denying them to others—on the basis of household characteristics. Thus, the variation in outcomes among more and less “well-off” households is explained by the interaction of household characteristics with the organizational interests of bureaucratic actors at the regional and state levels. This is cause for concern. As indicated, the positive outcomes of reform were quite limited while the negative could hardly have been more grave. Whereas the AFDC program may have left the worst-off families stuck in a so-called “welfare trap,” TANF leaves them dangling from a “workfare trapeze” under which there is no net.

Returning to the link between workfare and immigration, the past 30 years have witnessed the increased settlement of labor migrants from Latin America. Prior to reform these “new immigrants” exhibited higher levels of welfare use than earlier cohorts (Borjas 1999). These factors fostered a convergence in discourses about immigration and welfare in the racialized concept of the “underclass.” California’s Proposition 187 (1994) marked the enactment of this convergence in public policy. While struck down in federal court, the proposition was a harbinger of immigrant-targeted welfare reform and its construction of the new immigrants as “welfare migrants” with little interest in “assimilating” to American values (Chavez 2008; Murray 1984). In light of historical explanations of poverty in immigrant communities as resulting from the inability of persons

of inferior “racial stock” to “assimilate” (O’Connor 2001), the convergence of immigration and welfare reform around the specter of a new Latino underclass was not surprising (Chavez 2008). Led by Huntington (2004), this view holds that the failure of the new immigrants to become “self-sufficient” is rooted in Latino culture. Insofar as the distinctions between “cultural” and “racial” traits, as well as those among different “races,” are social constructions, an important question for future research will be to identify to what extent neoliberal policies such as welfare reform function to reinforce (versus deconstruct) notions of essential difference and the hierarchical social relations they support. To the extent that welfare reform has left members of Latino transnational communities worse-off relative to the “mainstream” than they were under AFDC it represents what Omi and Winant (1994) call a “racist state project,” i.e., one that reinforces racialized hierarchy, albeit on the basis of cultural, rather than biological, differences (Fredrickson 2002; Harvey and Pickering 2010).

Contra the underclass thesis, the findings indicate that the new immigrants may be more accurately conceptualized as strivers and survivors and the communities to which they belong less as “welfare colonies” than as sites of entrepreneurialism and thick “social capital.” That said, it is important not to valorize these households and communities as sites of “solidarity” or “resistance” to neoliberal globalization (Smith 2005). The communities examined here are fraught with internecine conflicts, including the exploitation of women by men and of new immigrants by those who barely preceded them. Reliance upon private networks often comes at high price as some of my respondents, all women, were effectively domestic servants in the homes of their husbands and relatives. At the community level, exploitation and abuse were evident in the attitudes and behaviors of some caseworkers, all of whom were Mexican-American, who viewed their clients through the prism of the underclass and appeared to identify-up with the neoliberal policy elites for whom they worked (Harvey and Pickering 2010).

Finally, this study indicates the need to analyze neoliberal policies and their impacts with reference to their global-historical determinants. The plight of households in transnational communities under welfare reform can only be explained with reference to broad institutional conditions which must also be explained through applied research. In the Valley those conditions are derived from its role in the long-standing international migrant-labor regime that exists between the U.S. and Mexico, and through which the U.S. effectively “off-shores” reproductive labor costs. In the face of the feminization of immigration and increased settlement, immigrant-targeted welfare reform functions to keep those



costs off-shored. When viewed in this light, the impacts of welfare reform in the Rio Grande Valley ultimately must be explained with reference to the Valley's status as a transnational space constructed through historically specific, spacialized, racialized, and gendered processes of capital accumulation, state formation, and racial formation.

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ESSENTIALIZING AUTHORITARIANISM: IMPLEMENTING NEO-LIBERALISM IN HIGHLAND PERU

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## ABSTRACT

In order to help understand how neoliberalism generates new forms of localized governing and social control, this article investigates the major differences between the Peruvian government's 1995 Land Law legislation, and how the state actually implemented the new policy. The article argues that, contrary to the letter of the Law, the shape of the institutions set up to implement it uniquely served the interests of local elites and made them the proxies of the neoliberal state. Moreover, by incorporating rural villages in an essentialized way, the Law enables and pushes these new state agents to govern in a more overtly coercive and authoritarian manner.

**KEY WORDS:** Peru, state agents, neoliberalism, Land Law, essentialism

This model of smallholders without technology is a vicious circle of extreme poverty. We must encourage medium-sized property, the middle class of farmers who know how to obtain resources, seek out markets and create formal jobs....

President Alan García. 2007.  
"The Dog in the Manger"

## INTRODUCTION

Neoliberalism encompasses a differentiated and frequently contradictory set of policies and political institutions, difficult to understand for their complexity (Brenner et al. 2010; Peck et al. 2010). In general terms, "neoliberalization denotes a politically guided intensification of market rule and commodification" (Brenner et al. 2010:184). Critiques emphasize that it is a political project "to restore the power of economic elites" (Harvey 2005:19) through "the methodical destruction of collectives," those organizations and institutions that stand in the way of people operating as cold, calculating, profit-maximizing individuals (Bourdieu 1998:94). But neoliberalism is just as much a conflict-ridden, unstable, and fluid ideological framework variegated through diverse external conflicts and sizeable internal contradictions, particularly "between its own authoritarian and libertarian moments and constituencies" (Peck 2004:403). Moreover, neoliberalism tends to spread through varied and contradictory forces experimenting in sundry on-the-ground milieus, "engender[ing] a range of contingent and ambiguous outcomes that cannot be predicted beforehand" (Ong 2006:5). In short, while neoliberalism involves an ideology

of frictionless global free markets, its actual expressions present a confusing and contradictory picture.

One way to grasp the nature of some localized manifestations of neoliberalism entails investigating the difference between policies and their implementation (Peck 2004). Governments throughout the world have followed some prescriptions to refashion their policies around privatizing, removing many state protections, and intensifying market rule (Brenner et al. 2010). The neoliberal project, however, remains contradictory, unstable, and incoherent due to variability within the different implementing parties, and the wide array of localized conditions they encounter (Peck 2004; Ong 2006). Looking at the more local level, then, demonstrates more of the way that neoliberal transformations occur. And, looking particularly at the difference "between what neoliberal states say they do and what they actually do" speaks directly to the new forms of governing and social control emerging as a key aspect of these reforms (Peck 2004:395; cf. Porter and Craig 2004).

This article looks at one particular such instance: the difference between the promulgation of the 1995 neoliberal Land Law in Peru, and how the government set up the institutions to actually implement the Law. This evaluation therein serves as a preliminary assessment of the institutionalization of the Land Law in order to generate questions for further research into the impact of this new legislation in rural highland villages. And in so doing, this article suggests possible avenues for action for applied researchers.

In 1995, the Peruvian government passed the Land Law, a "radical" neoliberal shift enabling the violability of



land for the first time in forty years (Ministerio de Agricultura 2004:8). This Law was designed to create a “viable market in land,” and therein enable rural villages to switch from the *comunidad campesina* (peasant community) land tenure system of quasi-corporate holdings to one of strictly individualized, private lands. The *comunidad* system provided protections against taxation and expropriation. The private system, in contrast, aimed to increase land value, productivity, and concentration (Ministerio de Agricultura 2004). The legislation, however, noted that *comunidades* had historical importance and thereby protected these holdings by only allowing a transition to private titles with a two-thirds majority approval by villagers.

To get at the difference between Land Law legislation and its implementation, I contrasted two things. First, I read the Law and the interpretations of it forwarded by the responsible government agencies. Then, I visited a local office in the city of Ayacucho and asked the local agents about the Law, particularly about how their office had been set up to implement it. While I also visited a couple of villages to see how this was playing out, the focus of this article is simply the central government itself and its own contradictions. But understanding these contradictions provides a key baseline for researching and acting on the localized implementations of the Law.

This paper argues that the contrast between promulgation and execution reveals that the Land Law pushes the few privatization-minded elite of rural villages towards coercive and authoritarian behavior. Specifically, the institutions established to implement the Law, particularly the PETT (Proyecto Especial de Titulación de Tierras—Special Project on Land Titling) of the Ministry of Agriculture, was set up only to serve the few privatization-minded, elite local farmers. As President García says above, this legislation only has medium-sized (or larger) farms in mind. The National Agrarian Census (INEI 1996), meanwhile, finds that most farmers are smallholders, particularly in the Andes (nationally 52.5% have less than 3 hectares, while 87.6% have less than 10 hectares). But the institutional shape of the PETT also essentialized rural villages. As I will explain through this article, by treating villages as undifferentiated, conflict-free, isolated redoubts of organic democracy, the PETT provided these same elites with the power and motivation to assume new despotic village roles with which to coercively impose privatization locally, and to therein present the village as unanimously pro-privatization.

## BACKGROUND

As with several other regions of the world (Harvey 2005), the implementation of neoliberal policies in highland Peru amounted to a struggle over the control of labor and resources, particularly land. Native land and labor are

intimately tied together. Specifically through allowing access to land, dominant groups have long constructed Indians *writ large* as a cheap source of menial labor (Appelbaum et al. 2003). Indians must look for work because their farm plots are too small to sustain their families, but they can be paid below-subsistence wages because their farming subsidizes their labor (de Janvry 1987; Stern 1992). Dominant groups have continually generated new ways to revitalize these relations, such as state or private interventions to reduce native landholdings (Spalding 1975; Stern 1992; Scarritt 2011). Rather than seizing all native lands, a shift to a land market instead portends pushing most natives to the most marginal fields for basic reproduction, increasing their dependence upon land-consolidating elites. Such shifts have regularly occurred in history, such as with the liberal reforms of the nineteenth century (Klarén 2000). These processes may become further intensified to the extent that the Law paves the way for the reintroduction of middle class mestizo farmers long resenting their land dispossession at the hand of the 1969 Agrarian Reform.

Popular struggles beginning in the 1950s helped crystallize the terms of this contestation in the new legal entity of the *comunidad*. This reorganization of rural spaces away from haciendas and towards villages provided indigenous people with a major new institution for collective decision-making and representation (Yashar 2005). The major problems with this new system were that it (1) largely kept the same people in power but just shifted their locale (such as former hacienda owners running the new Agrarian Reform offices) and (2) it used the creation of the new entity to pit urban mestizo interests against those of other “native” villagers (Poole 1994; Drinot 2006:19; Scarritt 2011).

Positively, however, the reforms protected lands against taxation and expropriation while severely limiting the maximum holding size. In the absence of meaningful structural change, however, the reform most strongly amounted to increased security over the subsistence land base upon which natives made their reproductive decisions. Moreover, this permitted the growth of cultural practices that could curtail some of the worst abuses and even lead to some further political mobilization (Yashar 2005). Natives’ socioeconomic position of providers of below-subsistence labor remained largely the same, but they had gained greater power in deciding how to deploy it.

The neoliberal project represents a continuation of the struggle over the control of indigenous land and labor. Most obviously, the legislation explicitly allows and endorses the elimination of the *comunidad*. More determinately, however, the institutionalization of the legislation provided the opportunity structure, windfall rewards, and important means for local elites to impose unpopular programs on the majority.





## THE LAND LAW

In 1995, the government passed “The Law for the Promotion of Private Investment in the Economic Activities of National Territorial, and Peasant and Native Community Lands,” known vernacularly as the Land Law. As the title indicates, the core idea behind the new Law entails generating investment through privatization—with important consequences:

The existence of an adequately functioning land market would be a generating element for economic development and, as such, would derive an increase in the general wellbeing of society. In effect, the free transferability of lands has a fundamental effect in the efficient assignment of this important resource, given that it permits that these are transferred in favor of the people who can use them best (Ministerio de Agricultura 2004:2).

The Ministry sees this as a “radical turn” towards, and opportunity to deliberately intensify, land concentration. Privatized land holdings provide collateral for loans, enabling greater risk-taking. But financing works much better with larger landholdings, meaning that under such a production scheme “the necessity to have a greater concentration of land is evident” (Ministerio de Agricultura 2004:6). And this is facilitated through greater access to credit combined with the need to take greater risks. Individuals whose highly leveraged strategies fail will lose their mortgaged lands, while successful land-based endeavors will gain more holdings and access to credit. To complete the circle: “Concerning [private] titling, another positive effect in respect to the access to credit, is constituted in the possibility of promoting the re-concentration of land tenancy” (Ministerio de Agricultura 2004:6). The Ministry, then, sees the Land Law as a means to accelerate land concentration in order to improve the overall well-being of society.

