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# The Applied Anthropologist

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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 and electronic access to back issues are available on the website or by contacting Managing Editor Andrea Akers at [amakers@rams.colostate.edu](mailto:amakers@rams.colostate.edu) or Editor-in-Chief Peter Van Arsdale at [pvanarsd@du.edu](mailto:pvanarsd@du.edu). Further information about the society is available at [www.HPSfAA.org](http://www.HPSfAA.org). Membership information is available by contacting Merun Nasser at 303-449-0278 or at [merun@worldnet.att.net](mailto:merun@worldnet.att.net).

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## POINT-TO-POINT

PETER VAN ARSDALE



ANDREA AKERS

This issue of *The Applied Anthropologist* features a special section with contributions which commemorate the life and accomplishments of a revered figure in the field of applied anthropology, Dr. Gottfried Otto ("Friedl") Lang. A co-founder of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology, which sponsors this journal, he also served as teacher, mentor, and friend to many anthropologists now working world-wide. Two memos received from colleagues (here condensed) illustrate Friedl's impacts:

Larry Van Horn (of Littleton, Colorado) recalls Friedl "listening attentively to me one Saturday morning at his home in Boulder, Colorado, which he shared with his equally hospitable wife Martha.... This occasion occurred during the time when the High Plains Society ... was turning its newsletter into a peer-reviewed journal.... Friedl queried me about my interests and position: American Indian ethnography, ethnology, and ethnohistory,...a cultural resources specialist for park planning in the National Park Service.... In turn, I learned of Friedl's American Indian interests, especially on contemporary reservations and about his academic work at Brown University, the University of Chicago, and his Ph.D. from Cornell University.... Our common focus that day was on naming the new peer reviewed journal. [My suggestion] stuck, I believe, due to Friedl's anthropological insight and influence. It continues today, of course, as is well known and appreciated by its readers."

Gertrud Schanne-Raab (of Zweibruecken, Germany) recalls that with "a German degree in sociology I came to the University of Colorado in the fall of 1970 to learn something new, to study a field that was not taught in Germany. [Applied anthropology] taught me new ways of looking at life.... The deepest impact on me [was through] Friedl Lang and Bob Hackenberg, who became my thesis advisor. To me the most important concept transmitted was that of cultural relativism which I still perceive as the basic assumption of an anthropologist's approach. I learned that all cultures were formed by their own traditions and the interrelationship with their environment and that they developed unique responses to these challenges. I learned that there aren't any cultures that are *a priori* better or worse than others.... Having grown up in postwar Germany with its hidden tensions between overcoming Nazi racism and prejudices and developing a new self-esteem, the idea of cultural relativism had a liberating effect on me. It gave me the chance to study other societies and cultures with an open mind and to treat them as equals. No matter if I talked to church members about development projects or to business students about social change the idea of cultural relativism allowed me to present other societies and their ways of dealing with change as comparable to our ways. Friedl Lang [not only taught] anthropology in class but practiced these views in his daily life. He always took great interest in other people. He loved to ask questions and engage in long debates as he wanted to learn about other persons' ideas and explore their ways of thinking while at the same time giving them a feeling of high esteem."

Our featured articles and research reports provide insight into many different topics including community-based participatory research, creative leadership and group ethic, peace and secession in South Sudan, staff care and aid organizations, and education in emergencies. These authors provide important contributions to the field of applied anthropology and are tremendous additions to the journal's publishing record.

Our ongoing thanks are expressed to our associate editors Constance Holland, Joanne Moore, and Teresa Tellechea, as well as our editorial assistant, Tim Schommer. Appreciation is extended to those who served as peer reviewers for the current issue: Kreg Ettenger, Ph.D.; Constance Holland, M.A.; Joanne Moore, M.A.; David Stephenson, Ph.D., J.D.; Teresa Tellechea, Ph.D.; and Cees Van Beek, M.A.

--Peter Van Arsdale, Editor-in-Chief

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HONORING FRIEDL: APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY  
AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGH PLAINS SOCIETY

CARLA N. LITTLEFIELD

## ABSTRACT

Gottfried Otto Lang, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Colorado – Boulder until his death in 2011, was one of the founders of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. Affectionately known as Friedl to friends and colleagues, he was born in Oberammergau, Bavaria. He fled Nazi Germany in 1937 and became a U.S. citizen in 1945. With an M.A. from the University of Chicago and a Ph.D. in anthropology from Cornell University, he came from a post at The Catholic University to a post at the University of Colorado in 1966 to assume the position of Professor of Anthropology. In 1981 he became the first elected chairperson of the High Plains Regional Section of the Society for Applied Anthropology. Through the next decade he guided the fledgling organization's transition to independence as the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology (HPSfAA). This article is a tribute to Friedl and the importance of his role in the birth and development of HPSfAA, as well as to his influence on the field of applied anthropology.

**KEY WORDS:** Gottfried O. Lang, applied anthropology, High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology

## INTRODUCTION

The birth of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology (HPSfAA) can be attributed in large part to the dedication of a small group of Colorado applied anthropologists that included Gottfried O. Lang. Affectionately known as Friedl to friends, family, students, and colleagues, this German-born anthropologist had an amazing journey from Oberammergau to Colorado where he became the first elected chairperson of the fledgling High Plains Regional Section of the Society for Applied Anthropology. In the words of one of his students and colleagues, he was an adventurer, a romantic, a humanist, and a scientist; he was Everyman whose friends in the 15<sup>th</sup> century morality play were Strength, Knowledge, Intelligence, and Good Deeds (Keller 2011a). This article begins with a brief biography of Friedl based on his résumé from the University of Colorado at Boulder and his obituary (Santa Fe New Mexican.com 2011) and moves into the importance of his role in the launching and nurturing of HPSfAA in its early years. Utilizing materials from the HPSfAA archives, it considers the influence that he had on the field of applied anthropology as summarized by his own published thoughts and those of his colleagues.

## BIOGRAPHY

Friedl was born March 24, 1919, in Oberammergau, a world renowned village in Bavaria, Germany, steeped in the celebration of the Passion Play. In later life, he would return here to study the culture and traditions which made his home town so unusual. He attended grammar

school there from 1925 to 1930, then on to secondary school in Weilheim and Ettal, Bavaria from 1930 to 1935. He then attended flying schools in Dusseldorf, Karlsruhe, Munich, and Berlin from 1935 to 1937. Throughout the 1930s, Friedl became active in the Catholic Youth Movement (CYM), a group opposed to the Hitler Jugend. CYM was attractive to Friedl because of their emphasis on action; they did not just discuss issues, but had to "do" something as well. For Friedl, this was the origin of his interest in applied anthropology (Keller 2011b).

As the Nazi party rose to power, members of the CYM were targeted for suspicion, harassment, and arrest. Friedl escaped Germany in 1937 to fly for Catholic missions in the Hudson Bay area of Canada. In 1938, he attended post-graduate flying school at Parks Air College in East St. Louis, Illinois. Between 1940 and 1944, he attended Brown University and earned his bachelor's degree in engineering. He became a U.S. citizen in 1945. In 1948, he received a Master of Arts degree in anthropology from the University of Chicago, followed by a Ph.D. in anthropology from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York in 1953.

Friedl's professional career as an educator dated back to 1948-1951, the period between earning his M.A. and his Ph.D. degrees when he was an instructor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Utah. Upon completion of his doctorate, he accepted the position of assistant professor of anthropology at The Catholic University of America and was promoted to associate professor in 1958. Three years later he was awarded a Fulbright Professorship to the *Soziologisches Institut* at the

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University of Munich. The Catholic University then promoted him to full professor, a position he held from 1963 to 1966. In 1966 he moved to Colorado to assume the position of Professor of Anthropology at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He taught initially at the Institute of Behavioral Science where he was Director of the Program of Research on Culture Change. He also served as Co-Chairman of the African and Middle Eastern Studies Program. Upon his retirement on May 31, 1986, he was appointed Professor Emeritus.

In his resume, Friedl identified his principal professional interests as social and cultural change, applied anthropology, theory and method, peasant societies (Europe), North American Indians, Africa (especially East Africa), and New Guinea (Irian Jaya, now called Papua). These interests are reflected in his grants, research and articles in scholarly publications. After his retirement, Friedl donated his collection of research notes, studies, and papers to the Archives of the University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries (Shurtz 2011). This rich collection includes his notes from field work among the Sukuma of Tanzania, Utes, Northern Utes, and the Asmat of New Guinea, as well as a national study on American Indian education.

Martha Lang, his wife, soul mate, and collaborator, shared his commitment to anthropology. They met at the University of Chicago and married in 1947 to begin a life-long partnership filled with family (eight children), research and devotion to their faith. At least three of his publications were co-authored with Martha. After Friedl's retirement, they moved to Santa Fe. Both were oblates of the Monastery of Christ in the Desert near Abiquiu, New Mexico. When HPSfAA members attended fall retreats at Ghost Ranch, Friedl invited friends and former students to join him at services at the monastery. After Martha passed away, Friedl moved to the monastery, spending the last years of life in prayer and peace, but still visited by HPSfAA members during our fall retreat.

## SHAPING A NEW ORGANIZATION

According to Friedl (1981), the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) requested, in 1978, that regional committees be formed to study the feasibility of certifying applied anthropology programs and practicing anthropologists. The Colorado committee was composed of Deward Walker (chairperson), Omer Stewart, Michael Higgins, and Friedl. The committee met over the course of a year and reported back to the SfAA annual business meeting in Philadelphia in March 1979. Colorado concurred with other regional committees that accrediting programs and individuals was premature; the real interest lay in the development of regional societies. SfAA responded with a vote of approval for the formation of the High Plains Regional Section of the SfAA.

Deward Walker chaired an Ad Hoc Planning Committee to move forward with the mandate. The committee was composed of applied anthropologists with academic and nonacademic affiliations, specifically, Deward, Friedl, Omer Stewart, Jack Schultz, Julie Uhlmann, Peter Van Arsdale, and Michael Higgins. The Ad Hoc committee called for an organizational meeting at the next SfAA annual meeting held in Denver on March 22, 1980. About 50 people attended the meeting. Many were former students of Lang, Walker, Stewart, and Robert Hackenberg, all professors at the University of Colorado - Boulder. Others had moved into the region more recently and were working in a variety of applied positions; all had applied interests. Attendees decided to make it a regional organization, embracing the geographical areas represented by those present, states generally east of and within the region of the Rocky Mountains. Omer Stewart suggested, and all concurred, that the best geographical designation for the title was the High Plains Regional Section (HPRS) of the SfAA.

Following the SfAA annual meeting in 1980, the Ad Hoc Planning Committee met again to select pro-tem officers and establish several sub-committees: by-laws, membership, and annual meeting. The date for the annual meeting was set for February 20-22, 1981 at the Hilton Harvest House in Boulder with Michael Higgins as chair. The main purpose of this first annual meeting was formal and informal interchange of current information among High Plains applied anthropologists as well as further organizational planning. Harland Padfield from Oregon State University gave the keynote address. At the business meeting, attendees adopted the proposed bylaws and elected the following officers: Friedl Lang (Chairperson), Shirley Kurz-Jones (Vice-Chairperson), and Carla Littlefield, Secretary-Treasurer. Executive committee members at-large were chosen to represent the different geographical areas within the High Plains: Ruth Kornfield (North Area), Robert Hill (South Area), and Peter Morley (Central Area). Other executive committee members were: Deward Walker (past chairperson pro-tem), Peter Van Arsdale (newsletter) and Jack Schultz (nominations and elections).

Friedl hosted meetings of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee as well as meetings of the HPRS executive committee during the two years of his chairmanship, 1981-1983. He convened these meetings at his home in Boulder, a comfortable old house on a tree-lined street in the vicinity of the university. Ken Keller (2011b) recalled that Friedl and Martha had established an earlier, welcoming home atmosphere for students and colleagues when Friedl taught at The Catholic University of America. Visitors to the Lang home in Washington, D.C. included staff from the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), professionals who had worked with Friedl in Africa. A Catholic



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University doctoral student, Elliot Liebow (1967), also frequented the Lang home as he worked under Friedl's guidance on his dissertation in the 1960s, focused on streetcorner African American men. Liebow recognized Friedl in his acknowledgments for *Tally's Corner*.

Deward Walker (2003) reminisced on the meetings at Friedl's Boulder home in the focus group convened by John van Willigen and Pamela Puntenney in 2003 at Estes Park. He described Friedl's home as a social center with food, wine, and cigars and convivial interactions with the large Lang family.