The Land Law, however, provides some protections for lands held as parts of *comunidades*. The Law (article 11) allows *comunidades* to convert their corporate holdings to private holdings (or otherwise alter their *comunidad* land tenure system) only with a two-thirds majority vote of the active *comunidad* population (Fujimori 1995; Del Castillo 1997). The Ministry understands that “under current law, the titling of the communities can take two modalities: communal or individual” (PTRT 2001:4). Communities cannot simply dissolve through the piecemeal conversion of lands to private holdings, but require the volition of a super majority to make any changes. Furthermore, villagers can remain under the *comunidad* system and obtain clear title to their lands.

## PRIVATE IMPLEMENTATION

The actual implementation of the Law, however, differed dramatically from these state interpretations. First, the Ministry of Agriculture and its PETT provided no means

to acquire a clear *comunidad*-based title. Despite its own law and interpretation, the government only allowed for private titles. In not providing any infrastructure for the *comunidad* option, the new institutions only served the local interests that desired privatization.

Additionally, in its own literature and according to its personnel at the Ayacucho office, the PETT saw privatization as inherently positive to all farmers, increasing the value of their lands and access to external resources, particularly credit. Seeing privatization as uncritically positive meant that fighting this “resource” was highly irrational, therein bolstering the private position to the detriment of the majority. While only noted briefly here, this construction resonates with traditional racisms that regard native interests as irrational.

Most importantly, only allowing for private titles meant that the Law institutionally equated clear titles with private titles. This meant that acquiring clear titles could only occur through the dissolution of the *comunidad*, a necessary precursor to privatizing. If the elite desired to privatize, they would have to convince the rest of the villagers to give up their *comunidad* protections against taxation and expropriation.

## ESSENTIALISM

More than exclusively serving privatizing interests and undermining the *comunidad*, though, the institutionalization of the Land Law provided crucial means through which the elite could impose their interests on the majority. The Law did this through incorporating the villages in an essentialist way. This essentialization granted authoritarian powers to local elites. And it masked the coercive consolidation of local power as an expression of village group mutuality.

By essentialist, I mean that the Law incorporated villages as though they were undifferentiated, conflict-free, isolated redoubts of organic democracy. The essentialist village expresses a mutual concord based solely on locally based priorities rather than power disparities originating from differential integration with the rest of society. This was an institutionalized essentialism because the shape of the PETT, rather than the opinions of its employees (even if these coincided), treated villages in this way.

This essentialism follows the longstanding Orientalist tradition of “Andeanism.” This ideological matrix, fairly rampant throughout Peru, constructs indigenous rural peoples as fending off the outside world by living according to timeless traditions (cf. Starn 1991). While celebratory of Andean customs, it thoroughly essentializes native life, downplaying local differentiation, political economic connections to the rest of the country, and cultural change as largely non-determinant of local reality. As a result, this perspective at least implicitly sees poverty and conflict as



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originating locally, outgrowths of the decision to preserve cultural integrity through living in isolated enclaves. As local problems they should be treated locally, all else amounting to imperialistic infringements on local autonomy.

While Andeanism appears in some academic dialogues, many its facets have been discredited. Connectedness, differentiation, and cultural change have long characterized native reality, with poverty and most sources of conflict, including those over land, emerging and transforming through colonialism and modernity—that is, through the ways natives are integrated into society. Indeed, many studies have demonstrated that cultural change, rather than leading to extinction, is a vital resource for group claim-making (Warren 1992; Hale 1997; Rubin 1997; Warren and Jackson 2002). Further, as suggested above, natives have long been a central element of the Peruvian political economy, their poorly remunerated labor undergirding much of the national economic activity. Andeanism naturalizes these relations as inherent racial differences, incorrectly portraying Indians as simply doing things as they have since time immemorial, their poverty reflecting cultural differences rather than exploitative social relations.

## ESSENTIALIST IMPLEMENTATION

This essentialism is readily apparent in how the PETT justifies the Land Law's protection of the *comunidad*. The PETT did not directly endorse dismantling this institution, and in fact stressed that tiling activities "should be designed with a profound knowledge of the complexity of the social culture of the communities" that dated back to "ancient times" (Ministerio de Agricultura 2004:8). This piece of essentialist wording, however, should not distract from the actual institutionalization whose simplistic treatment of local conditions enabled the rise of new autocratic village powers.

The requirement for two-thirds of villagers' approval was the Land Law's strongest protection for the *comunidad* system. But the PETT provided no means to regularize village decisions about preserving or privatizing the *comunidad*. The PETT specified no means through which villages should make this decision. Neither did the government include any infrastructure, resources, or authority to make this occur in an orderly fashion. This stands in marked contrast to the regularization of national elections that strove for transparency through concrete processes monitored nationally and internationally, specifically to prevent the powerful from manipulating the results to serve their interests.

Herein the government essentialized villages as undifferentiated redoubts of organic democracy. The PETT defaulted to expecting villages to sort out these issues by themselves in whatever way they saw fit. To the extent that

the Land Law's two-thirds clause insinuates a free and fair democratic process, by placing the sole burden on the community, the Ministry expected the village to generate outcomes free of intimidation or coercion. The Ministry expected the village to provide the democratic content, and thus in a sense to "actualize," the Law.

An assumption of mutually aligned village interests and lack of differentiation paralleled this democratic presumption. Without any transparent regulatory mechanism, the PETT assumed that powerful local interests differentially integrated into the larger society did not exist to a sufficient extent to dominate or completely subvert the local decision-making process and use it to enhance their power. Constructed in this way, the Ministry conferred impunity to local elites in terms of both methods and timeline. The new legislation granted them *carte blanche* to pursue their interests according to their lights.

Moreover, to the degree that the removal of *comunidad* protections made most villagers regard privatization as counter to their own interests, this form of implementation pushed local elites towards authoritarian behavior. That is, as most villagers used subsistence production to undergird their diverse reproductive strategy, they regarded the imposition of taxes as threatening their well-being. Without a convincing rationale for privatization, the newly empowered elite privatizers would have to use intimidation or other forms of fairly open coercion.

The Ministry's further essentialization of rural areas as conflict-free encouraged and enabled such manipulation. The PETT promoted privatization as the means to solve the endemic lack of titles in Peru. Only 17 percent of parcels have clear title, and most of these are on the coast (INEI 1996). Yet the government would only provide titles to areas deemed conflict-free. And the PETT provided no resources with which to resolve conflicts. In viewing privatization as the solution to endemic lack of titles but not providing resources to resolve local conflicts, the government assumed that villages were free of conflict.

This is a highly untenable position. Just as with lack of title, land conflicts pervade the highlands. These latent conflicts fed much of the violence of the recent civil war (1980-1992). And bloody fights abound in the countryside over land issues, frequently causing religious festivals to degenerate into brawls, or families and neighbors to suffer blood feuds (Isbell 1990). By further destabilizing the land regime, the new legislation only exacerbated these tensions.

The Ministry made its view consistent, however, in further essentializing villages as isolated from the larger society. Endemic lack of titles stems from the centuries of multiple, overlapping tenure systems through which a diversity of people can make claims on lands. The much more generously funded 1969 Agrarian Reform, the last and largest





ever effort to confer land titles, proved highly inadequate, only providing a very small amount of titles while never clearing up the many conflicting systems (Drinet 2006).

Rather than emerging from their integration with society, however, the PETT considered the lack of titles a locally originating problem. The PETT claims that landholders engage in endless informal splits mostly due to population increases (Ministerio de Agricultura 2004). The Ministry therefore planned to bring aerial photographs to the communities, cross-reference them, and provide titles according to (1) who the villagers said owned the lands and (2) verification of any extant land titles. As mentioned above, the PETT would not enter any conflicts and would simply demarcate any such lands as contested and therefore without title. This policy therein essentializes villages as cut-off from the rest of society rather than integrated with it. And the policy echoes more traditional racist dialogues of indigenous problems arising from local pathologies rather than exploitative social relations.

In this context, institutionalizing villages as isolated and conflict-free served to discipline local elites to force obedience upon villagers. The policy pushed the elite to quell local discontent. To the extent that the elite desired privatization, they would have to present their village in the essentialized form dictated by the policy. They would have to use whatever resources they had to coerce villagers into the dissolution of the *comunidad*. Once villagers accepted this, the elite could present their town as conflict-free and therefore able to receive titles.

## CONCLUSION

While neoliberalism has had a far-reaching impact, this has been far from monolithic and much more dependent upon local conditions (Peck 2004; Ong 2006; 2007; Brenner et al. 2010). One strategy for better understanding the impact of the polyvalent neoliberal project, particularly the character of the relations of rule that it generates, entails investigating the differences between policies and their actual implementation (Peck 2004; Porter and Craig 2004). This article has looked at the major differences between the letter of the Peruvian Land Law and its unfurling on the ground, and found major discrepancies. Because the Peruvian state, like many of its neoliberal cousins, displaces much of the social risk of governing, these differences within government institutions speak mostly to the parameters set around the new legislation under which the new, more localized neoliberal agents must make their decisions.

In general, I found that the new legislation encourages and empowers a new localized authoritarianism. In particular, the institutional shape of the Ministry served privatizing elite interests to the detriment of the majority. Further, the

essentialist way in which the legislation incorporates rural villages means that privatization-minded elites have been granted impunity—but also full responsibility—to use any means to manufacture a harmonious local pro-privatization consensus. And because the state unfurled a highly polarizing piece of legislation without providing any tools for helping to persuade villagers that privatization is actually in their best interests, the Law pushes the elite towards more openly coercive and fraudulent behavior. Under these conditions, local privatizing leadership will tend to have a much greater despotic content.

The essentializing tendencies of neoliberal institutions, however, do not guarantee an increase in local despotism. This article simply articulates the way the government unfurls the new legislation. Now, especially because the state devolves power locally, this presents multiple questions around the ways that local elites will engage with this new legislation. Do local elites sufficiently desire privatization to fulfill the authoritarian requests of the legislation? At the local level, how do these mandates conflict with other elite concerns and their relations to other villagers? For elites attempting to privatize: how are they able to respond? What resources do they draw on? How do they resultantly restructure rural life? How disruptive is privatization and the privatization process? In contrast, what prevents other elites from privatizing? How can popular anti-privatization voices successfully preserve *comunidad* protections? What resources can they utilize? What innovations can they create? Can they even leverage government services to provide *comunidad*-based titles as allowed by the law?

All of the questions in some way address concerns about how neoliberal legislation will interact with local conditions. While there certainly is a question of elite volition, these members of society inherit their social positions and resources. The bigger questions surround how this essentializing piece of legislation interacts with the contours of local society, and how this enables and limits elites to act in their own political-economic interests. How do the localized constructions of class, ethnicity, race, and gender interact with such a pro-elite, pro-authoritarian piece of legislation? What are the principal means of political contestation? How is village life transformed?

Much more research into the experimental application of these neoliberal policies on rural life must be conducted. Closely observed ethnographic studies promise to bring the necessary rich detail. If the data prove sufficiently detailed, these instances should add to the discourses on the overall character of the larger neoliberal project, in both ideological and political terms. Similarly, closely observed and grounded comparative studies need to speak to the localized variation in the emerging forms of governance under



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neoliberalism. How do localized dynamics engage with the same legislation and urban agencies in different ways? What factors enabled increased local despotism and what resources push against it? Overall, we need to better understand the local politics through which the neoliberal project unfolds and is contested.

The radical and polarizing nature of this legislation therein presents considerable opportunities for applied researchers. First, the essentializing tendencies of the new legislation are institutionalized more than grounded in the beliefs of the agents themselves. While officials may possess such attitudes (see Poole 1994), they also may implement these policies through simply "doing their job." Researchers can therefore present urban agents with more sophisticated understandings of rural reality and ideas for lessening the severity of the legislation, such as working in concert with other officials to formalize an intimidation-free and transparent village vote on the privatization issue.

More avowedly pro-comunidad organizations may be more open to such messages and strategies. Villagers from many locales, for instance, have sought help from the *Defensoría del Pueblo*, the governmental human rights ombudsman. This organization, while limited to an advisory capacity, can help locate distressed villages and also coordinate a regularization of the local process. Non-governmental organizations and the Confederación Campesina del Perú (Peasant Confederation of Peru) may also provide similar opportunities.

Locating distressed villages and their concerned representatives presents applied researchers with the opportunity to offer their time and skills to indigenous colleagues. Proferring such resources promises to provide researchers with more nuanced understandings about the actual on-the-ground implementation of the policy. More, it potentially puts researchers in dialogue with the diverse local actors engaged in privatization struggles. As a further resource for relatively resource deprived villages, an applied researcher could help negotiate local compromises. While such a dramatic legislative change heavily favors elite sectors, it also potentially clashes with extant forms of localized domination, forcing elites to make some kinds of compromises. For instance, acquiring more government funds through increasing a village's legal status—such as urbanization, sub-district, or district—may require broad popular support and not alienating the majority through stripping them of their land protections. Researchers could help strategize ways to emphasize these elite contradictions and provide alternatives to privatization that would offer elites some similar gains.

For researchers to identify local allies, the villagers looking for external help from the Defensoría or other organizations are the most obvious. The more conflicted elites,

however, can also become comunidad advocates. For instance, while local teachers may not have the best of reputations (see Gose 1994), they may desire to preserve comunidad land protections: their salaries make them more resistant to privatization's increased reliance on the vagaries of Peruvian product markets. Non-comunidad village organizations can potentially provide a backbone to local resistance through supplying alternative means for group expression—though these may also be elite dominated. Such organizations could include various development committees, the Mothers' Club, or even religious groups such as locally controlled popular Evangelical sects (see Robbins 2004).

Challenging privatization, however, presents a formidable task. As addressed by this essay, the federal government arrays its full forces behind the new legislation. Now President García has lowered the proportion of villagers required to approve the new tenure system from two-thirds to one-half. Privatization-minded elites thereby possess even more institutional power. And they may gain strong allies in urban mestizos longing to undo their Agrarian Reform land dispossessions. Further, convincing even avowedly pro-comunidad urban organizations to stick their necks out to assist villagers while receiving little (positive) recompense will be onerous, especially as they may mistakenly regard helping to formalize local land tenure decisions as violating village self-determination. Helping to negotiate compromises (over an inherently polarizing issue) requires high levels of trust and a sophisticated understanding of always-muddy local politics. Nevertheless, such a divisive situation calls for action, and people will always welcome informed and willing allies.

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## COMMENTARY

### NOW THAT WE KNOW WHERE THE BODIES ARE BURIED, WHO DO WE TELL?

RIALL W. NOLAN

#### ABSTRACT

Although the past fifty years have seen substantial progress on a number of fronts, it is hard to claim that development has been successful for the majority of the world's poorer people. Development's failure largely has been due to the failure of our development industry to learn from experience. Yet anthropologists, among other professionals, have learned a great deal of value. The problem is that ready-made constituencies, sensitive to development practice and development outcomes, do not exist. This commentary examines why institutional learning within the development industry has been so difficult. Several paradigms are examined. Lack of fit and lack of context, not lack of information, is central to the problem. Engagement of the public at large, as well as a focused agenda for reform, are central to the solution.

**KEY WORDS:** development, institutional learning, industry reform

#### INTRODUCTION: WHY AREN'T WE DOING BETTER?

Development is humanity's first global project, carrying enormous risk as well as high promise. Our early optimism that everyone could live a decent life, and that this would not take very long to achieve, now looks naïve, and—to some—hopeless. Although the past fifty years have seen substantial progress on a number of fronts, it's hard to claim that development—however defined—has been successful for the majority of the world's poorer people. Disparities between rich and poor have continued to grow, and today, poverty and inequality have become virtually institutionalized across entire regions of the world. In some places, warfare and crime—often indistinguishable from each other—have pushed development priorities off the table altogether, as people battle for dominance or simple survival. In addition to disappointing tangible results, we also face an intellectual crisis in development, as the dominant paradigms begin to show their weaknesses and limitations. Development's failure has been, by and large, due to the failure of our development industry to learn from experience.

But within that industry, certain groups, anthropologists prominent among them, have learned a great deal. The problem is that there is no one to tell; there is no ready-made constituency for development which could take what we know and use it to effect the reforms in development practice that we so desperately need. This commentary examines why institutional learning within the development industry is so difficult, and what anthropologists need to do about it if we are ever to have an impact on changing the way development is done.

#### A FAILURE OF LEARNING

If we look closely at development failures, we see that most of the time, these are not due to a lack of money, technology, energy, or good will, but rather to a simple lack of fit between what was attempted and the local cultural context in which it was tried.<sup>1</sup> And this is a persistent problem: criticisms of development work have an almost timeless quality. The same things that are wrong today were wrong twenty and thirty years ago.

Whatever else it may be, development is a cross-cultural encounter. And so our failure in development is, at base, a failure—on the part of the large development agencies which direct and control, for the most part, the process—to learn cross-culturally. Why, then, do agencies not learn better? Essentially, development agencies do not learn because they do not have to learn. And since the collapse of the Soviet Union, this problem has become worse, not better.<sup>2</sup>

There are three broad reasons for this organizational inability to learn: the *technicist paradigm* which dominates development work, the *scripts or development narratives* that this paradigm generates, and the *collusive structures* into which the development partners seem to be locked.

#### The Technicist Paradigm

The technicist mindset, derived from economics, engineering, and finance, could be called the behaviorism of the development enterprise.<sup>3</sup> It is quantitative, reductionist, deductive, and prescriptive. The approach tends to define reality in advance of investigation, thereby rendering new information irrelevant. Local data, in this view, tend to con-

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taminate and destroy the simplicity of the existing models, and so are avoided whenever possible. Things which cannot be counted, or whose significance is unclear, tend to be ignored or downplayed. What the specialists do not know, in short, is considered not worth knowing.

Perhaps the worst thing about the technician paradigm is that so-called experts can develop both theory and plans without ever having to learn very much about what ordinary people are actually like.

## Development Narratives

The technician approach tends to reduce complex situations to the policy equivalent of sound-bites, which have been termed “development narratives”—stories or scripts about why the developing world is the way it is.<sup>4</sup> Development narratives help us to smooth out the complex messiness of reality into neater, simpler patterns, turning uncertainty and ambiguity into clarity. The “tragedy of the commons” is one such development narrative. The notion of the “noble savage” is another, as is the “tradition-bound peasant.” Like fairy tales, development narratives draw our attention to what some people, at least, consider salient aspects of our world. But they also enable us to avoid directly encountering the other cultural worlds in a development situation.

Narratives arise and prosper partly because they are a way for experts to claim ownership of the development conversation. If a narrative becomes elevated to the status of an axiom, or theoretical orthodoxy, planners then have little need to go into the field where they might encounter discrepant and varied patterns of data.

## Structures of Collusion

The structure and operation of the development industry also constitutes a formidable barrier to learning. Large development agencies operate under relentless pressure to do two things: spend money and show results. But they do very little direct development work themselves. Instead, they employ contractors to plan and carry out projects and programs. Agencies, contractors, and host governments are locked into an essentially symbiotic arrangement where each depends on the other. Within this arrangement, no partner has an interest in upsetting the operation of the money pipeline.

There is thus a collusive web of relationships linking agencies (and their oversight bodies), host country governments, and contract specialists together. Each member of the network has an interest in communicating some types of information, but not others, to their partners. I’ll return to this point in a moment.

## ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND LEARNING

Institutions haven’t learned much about how to do development, but individuals certainly have. And prominent

among these individuals are the anthropologists who have been working for decades as project designers, managers, trainers, evaluators, and community advocates, across the world. Anthropologists are very good at doing development work, in fact. There are some specific reasons why this is so. Anthropologists are not only trained to discover the different cultural worlds that people inhabit, but also to make these worlds intelligible to the rest of us. Inductive and firmly grounded in reality, anthropology does its work through a process of discovery rather than one of verification of theory.

In essence, anthropologists learn about context: the social and physical environment in which plans unfold and develop. It is context—the conditions and factors which aren’t immediately obvious to the rural development tourists—which will ultimately determine the success or failure of development efforts.<sup>5</sup> As fifty years of experience have shown, development efforts which fit with their context will usually work, while those which disregard it will usually fail, sooner or later. Anthropologists are particularly well-equipped to examine the context in which development projects develop, to uncover and examine how plans interact with context to produce outcomes.

Development anthropologists have been doing this for years. Although there have been, on balance, more failures than successes, there have been some outstanding successes. And failure, as any investigator will tell you, often teaches us far more than success. A colleague of mine at the World Bank has a small plaque on his desk. “Good judgment comes from experience,” it reads. “Experience comes from bad judgment.”

Development anthropology has truly come of age. We are sought after in development work for our skills. Many of us have risen to important positions within the industry. We have acquired a wealth of immensely practical knowledge about what will work and what will not work in development. We have a very deep understanding, based on long experience, of why the development industry doesn’t do better, and what needs to change.

So what, after all this time, have we learned? In the broadest sense, we have learned two extremely important things, which are closely connected with one another. First, we now know a great deal about how local contexts figure in determining the course of development efforts. Second, we now know in detail how the development industry works, and specifically, how it works or fails to work with local contexts to produce the largely disappointing outcomes that we see around us.

## WHO CAN WE TELL?

This information is extremely valuable, obviously. The problem is, however, that we have no one to tell. There is



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no natural constituency for either foreign aid or international development. People in Third World countries don't vote in American elections. The special interests—the agencies, the legislatures, the consulting firms, and the university institutes and centers which receive large grants—all benefit from the way things are now. They are not really interested in hearing things the effect of which would be to question, undermine, and otherwise upset the status quo.

Let me qualify that. There are indeed groups in the US who would be very interested in “knowing where the bodies are buried,” but only because they would then use this information to scuttle the entire enterprise. Every development anthropologist I know has agonized at one time or another over how much to tell, and to whom. We all suffer from what one writer called the “guilty knowledge/dirty hands” syndrome, whereby we have been participants and accomplices in activities which, if publicly known, would cause someone, somewhere, a great deal of trouble.<sup>6</sup>

We know that there is strong support for some form of international assistance among the public at large.<sup>7</sup> We also know, however, that this is coupled with a strong bias against government. We therefore face a fundamental dilemma. If we talk frankly and fully about what we know about how things work now, we may horrify the public on whose support the effort to reform development ultimately depends. If we say nothing, of course, then little will change.

Keeping silent is not an option. But we need, as a profession, to find an appropriate way to tell the public at large what we know, in order to marshal support for change in development procedures. Such changes will have to be far-reaching to have any real effect on outcomes. Our problems are structural and systemic, and will require a major overhaul in the development industry, at all levels.

Within the current pattern of relationships, players have little incentive to either learn or change, and few mechanisms for converting what is learned into better planning. Few agencies directly experience the effects of their plans, projects, and programs. Their internal operations, largely opaque to outsiders, are not particularly disposed to self-criticism or the discussion of failure. Agencies tend to be preoccupied with moving money down the aid pipeline, and bad news tends to impede the flow. Success, for most agencies, means disbursing the maximum amount of money with a minimum of problems.

Much of development work today is almost a monopsony situation: a market in which the product or service of several sellers is sought by only one buyer. What of the NGOs, however? What of the various groups which have arisen in opposition to the influence of the large agencies? First, they simply have nowhere near the power and influ-

ence of the larger agencies. Second, because they define themselves in opposition, they tend for the most part to present a version of development reality which serves their own needs, and not necessarily those of the world's poor.

What constituency we have for aid and development is actually not a constituency at all, but a series of interconnected gatekeepers, “interpreters of poverty” if you will. And it is good to remember the definition of an interpreter: someone who helps two groups understand each other by repeating to each what it would have been to the interpreter's advantage for the other to have said.<sup>8</sup> The broadcast media, of course, merely compound the problem, in part because of the technical limitations of television, which tends toward the high-contrast, dramatic, short, and shallow, and the proclivities of today's journalists themselves, who only seem interested in people far away if they are starving or killing each other.