...Friedl was a very gentle, wonderful man, and still is, who had a wonderful and gentle and supportive wife and family. We all benefited tremendously from that, so we had this very warm foundation for what we were doing together, and he always helped maintain that atmosphere and made us want to come to his house to the meetings, made us want to be a part of it... be bathed in this wonderful warm light of the Lang household. Friedl became the first actual president elected and was instrumental in many of the moves that were necessary to get us going, in planning, and getting incorporated...his students...became his disciples and right arms in getting the society moving.

Friedl's leadership was critical to the success of the new organization. Early issues reflected in the minutes of the executive committee meetings were incorporation, annual meetings, and the inauguration of a newsletter. SfAA initially informed the group that it could incorporate as a regional section and this was set in motion. Russell Coberly agreed to chair the second annual meeting to be held again in Boulder at the Hilton Harvest House in February, 1982. In October, 1981, Peter Van Arsdale, newsletter editor, sent out the first edition to 87 members as well as to everyone who had attended the annual meeting that year and to all anthropology departments in the region. The first newsletter included highlights/abstracts of most of the sessions of the first annual meeting. The next newsletter in January, 1982, carried the preliminary program for the second annual meeting. Under Peter's direction, the newsletter was on its way to becoming "an effective voice of and for applied anthropologists in the High Plains/Rocky Mountain region" (Van Arsdale 1981).

Friedl (1981) laid out his vision for the new organization in the first newsletter. The lead article was titled, "HPRS a Viable Reality: Introductory Letter from Friedl Lang, Chairperson." Friedl stated:

Our prime purpose is to reach as many practicing anthropologists in our region as possible. By practicing anthropologists we mean not only those who have degrees in anthropology (B.A., M.A., Ph.D.), but all those who, no matter what their disciplinary

and academic background may have been, find the anthropological approach of help in solving the technical, environmental, organizational and other human problems they must deal with in their work. That is, they see their work as being part of a cultural matrix or context; they see problems to be solved in a systemic and holistic manner, sometimes of a cross-cultural nature. These practicing anthropologists are concerned about the social consequences of their actions and the programs they work with. They subscribe to the "Statement on Professional and Ethical Responsibilities" of the SfAA.

In the same article, Friedl advocated for a sense of community among the region's practicing anthropologists, recognizing that many had little opportunity to share experiences, both successes and failures. He promoted the society's annual meetings as a place where members could get to know each other, exchange information on problems and solutions, and learn from one another. In Friedl's words:

This can add to our knowledge of the application of anthropological principles...It will also help us overcome the feelings of isolation working in environments where we may be the only ones who have human concerns in mind. Forming such a society will also help us to help each other. It is important for us to identify imaginative opportunities for applied research and to help locate those people who can fill such jobs when they rise.

In this spirit of community, HPSfAA members turned out annually for meetings held initially at hotels in the Denver-Boulder area. Through the efforts of Peter Van Arsdale and Larry Van Horn, proceedings of the annual meeting sessions were printed in the society's early publications, another effort to disseminate information and promote communication among the members. The character of the annual meetings gradually changed between 1981 and 1985. We initially modeled our format after the national anthropology societies and convened at hotels. By the third year, members were asking for more opportunity for informal discussion and interaction and less expense. In 1984, former Friedl students Ken Keller and Arthur Campa of Metropolitan State College of Denver invited the group to meet at the Auraria Higher Education Center there. From 1985 to 1992, the High Plains Society found a more permanent location for its annual meetings at the Bethlehem Center, a rural retreat center in Broomfield, in the northern suburbs of metropolitan Denver. The center appealed to the members' need for a relaxed, informal, come-as-you-are atmosphere where they could renew friendships, applaud what colleagues were doing, and welcome new members.

## HPSfAA ADDRESSES ISSUES OF THE EARLY 1980s

Applied anthropology in the early 1980s was taught



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and practiced within the historical backdrop being experienced by the nation. In November of 1980, Ronald Reagan defeated Jimmy Carter and became the 40<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S. He would be elected for a second term in 1984. A deep recession hit the country between 1981 and 1983 with the highest unemployment rate (10.4%) reported since 1940. Politicians took a hard line against welfare and related social programs. There was a backlash against illegal aliens supposedly taking jobs and utilizing health resources without paying taxes. The federal budget director proposed “trickle down” economics, essentially decreasing taxes for the rich to enable them to invest and trickle down benefits to average Americans (Holland 1995). For applied anthropologists, there were myriad opportunities in areas of advocacy, action research, and policy development.

Both academic and practicing applied anthropologists reported on their efforts at our annual meetings. The theme for the 1981 meeting was “Applied Anthropology in the High Plains Region.” Sessions addressed such issues as teaching applied anthropology, women and development, understanding health practices, and participating in the marketplace as applied anthropologists. In 1982, the theme was “Government and Anthropology: Mediation, Advocacy, Brokerage,” with emphasis on government funding structures and parallels between public and private sectors. Sessions included women in boomtowns (chaired by former Friedl student Carla Littlefield); cultural resource management; anthropological-governmental interface in first and third world development projects; role problems for anthropologists in international development work (chaired by Friedl’s colleague from FAO, Darwin Solomon); and implications of federal budget cuts for applied social science. The theme for the 1983 meeting was the “Anthropology of Crisis and Crisis Management.” The opening session focused on a crisis in higher education, specifically on proposed funding cuts for the anthropology program at the University of Northern Colorado where Michael Higgins was a faculty member. Another session focused on the crisis in cultural resource management, also attributed to funding cuts. Other sessions included the crises of both individuals and families with mental health problems in different cultures. Colby Hatfield, former Friedl student, contributed insights from his field work among the Maasai in Tanzania. (Hatfield’s contribution covering this can be found elsewhere in this issue.) Omer Stewart, CU Professor Emeritus and a founder of HPSfAA, delivered the keynote address on Japanese relocation.

In 1984, the annual meeting’s theme was Human Rights, and at least two of Friedl’s former students chaired sessions: “Rights of Migrant Farmworkers” (Carla Littlefield) and “International Law and Human Rights” (David Stephenson), both practicing applied anthropologists in professional po-

sitions. Ted Downing, President-Elect of SfAA, presented the keynote address, “Human Rights and the Future of Anthropology.” In 1985, Colby Hatfield chaired the annual meeting that was held at the Bethlehem Center for the first time. The theme was “Communities,” and an innovative format departed from the formal presentation of papers to concentrate on group discussions with facilitators and key discussants. The informal sessions included consideration of conceptual models of community, such as professional community and political community, as well as agents and agencies involved with communities. In 1986, HPSfAA co-sponsored the SfAA annual meeting in Reno, Nevada. Friedl attended the meeting and was a visible, supportive presence at sessions organized by HPSfAA members or which included papers presented by our members. HPSfAA had attained national recognition.

## MOVING HPSfAA FORWARD INTO INDEPENDENCE

Friedl’s term as chairperson ended in 1983, but he remained on the executive committee as “past chairperson” for another two years. In late 1983, the SfAA informed the High Plains Society that, because of IRS regulations, it could no longer be a regional section of the SfAA. The issue was the subject of a session led by Reed Riner, Chairperson, at our 1984 annual meeting. Members pondered and discussed whether we had the critical mass, the collective numbers, the commitment and opportunity for interaction sufficient for independent success (Knop 1984). Discussion continued at a fall retreat at the Broken Arrow Ranch in October. With Friedl’s influence and Reed Riner’s leadership, by 1985 the High Plains Regional Section of SfAA had officially become the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. Members approved the revised bylaws that changed the name of the organization and changed the title of chairperson to president and vice-chairperson to president-elect. Revised articles of incorporation with these changes were submitted to the Colorado Secretary of State’s Office in 1985.

The transition of the Society to independence was reflected in the publications of HPSfAA. Peter Van Arsdale was newsletter editor until 1984 when Ed Knop assumed the position and published it as a bulletin. In the fall, Ed introduced the *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* in a journal-type, peer reviewed format that included much of the same content established by Peter: refereed articles, organizational news, programs for meetings, commentaries, brief communications, book reviews, and notices of upcoming events. The publication supported the mission of the Society, stated in the revised bylaws: its objective is “the study and application of the principles that explain the relations of human beings to one another, and the dissemination of this body of knowledge.” Throughout its history,



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the journal has maintained the highest standards of journalism and also provides a valuable repository of information about HPSfAA.

Another service provided to members was the directory published in 1985 and 1988 by Lin Evans, directory editor/publisher. The directories served the purpose of improving communications among HPSfAA members and to link them with other applied anthropologists and members of other anthropology societies. In addition to the usual contact information, the directory identified each member's applied interests. The entry for Friedl in 1985 noted his interests as: agricultural development, community development, and cultural relations. He described his research in Bavaria as "cultural continuity and change in Alpine villages in relation to tourism." In 1988, he added technological change, medical anthropology, and educational anthropology to his interests. The description of his research was more focused: "Transformation of an Alpine village (Oberammergau) over past 350 years into tourist town, in the context of regional and state social, political, economic and religious changes."

During this early period, Friedl fostered the young organization, promoting the strengths that gave HPSfAA vitality. These strengths have been enumerated previously (Littlefield 2000). They included 1) a healthy mix of practitioners and academics, with generous support from the regional anthropology departments, especially the University of Colorado - Boulder and Metropolitan State College of Denver; 2) multidisciplinary diversity (sociologists, environmentalists, human service providers and others who fit Friedl's concept of membership, i.e., anyone who applies the anthropological approach in their work); 3) steady inflow and enthusiastic acceptance of students; 4) large enough geographical area to support a critical mass of members; 5) a relatively large core of committed members who have consistently taken on responsibilities and roles of leadership when called upon; 6) strong administrative structure spelled out in the bylaws; 7) fiscal responsibility with the designation of 501(c)3 status with the IRS and eligibility for charitable donations; 8) mutually supportive relationships with the two national applied anthropology organizations - SfAA and NAPA; 9) a nationally recognized journal; and 10) a tradition of annual meetings and retreats where members get renewed, share ideas, and confirm their commitment, vision, and community.

## FRIEDL'S ROLE IN APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY

Through his students and the organization he helped found, Friedl had a large impact on the field of applied anthropology, especially in the High Plains region. Robert Hackenberg (2006) recalled that he and Omer Stewart had been instrumental in recruiting Friedl to the University of Colorado in 1966. He and Friedl had been classmates at

Cornell University where they worked on their doctorates in anthropology in the 1950s. Hackenberg had a divided appointment with the Institute of Behavioral Science (IBS) at CU and the Department of Anthropology. When another divided position became available, Hackenberg recommended Friedl.

Omer Stewart, founder of the anthropology department at CU, respected Friedl's work among the Utes and wanted his expertise in the department. Friedl's appointment began in September 1966. After Omer Stewart retired, Friedl Lang, Robert Hackenberg, and Deward Walker became the source of applied research and dissertation supervision through the 1970s and into the 1980s. They initiated a curriculum built on four basic courses: applied, urban, medical and development anthropology. Area courses reflected the expertise of the faculty: Native Americans (Walker), Southeast Asia (Hackenberg), and East Africa (Lang). Between 1970 and 1975, they graduated ten PhDs; the applied program flourished (Hackenberg 2006).

Friedl published two articles on applied anthropology in the *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* (1988; 1998). In 1988, he asked, "Does the application of anthropology to human problems have a future?" He noted the emergence of graduate programs in applied anthropology at several universities, probably related to the decline of jobs in academia. These new programs provided opportunities for solving "pressing" human problems. He urged anthropologists to be critical of "an oversimplified, 'so-called' rational scientific approach." Before embarking on a traditional research design, Friedl strongly advocated the process of participant observation and unstructured interviewing to discover the nature of the problem, what solutions had been applied, and to determine the workable, culturally acceptable solution. Local participation was critical. His own research, with Martha Lang in Oberammergau, reflected this orientation (Lang and Lang 1987).

In 1998, HPSfAA bestowed on Friedl the Omer C. Stewart Memorial Award in recognition for exemplary achievement. His acceptance speech was published in the *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* (1998). He recalled that, as a graduate student at the University of Chicago, he did field work with the Northern Utes in northeastern Utah in the summer of 1950. He saw his role as that of a scientist collecting objective data about a socio-cultural system. After establishing rapport, he was eventually asked for help in dealing with some tribal problems. Feeling inadequate, he wrote to Robert Redfield in Chicago for advice, but was disappointed when Redfield answered in a letter that he could not help him. Redfield referred Friedl to Sol Tax who was developing a course on action anthropology at the University of Chicago. The discipline was beginning to recognize the action or applied role of the anthropologist in



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helping communities identify and solve problems. Friedl found out later in his career that the scientific method, objectivity leading to abstractions, was not always the answer to human problems. He found that by applying anthropological principles, one could not only be objective, but also sympathetic and compassionate. Just as he had experienced the "action mandate" from the Catholic Youth Movement in the 1930s, in Bavaria, to "do" something, Friedl told us, "...we must not be innocent bystanders, but do our part to help in creatively finding solutions to old and new problems." This is his legacy to HPSfAA and to all of us who see ourselves as applied anthropologists.