Although individuals and project teams actually accumulate a great deal of useful information about what works in development, most of this never finds its way into the system. Reports from the field which would threaten the smooth operation of the pipeline are carefully sanitized and shaped, put into their “proper” context. Failure is rarely discussed, and therefore, opportunities to learn from failure are rare. Often, completed projects are by definition successful ones, since they pave the way for more projects—and more funding.

In these and other ways, the large agencies operate to define development norms and meanings. One consequence of this is that until a development problem, issue, opportunity, or concept has been noticed by the large agencies, it does not really exist. And once it is officially mentioned, it becomes, as it were, the property of the development industry.<sup>9</sup> There are, in other words, few “learning moments” in development work.

## CONCLUSION: THE WAY AHEAD

The greatest danger is that we will simply continue as before. But as we all know, if you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten.

“The answer cannot be more of the same. And the answer is surely more than simply hoping for the best, more than vague ideas about ‘strengthening over time the institutional forms and activities associated with global society’. Simplistic exhortations to ‘accelerate the transfer of technology’ after decades of disastrous technology transfer, are not only counter-productive, they are (and here, the percussion) stupid.” [Smillie 1995: 245, emphasis in the original]

Let me present, therefore, a simple agenda, or framework, for development anthropology in this decade.



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Now that We Know...

## Internal Reform of the Industry

Players in the development game are locked today into a self-reinforcing system which is neither transparent nor amenable to democratic control, but which monopolizes financial and intellectual resources for development. We need to make common cause with others to force fundamental reform of the development industry. Reform efforts can take many forms, from confrontation and subversion on the one hand, to co-optation and collaboration on the other. Years ago, Laura Nader urged us to “study up”—today, we also need to “move up” into key positions in the industry, and in the political structures to which it responds.

As anthropologists become more influential in the industry, they need a broad but focused agenda for reform. This should include three key components: *accountability*, *incentives*, and *mechanisms for learning*. The most critical of these, of course, is an organization’s ability to learn from experience. Unless development agencies are able to find better ways to do this, very little in the way of improved outcomes can be expected.

## Internal Reform of Anthropology

While some of us work to reform the development industry, others must reform anthropology.<sup>10</sup> In particular, we need to confront the still-prevalent attitude within the academy that applied work is somehow a lesser calling, ethically suspect, and unworthy of our intellect, passion, energy and creativity.<sup>11</sup>

## Generating Better Information

We also need to connect the academy to the field through the production of more and better development ethnographies—detailed analyses of how and why we get the results we do. We have not done a particularly good job of documenting how, for a particular project, day-to-day decisions are made, and how interactions between stakeholders produce, over time, specific outcomes. The academy has been largely indifferent to this type of study, preferring to encourage its students to pursue other, more traditional, forms of enquiry. Field practitioners, on the other hand, have neither the time nor indeed, the freedom to do such work.

## Finding Our Public Voice and Telling Our Story

A society’s institutions, as Mary Douglas reminds us, shape the way we think about problems, and—more importantly—about solutions to those problems (cited in Gudeman 1984). Our institutions help organize our public memory and shape our public imagination. In important ways, the institutional forms and cultures which we have allowed to evolve for development purposes function today not only as important obstacles to effective development, but to our very understanding of what effective development might be.

Slowly and painfully, a new paradigm is emerging in development work, and it will take form with or without help

from anthropologists. But how much better it would be if we could clear our collective throats, marshal our thoughts, and join the public dialogue on where development goes from here, and how. We cannot simply assume, as we have in the past, that good information will carry all before it; that others will automatically understand what we are talking about; and that they will know what to do. We have not had a strong public voice for some time, and there is scant evidence that the discipline views popularizers any differently than it has in the past. But the broad outline of the new development paradigm now emerging is one with which anthropology is already familiar, and where it can lead, rather than follow. One of the most interesting aspects of the new paradigm is that it is not really about the Third World at all, but about all of us, and how we are connected, now and into the future, through a set of interwoven issues.

## FINALLY. . .

Today, we are headed into a world characterized by a few hugely wealthy countries surrounded by a sea of poorer, overpopulated ones. Does anyone reading this doubt that such an arrangement will be temporary? At the same time, is anyone absolutely certain that we can solve problems of poverty while at the same time preserving the richness and integrity of the world’s diverse cultures? Or will we, so to speak, wind up destroying the village in our attempt to save it?

For reasons which have been evident for some time—and today more than ever—we need to re-launch the development effort. But this time, we need to do it right. What anthropologists know must inspire and inform this initiative. Despite the setbacks and the frustrations of the past development decades, anthropology has accumulated a valuable store of experience about what works and what does not. For anthropologists, the challenge for the present is to find ways to use their experience wisely and effectively.

There can be no more fitting arena for the application of what anthropology knows, no better dynamic for revitalizing and transforming a discipline into a profession, and no higher mission than the creation of a just, equitable, and prosperous future for all of humanity. If we neglect this task, then we—and the rest of the world—will continue to have development defined and done for us by organizations which know much less than they should.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>This assertion may strike some as controversial and in need of proof, justification or at the very least, amplification. I don’t have space to do this here. But see, for example, the following: Cernea (1987, 1991, 1996), Horowitz (1998a & b), Kottak (1991).

<sup>2</sup>Louis Lapham, writing about what he perceived as a similar characteristic





of President George Bush père, observed: "This lack of development is fairly common among people born to the assumptions of wealth and rank. They can afford to believe what they choose to believe, and they seldom find it necessary to revise the texts of the preferred reality." (*Harpers*, March 1992: 7). The end of the Cold War may have made it even more difficult for our aid agencies to learn. Speaking of the attitude of "triumphalism" in the West following the breakup of the Soviet Union, where, in the view of many, capitalism and the market "triumphed" over socialism and centralized planning, Samoff (1996: 616) notes: "This triumphalism has (at least) two powerful consequences for the relationship between aid and policy making. Those who have triumphed need no longer listen. Since they know what is right, and since it is their power, rather than negotiation, that secures their interests, they can instruct rather than learn. Moreover, since the triumph, they believe, proves the correctness of their perspective, they need to feel reticent or guilty about telling others what to do."

<sup>3</sup> The term "technicist" isn't widely used, but the mind-set – and the problems it creates – are discussed in a number of places. See, for example, Cernea (1996), Chambers (1993, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> See Roe (1991, 1995), and Hoben (1995).

<sup>5</sup> The phrase "rural development tourism" is, of course, from Robert Chambers (1988).

<sup>6</sup> The "dirty hands/guilty knowledge" phrase is from Fetterman (1983). This raises ethical issues far beyond the scope of this paper. Many academic anthropologists, far from wanting to confront these issues, would prefer it if anthropologists stayed away from them altogether, a position which I consider morally bankrupt.

<sup>7</sup> Smillie 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Bierce 1958.

<sup>9</sup> The Bank "defines" development: Finnemore (1997) discusses how this has operated to define poverty within the World Bank. As Finnemore points out, the organization of the Bank and the kinds of people the Bank employs constitute an elaborate filtering and transforming mechanism, taking in ideas at one end and turning these into policies, programs and projects at the other end. Only certain ideas are taken in, of course, and only certain solutions are produced. Originally, development was conceived of as simply an attempt to raise GNP, and this was to be done through industrialization. This, in turn, was promoted through capital-intensive infrastructure projects. Between 1968 and the mid-70s, however, the alleviation of poverty was "discovered" by the Bank, and subsequently institutionalized. The Bank functions, therefore, as a major arbiter of development norms and meanings. One result of this that until a problem, issue, opportunity or concept has been "noticed" by the Bank, it does not really exist. And once it has been noticed, it tends to become, as it were, the Bank's intellectual property.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Nolan (1998, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Erve Chambers (1991).

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## COMMENTARY

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF ETHICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION,  
WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

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### ABSTRACT

While the ethical problems involved in research with human subjects is not a new phenomenon, the interest in this area has intensified over the past few decades as represented within the Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association. Less attention, however, has been given to how research ethics are taught and learned in higher education as a tool for anthropologists to conduct their work while maintaining an ethical framework. This paper uses the AAA Code of Ethics to show that the development of a culture of ethics in a university or college department can be a multi-faceted, historical process that both influences and is influenced by the meaning placed on significant symbols, such as the mentor-protégé relationship. This in turn helps to shape the definition of research ethics. I argue that the distinct culture of an academic department is reflected in the ways that informal networks or relationships are (or are not) utilized, thereby embedding this action (or non-action) into the culture of ethics. Using examples from research conducted in different academic departments located in the social sciences and allied health fields of a large research university, I illustrate how informal and formal mechanisms are used to transmit knowledge of research ethics, and also to develop a culture of ethics or lack thereof in each department.

**KEY WORDS:** ethnography, culture of ethics, departmental context and training

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the *American Anthropological Association (AAA) Code of Ethics*,<sup>1</sup> last approved in February, 2009, is to “foster discussion and education...to provide anthropologists with tools to engage in developing and maintaining an ethical framework.” While the ethical problems involved in research with human subjects is not a new phenomenon, the interest in this area has intensified over the past few decades as represented within the new Code of Ethics of the association. Less attention, however, has been given to how research ethics is both taught and learned in higher education as a tool for anthropologists to conduct their work while maintaining an ethical framework. This paper focuses on two elements of the AAA Code of Ethics to show that the development of a culture of ethics in a university department is a multi-faceted, historical process that both influences and is influenced by the meaning placed on the significant symbols, such as a mentor/protégé relationship, which, in turn, help to shape the definition of research ethics.

The AAA Code of Ethics mirrors the three ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report; Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice, in the statement that “Anthropologists have a duty to be informed about ethical codes relating to their work, and ought periodically to receive training on current research activities and ethical

issues. In addition, departments offering anthropology degrees should include and require ethical training in their curriculums.” Moreover, it suggests that, “Teachers/mentors should impress upon students/trainees the ethical challenges involved in every phase of anthropological work; encourage them to reflect upon this and other codes; encourage dialogue with colleagues on ethical issues; and discourage participation in ethically questionable projects.” To this end, I argue that the distinct culture of an academic department is reflected in the ways that informal networks or relationships are (or are not) utilized, thereby embedding this action (or non-action) into the culture of ethics. Using examples from research conducted in different academic departments located in the social sciences and allied health fields of a large research-intensive university, I illustrate the ways in which informal and/or formal mechanisms are used not only to transmit knowledge of research ethics, but also to develop a culture of ethics or lack thereof in each department, further illuminating how to “foster discussion and education...and to provide anthropologists with tools to engage in developing and maintaining an ethical framework.”

An ethnographic approach to research gives richness and texture that allows a multi-dimensional analysis to the social construction of significant symbols. In this study, some examples of significant symbols for each department include: 1) a mentoring relationship and whether this proc-



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ess is effective; 2) collaborative research practices and the spatial arrangement or physical layout of the department and its impact on interaction; and 3) accessibility of faculty to one another and students.

Scientific research is undertaken with a set of both written and unwritten rules regarding ethical standards. Those standards are based on socially constructed values that reflect ethics in general, thereby creating a "culture of ethics," which is unique to each researcher, research department and institution. Clifford Geertz paraphrases Susanne Langer remarking that "...certain ideas burst upon the intellectual landscape with a tremendous force. They resolve so many fundamental problems at once that they seem also to promise that they will resolve all fundamental problems, clarify all obscure issues. Everyone snaps them up...[and] after we have become familiar with the new idea, however, after it has become part of our general stock of theoretical concepts, our expectations are brought more into balance with its actual uses..."(Geertz 1973:3-4).

This concept can also be applied to the construction of research ethics. While the ideas and underlying guidelines relating to research ethics have not necessarily "burst" on the scene, these "ideas" eventually become the basis of a culture of ethics within a certain discipline such as anthropology. The culture of ethics therefore can become embedded within the sphere of the academic department and ultimately the institution itself. Culture is represented by human behavior, i.e., behavior that has symbolic attachment and action. Geertz reflects that..."culture is composed of psychological structures by means of which individuals or groups of individuals guide their behavior"(Geertz 1973:11). A society's culture then involves the rules and resources, or the structures by means of which individuals guide their behavior to act successfully or appropriately in a manner acceptable to its members. An institution's culture mirrors this process.

I assert that research ethics involving human subjects is transmitted to students and faculty through informal mechanisms that are embedded in the culture through informal networks such as mentoring, collaborative research practices, and a spatial arrangement of close proximity among faculty and students enabling an environment for frequent communication. However, those departments that include a formal component to their curriculum are also those whose faculty and student population are best equipped with the ethical concepts that are the foundation for federal and university regulations of research with human subjects, such as knowledge of the Code of Federal Regulations governing research involving humans, work with an Institutional Review Board, ethics courses, and familiarity with guidelines and best practices necessary for sponsored research.

The methodology for this research included open-ended, in-depth interviews and direct observation of a total of 33 faculty and graduate students from three departments in the social sciences and allied health fields over a period of two years within Midwestern University. Midwestern University is a pseudonym to protect the identity of the institution and privacy of the subjects involved in this study.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two anthropological perspectives, praxis and the theory of structuration, informed this research. These theories provide a framework and foundation for analyzing informal and formal modes of communication by accounting for the individual experience, history, and practices among faculty and graduate students, within the culture of ethics of each department. Praxis theory facilitated the connection of relationships between the structures and agency among faculty and students to determine how this process influences the culture of ethics (Bourdieu 1990). Praxis theory accounts for both collective and individual histories and examines how these histories influence and ultimately shape the culture of ethics within the department. In addition, praxis explores how individual action within a day-to-day context (referred to as "agency") is formed and how it shapes practice to transform or reproduce structures, in this case the culture of ethics within each department (Figure 1). Praxis focuses on the nexus of theory, practice, and ethics. Anthropologists have used a praxis approach to analyze the relationship between structure and agency and the process by which these relationships influence one another in the reproduction of social systems. Agency represents the capacity of an individual to make decisions and act upon them, resulting in intended or unintended consequences (Giddens 1979). Giddens makes the point, however, that most social change results from unintended action by individuals who did not know the eventual outcome. The advantage of praxis theory for anthropological analysis is that it does not emphasize the experience of the individual over the entire society, but examines social practices over time and space.

The theory of structuration (Giddens 1984) assists the analyst in breaking down structures into rules and resources, which for my purposes determined how research ethics regarding human subjects were generated among faculty and students and engendered within a department to create a culture of ethics. Giddens' theory describes structures as containing rules and resources that clearly explain their development and elements as opposed to assuming that they are just there without form or intent of origination. Rules and resources are continuously implicated in the



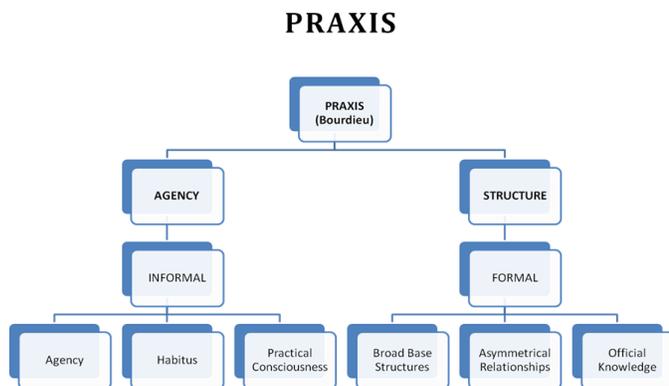


Figure 1

production and reproduction of social symbols, and are involved in the institutional articulation of social systems or structures. Giddens suggests that these elements cannot be separated from one another but must be regarded as an interactive duality (rather than as a dualism). They complement one another to adequately explain structures.

Giddens holds that there are two types of rules and two types of resources. Normative rules are written and for the most part strongly adhered to; examples include canon law and bureaucratic rules, which are descriptive and sanction social conduct. Codes of significance are the unspoken rules or social rules by which we lead our lives, such as taking turns when speaking or offering food and drink when guests arrive. These rules are expressed through practical consciousness and habitus, and can have a more profound effect on social conduct than normative rules. Rules are the medium and outcome for the production and reproduction of structures handed down from generation to generation without strict definition (Giddens 1979). Two types of resources, according to Giddens, also influence the production and reproduction of structures. Resources are structural properties of social systems. Allocative resources involve the control over formal and material things such as money, buildings, and technology. Authoritative resources consist of relational aspects such as power, prestige, access to power, and informal communication; they derive from the coordination of activity of human agents. Both rules and resources must be used concomitantly in the social analysis of structure and agency.

For this study, the significant symbols are ways in which research ethics involving human subjects of research are transmitted to faculty and graduate students. The significance of these symbols lies in the way this knowledge is transmitted informally, formally, or both. In addition, the

level of meaning that academic departments place on the transmittal of research ethics can be examined by the value they place on the transmittal. The culture of a society—in this case, reflected in a university and its departments—involves the rules and resources one must learn to navigate to appropriately behave in a manner acceptable to its members.

## METHODS AND SITES

This research explored the culture of ethics within three different departments from three different colleges within Midwestern University. Midwestern University is a pseudonym for a large research and land grant university occupying approximately 5,300 acres, which was established in the 1850s. There are 40,000 students and 9,000 employees, of which 2,700 constitute both full- and part-time faculty members. The libraries at Midwestern have an expanding research collection of over 4,100,000 volumes and present new technologies, which are housed in the main library and in 14 branch libraries. There are 84 different departments within 14 degree-granting colleges, 13 of which offer graduate degrees. These departments represent Agriculture and Natural Resources, Arts and Letters, Business, Communication Arts and Sciences, Education, Engineering, Human Ecology, Human Medicine, Natural Science, Nursing, Social Science, and Veterinary Medicine. Approximately 9,000 of the 40,000 students at Midwestern University comprise the student population of the colleges I investigated. In addition to my use of pseudonyms, some other details have been changed to disguise the identity of the University and its setting.

The three different departments X, Y, and Z were chosen to represent a cross section of the behavioral and allied health sciences. These departments were also chosen because the faculty and students are actively engaged in research with human subjects. A description of each department follows.

Department X is part of an allied health field where the faculty conducts extensive research involving human subjects. There are approximately 10 faculty members and 40 graduate students. The department has a strong record of obtaining research grants from federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR) and the centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and is known for publishing important scientific research in major peer-reviewed journals. It is a relatively new department, established in the 1990s. The department's teaching mission is to encourage public health awareness and sophistication among its students, and to



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provide students with training that will allow them to participate in disease control. The department's service mission is to provide consultation, in allied health and biostatistical study design and analysis, for faculty, community health professionals, and public health agencies. The faculty members are a valuable resource of expertise, available to address issues in public health.

Department Y was established in the early 1900s and is located in the College of Social Sciences. It contains approximately 30 faculty members and 70 graduate students. Department Y has formal ties with many of the colleges including Natural Resources, Human Medicine, and Education. Many department members have informal ties with the College of Business and International Development. The graduate program has three main thematic areas of concentration, i.e., education in this department is intended to develop professionals who will be creative research scholars, teachers, and practitioners.

Department Z is also located in the allied health field and contains approximately 25 faculty members and 85 graduate students, the majority of whom are in a master's degree program. This department was established in 1950 and has recently revised the curriculum to combine a strong clinical and research emphasis to prepare students for both collaborative and independent practice in a variety of community based settings. The primary goal of this department is the promotion, improvement and maintenance of human health with an emphasis upon the needs of all the people in the state. Department Z pursues this goal through its educational, research and service programs in collaboration with other relevant units of Midwestern University.

## RESULTS: VIEWS ON COLLABORATION AND MENTORING

One of the overall themes to emerge from the interviews with faculty members is the value both faculty and the discipline place on collaborative research. Faculty engaging in collaborative research was a common thread that ran through departments X and Z, and, to some extent Y. Collaborative research within, and outside of, a department is a process that depends strongly upon informal communication, while at the same time incorporating both formal and informal resources. The interviews demonstrate that faculty members utilize both formal and informal rules and resources in learning about research ethics. Clearly, most faculty have some knowledge of and adhere to the normative rules of research ethics which include federal regulations and Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures. These procedures include applying for approval before conducting research, which can take up to two months before the

review committee gives final approval. The way in which this knowledge is imparted among faculty, however, is through informal relational aspects of authoritative resources, such as power, prestige and the coordination of day-to-day human interaction. In conjunction with normative rules (such as federal regulations and IRB procedures), and authoritative resources, allocative resources or the control over material things seem to play an important role. For instance, the faculty in department X generate a significant amount of funding in research grants and must constantly navigate the management and administration of large sums of money. As a result, the faculty has an acute sense that successfully attaining these funds depends upon collaborative and interdisciplinary research teams. Without the funding, the collaborative research teams would not flourish. The teams are also therefore, the creative impetus behind obtaining the funding. Through the day-to-day activity of collaborative research teams, the faculty in department X are creating a culture of ethics that depends extensively upon informal communication which is reinforced through the utilization of allocative and authoritative resources and normative rules.

This suggests that faculty members overwhelmingly perceive informal communication as the most effective tool for learning about research ethics. The particular cultural environments of departments X and Z, which are committed to collaborative research projects in which many faculty members engage in multiple projects simultaneously, provide evidence regarding this reliance upon informal communication. In addition to working collaboratively among themselves, the faculty in these departments also engage in interdisciplinary research within and outside of Midwestern University. This collaborative nature of conducting research has led the faculty to establish what they perceive as an effective communication process, which relies heavily on informal communication.

A faculty member who also collaborates with the social sciences further alluded to the importance of collaborative research when he stated:

Social science policy is stupid in the way they [sic] conduct themselves, as a one man band. This kind of research is finished, all gone, a dead animal. Social science is a bizarre culture in that it is not good to have more than one author on a publication. In our field, the work is collaborative, it makes sense, it saves time and perhaps imparts better knowledge.

This statement indicates that some faculty see collaborative research as the best research practice. My research suggests that this fosters an environment in which co-collaborators are forced to communicate with one another on projects and that research ethics issues associated with





human subjects are informally talked about often.

My data also suggest that faculty members from department Y who engage in collaborative research overwhelmingly perceive informal communication as the most effective tool for learning about research ethics.

Another interesting component to the analysis of my data is the way in which a positive mentoring relationship among faculty members and students is engendered, further encouraging a culture of ethics. It is important to underscore the differences between the mentor/protégé – advisor/advisee relationship as it may affect the ethical environment for both faculty and student. In academic settings, the term *mentor* is often simultaneously associated with the term *faculty advisor*. In many instances, however, the research advisor and mentor are not only two different people, but come from different disciplines. The National Academy of Sciences suggests, “A fundamental difference between mentoring and advising is more than advising; mentoring is a personal, as well as, professional relationship” (1997:15). In addition, positive mentoring requires effort on both parties involved. A motivated student helps the process of mentoring along, while the professor feels that she is not wasting anyone’s time. An advisor, by contrast performs more narrow or technical functions such as “informal advising about degree requirements, periodic monitoring of an advisee’s research work and progress toward his/her degree” (Swazey and Anderson: 1996: 6). In addition, advisors usually serve as the principle investigator and/or laboratory director for the project on which the student is working. In this capacity, the advisor instructs the student on initial proposal, design, methodology, literature review, and other aspects of the dissertation research.

The original concept of mentoring is an ancient one in which Homer describes the first mentor as the “wise and trusted counselor” who is left in charge of Odysseus’ household during his travels. Athena acts as the mentor and became the guardian and teacher of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. Today, mentoring has many different facets in higher education. A primary responsibility of a mentor is to help a student and to take an interest into helping that person develop professionally. This requires patience, trust, effective communication, good role modeling, and understanding from both parties involved. It also requires that both the professor and student fully understand the ethics of research and abide by the federal and institutional regulations and guidelines. Unfortunately, there is not an optimal formula to positive mentoring. Each situation is complex with many different factors entering the formula. Mentoring can differ among disciplines, personality types, gender, ethnicity, knowledge of subject matter, and status of student and professor.