Carla N. Littlefield holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Colorado - Boulder, awarded in 1981. She served as the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology's first secretary-treasurer from 1981 to 1986, is a past president of the society, and is the current archivist. She is a retired consultant and nurse educator. She may be reached at [cnlittlefield@q.com](mailto:cnlittlefield@q.com).

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FOLLOWING FRIEDL: FORAYS INTO AFRICAN FIELDWORK

COLBY HATFIELD

## ABSTRACT

This article explores Gottfried Lang's influence over my enculturation into the theory, method, and practice of cultural anthropology. It traces this influence through three Tanzanian fieldwork experiences. The paper concludes with a reflection on the importance of cultivating a mindset of serendipity when undertaking any kind of anthropological investigation, and an exhortation that this mindset be recognized as an integral component of anthropology.

**KEY WORDS:** Gottfried O. Lang, Sukuma, *bafumu*, livestock development, serendipity, Tanzania

This article is both an investigation into and reflection on my experiences becoming an anthropologist, an enculturation into its perspectives and the learning techniques of gathering and analyzing data in field research projects. Substantial portions of this experience were either directly guided by Friedl Lang or bore his lengthy shadow of mentorship. My goal is twofold: to better understand the dynamics of my approach to the anthropological endeavor and to discover (re-discover) the influence Friedl's tutelage had over my professional career. I will focus on my enculturation into anthropology as a graduate student at The Catholic University of America, Friedl being the central figure in guiding me. Then, I will discuss my first fieldwork abroad, in Tanzania, the Sukumaland Livestock Development project, and also take a brief look at its Maasai version. I'll conclude by putting it all together.

## THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Regina Herzfeld, chair of the Anthropology Department, after learning what dated literature background I had of the field, more embarrassed than I, hustled me into Friedl's introductory course. The course, a highly structural excursion into the basics of cultural anthropology, I learned later, was rather typical of the time. I discovered the department attracted an unusual collection of graduate students. My classmates on the whole were well-seasoned government workers, medical personnel and others, almost all well traveled, sophisticated and articulate. Comments on anthropological issues came easily to them.

Learning anthropology with Friedl moved far beyond the kind of classroom experiences I was used to. Older students in the know deliberately diverted him from his lecture notes, enticing him, I believe willingly, to wander into fascinating anthropological back streets and alleyways. Later, when I was a more seasoned student, Friedl

invited me to join one of his interdisciplinary seminars, the foci of which were usually explorations into dauntingly elusive topics, "power and authority," for example. Implicit was the understanding that participants could move into any arena of discussion they chose. Discussions veered madly from the assigned topic. Membership transcended status. I nestled between experts in dead Middle Eastern languages, psychologists, sociologists, historians of the Middle Ages, all bellowing about distinctions, moving the discussion into arenas of knowledge I had little acquaintance with or that by the texts I was reading were sacrosanct, hardly open to scrutiny.

Outside of class Friedl enticed me into his web of mentorship and his family, as he did with many of his students. I think he intuitively associated my naiveté with his own, entering into a new world of discourse when he escaped from the Nazi net to the USA more than 20 years before. In a sense following his path, I ventured unknowingly into participant observation of my future field and its community.

Even headier discourse ended most of Martha's and Friedl's departmental soirees. The keg of beer had to be finished and after the more polite guests had scurried away, Friedl, Michael Kenny, Elliot Liebow, just completing his research of Washington Street Corner men, and die-hard members of Elliot's graduate student cohort engaged in an interchange that would make a !Kung community healing ceremony seem like a tea party. Martha served cheese and cigars, while I, departmental Ganymede, poured libations. They had lots to say about their experiences in translating classroom and texts into the real world. While classroom learning provided us with the ethnographic and theoretical bases of the field and most seminars the freedom to challenge the very concepts and theories we were absorbing, Friedl's post party wind-ups in

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Martha's kitchen gave us the opportunity to vicariously experience that real down and dirty experience of application.

Washington had a lively anthropological scene, and Friedl made certain his graduate students had full opportunities to participate. Rides to the Smithsonian Institution or other historical settings in his VW bus were *de rigor*. Washington Anthropological Society meetings thrust us into contact with eminent scholars and professionals who seemed perfectly comfortable chatting with uncomfortable tongue-tied graduate students.

The above opportunities presented the informal addendum to the academic priorities of formal lecture and text, the most emphasized academic means for growing an anthropologist. For this inquiry, most salient was Friedl's yearlong "class" in research methods. I put this in quotes because with a few exceptions, his syllabus was again stalled by the student *cognoscenti*, luring him away from his prepared lecture into the arena of applications and adventuresome speculation. These diversions were not escapes from the subject, but rather gave us tyros the opportunity to gain insights into the messy nature of the research process. From participant observation and the possibly deviant nature of one's most accessible informant, to elaborate social surveying and textual content analysis, Friedl's research methods class covered everything that at the time could be covered.

## FRIEDL AS A "ROGERIAN"

"That's interesting. Can you tell me a little more about it?" As I recall, this form of dialogue was essentially Friedl's informal means of communication in contradistinction to his lecturing style. His questions were usually accompanied by body language indicating genuine interest in hearing what we had to say. With a slight twist of his head, squint of his eye, and fiddling of his pipe, he was inviting us to expound on an opinion or topic. Later in my graduate career, Friedl characterized his approach as "Rogerian," in homage to Carl Rogers, who was at the forefront of Humanistic Psychology and known for his learner-centered approach to teaching. Friedl may have had contact with Rogers at the University of Chicago in 1945. Roger's seminal work was published in 1951 (Rogers 1951).

Speculation on how Friedl came into contact with Roger's theories of education aside, the manner in which he chose to interact with his graduate students and colleagues involved a stance of open-endedness. His goal was to facilitate learning beginning with an affirmation of the worth of persons, their opinions and make it clear that he was an empathetic listener. Of course, the twofold aim of this approach is one where the teacher learns while

gently guiding the student to greater insight, while not necessarily bringing resolution to any issue.

At first, I thought this technique was Socratic, but with Friedl it lacked the kind of not so hidden smugness that seemed to me to lie behind Socrates' methods of getting his interlocutor to see the defects in an argument or opinion. However, another of Friedl's favorite questions, "Have you read...?" could prove a daunting challenge. It was for me, for rarely had I read what he was alluding to. A fellow student, exhausted with this kind of question, finally said, "No! Have you?" To which Friedl responded in surprise that he hadn't. He was just wondering if the reading in question would shed any light on the issue they were discussing.

I note this important characteristic for two reasons. It certainly existed in contradistinction to Friedl's manner of classroom lecturing. Not that he purported to be the expert, but the learning context made the conclusion inevitable. In retrospect I believe Rogers provided Friedl with the theoretical basis for doing what he did best and left him willingly open to being lured from his "text." The second reason I explore in a little more detail at the close of this paper. Suffice it to say that Friedl's pedagogy reinforced the spirit of inquiry, which I have come to learn, is the genius of anthropology. In vernacular, he was constantly encouraging those around him to "think outside the box," although I don't ever remember him using the phrase. He was slyly inviting us to engage in healthy adventures in cultural relativism, which meant challenging our conventional concepts and describing what makes us humans do what we do.

During this time some of us had the opportunity to test our wings as researchers in Washington. One of two experiences severely challenged my choice of careers. I wasn't prepared to investigate my own society and I didn't realize that I was already learning to be a participant observer.

## BASUKUMA AND BAFUMU

Not completely convinced that the exotic can be as much in one's own backyard as a thousand miles away, the prospect of fieldwork overseas grew to be more and more exciting as I moved through an M.A. degree, the university's Ph. D. requirements of two language exams, a first and second minor and into the final stages of my Ph. D. program. Having fallen in love with Anna Marie Czaplicka's *My Siberian Year*, I entertained hopes to do research with the Chukchee or Yukagir (Czaplicka 1920). With the Soviet Union in the midst of the Cold War, Friedl offered me a more accessible opportunity in East Africa. With his encouragement, I obtained a modest fellowship that would support my research for a year. Through the



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efforts of Regina Herzfeld, Catholic University waived my tuition and academic fees. Encumbered with a seemingly immense poundage of research equipment, I set sail for Tanganyika in late summer of 1963..

A few years prior, Friedl and Bishop Blomjous, a Dutch White Father responsible for developing an educational complex at Nyegezi, a few miles outside of Mwanza, the regional capital, had forged an alliance. The Nyegezi Social Research Institute and the Program in Social and Cultural Change in Sukumaland were born (Lang 1962). Sukumaland, the home of the largest tribe in Tanzania, the Basukuma (henceforth called Sukuma), covers approximately 19,000 square miles, extending southwards from Lake Victoria Nyanza like an overloaded hammock. In 1963 its population numbered around 1.5 million. The Sukuma offered interesting potentials for research: originally composed of chiefdoms, yet highly egalitarian, yet possessing a history of traditional cooperative organizations; primarily farmers with a great investment in cattle-keeping, producers of cotton and sisal through enforced cropping by the British, and represented to the world through only a modest scientific literature.

A Catholic University senior graduate student, Charles Noble, and a Dutch researcher, Hans Vande Sande, were the co-directors of the institute, which provided free office space and lodging. Prior to my arrival, a number of European and American students were attracted to the institute. Among these were fellow anthropology students Warren Roth and Margaret Paulus from the University of Cologne. Through his network, Friedl learned of two other Ph. D. candidates who planned on establishing base at the institute, Mary Eaton Read of Stanford and Andrew Maguire of Harvard. Always interested in collaborative endeavors, he invited both to attend a pre-departure colloquium. Aside from long discussions as to what "egalitarian" meant in the Sukuma context, the most important item on the agenda was the fieldwork process. After enduring an entire year of research methodologies, I was surprised to learn that at least one of my new colleagues had never had the benefit of such an academic experience.

I arrived in Sukumaland armed with a number of new items for research as well as a mandate on how to properly carry it out. However, my research methods class notes did not include cameras, watches, cumbersome tape recorders, the prototypes of fieldnote paper and a typewriter, all of which Friedl ineluctably required. I already possessed the latter and was given samples of the penultimate, but was required to buy the rest. Friedl lent me the tape recorder. Save for a few instances, it remained at Nyegezi, being too cumbersome to be packed on the used Honda 160 cc motorcycle I purchased. Accommodations at

the institute were reasonably luxurious by Tanzanian standards; a shared house with a private bedroom, water, and an office at the institute.

## The Research Project

My original intent was to investigate the Sukuma tradition of *balogi*, loosely translated as witchcraft, sorcery or "poisoning." I asked a question: under conditions of rapid socio-cultural change how would the Sukuma belief in the ability of neighbors to "mystically" harm alter? The topic fit very nicely with the kind of research Friedl and Bishop Blomjous wanted for the Social Research Institute.

I was given free range to err as I wished. I had read enough to know that witchcraft was a subject people in most cultures were loath to talk about and was not the easiest subject for a novice anthropologist to undertake. But I had a strategy, which Friedl considered a reasonable one to test. The scant literature on the Sukuma indicated that those who know most about the subject are those whose training and sensitivity qualify them to reveal *balogi* and assist in redressing their evildoings. These "religious specialists" were called *bafumu*. My strategy was to work intensively with *bafumu* to gather witchcraft lore, case studies and witness divinations. To some extent I was correct, Sukuma religious specialists and curers are experts in revealing *balogi*. In almost all instances they are absolutely necessary, but *bafumu* proved to be extremely reluctant to talk about these evildoers. As one of my informants said, "to know about witches is to be one."

It became quite clear that if I wanted material for a dissertation, I would have to make drastic repairs to my research topic. With Friedl's commiseration, suggestions and eventual approval, *bafumu* became my focus. I was already apprenticed to an engaging *nchembi wa ngoko* (chicken diviner), each day traveling the Sukuma countryside on my motorcycle visiting clients. Each evening I returned to the luxury of the institute, typed out fieldnotes in triplicate, the original for myself, a pink carbon copy for the institute and a third pink copy for Friedl's files in Boulder. Afterward, I would have dinner, share my day with fellow researchers, take a shower (cold) and partake in the occasional party.