The term “toxic mentoring” (Darling 1985: 43-44) includes four categories of undesirable or “toxic” mentors:

1. “Avoiders” – mentors who are neither available nor accessible.
2. “Dumpers” – mentors who force novices into new roles and let them “sink or swim.”
3. “Blockers” – mentors who continually refuse requests, withhold information, take over projects, or supervise too closely.
4. “Destroyers or Criticizers” – mentors who focus on inadequacies.

It may not be surprising that research has shown that both faculty and students consider positive mentoring relationships to be the exception rather than the rule (Friedman 1987). Effective communication is paramount to both the mentor/protégé and advisor/advisee relationship. Interestingly, a university-wide survey at Midwestern reported that just over half of all students surveyed (52%, with 40% agreeing and 12% strongly agreeing) believe that there is satisfactory communication between faculty and students. While it was gratifying that 52% found communication between faculty and student satisfactory, it raises questions why 48% found communication between students and faculty unsatisfactory.

Perhaps the most enlightening theme to come from the interviews with both faculty and students from department Z was the importance of a constructive mentoring relationship. There seemed to be an effective informal mentoring program among junior and senior faculty members and among faculty and students. At least three faculty members interviewed mentioned the same person when referring to their mentor. Additionally, during the interviews, all faculty members indicated that the mentoring process was the best way to impart knowledge about research ethics issues and professional values. When asked about how this process worked, one professor stated,

...if a formal practice or formula [of mentoring] exists, I don’t see it, it’s invisible to me. We don’t meet in seminars or regularly as a group, it’s just incorporated into the relationship between junior and senior faculty.

The spatial arrangement of a department appears to contribute to the value faculty place on informal communication. For instance, a faculty member from department X admitted that he never closes the door to his office so that graduate students and other faculty members will know that he is always available and willing to talk. This indicates that the physical layout of the department also reflects a propensity to engage in informal communication. Every faculty member and project manager in department X has an individual office, and graduate students have their own computer terminal in an area cordoned off separately.



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There is a conference room in the center of the department with the individual offices surrounding this room in a circular fashion. This physical arrangement reflects the importance faculty place on communication, by reinforcing and perpetuating an environment conducive to informal meetings. There is a flurry of activity as faculty members are in and out of each other's offices regularly. Faculty members seem to have direct knowledge of other faculty's research and talked freely about each other's projects in our interviews. This promotes the impression that the faculty were kept well aware of each other's progress and research. It should be noted, however, that many of the faculty members participate in research on the same projects, which would account for their intimate knowledge about the research.

The spatial arrangement of department Y, by contrast, does not reflect a propensity toward informal communication. It is not apparent that the faculty in department Y engage in a lot of informal interactive communication, unless absolutely necessary. For example, one professor admitted to not knowing every faculty member in the department and did not have knowledge about the research each faculty member conducted. When asked how they would find out about research ethics issues, many faculty members indicated that they rely on their professional association for help rather than their colleagues. Many said that they would contact their association before contacting another faculty member about questions or concerns they had about these research ethics issues. This indicates a reliance on normative rules which their own discipline codifies. Therefore, the capacity for effective communication and the relationship to the spatial arrangement of the department appears intertwined.

The faculty offices in department Y are split between two floors and the graduate students are housed in the basement of the building. The faculty offices are also split into suites, so that in many cases, one must go through at least two doors to get to a faculty member. These suites are off a main hall in a large building, and during my interviews, the majority of these doors were closed.

Interviews with faculty members in this department further suggests a culture that is demarcated by individual research projects and that effective informal communication occurs primarily when they are involved in collaborative research projects with other faculty from outside their own department. This is an old department with a lot of history that has resulted in some fractures among faculty members. One member described the department as one in which the faculty has been "atomized and told to shut up by the dean and chairperson". Another referred to a period of time of about 20 years in which "no one talked to each other, and that the succession of departmental chairs simply main-

tained the status quo". This created a large amount of tension, which still exists in part today. One professor suggested that "this discipline has a history of spinning off in different directions, it's fractured". While the discipline may focus on one issue, there is disagreement and debate about how to look at the issues. The majority of faculty that I interviewed conducts their research individually, while a small number work collaboratively on projects with other disciplines. One faculty member states that "people tend to go off and do their own thing, and that research ethics is not on the top of their priority list".

Department Y represents a situation where faculty and or graduate students choose to utilize neither formal nor informal mechanisms, indicating that their lack of focus on research ethics results in a departmental culture which inadvertently rejects the need for explicit ethical conduct when human subjects are involved. This combines Bourdieu's notion of reproduction of structures and habitus with the theory of structuration. Therefore, the lack of a culture of ethics is reproduced over time as this statement from one professor concerning others in her department illustrates,

As far as faculty interaction goes, people tend to go off and do their own thing. Research ethics is generally not on the top of the priority list. I can't remember a single conversation with anyone from my department about research ethics. It's just something you do yourself.

The formal and informal components of knowledge transmission are interwoven as suggested by Giddens' model of structuration. The following examples from department X illustrate this model in action by illustrating how both formal and informal methods, embedded or combined together, are used to create a culture of ethics. A group of project managers, data analysts, and project investigators met informally on a regular basis to keep informed of the project's status. Originally these meetings started out as a "peer contact resource, taking full advantage of one another's expertise." Over time, however, the subject of research ethics was incorporated into the discussion and members of this group became informed regarding research ethics issues by gleaning information from one another. Some of this information entered into the formal arena, as questions and concerns over human subject issues were brought directly to the IRB institutional official. Eventually these "informal" meetings became a "formal" standard operating procedure. Another result is that they were integrated into the process of research, thereby informally creating a formal component to their culture of ethics. The original informal status of these meetings was developed over time into a formal ingredient of the research process. This supports Giddens' model, which suggests that both formal and informal aspects of rules and resources must be



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JULIE A. REYES



Developing a Culture...

used (sometimes unconsciously or with tacit knowledge) in developing structures.

Another example points to the process by which formal and informal facets of knowledge transmission work side-by-side creating a model whereby both are necessary for knowledge transmittal. While interviewing Professor Resourceful in department X, I asked where he would go for answers to specific questions or concerns regarding the protection of human subjects of research. He replied that he would contact his "friend and fishing buddy," implying the use of an informal relationship with Ted, who is also the formal institutional IRB official. This relationship shows the connection between utilizing both formal and informal mechanisms of knowledge transmittal.

Importantly, most faculty members in department Y do not remember receiving any formal training on research ethics, but have relied heavily upon experience over time and contacting their professional societies. Many senior faculty were in graduate school before federal regulations governing research involving human subjects emerged and had no formal component to their education about these issues. Many reported "not really remembering" when research ethics issues came up, and how they dealt with them. One stated that "it was just something I absorbed through time and experience".

The fundamental principle that is paramount to these faculty members is the issue of confidentiality. While a few members were cognizant of the federal regulations governing human subjects, more were ignorant of the specific regulations regarding research with human subjects. For example, many faculty said that the kind of research they were involved with only had to do with issues of confidentiality, not larger more intrusive issues, such as drawing blood or conducting clinical trials on experimental medicines. Therefore, a lot of the regulations did not apply to their discipline and research. There is more of a generalized feeling that such researchers were taught simply not to hurt anyone when conducting research, as exemplified by this faculty member's statement that in graduate school, "it was clear to me and my advisors that we wouldn't hurt anyone". Knowing the primary principle of confidentiality was the most important regulation they needed to follow. Although there is no formal ethics training component to the graduate program, most faculty members discuss and emphasize the importance of confidentiality in their courses. Therefore, my findings and analysis support that informal mechanisms are central to the learning and teaching process of research ethics.

In my analysis, I found that research ethics are woven into the fabric of the culture of department Z, both formally and informally within the discipline's curriculum. The faculty

members, and to some extent the graduate students, in departments Z and X were very knowledgeable and clear about both the federal and Midwestern University's regulations regarding research involving human subjects. There was consensus that the issues surrounding research ethics with human subjects was implicitly and explicitly integrated into the curriculum, which made most faculty and graduate students aware of basic ethical issues. For example, one faculty member in department Z expressed the notion that because their discipline is perceived as a "helping and health profession, we are more sensitive to the issues of research ethics, at least in dealing with interventions of human subjects". Another member put it this way, "Our faculty and graduate students are very sensitive to these issues, and are more likely to be an advocate for the patient rights than within other disciplines". Clearly, a cultural component of department Z is the notion that one of the roles of health care is to be an advocate for the patients. This is carried out formally throughout the curriculum, such as in courses specifically devoted to research ethics issues and informally through the mentoring relationships that exist.

## CONCLUSION

I conclude that both formal and informal modes of transmission regarding ethics are best utilized concomitantly, so that the question of which method is best, either formal or informal, becomes moot. However, my research across several disciplines indicates a need for more formal mechanisms of training as many faculty and students rely primarily upon informal means, which do not necessarily address all of the issues regarding the protection of human subjects. As my findings apply to anthropologists, the purpose of the AAA Code of Ethics, to "foster discussion and education...to provide anthropologists with tools to engage in developing and maintaining an ethical framework," is necessary for providing an additional opportunity to use formal mechanisms to help foster a culture of ethics.

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## NOTE

<sup>1</sup>The AAA Code of Ethics is available at [http://aaanet.org/\\_cs\\_upload/issues/policy-advocacy/27668\\_1.pdf](http://aaanet.org/_cs_upload/issues/policy-advocacy/27668_1.pdf)





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## INTEGRATED BOOK REVIEW SET

THEY CALLED ME UNCIVILIZED: THE MEMOIR OF AN  
EVERYDAY LAKOTA MAN FROM WOUNDED KNEE

WALTER LITTLEMOON WITH JANE RIDGWAY,  
FORWARD BY JAYNE SHORIN

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA AND  
NEW YORK: IUNIVERSE INC., 2009, 107 PAGES.  
CLOTH \$22.95, PAPERBACK \$12.62.

### INTRODUCTION, ORGANIZATION, AND REVIEW

LAWRENCE F. VAN HORN

Publishing more than one review of the same book by different reviewers, accompanied in the same issue by a counterpoint by the book's author(s), has been a hallmark of *The Applied Anthropologist*. It is my privilege to be the organizer of this integrated set of reviews with fellow anthropologists Kathleen Sherman and Kreg Ettenger, who respectively bring out the autobiographical and historical aspects of *They Called Me Uncivilized*. And it is my privilege to work with the authors, Walter Littlemoon and Jane Ridgway. In the interest of full disclosure, both Kathleen and I know each of the authors personally.

This book is a clearly written personal history that is well organized chronologically with a message painful to realize. Walter Littlemoon relates how he suffered physical and psychological brutality as well as cultural and social confusion from the age of five into adulthood. The primary culprit is identified as the now defunct program of the United States government to put American Indian children into boarding schools away from home. Littlemoon's telling of his experiences during this time is intended to encourage others with similar experiences to think through such past conflicts to create a more whole, less fragmented future.

What I find especially interesting in this book is cultural continuity in the face of change and intentional disruption. Littlemoon grew up in the United States to be an American Indian Lakota man with ethnic pride, integrity of character, and everyday straightforwardness. He did so while carrying the baggage, so to speak, of psychological trauma and socio-cultural contradiction. This story is well told and will benefit American Indian and non-Indian readers alike who have ever grappled with huge problems affecting personal identity and resolved them on an individual level.

As a memoir, *They Called Me Uncivilized* would be worthy of inclusion in such a book as Ben Yagoda's *Memoir: A History* (2009). Littlemoon's work exhibits several

traits of memoirs most admired by Yagoda: (1) outstanding description of "difficult times in childhood," (2) emphasis on the "particularity of that childhood," and (3) recounting it "with great insight, perceptiveness, humor, humility, and storytelling skill" (Yagoda 2010: 61). Albeit in varying degrees, *They Called Me Uncivilized* meets all of these criteria. While a *memoir* and an *autobiography* are both historical personal accounts, there is a nuanced difference between the two terms: a memoir presumably covers fewer events than an autobiography. The implication is that Walter Littlemoon has more to share than he has so far revealed. Perhaps a revised edition or sequel might be possible.

It would have been interesting, for example, for Littlemoon to mention his involvement in the National Park Service's special resource study pertinent to the site of the December 29, 1890, massacre of Lakotas by units of the U.S. Seventh Cavalry at Wounded Knee, South Dakota (Hagood, Van Horn, and Sorensen 1992). The study considered possibilities of the site becoming a formal tribal park, a state park, a national park, or remaining as it was. As a member of the Lakota-National Park Service planning team, Littlemoon felt strongly that it should remain unchanged. His view prevailed and fits in very nicely with his values of Lakota personal and community integrity that one discerns in *They Called Me Uncivilized*. The National Register of Historic Places listed the site as the "1890 Wounded Knee Massacre Site National Historic Landmark" on December 21, 1965 (with documentation updated on March 31, 2001). It draws visitors from all over the world. Littlemoon and his wife, Jane Ridgway, live relatively close to the Wounded Knee site; the proximity, however, is not emphasized in the book.

More information about Littlemoon's dealings with the government of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs could also be illuminating. A hint of his views can be found in a

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pungent comment (not included in the book) about the tribe not snow plowing the two-mile road to the Littlemoon home after a blizzard, but doing so to provide access to the Wounded Knee Site prior to anniversary ceremonies on December 29th. According to his wife, Jane, Walter commented to various government agencies that they “plow for the dead but not the living” (Ridgway 2009).

Overall, *They Called Me Uncivilized* is a significant first person contribution to North American Indian ethnography and ethnohistory of the mid- to late-twentieth century. Walter Littlemoon is truly an engaging storyteller as befits the honored Lakota elder he has become.

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Walter Littlemoon was born in Wounded Knee, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, in 1942. Littlemoon traces a series of multigenerational traumas that he and his ancestors survived over the last century and a half. The slaughter and forced relocation of the Cheyenne, the abusive treatment of Native American children in boarding schools, the violent and unpredictable separation of children from their parents and grandparents, and the thoughtless destruction and isolation of the Wounded Knee community during the American Indian Movement (AIM) takeover of 1973 are among the experiences shaping Littlemoon’s life. His autobiography, however, is not simply a recitation of personal and familial recollections around historically significant incidents.

Autobiographies aimed at non-Indian audiences tend to emphasize what it is like to be Indian, revealing exotic customs and cultural practices while reliving quaint realizations of major differences between Indian and non-Indian life and society (see Barrett and Markowitz 2005; Pearce 1988). With respect to forced assimilation, when it is even addressed, these autobiographies are often framed as narratives of personal triumph, with the authors taking on new challenges and ending up successful in both the Indian and dominant European-American worlds. These happy endings are intended to remove guilt feelings from the non-Indian audience and reinforce the subliminal message that Manifest Destiny really was better for everyone. Messy emotional issues are sidelined to protect the Protestant aversion to getting too personal.

The thread that runs through Littlemoon’s life is his personal struggle to understand a nest of isolating and often self-destructive emotional patterns that he ultimately identifies as Complex Post Traumatic Stress.<sup>1</sup> These emotional patterns are evident across the population of Pine Ridge, as well as other reservations in the United States and indigenous communities around the globe. Because the focus of this autobiography is on understanding Native American experience from a Native American perspective, Littlemoon does not shy away from the painful and negative behaviors that accompanied his efforts to cope with Complex Post Traumatic Stress. He does not sugarcoat the shame he felt in longing for his Lakota life while he was forced to survive in the European-American world. He does not let the reader off the hook with a happy ending of having overcome all obstacles. Instead, he provides a grounded account of how the act of remembering his ancestors, his Lakota upbringing, and his Lakota values ultimately let him bring his two disjointed worlds together. While this journey to health of more than 30 years is not complete, elements of nature, comfort, and pleasure are starting to return to his life.

While the main purpose of this book is to help other Native American people understand and cope with their

## REVIEW



### KATHLEEN A. SHERMAN

Autobiography has been a robust genre in the literature on Native American life and culture over the past 300 years (Brumble 1988). Among the many remarkable aspects of *They Called Me Uncivilized* (Littlemoon 2009) is the original purpose and perspective that this autobiography represents. Rather than presenting Native American life for the casual consumption of curious non-Indians, Littlemoon’s autobiography presents a journey of trauma and discovery explicitly intended for Native American audiences. Nevertheless, the lessons and understandings drawn from Littlemoon’s life experiences have tremendous power for any reader, regardless of their ethnicity.



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experiences of Complex Post Traumatic Stress, it accomplishes other objectives as well. By giving an honest account of reservation life, Littlemoon's text provides cultural insights into what it really means to be Lakota. Rather than attempting to glamorize quaint and curious practices attributed to being from a different culture, this book gives you the fundamental feeling of Lakota life from an everyday perspective. The book also conveys in real terms the emotional impact of living between two worlds.

Another important contribution is the context provided for the 1973 AIM takeover of Wounded Knee. Out of more than 50 books on the American Indian Movement, this is the first to give an account of Wounded Knee from the perspective of the local residents. Other treatments of the "Second Wounded Knee" glamorize AIM members for their political resistance to the U.S. Government and hold them up as examples of modern Indian warriors (Reinhardt 2007; Means 1995). From Littlemoon's perspective, AIM was yet another traumatic intrusion into the lives of Wounded Knee residents. The arrogance, violence, and cultural inexperience of AIM members made them nearly as foreign to Littlemoon as boarding school teachers and administrators.

*They Called Me Uncivilized* is successful in putting words to an experience that many American Indians and indigenous peoples have shared but not fully understood. The power and healing from this book will undoubtedly ripple through thousands of lives, Native American and non-Native alike.

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## NOTE

<sup>1</sup>The term "Complex Post Traumatic Stress" is explained in the book's Foreword by social worker Jayme Shorin as resulting "from growing up in an environment where you are exposed to repeated trauma that affects who you are as a person" (p. viii). It is contrasted with the more familiar term Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which can occur after a single traumatic event. See the response essay by Littlemoon and Ridgway for the origins of and citation for this term.

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## REVIEW



### KREG T. ETTENGER

*They Called Me Uncivilized* (Littlemoon 2009) gives a glimpse into how the events of history work their way into the lives of "everyday" people, and how those people in turn react to sometimes monumental events while retaining their cultural and personal values. It provides a history of Indian Country through the eyes of one individual, somewhat like a real-life *Little Big Man* (Berger 1964) with the captivity narrative reversed. Littlemoon's own forced assimilation was into the dominant European-American society's world of boarding schools, boot camps, imposed politics, and alcohol. His account of this violent process, and the way it wrought havoc on him, his family, his community and his culture, helps us understand the very real implications of American policies geared toward cultural assimilation and "civilizing the Indian."

The text begins with a foreword by Jayme Shorin, a clinical social worker who treats victims of violence, including child abuse. Shorin names the psychological condition formed by years of abuse in government-run residential schools as "Complex Post Traumatic Stress," described as an ingrained response to "prolonged abuse, trauma and torture," especially when experienced as a child (p. viii). This unfortunately describes the experiences of hundreds of thousands of Native Americans and First Nation Canadians. It is this experience that has formed Littlemoon's personality and responses to his life experiences, and which he has tried to resolve in part by writing this book.

The first third of *They Called Me Uncivilized* reminds one a bit of *Forrest Gump* (Gloom 1994). Not that the book is full of humor; Littlemoon explains early on that he is a "somber man" who does not "talk in a joking way." And it never becomes maudlin, despite dealing with personal and collective stories of deep heartache and loss. Most importantly, it is a work of historical truth as experienced and remembered by one "everyday Lakota man." The parallel with the film is how this one person's life has been directly touched by so many key events in Native American history, from the so-called Indian Wars of the 1800s to Vietnam,



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and from residential schools to the author's own struggle with alcohol and other demons.

While Gump was a passive and naïve witness to monumental historic events, Littlemoon is fully aware of the history around him, of the significance of events like Wounded Knee (both tragic episodes), and of the roles of individuals within that history. His responses to what goes on around him, however, are muted by the defense mechanisms that he admits prevent him from being fully engaged with the world. Like others who survived the residential school system, and many children who suffer abuse or neglect in their own families, he learned to survive by becoming invisible. In all his stories there is one thing missing—his own interactions with other people, especially any sort of confrontation or conflict. Instead, he is an observer of the events that rock his own world and those of his people, and which form the important background for this book.

It is worth a brief look at some of the events that thread through his short narrative and how they touched his family and community. (Much of the following, by the way, was recorded in a 1926 interview by a doctor named Thomas Bailey Marquis [1957] that was reprinted in the 1970s, setting in motion Littlemoon's interest in his family's history.) Littlemoon's great-grandmother, a Northern Cheyenne woman named Iron Teeth, lived with Dull Knife and his band in the mid-nineteenth century. They were given land under the Fort Laramie Treaty, only to see that land taken away during the Black Hills gold rush. She heard first-hand of the victory at Little Bighorn, but soon after watched her own husband and many of her people killed in a massacre led by Colonel (later General) Ranald Slidell Mackenzie, a key figure in the Indian Wars (Greene 2003). After a long, bitter midwinter march, her people took refuge with Crazy Horse, but eventually surrendered and were sent to Oklahoma Indian Territory. What followed were years of deprivation, attempts to return to their homeland, and forced confinement on reservations.

Other stories of note include one about Littlemoon's great grandfather on his father's side, who was shot by settlers while out hunting and left for dead. As the story goes, a family of coyotes came along and rescued him, dragging him to their den and nursing him back to health. He returned to his people later with a promise by the coyotes that one child in each generation of his family would be born with "coyote eyes," a trait Littlemoon says continues to this day.

In one of the most compelling yet understated stories in the book, Littlemoon's father was killed by lightning on a clear blue day when a single cloud formed over the small church building where his family was resting near the site of the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre. According to Lit-

tlemoon, his father James was a shaman with special powers and connection with the Thunder Beings. Risking severe punishment from the government and the church, James continued to drum and hold sweat lodges out of sight of the European-American community. For whatever reason, on a clear July day the "Thunder Beings came and took my father home," sending a bolt of lightning down a chimney and through a wood stove, knocking over James and killing him instantly (p. 17). This is one of several powerful and mysterious stories that Littlemoon relates with little commentary or explanation; it is up to the reader to decipher the meaning and importance of such events.

*They Called Me Uncivilized* might in fact be disappointing to seekers of "Native American wisdom" because it contains no clear guidance or lessons for the reader, no pronouncements of the deep and abiding spirituality of modern-day Indians. Its few references to the mysterious are offered in a matter-of-fact, reportorial way. Littlemoon remembers clearly, for example, watching a flock of pheasants perform an intricate circle dance on a fine summer day. He and his friend Harold, boys at the time, watched in amazement as the pheasants marched in a tight circle, with individuals taking turns running in straight lines across the circle. When the boys ran back breathless to tell Harold's father, he just smiled and said, "You've seen pheasant dancing," explaining that they do this in good years to celebrate their fortune. "We Lakota do the same," he added (p. 33). Such stories are not followed by pages of sermonizing or lecturing; they are simply offered as some of the many fascinating things that Littlemoon has witnessed or heard about in his life.

Littlemoon's residential school experiences, while not described in as much detail as the Foreword suggests, form the center of his historical narrative. We learn about the abuse suffered at the hands of teachers, who seemed to punish children arbitrarily and with pleasure. "Beatings were frequent and rarely made sense," writes Littlemoon. "If we got an 'A' we were beaten for cheating, if we got an 'F' we were beaten for being stupid. So we learned to stay in the middle" (p. 44). He gives a few examples of the specific tortures applied to the children, from severe beatings to being forced to kneel for hours on a pencil, or being deprived of food and other needs.

Most heartbreaking was how this treatment eventually broke the spirit of the children, separating them from their culture, their language, their feelings, and their own families. Despite having older siblings at the school, Littlemoon could not interact with them in any meaningful way as they could be punished for talking or displays of emotion. When Littlemoon's mother comes to briefly visit the school during his first year there, he hardly recognizes her. Several times



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over the next few years he escapes from the school and makes the 16-mile journey on foot back to his home, until one last time in midwinter when he was badly frostbitten and his mother refused to let him be taken back. Eventually he went to a Catholic school, finishing at the local public school and quitting after the eighth grade.