However, something was wrong. First, as I reviewed my field notes, Friedl's discussions on the importance of scientific validity and reliability in the collection and analysis of data came to haunt me. How reliable was my information? How could I contribute anything meaningful about *bafumu* on the basis of a year's experience with one or two religious specialists other than to report on how to diagnose a physical, mental or spiritual problem by dissecting a chicken? The answer was obvious, I would have to broaden my investigation. But doing so seemed to run



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afoul of another reason I was in Tanzania: my rite of passage, the only way I could truly become an anthropologist, or so I thought. Even my original research design didn't take into account my almost unconscious expectation that my first field experience would replicate Laura Bohannan's adventures with the Tiv.

## A Word on Fieldnotes and Research Revision

As I began my anthropological enculturation in 1959, I thought a peek at Herskovitz's text, *Cultural Anthropology* might provide insight into discussions of the research process of the time. The following is what I must have absorbed in Friedl's introductory course and was partially reinforced much later in Russell Bernard's *Research Methods in Anthropology* (2006):

*"Descriptions of actual methods used by anthropologists in the field are rare, though increasing attention is being given to the technical problems of methodology"* (Herskovitz 1955: 369).

But, while describing the ethnological endeavor, Herskovitz dismissed discussion of "points of detail in field method...recording instruments" as being the province of the "specialist" equivalent to "test tubes and microscopes" (p.383), only taking on importance "in terms of the more fundamental considerations that arise out of how the research worker conceives his problem, and his basic approach toward its solution" (p. 383).

Friedl's requirements for his students concerning methods and points of detail differed from those of Herskovitz. A salient example of "points of detail" was Friedl's meticulous rules for fieldnote taking. All names and places in code (GOL for Friedl, CRH for Colby, etc.); recording time of day and atmospheric conditions; noting your physical condition; meticulous entries of observations, actions, conversations, interviews, and reactions, a kind of pre-analysis, but clearly stated as such. All of these notes *cum* recordings had to be done in triplicate. The routine taking of fieldnotes was in no way to be arbitrary, nor their dissemination left to the discretion of the researcher; they were to be public documents. As an example of how procedures have evolved toward Friedl's approach, Bernard's recent text on anthropological research advances a position similar to his (2006: 398).

Code names within the field notes came in quite handy when halfway through our fieldwork, since we were called on the carpet by the Mwanza Regional Commissioner. One of our team members buried his field notes for fear they might be confiscated and possibly be used against his informants. Part of Friedl's insistence on such scrupulous recording of data was related to his vision of the uses to which they would be put—reposing at the institute and available to any scholar who wanted to consult

them. Thus, clarity, specificity, and anonymity were crucial.

My apprenticeship centered in and around Mwanza. While waiting for advice from Friedl about the first of my dilemmas and after considering the few months remaining before my funds ran out, I decided to abandon my medicine father. With my assistant, the typewriter, notepaper, two camp beds and personal effects on the back of the Honda, I initiated research into the five administrative districts constituting Sukumaland at the time. My plan was to visit each district tracking down *bafumu*, accepting their hospitality when available and thus, expand my understanding of what I called "the position of *bafumu* in Sukuma society" (Hatfield 1968). In Bernard's view, my efforts were hardly "scientific" (2006: 146). I wasn't even doing "simple sampling." I was armed with an interview schedule I had "tested" in one of the districts and filled with hopes that while gathering survey data on the run I might possibly be able to gain some of the depth of understanding I had achieved in my first apprenticeship, and also have at least a fleeting experience of "being present" to a people, as was Bohannan.

I should note that at the onset of my research I did not fully realize how my persona as inquirer about *bafumu* would dovetail with a common practice in which Sukuma seeking knowledge or curing would apprentice themselves to an *nfumu*. As apprentices they would do exactly as I had done with my first medicine father, *ise buhemba*. They would hang out with their master and in return for their labors the medicine father or mother would provide them with spiritual protection and teach them about medicines and divination. I had become an apprentice without knowing it.

The first stop was to a locally famed practitioner living in Kwimba District. As we bounced across the fallow rows of maize fields, I marveled at the size of Nyumbani's spread and promptly propelled us off the cycle. Thus we made our entrance, limping through the main gate of Nyumbani's homestead. Two discoveries kept me at Nyumbani's residence for the remainder of my stay in Tanzania; I had discovered a prophet and I learned I had a windfall of a fellowship. To be truthful, Nyumbani was not fully a prophet or *nanga*, according to Sukuma tradition, but he was well on his way. How could I not remain to witness and record his evolution? But was I venturing into yet another deviation from my original attempts to study the dynamics of witchcraft? Friedl wrote, informing me that my attempt to salvage my research was acceptable, likely fully aware that the vicissitudes of fieldwork, especially one's first foray into it, probably demanded this kind of openness. Moreover, he had orchestrated a small fellowship for me. A quick calculation revealed that I could remain in Tanzania for at least six more months. I could engage a couple



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of researchers to continue the survey, be a full-time participant observercum apprentice, thus fulfilling my romantic notions about what a proper rite of passage should be—while witnessing Nyumbani's spiritual evolution. I should note that the survey instrument was a revision of the interview schedule I had tested in Geita District. I expanded it and included detailed instructions to make the research process more accessible to my Sukuma assistants. Bernard has a somewhat different definition for this instrument, labeling the version I learned as "informal interviewing" or "ethnographic interviewing" (2006: 211-212).

Aside from accepting my deep gratitude for his efforts on my behalf, I never learned what Friedl really thought about my multiple changes of a research protocol. The field notes continued to flow into the institute and into his files at The Catholic University. Although there were many bumps and grinds during that last six months, I ended up with satisfactory information about more than 60 *bafumu* from all but one district (Hatfield 1968: 20-27). The result of my research was a Ph.D. dissertation outlining everything one needed to know about how to become an *nfumu* and what happened once a person tried to make *bafumu* a career. As a finale, I ventured into speculations concerning what happens to individuals who gain the kind of privileged knowledge that *bafumu* claim in an egalitarian society. In the process, I learned a lot about witchcraft and prophethood.

## LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT, SUKUMA STYLE

While my first field experience lasted about one and a half years, the two livestock development projects lasted over eight. My participation in these applied projects began again with Friedl, who initiated a new phase in documenting culture change among the Sukuma (Lang 1971). In 1958 F.A.O. predicted a worldwide animal protein shortage by the early 1970s. In Tanzania, four livestock keeping areas were considered prime for development. The engine for this improvement was the ranching association. Parliament mandated the Livestock Development Project through the Range Act. The three regions of Dodoma, Arusha and Shinyanga were selected.

Although not the team leader, Friedl as "project sociologist" played a seminal role in establishing the Shinyanga initiative. By this time he had accepted a joint position in anthropology and the Institute of Behavioral Science (IBS) at the University of Colorado - Boulder. I had also accepted a position in the anthropology department of the same school. Friedl proposed spending a year initiating the social research/application portion of the project, then a year in Boulder, then back again until the end of the project, an estimated 10 years. I agreed to replace him in the field when he was in the USA. He managed to convince

project directors in Dar es Salaam and FAO that it would be appropriate for us to briefly overlap in the field. His FAO Rome contact was Darwin Solomon, an American rural sociologist. Solomon was active in the High Plains Society after he retired from FAO.

Ranching associations were not only a means of organizing local groups, they were also the mechanism for initiating a series of technical "improvements" ranging from water resource management, to seasonal grazing units, to culling and selling of livestock. An important component of the Tanzanian project was to revive a moribund national cattle market coupled with a defunct beef canning industry. The Range Act also mandated a very un-Tanzanian requisite. Once formally registered, each association would possess its land and its resources in perpetuity.

The role of sociologist on the project was to nurture these fledgling associations. But another task, required for each association registration, was a survey of population and infrastructure. To set the stage so that this work could be accomplished, we inherited the Lang house, possessions and staff, a cat, a bizarre little Fiat van, the Langs' social network and of course, the tape recorder, which was stolen during a meeting in Dodoma. I also inherited Friedl's Tanzanian counterpart, David Masanja, a canny and knowledgeable Sukuma, his Landrover and driver. Later, Reuben ole Kuney, a Maasai who had just completed his university degree in sociology, joined my little team. Friedl had a talent for organizing people and resources that I never equaled. We arrived in Tanzania a few months after he had completed a massive survey focusing on social change in western Shinyanga and was in the process of analyzing the data. Excerpts from an earlier letter to me illuminate the flavor of the survey and the requirements he was seeking in order to analyze the data:

*Mwadui, Sunday 24 May 1970*

*"...please ask the programmers (in IBS) to provide an estimate to be sent directly to Rome (FAO). I have about 240 questions... many are scales, some identification. I will need 5 IBM cards per questionnaire."*

He goes on to say that he will need frequency counts, means and variance of all scales as well as standard deviations run on the basis of 4 different administrative divisions, correlations on 20 variables on 17 different categories of people, etc. He closes with:

*"Finally, I would like to know how much a factor analysis would run for the expected total of 1,200 respondents."*

I quickly realized that this kind of field experience was going to be quite different from my earlier work among the Sukuma despite my own forays into structured questionnaires. The survey was research instrument of choice and its topics were already determined. FAO ulti-

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mately did not fork up the money for the kind of data analysis Friedl wanted. I also became part of an international team of expatriates with different agendas and personalities, likes and dislikes, as well as a project manager and staff 500 miles away in the capital. I was no longer independent. Friedl had established his professional credentials and his status as an *mzee* elder, meaning to Tanzanians someone with the wisdom of age and all the respect it bore. I had none of that *éclat*, although I did have one advantage. I could still resurrect my KiSukuma and both my wife and I had gained proficiency in Swahili, the national language, which was now beginning to infiltrate even the most conservative Sukuma enclaves.

Friedl's survey provided the overall social context. I became involved in local level research, organizational dynamics, water use and rights, as well as the dynamics of livestock ownership and grazing patterns. These forays provided me with the opportunity to learn more about attitudes, community tensions and potential barriers to the kinds of innovations my technical colleagues were seeking.

Successfully sharing these discoveries with my colleagues proved to be a challenge. I soon learned that our technical innovations in range/livestock management practices required considerable tactful assistance to be effectively integrated from the "social expert" on the team. I knew this from my academic studies, especially in Friedl's applied anthropology course, my earlier contact with medical and other experts working with the Sukuma, and my own reading. But I had to establish my expertise with my fellow team members, alas, some of whom preferred to remain innocent of cross-cultural contamination. This pattern continued through the subsequent Maasai Development Project as well, although I also had to deal with some Tanzanian officials and experts who claimed they knew exactly "what these people need."

One example may suffice. Perhaps the greatest challenge to successfully creating a ranching association, was establishing a common herd coupled with yearly "offtake" via sales based on calculations of grazing capability, adhering to the concept of carrying capacity. Not only was the notion of sharing one's animals with everyone else in common antithetical to the Sukuma way of distributing livestock resources, but the idea of culling a herd just because, in their perception, animals might get a little thinner in lean time was anathema. Cattle for the Sukuma are not simply subsistence or economic entities. As any Africanist knows who studied the classic work of E.E. Evans-Pritchard, they have social value. The Sukuma maximize their livestock's wellbeing by "loaning" them out to others. In return the recipients get their products and have a stake in their offspring (Hatfield 1968). I think my breakthrough in team

credibility came when a new animal production team member exploded in frustration:

*"J- C-! They expect these people to do things that no Texan cattleman would agree to."*

Another new area of research arose from the team's internal dynamics. As noted earlier, Friedl trained his students to record everything and everyone, and everyone included his/her observations of and reactions to other researchers, officials, and expatriates; I had dutifully done so while engaged in my Ph.D. research. But these individuals were usually peripheral to what I was doing.

The internal dynamics of our team had extraordinary, mostly negative, impacts on our work. Our initial team leader introduced me to livestock development by lecturing on the evils of ticks and then proceeded to stuff a handful of squiggling engorged ticks into my palm, my livestock project rite of passage. Our team's interactions with our Dar es Salaam project manager were hardly productive, his therapy during his visits upcountry being to harangue us for our lack of productivity. So the inner workings of our team and its various encounters with our project manager became an irresistible subject for my participant observation obsessions. The Sukumaland project was nipped in the bud. I continued on for a half year longer than I was supposed to and watched the project shut down. Friedl did not return, but I did, to the Maasai.

## THE MAASAI RANGE PROJECT

The Shinyanga project was the last on which Friedl and I collaborated. A little over a year later I returned to Tanzania to assume the "sociologist" role on the Maasai Range Project in the Arusha Region. Friedl began a project with the Asmat of New Guinea. He was no longer with the Institute of Behavioral Science and the long-range dreams of a Sukumaland project faded. Our mandate was the same as in Shinyanga, but the cultural context and political climate were quite different. The lifetime of the project, funded by USAID, continued for ten years. I was part of the project for the last seven. The American team was much larger than in Sukumaland and included an amazing diversity of technical specialties. Turnover of personnel was astonishing. We had three team leaders and when we were without one for long periods of time I acted as interim. I'm not sure we ever coalesced as a cooperative unit. The phrase, "there is no I in team," comes vividly to mind.

A major shift in national policy occurred shortly before my arrival, inciting an almost unmendable rip in U.S. - Tanzanian relations. The principle of *ujamaa* was now the country's primary development focus and with it, the nationalization of some European farms and other proper-





ties. Members of the U.S. Congress condemned Tanzania as a communist state, yet we continued with the then-superseded ranching association mandate.

Later, the country embarked on another major policy, which was the reorganization of populations into permanent settlements, called in Maasailand *operashun mbarnoti*. Doomsday sayers predicted the death of the Maasai project in this maelstrom of conflicting policies. The drawing card of permanent possession of association lands was forgotten, as were ranching associations. My counterparts and I were able to allay project and local government fears by recommending a tweaking of the policy to accommodate Maasai livestock practices. We opined that the Maasai on the whole would be quite willing to resettle and our predictions proved to be correct.

As the sociologist for the project I continued under a mandate similar to Shinyanga, but under much different conditions. I inherited a Friedl-like infrastructure survey that utilized an army of secondary school students. Planning and executing these surveys made the Shinyanga experience seem like kindergarten. I learned some Maasai, but never became fluent. Part of the problem was that I could not hang around a Maasai community for very long periods. A predecessor, taking the romantic participant observation route, had chosen to live with a community and contributed valuable information on Maasai life-ways, but was soundly criticized for his efforts. We had the unachievable requirement that we work in all the areas of Maasailand simultaneously. Thus, my primary responsibility was to conduct infrastructure surveys and when allowed by my technical colleagues, assist in their innovations. Later in my tenure on the project, a visiting American anthropologist, after taking up project time with lengthy consultations, criticized me in his final report for not doing what an anthropologist should be doing.

During this time Friedl and Martha visited Arusha. For a few weeks, the tradition of me following him was reversed. I led Friedl on visits to Maasai colleagues and engaged in a lavish safari through Ngorongoro and the Serengeti. Jaded with work safaris as I was, I was very impressed with being a tourist. We had long talks, not quite replicas of Martha's kitchen with Eliot Liebow and Friedl locked in argument, but I nonetheless found seeing this project through his eyes an unexpected gift.

Ironically at the close of the project, after traveling with the evaluating group for some weeks, the team met with the Arusha regional authorities to review their report. The results were quite negative. Given their instructions to evaluate the project on a series of indicators that had emerged from its very onset more than ten years previously, they were correct. A few of us argued that the project had succeeded in innumerable ways that were ignored in the evaluation. To everyone's surprise, the Tanza-

nians did not share the lowly opinions of project success that the American evaluators had presented, and instead focused on its successes.

## CONCLUSIONS

Noting the immense literature on fieldwork technique and the growth of personal accounts, I am ending this retrospective by adding yet another piece to the already bulging literature. In doing so I am keeping to my goal of reflecting on Friedl Lang's influence, on my own development as a professional, and on re-affirming what I think should be treasured as anthropology's contribution to understanding the human condition.

## Friedl as Medicine Father

How could I not have made the connection between my own experience as a student and my first Tanzanian fieldwork? Friedl was as much my *ise buhembra*, medicine father, in D.C. as were my Sukuma *bafumu*, but with one major difference. Our relationship went far beyond a connection via temporary instrumentalities modeling the Sukuma medicine father and the academic mentor ideals. I certainly struck out on my own and often deviated from Friedl's approaches to the anthropological endeavor while maintaining his vision of what this renegade discipline is.

## Techniques

In these early experiences in anthropology, I naively concluded that participant observation and structured social surveying were in conflict (cf. Bernard 2006: 384-386). My attempts to traverse Sukumaland in search of *bafumu*, armed with an interview schedule and infrastructure surveys on the two livestock projects, made the kind of participant observation I also thought necessary a challenge. I deliberately chose the type of interview schedule I did because it not only provided me with flexibility, it also gave me a chance to engage in participant observation "on the run." From these early experiences I learned that participant observation, key informant interviewing, and surveying all are essential anthropological techniques, something I should have taken for granted as Friedl's student. Instead, I stubbornly (and I think unconsciously) clung to participant observation, as I narrowly defined it, as superior. It was certainly not easier; in fact, as almost all accounts of this form of fieldwork will attest, it demands an extraordinary investment of self.

## Research and Rites of Passage

At the onset of my anthropological career, I did not register the tension that would exist between the requirements of my first fieldwork experience and my understanding of it as a rite of passage. The former involves a host of techniques, some of which I've outlined via my own



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experience in the three projects described here, resulting in a professionally acceptable product. The latter, though far less measurable, assumes personal transformation, the basis at least being an internalization of what used to be called “cultural relativism.” I don’t recall any academic discussions in which this aspect of one’s first field experience was emphasized. That one’s first fieldwork was more than learning how to be a scientist, lay in the interstices of texts, lectures and discussion of theory and that the budding anthropologist who left the ivory tower for the field was not to be the same person who returned.

I don’t think my graduate training, including Friedl’s tutelage, fully prepared me to understand the dynamics of entering into liminality and how to successfully emerge from it. All I understood was that I had to imbed myself into a community and through the crucible of participation, surface as a new person. However, at the same time I was to bear with me the fruits of a carefully orchestrated research project. Are today’s students of anthropology trained to be more savvy than I was about how to balance these often-conflicting goals?

## Serendipity

Very drastic changes in our field situations, challenging the direction of research or the successful completion of an assignment confronted my colleagues and I. I jumped from witchcraft to the training of religious specialists to documenting the life history of a prophetic movement in the course of six months. Warren Roth (2011) encountered a similar challenge at the onset of his research. In my case, the first shock arose from discovering the gaping defect in my hypothesis concerning a *bafumu*’s willingness to “communicate the skinny” on witchcraft. Later, two major governmental changes in policy threw monkey wrenches into project activities and eventually affected their evaluations. I was only partially successful in my repairs.

Serendipity, as I am recommending the concept here, is more than the ability to make fortunate discoveries by accident. I suggest it can be a learned mindset, capitalizing on coping successfully with the slings and arrows of capricious field circumstances. The first key lies in possessing a healthy awareness of unforeseen challenges. The second, I argue, resides on a more specific level, in integrating flexibility into one’s research designs in order to meet these affronts.

How does one learn such a skill? I believe I began to integrate its basics in the outrageously interesting byways that a leading question took us in class and seminar, in those passionate discussions in the aftermath of departmental parties and in Friedl’s Rogerian style of student-centered discourse. These occasions modeled the necessity of cultivating an attitude of serendipity, even though the

word was never used and we were encouraged to develop ideal models of research with the explicit assumption they would prove workable in the field.

I learned a tremendous amount via coursework, research methods, and reading, but I best learned what field research was like by informally witnessing its incredibly messy nature. This was not just the personal discomforts inherent in that schizophrenic experience of participant observation, but even moreso in attempting to carry out more formally structured research in unpredictable environments (aren’t they all?). I hope I have managed to integrate their lessons, which taught that one can triumph over most research challenges.

My suggestion is to recognize the value of “witnessing” this messiness more formally. Contemporary anthropology has come to welcome “true confessions” of the anthropological experience. The titillation of Bronislaw Malinowski’s diary or E.E. Evans-Pritchard’s confessions about his life with the Nuer are now taken as a necessary part of honest self-disclosure. Among many recent examples, I could cite Hume and Mulcock’s *Anthropologists in the Field* (2004). Such publications provide a more convenient opportunity to witness the nitty-gritty of actual fieldwork, rather than awaiting an invitation to Friedl’s kitchen, his seminar, or his Rogerian mentorship. I would like to take this notion a giant step further into pondering the nature of anthropology itself. Cultural anthropology has always been a significant thorn in the side of other purportedly scientific disciplines, claiming preeminence in understanding the human experience. The “thorn” is its nasty habit of challenging, usually western, assumptions about what makes us tick. But, gaining legitimacy in the world of scientific experts brings with it a danger that we will rigidly conform to its rules, which in stereotypic terms requires what IT defines as “rigor and quantification.” I like to borrow McKim Marriott’s use of “sanscritization” (1955) to describe what happens when a community attempts to raise its status. My point is that the field of anthropology can become so locked in its own patterns of pedagogy, professionalism and requirements for expertise that it loses that open-endedness that defines its character and purpose. Serendipity, the ability to capitalize on unforeseen circumstances, to see the world of change through different lenses, is therefore lost.

I have come to understand that growing an anthropologist involves a lot more than classroom teaching. I learned technique and theory through Friedl’s meticulous teaching, but I learned the “art” and “soul” of anthropology in the midst of lively diversions from the text in the classroom and from those ardent, serious, loud, somewhat tipsy, encouraged dialogues I’ve described. I endured Friedl’s gentle Rogerian challenges to my views of how





things work and put them all to the test through fieldwork. Perhaps others of us for whom Friedl was a "medicine father" might want to use this reflection as a stimulus to share their own experiences in becoming an anthropologist via this remarkable mentor and human being.

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TAUGHT BY FRIEDL: THE POWER OF MILLENARIAN  
MOVEMENTS AS REFLECTED IN A NEW GUINEA  
CARGO CULT

PETER W. VAN ARSDALE

## ABSTRACT

Gottfried O. ("Friedl") Lang was a teacher and mentor to many undergraduate and graduate students during his tenure in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Colorado – Boulder. As senior advisor for my doctoral dissertation, his insights proved exceedingly helpful as I prepared my prospectus and then implemented field-work among the Asmat of Indonesian New Guinea. His views on social and millenarian movements were prescient, and his emphases on socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political dynamics as induced culture change takes place, guided me to a comprehensive analysis of an intriguing cargo cult. It was referred to locally as the "Belief in the 'Lord of the Earth' " movement.

**KEY WORDS:** Gottfried O. Lang, millenarian movements, cargo cults, socio-economic change

*Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*, in the German tradition from which Dr. Gottfried O. ("Friedl") Lang arose, refer to "freedom of teachers" and "freedom of students." These are ideals which he represented in the classroom, and which were reflected in the most intriguing graduate course I ever took. Simply entitled ANTH 610, "Seminar in Culture Change," it spanned the "field of change" from an anthropological perspective. As I began my doctoral work, the course inspired me to tackle issues of both socio-cultural and socio-economic change. The in-class presentations by fellow graduate students such as Lee Lefferts, Pat Gray, Joe Graziano, and Paul Brown were stimulating. Friedl himself inspired me to tackle field work of the most challenging kind, in the most challenging place I then could conceive: New Guinea.

By way of background, Friedl was interested in strategies of change, and he conceptualized these broadly at two levels: Those that influenced (and were affected by) individuals, and those that influenced (and were affected by) groups. This dichotomization was by no means simplistic, as he stressed in class. As these played out cross-culturally, he wanted to know how development processes were impacted. "Development" was becoming a major thrust of anthropological analysis, and Friedl – along with his faculty colleagues Deward Walker and Robert Hackenberg – was fascinated by its ramifications. In the 1970s, induced development was primarily categorized by anthropologists as "modernization," "urbanization," or "industrialization." Impacts on an individual, especially those that were psycho-dynamic, were best reflected in acculturation processes as (e.g.) a migrant moved into a slum. Impacts on groups, especially those that were socio-

cultural, were best reflected in adaptation processes as (e.g.) a millenarian movement formed. Social movements were of special importance to Friedl.

Although not a systems theorist *per se*, Friedl was keenly aware of systems principles. He stressed them in class; his observations influenced me greatly. He was inspired, in part, by fellow scientists at the University of Colorado's Institute of Behavioral Science, most prominently Kenneth Boulding, Elise Boulding, and Gilbert White. Kenneth brought a fascination with systems reflecting economic interpretations, Elise with systems reflecting sociological interpretations, and Gilbert with systems reflecting geographic interpretations. Like them, Friedl was a multi-disciplinarian. More like White than the Bouldings, Friedl – to use a current term – was very evidentiary-based. Empiricism ruled. He was an inductivist. Hard data had to be collected in the field before any conclusions could be reached.