Today Littlemoon's memories of boarding school often leave him physically ill, which he also becomes when he smells fresh-cut grass, associated with the first day of school in the fall. The term *residential school syndrome* refers to the combination of physical, psychological, substance abuse and other problems suffered by those who lived through residential schools, often known as *survivors* rather than alumni or graduates. Littlemoon describes clearly how residential school has affected him and other survivors as adults:

Those of us who have tried to carry on have found little on the reservation to give meaning to our lives. We have developed unique behaviors to survive. Our conversations tend to be guarded, and we frequently withdraw and fade into the background in a crowd, rarely stepping forward to participate. We cut conversations short just to get away from others; we tend to be suspicious of people, meetings and group activities. For many of us there are no feelings of freedom, or pleasure. There is nothing. We are just there, silent observers of our own lives. (Pp. 52-53)

In Canada, where the residential school system affected many thousands of First Nations peoples, a recent agreement with the federal government and several churches has given compensation to survivors. There are now a host of programs and healing circles designed to help them recover from their experiences, work through their problems, and aid them in not passing along the dysfunctions they learned in school to their families and communities. It is a long road, and the repercussions of the residential school system may last for generations to come.

*They Called Me Uncivilized* is not all gloom and despair, to be sure, but the hope offered by Littlemoon does not come in the form of government programs, church or school apologies, or the efforts of tribal leaders or outside groups. It does not even come in the form of Native healing circles, sweat lodges, prayer ceremonies or cultural and language programs. Instead, it comes in the form of small gestures by everyday people done in the spirit of helping and common need. Near the end of the book, Littlemoon describes the funeral of his brother Ben, with friends, family and neighbors coming from miles around to hold a wake, help with the proceedings, and pay respects. Food is donated, prepared and shared; chores are done without complaint; spare rooms and floors are offered for out-of-town visitors; and emotional support is given through kind words and

simple gestures like handshakes and hugs. In short, the meaningful ceremonies of life are shown as being heartfelt and pure, not overly grand or full of affectation.

On the other hand, Littlemoon scorns those who pride themselves on their good intentions; he writes scathingly of outsiders in the American Indian Movement (AIM) who took over Wounded Knee in 1973, leaving buildings and homes shot up and burned down, and the community scarred and shaken. These radical, urban Indians, he writes, who "dressed with feathers and a little beadwork here and there," had no idea of the damage they were doing in their misguided attempt to raise awareness about Native American rights. The elected leaders of Pine Ridge and neighboring communities are depicted in an even more unflattering way; they are responsible for protecting their own people, yet are accused of stealing funds, threatening and harassing their enemies, and creating an environment of fear, hostility and suspicion. These individuals, the powerful and oppressive, whether Native or non-Native, remain nameless and faceless in the book.

Meanwhile, residents of the community like Good Lance, Left-Handed Jimmy, Lincoln Looking Horse, and Tall Jenny, are described with love and respect, from their idiosyncratic clothing and hairstyles to their kind and simple words of wisdom. There is a clear desire to honor individuals who did not earn reputations as Lakota political leaders or wield power through the European-American institutions that controlled reservation life for many years. These are the folks who made food for funerals, helped their neighbors, and waited silently at the trading post for the bus carrying children to return to the reservation every summer. The heroes of *They Called Me Uncivilized* are not powerful leaders or well-known figures, but "everyday Lakota." These people inspired Littlemoon, through his memories of them, to write down his stories, and they remain at the center of Lakota culture and society.

If there is a shortcoming to the book, it may be its modest length. Many of the sections could have been expanded, including the brief descriptions of working in San Francisco and fighting in Vietnam, both important aspects of the Native American experience. Perhaps Littlemoon feels that these subjects have already been well covered by other authors, or perhaps he assumes that his main audience knows these stories already. Littlemoon makes it clear that his words and ideas are mainly meant for others from his own community, those who experienced residential school abuse, and other Native Americans. But the book still has much to offer non-Native people who wish to understand this part of our history and better appreciate how these experiences have affected so many. It would be especially helpful to those outsiders who work with Native Americans



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who have suffered abuse within the residential school system, or within their homes and communities. It would also be useful for undergraduate students in history, anthropology or Native American Studies, and the slim size and low cost make the book an easy addition to any related course syllabi.

Littlemoon's memoir is guided by the philosophy that "Remembering is a basic ingredient for living" (p. 80). These were the words given to him by his elders and by the great cottonwood tree that stands besides his family's old homestead on Mouse Creek. According to Littlemoon, one day the tree seemed to tell him, "All things that ever happened in this place, Mouse Creek of Wounded Knee, are a part of today. They are not just history, over and done with, as some now think" (p. 2). This book is a small testimony to that fact. It breathes life into the history of Native American people, especially those of the northern Great Plains, and helps the reader understand how that history—good and bad, tragic and beautiful—continues to inform the present.

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## RESPONSE



### JANE RIDGWAY AND WALTER LITTLEMOON

It is with pleasure that we write this response to the three reviews of *They Called Me Uncivilized* by Lawrence Van Horn, Kathleen Sherman, and Kreg Ettenger. We are honored to be included in this scholarly journal and humbled by the thoughtful comments of the reviewers. Your

words have led us to reflect on the journey we have taken in putting Walter's words on paper.

When something horrendous has happened to thousands of people we believe there is a moral obligation to bear witness. Whether this book is one of many or the only one, whether it is read by a thousand or a hundred, *They Called Me Uncivilized* bears witness. Ten years ago we set out simply to record Walter's memories and his family's history for his adult children. However, we were confronted time and again by intrusive, dark emotions for which we had no name and little understanding. They would seemingly come out of the blue: anger, sorrow, frustration and hopelessness. The darkness that rose to the surface challenged both of us—the speaker and the listener. That darkness lived within Walter but it was not a part of us.

Walter and I have known each other now for twenty-five years and have lived together in his home two miles from the Wounded Knee Massacre site for the last twelve. When I first came to Wounded Knee at his invitation in 1985, I noticed a familiar look on the faces of many of the older residents that niggled at me. At some point, as we struggled to get his memories down, I saw in him the faces of holocaust survivors I had known from years gone by. They had been beckoning to me throughout all those years. I remembered being told of their struggles to overcome the negative impacts on their families—the second and third generations. Although his doctor at the Veterans Administration (VA) had told Walter he was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress and to "talk it out," we wondered if the Jews might have a more specific understanding of what he was experiencing. We were beginning to realize that we were facing the eruption of long buried demons from Walter's childhood spent in a U.S. government boarding school for Indians.

We began looking for understanding and help for Walter and others as we now saw a bigger picture evolving than the original family story. Unfortunately, we learned along the way that twenty-eight Canadian residential school survivors had filed a class action suit against their government around 1991 and because there was no psychological safety net, twenty-one of them had committed suicide. The memories that action dredged up were too painful. That knowledge was so frightening to us. Over the years we have constantly sought further understanding, wisdom and knowledge. We have never forgotten those who took their lives because the pain of remembering was too much for them to bear. Fear that our words might drive more to suicide was never far from our consciousness. A huge old cottonwood tree outside our kitchen window became a symbol of strength, determination and perseverance to which we turned.



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The internet has brought the world into our remote home. A painstaking search uncovered reams of information. In particular the name Judith Herman, a Boston psychiatrist affiliated with Harvard, stood out. We sent for her book *Trauma and Recovery*. Through it, we learned the term Complex Post Traumatic Stress that she had coined. Another search and we had her business phone number. We called and left a message, essentially asking if she knew of anyone helping American Indians recover from the trauma stemming from Federal Indian boarding schools. That evening she called back from her home and talked with us both at length.

Judith didn't know anyone working in particular with boarding school survivors, but she did have one counselor who might have enough experience to be aware of cultural differences, Jayme Shorin. She offered to put us in touch with her. Judith cautioned us not to build up too much hope in finding a counselor, even in our area, who would have skills specific to Native Americans. She said that often people start out with good ideas to set up helpful programs for those who suffer, but end up doing more research and writing more papers. At the same time, she encouraged us by saying that many people around the world who live in isolated areas have been very creative in setting up healing methods of their own that are indigenous and satisfy their cultural expressions.

Over time, Walter has come across a few classmates and shared his newly found knowledge on the psychological impacts of boarding schools with them. He'd also add that he was writing a book. Time and again the response has been, "You tell them, Walter. You always find the right words to say." Some of them shared their memories with us and, to survive the horror of what we were listening to, we would withdraw psychologically as best we could. One boy had his head submerged in a bucket of ammonia for speaking his native tongue. Another had his eyes glued shut after he was discovered practicing a small ceremony. Still another had his back peppered with buckshot as he attempted to run away. Counselors, unaware of the mandatory nature of the boarding schools, have told some survivors that their parents abandoned them. It has been hard to find the positive and hold onto it. The glimpses of Good Lance and the others, the fragments of comments made by the older men to a little boy, are so precious, as Kreg Ettenger perceives in his review.

As noted by the reviewers, we have kept the book's wording simple in order to share it with the people here on the Pine Ridge Reservation. This is a remote, impoverished area. There is much confusion, and misinformation runs rampant. The average person has less than an eighth grade education. We have learned over the years that most peo-

ple carry on conversations at that level too, so we figured that must be the understandable language level for all people.

We have learned through our experience that healing does not come easy, and it may never be complete. With that said, people need the big picture and through that view, more than anything, they need to see the good in each other and themselves. Those are some of the reasons why we didn't include more aspects of Walter's life. As Larry Van Horn points out, Walter did take a strong stand against the massacre site becoming a national park because he learned that it meant some of the residents would be relocated. He also has been a certified drug and alcohol counselor (through the state of Colorado) and started a Hazelden program on this reservation with Basil Braveheart, as well as an alcohol-counseling program in the reservation border town of Gordon, Nebraska. He founded a non-profit organization, the Tiyospaye Crisis Center, when he lived in Denver, assisting Indians there and bringing aid in various forms to Wounded Knee and other communities on the Pine Ridge Reservation. He was elected Wounded Knee District President for two terms but stopped after completing one because he can't stand politics. Had we listed those accomplishments we would have made others feel diminished and that would have defeated the purpose of his message.

Of particular interest to us is the number of men, including non-Natives, who are responding to Walter's memoir. One message that seems to sum up what they are saying came from our friend, Manus Pauwels, in the Netherlands. He wrote, "Although his story is unique ... for his people in this time, it talks about pains and fears and hope that [are] recognized all over the world, which makes Walter's story also a universal story, not only helpful and useful for Lakota people but for all human beings. So thank you, Walter, for sharing" (Pauwels n.d.).

The Lakota don't usually talk in chronological order. Walter's story didn't initially unfold that way either. However, an editor suggested that revision and we found it actually was another healing element. Chronological order put things in perspective. The trauma became a *part* of life, not *all* of life, and thus happier memories began to rise to the surface and bring comfort. One hope is that this narrative style will set an example others can follow in putting their lives in perspective as they attempt to find some peace.

Recently, Walter's story has taken on a life of its own. Numerous speaking engagements (including to anthropology students) have been complemented by the development of a documentary, *The Thick Dark Fog*. Award-winning filmmakers, including some connected with the Sun-



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dance Film Festival, have added their expertise. Thanks in part to generous funding from Native American Public Telecommunications, this perspective on Walter's story is being produced by Randy Vasquez and is scheduled to be broadcast on PBS during the 2012/2013 season. (For a preview, readers are invited to watch the trailer: [www.thickdarkfog.com](http://www.thickdarkfog.com).)

*Walter Littlemoon (Oglala Lakota) and his wife and collaborator Jane Ridgway are resident activists and cultural facilitators from the Wounded Knee community of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota. They are authors, counselors, and senior consultants on issues concerning community residents, including Complex Post Traumatic Stress and the impact of boarding schools on indigenous populations. They can be reached at 605-867-2092 or at [janedane@gwtc.net](mailto:janedane@gwtc.net).*

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