## PRELUDE TO THE FIELD

In the "Seminar in Culture Change," we studied reactive change, induced change, and facilitated change. From Friedl I learned about the process of "facilitative development," about the ways in which outside change agents can create an environment conducive to change that meets the felt needs of indigenous peoples. We studied the variety of change agents, from missionaries to corporate executives to applied anthropologists. Looking back, it was a discussion of the intersection of government and mission impacts on the Asmat of Indonesian New Guinea (then, called the province of Irian Jaya, now the province of Papua) that first peaked my interest in conducting research

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for my doctoral dissertation there. Friedl had already begun field work in this region. I was further inspired by conversations with Ken Keller, whose article constitutes another contribution to this *gedenkschrift*, as well as by the work of Frank Trenkenschuh (1970), with whom I later had detailed discussions.

As my dissertation prospectus unfolded, I came to focus on the nature of “modernizing” socio-economic impacts on Asmat villagers. I planned to work in six coastal villages within the Bisnam region of Asmat. Given the dense jungle and swampy environment, they are interconnected only by river or sea travel. A secondary research focus also emerged. In discussing social movements in the seminar, Friedl had covered reactive, millenarian and cult movements. He had emphasized the pioneering work of Anthony F. C. Wallace (1956) and Peter Worsley (1968). He had noted that certain movements (such as early Christianity) were innovative, incorporative, and culturally engaging, and that – following Wallace – the processes of leader visioning, of spreading the visionary message, of recruitment of followers, and of retention of members were essential. He had noted that so-called “cargo cults” were common in Melanesia, and that – following Worsley – they were indicative of certain indigenous coping mechanisms and reactive change to outside influence. He had mentioned that such a movement *cum* cult had begun among the Bisnam Asmat, in the village of Ewer. An ethnographic case study might well be warranted.

## IN THE FIELD

Beginning in 1966, the village of Ewer began to experience manifestations of cargo cult behavior. The latest was during 1973, when I first arrived, with lingering effects still being felt in 1974 as I was concluding my research. This portion of my article outlines developments surrounding the four major Ewer cult manifestations, and then analyzes this behavior in terms of (1) functional transformation over time of a relatively stable cult structure, with a decreasing interest in cargo and concomitantly increasing intra-village struggle for power; (2) Big Man activity as broadly manifested throughout Melanesia; (3) economic and development problems in the Asmat region. Following Friedl, I came to recognize that no single explanation of cult behavior would suffice. Rather, a cargo cult can best be interpreted systemically, as a complex set of reactive yet adaptive socio-cultural responses to outside pressures. Following David Gallus, who also contributed mightily to my analysis and co-authored an earlier paper with me (Van Arsdale and Gallus 1974), I came to understand the role of the Catholic Church in influencing such behaviors. Friedl also influenced by interpretation of the church’s role.

In categorizing the cult activities in Ewer I follow the classic definition of Meggitt (1973: 1): A millenarian move-

ment involves a series of actions designed to bring about certain existential changes, after which “the elect” participants will enjoy special benefits such as the acquisition of power, wealth, and happiness. A millenarian (or cargo) cult is that kind of millenarian movement which emphasizes and employs religious-magical doctrines and rituals to explain and achieve its purposes. Most have taken place in Melanesia.

It is crucial to recognize that a millenarian movement in its broadest interpretation can follow either Western-recognized processes of political and economic development, or non-Western yet locally recognized processes for achieving the same development status. Early on, Finney (1969: 59-60) found that cargo cult actions and market-oriented activities could be conceptualized as competing ways open to Melanesians to obtain wealth, and that where favorable preconditions existed commercial activities with their demonstrable returns might well be preferred to cargo cult activities. Adrien Vriens (as reported to Frank Trenkenschuh 1974) had made similar findings among peoples of southwest Papua, including the Marind and Mappi. Still other cults in Papua reflecting this included those among the Muyu, Mimika, and Kimam (Trenkenschuh 1974). As will be shown, for many of Ewer’s adult males such commercial and economic activities had not been readily accessible. In its earlier stages the cult members chose what to them seemed a more viable alternative: ritualistic methods to attain economic and even ethnic parity with “whites” (who, for them, included Javanese). These ritual insights were offered by a few men striving to increase their own power and prestige.

Such a choice was intellectually viable as well. It followed traditionally accepted Asmat practice. Peter Lawrence inspired me in this respect. He believed it important to analyze cargo cult behavior along rational-intellectual lines found in the society itself (1967; 1970), rather than applying purely sociological analyses which might yield results suggesting “maladjustment.” Following established religious-intellectual lines of reason found in their society, Asmat cult members wanted immediate material satisfaction and saw cargo cult activities as the most viable alternative given the pressures they were confronting. Asmat behavior regarding traditional economic opportunities and exploitation of resources is intellectually directed along these same short-term guidelines, and their initial cargo activities were a logical consequence. After repeated failures to achieve their goals and the desired cargo, as will be shown, the cult leaders gradually modified the functions of the cult toward more political and traditional curing objectives. The role of the so-called Big Man shifted, but remained central to these objectives.

Some of Papua’s earliest millenarian cults appeared in the Lake Sentani region in the 1920s (Worsley 1968: 98-99). These were in response to the combined effects of mis-



sion and government penetration. Within the Asmat region, although information is scattered, cults or cult-like activities were reported in several villages prior to 1966. The cargo cult which emerged in Ewer apparently was the most powerful and – for me – the most intriguing.

## KEPERCAYAAN TUHAN TANAH: BELIEF IN THE “LORD OF THE EARTH”

### Phase I

During October of 1966 a 27-year old man whom I will call Marsellus Ndomber broke into the Catholic pastor's storeroom in Ewer. (Throughout, the names of key “Asmat actors” have been changed.) As the pastor was frequently in Agats, the administrative center of Asmat some six miles away by river, he did not initially miss the tobacco, money, and clothing which were stolen night after night.

Ndomber began dividing these goods (Asmat, *pok*) with others in Ewer, telling them he had received the supplies from the “Lord of the Earth” (Indonesian, *Tuhan Tanah*). Tuhan Tanah had appeared to him in a vision and presented a secret key, with which he was able to unlock a hole in the ground from which the *pok* appeared. It seems the people began to believe his story, and gladly accepted his gifts. Such holes traditionally were revered as special portals.

My informants said that initially no one knew Ndomber was stealing these supplies. He thus was able to gather a group of followers about him, all relatives, most of whom belonged to the fam or two-segment moiety (Asmat, *yew*) Jower. All were young men, and most in the probable position of desiring to enhance their own power and prestige, as members of Ewer's most powerful *yew* at that time.

Ndomber became a Big Man, a man of influence, in Ewer as his following expanded. His story concomitantly expanded to say that Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the angels were giving him advice. They had also informed him that on a certain date there would be a great happening. All believers in Tuhan Tanah would become white, each becoming a “master” (Indonesian, *tuan*). They would receive “freedom” (Indonesian, *merdeka*), and the hole would supply even more *pok* than before.

All these things would happen if Ewer's people believed in Tuhan Tanah, and rejected all that was traditionally Asmat. Bows, arrows, spears, and other implements must be burned, proclaimed Ndomber. No longer were men to use body paint or women the traditional garb (the fiber mini-skirt, *awer*). When each became a *tuan* with white skin such things would be unnecessary. Any traditional items hidden and not burned would rot. Since their food would come from cans, hunting and gathering would be unneces-

sary. There was even a plan to cut down many of the sago palms, which provided the key dietary staple, as these would not be needed.

These events all hinged, said Ndomber, on the sincerity of the people's beliefs. As a majority of villagers were already baptized Catholics, they were to obtain rosaries and pray fervently each Sunday. In response church attendance shot up, many items indeed were burned, and sago chopping ground to a halt. Ritualized drumming and dancing began. About this time Ndomber began to wear a star-shaped pin he had stolen. The people began calling him “President.” That he referenced books in his declarations also was deemed a virtue.

Also at about this time, a person whom I will call Gabriel Esakam returned to the village from the southern coast where he had been working for the Catholic mission. This Asmat man later would become village head, under Indonesian government auspices, but even in 1966 he was viewed as up-and-coming from both mission and government perspectives. He also was seen as a potential program innovator. It is extremely important to note that he was a member of the *yew* Jowijof, Jower's chief fam rival for power in the village. Esakam heard of these cult activities and decided to investigate, as did the pastor who finally had discovered the missing supplies.

While the pastor was unable to pin down the thief due to lack of evidence, Esakam had more success. He hid under the store room and caught Ndomber stealing more supplies to supplement his revelation that the Virgin Mary would walk through Ewer later that night. Ndomber begged Esakam to allow him to perform fellatio, the traditional Asmat custom binding one to secrecy. Instead, Esakam reported the incident to the pastor, the head teacher, and government officials in Agats, the administrative center. Ndomber was arrested for theft and jailed in Agats. The pastor demanded that the people who had received *pok* return it; slowly it was brought back.

Making one last attempt at retaining his prestige and power as “President,” Ndomber escaped from jail. He told the people that he had simply “reappeared” in Ewer. Yet he was soon re-arrested, belief in the cult seemingly subsided, and he never again regained his power and prestige. When released, he turned to a nondescript life. When questioned during November, 1973, one informant told me that people thought it was foolish that Ndomber had stolen the mission supplies.

### Phase II

During July of 1968 the teachers and new pastor assigned to the church in Ewer began to notice the villagers remaining home more than usual. Drumming was on the in-

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crease, and mission- and government-sponsored work was again slowing down. Being unwilling to leave the village (for reasons noted shortly), Ewer men refused to paddle the teachers the six miles to Agats or to bring them food, as was the norm.

It was learned soon after that a middle-aged man whom I will call Leo Owusipitsj had been speaking to the villagers from a comatose state, "as if crazy" (Indonesian, *macam gila*). He was probably suffering from epilepsy, a condition further compounded by a case of malaria tropica. Among other things he had told the people to listen to his cousin, a man whom I will call Andreas Yokor, one of the ranking members of the faction Ndomber had built up – but a member of neither yew Jower or yew Jowijof. (His was yew Darkau, a point which becomes important later in this analysis.) Yokor, crippled since his youth, was able to attract a following owing to his previous association with the cult, his family relationship with yew Jower, and his position as a *ndembero* (traditional curer) with special contacts in the spirit world.

Through a series of dreams Yokor reported that an old bearded man had appeared to him, and had offered a key leading to numerous kinds of *pok*. The old man also revealed that *merkeda* was imminent. Other dreams were of dead people, which he not only reported to the villagers but to the pastor. Although the pastor told him dreams were not to be feared, like other Papuan peoples the Asmat believe dreams of spirits and the dead to be extensions of reality.

For fear of missing the promised freedom and *pok* no one dared leave Ewer. No canoe trips could be engaged. However, Gabriel Esakam (who by this time had become the Indonesian government's village head) heard rumors of the cult's re-emergence and again quickly reported it to officials in Agats. Before the situation could develop further Owusipitsj and Yokor were called to Agats and warned by officials of the consequences of such talk. The village seemingly returned to normal, although it later was learned that secretive talk had continued until the next phase occurred.

### Phase III

Actually a delayed continuation of the events of 1968, this phase of the cult surfaced in July, 1969. At this time Esakam, the village head, left for an extended trip to Java. Apparently his presence had kept "cult talk" underground because shortly after he left both cousins, Owusipitsj and Yokor, began talking of Tuhan Tanah more openly again. It was said that Yokor would "open everything" and that white skin would replace black skin. The village of Ewer would become a big city. At this point Yokor began revealing his dreams again.

During early August, participation in the mission-

sponsored fish cooperative ceased. Pig hunters no longer brought in pigs. Further belief in the cargo cult was probably enhanced when Owusipitsj died on August 16 due to complications surrounding his malaria tropica. Yokor quickly emerged as the sole cult leader, strengthening his position by proclaiming that Owusipitsj had not died at all but would return when Tuhan Tanah opened the hole in the ground for the emerging *pok*. Traditional Asmat mourning calls for prolonged wailing and rolling in the mud by close relatives, women in particular. Hence it was a marked contrast when, due to Owusipitsj's supposed return, no such mourning occurred at his burial. When questioned by the pastor, several people responded that they had learned from the Catholic religion not to wail at a funeral, but to pray.

Shortly after the burial, Yokor changed his tact and declared that he was even more powerful than his cousin had claimed. Through a dream he revealed that he had been taken on a world tour. In Java he had learned Esakam, the village head, had been shot and killed. Yokor then said: "See what happens to people who don't believe me. Whoever does not believe will get the same." This convinced many people even more strongly that his power was real. Each Thursday recruits met at his house to hear further revelations.

Informants reported the following Yokor monologue from one of these meetings: "We must stand by ourselves. Tuhan Tanah says that if we stand by ourselves, our lives will be changed and much better than now. We will undergo a great change. Our skins will become white and we will have all types of *pok*. This will happen only if you believe. Whoever does not believe will become pigs, or dogs, or fish, or snakes. Also we must keep this secret. Whoever reports this to the pastor or to the government will become water." During other meetings he added that the Asmat must be free of Indonesian influence, and that all the people of Papua must be prepared to fight for their freedom. Pan-Papuan, anti-Indonesian sentiments were running strong at this time throughout the province.

Yokor proclaimed that it would therefore be necessary for Asmat to have its own government, and so the following offices were established: President of "Free Asmat," Vice President, Governor, and District Head. Other offices all followed the established Indonesian government hierarchy. Yokor made certain that he spoke to the people, especially potential recruits *cum* disciples, in Indonesian, which not all Asmat could understand. This further elevated his status. He assuredly would assume the post of President.

During October and November, 1969, belief in Ewer's millenarian movement reached an all-time high. This amount of fervor was not seen again. There was drumming every week, the pig and fish cooperatives were dead, and peo-

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ple refused to leave the village except when absolutely necessary to gather food. Children showed no enthusiasm for school, teachers were brought no food, and according to Yokor's orders the church was filled each Sunday.

A skilled analyst, Yokor also kept close tabs on socio-political developments within the Catholic church. Father Alphonse Sowada, a beloved Crosier priest, was to be ordained the first Bishop of Asmat on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Yokor proclaimed that after the feast of ordination a "great happening" would take place. He would approach the Archbishop of Marauke when he stepped out of the plane at Ewer, and at that moment Asmat's flag would arise from the ground. Its colors would be red, white, and blue with a cross. Immediately the ground would open and factories, machines, automobiles, airplanes, clothing, electric generators, boats, medicines, food, and kitchen utensils made of gold would appear. Each Asmat person would become a *tuan* at that moment, and from then on would never work again. The *pok* then would be sent to the Asmat village of Ayam, known for its relative prosperity, which would become the capital of Asmat. Word of this revelation spread to other villages, the coastal village of Owus apparently becoming especially convinced of the truth of the reports.

A few days prior to the ordination, Gabriel Esakam (reported by Yokor to have been killed in Java) returned to Ewer. Yokor and his colleagues quickly went to Agats and asked the government to remove him as village head. When their request was refused rumors began spreading of a duel which would result in Esakam's death. The more that Esakam investigated the cult activities, the more vigorously the cult's leaders lobbied against him. A great deal of excitement accompanied the November 23<sup>rd</sup> feast of ordination, but when Yokor's revelations were not realized he twice rescheduled the "great happening." During December the government demanded a full report on the cult. This was provided by Esakam and two other villagers. The members of the cult's "government" were called to Agats and warned of the consequences which continued cult activity would bring about. Yokor merely declared he had been aiding the Catholic mission by promoting better attendance at church. Yet this pressure by the government was enough to diminish enthusiasm in Kepercayaan Tuhan Tanah once again.

## Phase IV

Due to the fear of government reprisals and the continued presence of Esakam in the village as government head, little information surfaced about the relative strength of the cult from 1970 through 1972. However, enough information later was obtained to indicate that cult beliefs persisted. Yokor was regularly consulted as

one having special contacts with spirits, and was called on in his role as a *ndembero* to divine and cure illness. So were others. While the structure of the Ewer cult fluctuated, it was in the increasing power and prestige gained by cult leaders in their developing roles as *ndembero* that functional transformations were evidenced. Socio-cultural and socio-political adaptations were emerging concomitantly.

In May, 1970, the wife of one of the villagers who had helped Esakam prepare his cult-critical report for the government died. Some recalled Yokor's earlier statement that anyone revealing cult secrets to the government would die. Others reported that an increase in illness in Ewer at that time was due to Esakam's continued reporting of the people's secrets to the government. A teenage girl's role in afterbirth burial, with subsequent socio-political complications, added fuel to the fire. Interest in government-sponsored health programs dropped.

Although the next two years saw little outward signs of cult activity, undercurrents were stirring. By early 1973 the Indonesian phrase "kepercayaan Tuhan Tanah" had been heard in other, more distant Asmat villages, and possibly had been heard in connection with cult activities in the Muyu and Kimam areas of Papua. The emphasis in Ewer, although diminished, still focused nominally on *pok*. Yet David Gallus and I came to believe that fam-specific power struggles, the emergence of a new generation of Big Men, and a general dislike for outside intervention – by the government, missions, and non-Asmat teachers – were key. Gabriel Esakam's role, as both innovative leader and government contact, remained at the fulcrum.

One day, to the teacher's surprise, three Ewer students openly revealed to the class the new members of "government" in the cult. While Andreas Yokor remained as President, several new members had been granted important titles. A list of members had been drawn up which included the names of teenage boys, as well as several children. It was stated that after years of unfulfilled revelations the group wanted results. Hence an asphalt airstrip would be needed, with young Ewer men becoming pilots. The simple mud-and-grass airstrip in use for years would be inadequate. Mission aviation pilots would not be needed. How this transformation would be accomplished went unstated.

The latest manifestation finally came more clearly to the surface during August, 1973. A man from the neighboring village of Per died suddenly after a jungle trip. Before he died he told of a snake he had met in the jungle. The creature had a book and a key (both symbols used by cult leaders in Ewer during the three previous phases). The snake threatened him with death if he did not take the book and key, but as he was afraid he re-





fused. Because of his death, as the snake had predicted, the story quickly reached Ewer. (One Asmat man who helped spread the story was a Catholic catechist and teacher in Per, who originated from Ewer.)

During August and September, 1973, the non-Asmat teachers again reported that villagers were not bringing them food. By October it was noted there was a general lack of enthusiasm for village projects and mission-sponsored work. Some people believed the pastor should pay them for cleaning up the village, and others mentioned their desire for non-Asmat teachers to leave. Men complained that zinc roofing should not go on the new teacher's house, but on the local government office instead (a request that, in fact, was implemented in January, 1974). One evening after a fight involving an outsider, an Asmat man openly declared: "Outsiders are not wanted in Ewer."

Clamouring for a new village head peaked in October, and once again in early November. One of the men mentioned to fill Esakam's office was seemingly picked at random; his credentials were non-existent and he was not well-liked. However, he was a member of yew Jower. It was argued that he would be able to lobby for higher prices for indigenous products sold in Agats. By contrast, it was argued that Esakam was always pushing for government projects and hard work, but was not able to arrange things to suit the people. He also did not know how to read or write, they pointed out, and did not sit in his office enough. Yet in late November, when there was the opportunity for a village-wide vote to replace him, the overt Jower/covert cargo cult faction could not muster enough support to replace him.

By coincidence, in late September, 1973, fifty Ewer men had gone to Agats to sign up for wage labor with an oil exploration company that had recently opened operations in the interior Asmat region. Although these men repeatedly prepared to leave to begin their contract, they were forced to wait owing to various company delays. Yet enthusiasm for the wage labor continued at a very high pitch. However, none of the cult's leaders signed up, nor expressed much interest in the possibilities of such work. When, in early October, a group of Ewer men returned from an unsuccessful crocodile hunt in the Mimika region, some 75 miles to the northwest, they were further frustrated to learn that they had missed their chance to sign up for wage labor. Yokor told them not to worry, since they would soon receive *pok* from Tuhan Tanah.

At about this time, Yokor spoke with one of the more influential women in the village, reporting that – although he was crippled – the pastor had seen him in perfect health. The pastor had seen him with "two perfectly good

legs, walking normally." Thus the theme of the power of the church and the pastor, which was prevalent in the earlier cult manifestations, was still present.

## CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

### Functional Cult Transformations

Over a period of eight years Ewer's millenarian cult remained viable. Its four major manifestations indicate that belief in the cult fluctuated but remained generally widespread, extending at times beyond the village. As of 1974 Andreas Yokor had become an increasingly influential Big Man. Several informants, both in Ewer and its sister village Syuru, stated flatly he had become the most influential man in Ewer. All this took place despite the fulfillment of not a single revelation, and despite the continued presence of Gabriel Esakam as village government head. This can be explained in part by the functional transformation of the cult while its structure remained essentially the same.

The inter-yew power struggle (a tight-rope dance among fam) which became increasingly pronounced after 1968 was one facet of the cargo cult's functional transformation. Friedl's insights on development in Asmat, just recently then having been published, helped me analyze what had transpired (Lang 1973). As he later suggested, in the context of induced development and reactive change, an anthropologist studying social movements (millenarian movements being one type) should focus on socio-economic and socio-political factors. (By contrast, a psychologist should focus on psycho-social factors.) *Pok*, the cargo, represented socio-economic, not merely economic, status. Yew affiliation represented socio-political, not merely political, status. Both *pok* and yew affiliation are malleable within Asmat society.

But in 1966 this was not the motivation behind the cult. The original visionary, Marsellus Ndomber, was a member of yew Jower. Hence by first gathering a close-knit group of supporters from Jower and his own extended family as recruits *cum* disciples, he was in the ideal position to capitalize upon his membership in this important fam. He had no particular Asmat-recognized charisma nor special attributes, so it is probable that were he to have been a member of another fam the cult's initial success would have been compromised. That the people were extremely hopeful of receiving the promised *pok* was, of course, another factor in his favor.

Ndomber the "cult visionary," and later Yokor the "cult manager," were the most important leaders of the cult's development during the most crucial period in its eight years of existence. Belief in Tuhan Tanah as the provider of *pok* was still present, but after his failure of



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1966 Ndomber had no other personal attribute or pre-existing influence by which to continue mustering support in his drive to become a truly Big Man. It is probably no coincidence that shortly after Esakam became village head, shifting the balance of power toward yew Jowijof, that cousins Owusipitsj and Yokor revived interest in the cult. From the viewpoint of cult leadership the functional transformation was in full swing, because not only did Yokor want to become a Big Man, yew Jower was now in a secondary power position – and he was beholden to it through family connections but not membership. Yokor was a member of a third yew, Darkau, less influential than either Jower or Jowijof.

Evidence is circumstantial but it appears that one of Ewer's most influential and elderly former headhunters was behind some of Yokor's maneuvers. From a socio-political perspective, this would make sense. Both were members of the same extended family but different fam. Throughout Melanesia it is rather unusual for a man as young as Yokor (ca. 25 years at the time) to command such widespread influence; the older men would usually pay little attention to "young upstarts." This would seem to be particularly so among the Asmat since feats of war and headhunting, even in the 1970s, were no longer alternatives by which a young man could gain prestige. Other avenues had to be opened. With the elder's support Yokor would have been assured of solid village backing, and not merely among younger people or members of yew Jower or yew Darkau. The elder was respected throughout much of the Bisnam Asmat region. Furthermore, I learned that the elder would very much like to have had Esakam removed as village head. Esakam frowned on the elder having five wives.

The inter-yew power struggle further can be understood by digressing long enough to explain the basic kinship organization pattern in Asmat. It can be termed "Hawaiian" in that it is broadly classificatory and generational, hence can be conceptualized horizontally rather than vertically. Lineages and clans are not recognized. Where one lives in a village is very important. A dualistic worldview is found in many aspects of Asmat life, including the division of each fam into moieties and the idea that each fam is represented by a spirit world fam of the same name whose membership must be kept in balance with the real-world fam via the proper number of births and deaths. Through the mid-1950s, this dualism further played out in revenge warfare and headhunting raids.

Given this rather flexible system, although one generally retains the ascribed membership in the fam and moiety of one's father, this can be altered if the total village fam system is perceived to be out of balance. The houses of any one fam tend to be grouped in the same part of the village, near its men's house. However, a man of a

different fam usually can build his hut in a different fam's section if he has family ties there, strong friendships, or intentions of improving his own position in the village. Over time such a spatial orientation can be translated into a change in fam membership. This is what I have termed "residential override" (Van Arsdale 1975: 259-260; Pouver 2010: 105). By requesting permission from the respective fam leaders (who consult each other as well as spirit world fam leaders) a switch can be made. Informants told David Gallus and me that Yokor had come close to switching from yew Darkau to yew Jower on several occasions, and his home was located in Jower's section. Yet by maintaining Darkau membership he was in a better position by which to solicit extensive support from both Darkau and Jower.

## Transitional Big Men

Marshall Sahlins (1968) developed an important early typology of Big Men and their leadership styles in Melanesia. However, it was Glyn Cochrane (1970) who wrote what I have found to be the most compelling overview ever of Big Men in the context of Melanesian cargo cults. While considering *tradition*, he also considered *transition*. In Asmat, it was among the younger men of Ewer that the balance of power was being actively fought over, much of it by means of Kepercayaan Tuhan Tanah. What was reflected as *power* at the fam level was the result of striving for *influence* at the individual level. Those belonging to yew Jowijof were less active than those of yew Jower and yew Darkau. Yet influential older men and some of the fam leaders played a strong role in what power shifts actually did occur. As I first appreciated by reading the work of Rolf Wirsing (1973), information is best understood in these contexts as potentially transformative political power. Family networking, yew power dynamics, and individual personalities all came into play in complex fashion within the village. At a still broader level, these all came into play as Asmat society reactively confronted induced processes of culture change.

The fact that Friedl was a devout Catholic did not subtract from his ability to assist with my analysis of the "Lord of the Earth" cult; it added measurably. It seemed that, at one and the same time, he could add personal insights about the impacts of religious belief on one's life and yet ethnographically analyze the incentives and constraints that the church imposed upon Asmat people. Friedl helped me realize that in one sense Kepercayaan Tuhan Tanah had everything to do with religion, and in another sense it had nothing to do with religion.

While my analysis was primarily couched in socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political terms, Friedl also reminded me of the psycho-dynamic and personal dimensions (Lang and Van Arsdale 1975). Marsellus



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Ndember the cult visionary, Andreas Yokor the cult manager, and Gabriel Esakam the primary "cult antagonist," could also be seen as intriguing personal figures with fascinating personalities. Each was attempting to cope with the pressures of induced culture change while simultaneously maneuvering for position and influence. That Andreas Yokor increasingly engaged in traditional curing practices in his role as *ndembero* strengthened his transitional role as emergent Big Man. The importance of *pok* dwindled. He continued to capitalize on his understanding of the Catholic Church, his at-times strong relationship with it, and yet his at-times antagonistic relationship with it. He continued to capitalize and manage his socio-political relations with multiple fam as well.

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INSPIRED BY FRIEDL: LESSONS TAUGHT,  
LESSONS LEARNED **KENNETH KELLER**

## ABSTRACT

Gottfried O. ("Friedl") Lang was an inspiring teacher and educator. His expertise in applied anthropology was reflected in his abilities to communicate with his students. As my field research unfolded, involving the Asmat people of Indonesian New Guinea, several key lessons emerged. One covered the avoidance of paternalism, a second the pervasive role of reciprocity, and a third creative decision-making. Under Friedl's guidance, these lessons' immediate meanings and broader implications became clear.

**KEY WORDS:** Gottfried O. Lang, mentorship, community development, cooperatives

Dr. Gottfried O. Lang (or Friedl as he was affectionately known) introduced me to applied anthropology. I took my first applied anthropology course from him at The Catholic University in the summer of 1967. Unfortunately for me, he moved that fall to the University of Colorado in Boulder where he was awarded tenure and a position in the allied Institute of Behavioral Science. Fortunately for me, I followed the next year after applying to the graduate anthropology program at C.U.

My introduction to applied field work followed soon after completing my M.A. One of the books Friedl used for his applied class was Ward Goodenough's *Cooperation and Change* (1963). It was a bit like his bible, especially the last two chapters on the "Pitfalls of Cultural Ignorance." These simple words inspired me:

It is important, therefore, to have some warning of the kinds of cultural difference that exist in fact and of the pitfalls to understanding and communication that they create (Goodenough 1963: 453).

In his lectures, Friedl often added a footnote to this and emphasized that one would have problems in looking at another culture objectively until they had a clearer understanding of their own culture. He often spoke about how one had to understand one's own culture before developing ideas about that of others. In reality it was more like coming to understand how much a person had "bought into" their own culture.

I think this perspective came from Friedl's intense experiences leaving Germany and coming to the United States before World War II. Carla Littlefield references this in her article in this section. His arrival in the U.S. was a major adjustment for him at the time. He came to realize that it is important to arrive at some deeper understanding of yourself as you emigrate; immersion in – and reflection about – the host culture can help.

These insights carried on, as Friedl worked with dozens of graduate students and fellow faculty at C.U. My time spent with the Asmat of Irian Jaya (now Papua), Indonesia, especially working with cooperative development, drove home the importance of these points and made me appreciate his teaching and mentorship all the more. With my M.A. completed I was off to work with the Asmat, a people who became well known to Friedl. I would return to complete my Ph.D. three years later. In the meantime I was to learn some important lessons about myself. Lessons are presented here, which complement points made by the other authors in this special section commemorating Friedl's life.

## LESSON ONE: AVOID PATERNALISM

By way of background, the Asmat have lived in the lowland mangrove swamps of southwestern Papua for many generations. Today they number about 70,000. They traditionally were gatherers, especially reliant on sago, with significant involvement in hunting and fishing as well. Village size ranged from about 50 to as many as 3000 people. The larger villages were few in number and usually coalesced for reasons of protection. Warfare was endemic, well-planned, and culturally attuned. Dutch missionaries who moved into the area in the 1950s were intent on ending the fighting and associated headhunting, and slowly made inroads. As subsequent Indonesian control was exerted, dramatic changes unfolded. A local government system was introduced. Peter Van Arsdale covers one of the indigenous, reactive responses in his article herein on a prominent cargo cult that emerged.

A small group of American Catholic missionaries settled in the area in the late 1950s, and along with religious activities, began a lumber enterprise. Planks were needed for churches, schools, administrative buildings, and houses.

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In several villages, Rev. Delmar Hesch, an American Crosier priest, began to develop this lumber cutting into a cooperative venture. He hoped to engage young Asmat men in an enterprise which would benefit them both economically and socio-economically, by providing wages and by removing incentives for out-migration in search of work. The people wanted to obtain supplies (Asmat, *pok*) such as soap, fishing line, and especially tobacco (which, since the Dutch era, had become a kind of money, readily sought and readily exchanged). They seemingly wanted to “modernize.”

When I arrived in the village of Ayam to work with the emergent cooperatives (“co-ops”), I found both Catholic and Protestant missionaries living there. In addition to introduced economic enterprises, there were two denominations and two associated schools at work, and, in competition.

After I had been in the Asmat area for several months, I thought I was developing an understanding of the culture. However, I still had a tendency to get lost going from one village to another. The maze of waterways can be tricky to navigate. (Yet, from an Asmat perspective, only outsiders are “crazy enough” to get lost.) A personable young man named Kanke became one of my guides. He and I became friends. He mentioned to me one day that he would like to buy a pair of tennis shoes from the co-op. The co-op store was primarily for people who brought in lumber or worked there, so I would have to serve as an intermediary if he were to succeed in his purchase. At that point I suggested that he really did not need a pair of tennis shoes. I said, “It never gets much below 68 degrees in this forest environment, it rains a lot, and the shoes will probably rot soon after you buy them. Plus, you’ve never worn shoes before, so you’d probably find them uncomfortable. Your feet are large and there aren’t good sizes available.”

Kanke listened very patiently to me for 10 or 15 minutes, while I rambled on. He waited until I had run out of wind and said to me in a fashion that was similar to a frustrated son replying to his father: “I understand what you are saying. I don’t care if the shoes fall apart in week. You have always had shoes and can choose to wear them or not. I have never had shoes before, and just want to wear them for awhile. I want to have a pair of my own.” Obviously, I still had a lot to learn about Asmat culture and its socio-economic nuances, as these were playing out in a rapidly changing Indonesian context.

## LESSON TWO: RECIPROCITY PREVAILS

The second lesson stems from my work in the Asmat village of Mnanep. Villagers there had been asking me for quite some time to help them establish a lumber co-op. My work in Ayam had set the stage. One day a delegation consisting of several head men and other members of *jeu* kin groups from Mnanep called on me in Ayam. Once

again they requested that I come to their village and assist them in this venture; a man whom I’ll call Bayim was especially adamant. We talked for a while and I finally suggested to the co-op leaders of Ayam that they provide the Mnanep delegation with a tour of their coop and explain the work involved. (What I didn’t know was that Mnanep and Ayam had been enemies at one time, and that some men from Mnanep had been killed by men from Ayam not many years before I had arrived.) They seemed somewhat nervous about the whole “tour” concept, but agreed to it anyway. The federal government was harping on the notion of “advancement” (Indonesian, *kemajuan*), and the men were trying to be responsive.

The tour was completed without incident and the men from Mnanep decided, since it was late, to stay overnight in Ayam. They asked if they could sit on the porch of my house for the evening. I said yes and sat with them for some time while we chatted about various things. It seemed clear that one form of reciprocity, mirrored in the tour give-and-take, was playing out nicely. They then asked if they could sleep on my porch as well. (Again, I didn’t realize at the time that they would feel safer there because of the previous killings.)

To further facilitate the co-op development process, shortly thereafter I traveled to Mnanep with the men and began instructing them in the intricacies of Western-influenced lumber cutting. They had some previous experience, so lumbering proved less challenging than the notion of co-op development *per se*. From measuring, to marking with a snap line, to sawing, to rough and final planing, we worked together for about 10 days. We set up an administrative structure, from the head (*kepala*) on down; links to the cooperative store were arranged. I told them to proceed, and that I would come back in a week to help transport the cut lumber to the river; they would then be paid. The men agreed.

I went back to Ayam, then returned to Mnanep a week later as promised. I was pleased with the large pile of sawdust I observed under the saw pithouse. I didn’t see the lumber itself, but thought it was probably being stored elsewhere. The newly minted sawyers greeted me enthusiastically, did not mention the lumber, but immediately asked when they would get paid. I replied that they would receive their money after the lumber had been transported downriver to the town of Agats. There, the Co-op Center would take over. *Pok* also could readily be purchased there with the money they had earned.

I asked again: “Where’s the lumber?” They asked again: “When will we be paid?” We went round and round for several more minutes. When I said that I needed to “see” the lumber they finally took me to the headman, Bayim, who had been so adamant earlier. There was most

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of the lumber, already employed in the construction of his brand new house with plank flooring and nicely structured support beams. I was stunned to say the least.

My notion of market development and exchange had readily been trumped by the Asmat notion of reciprocity. The co-op tour had demonstrated one type, the house construction another. I had not understood Bayim's role and the obligations that had accrued to him. Lumbering would need to be re-framed.

### LESSON THREE: CREATIVE DECISION-MAKING

My third lesson, the last to be presented here, was by no means the final one for me. I continued to be amazed at how my culture was so much a part of my life and so different from that of the Asmat, and yet it was their culture that was constantly demonstrating this to me. Reflecting on the value of the classic anthropological method of participant observation also becomes important here.

I had decided to call a meeting of all the co-op members in Ayam. It seemed that most of the men were losing their enthusiasm for working in the co-op. They were showing up later for work, leaving earlier, and production was definitely declining. While I had several ideas as to why this was happening, I felt it was important to hear their version as to why. It became clear during the discussion that part of what was happening was tied to reciprocity once again.

After three weeks of working they would get paid and take three weeks off to gather food in the jungle and engage in other activities, while another group would rotate in. The first group then would return. The problem the men seemed to be having involved *pok*, readily available at the co-op store. As soon as they were paid they would purchase such things as long pants, tennis shoes, tobacco, fishing line, and hooks. As they walked back from the store, within minutes, they would run into an uncle, an aunt, or a cousin, and quickly be reminded that there was a previous obligation still owed. Soon the things that they had worked so hard for had disappeared; some items did not even make it home. The co-op members were put in the position of offering a pick of the items they were carrying in return for previous favors performed. This was becoming a real stumbling block.

This was the frustrating part for me. Now that the men seemingly knew the reason, they then decided that the next step was to listen to me tell them what to do about it. I tried to explain that this was not my role and so I simply said "no;" they needed to come up with an answer. They did not believe me and indicated that this was just a foreigner's ruse. Again I found myself going round and round. What they were saying, in essence, was: "What is it you really want us to do? The co-op was your idea." What I

was saying, in essence, was: "Do what you will. The solution must be yours."

After nearly two hours of "cross-cultural manipulation," the co-op members' solution was to take the *pok* they purchased from the store at the end of three weeks and leave it at the back of my house (which was located next to the store). They then would wait until dark to come and get it. This way no one would see what they had when they walked home. This would work well as long as there was a full moon, but after that it would be too dark and too many spirits would be out. That plan deteriorated before it could be enacted.

It slowly dawned upon me that the type of decision making that I was asking of them was difficult if not impossible. These were bright people, adept at surviving in the harshest of jungle environments. The problem was that they were having extreme difficulty in "getting outside" the culture they had grown up in, one featuring "traditional" practices being overridden by first Dutch and then Indonesian colonial government proscriptions. Missionary influence was also strong. Outsiders were constantly telling them what to do, and, how to do it. I, on the other hand, had grown up in a Western culture where everything was being questioned, where policy criticism was fair game. Government practices were not immune. I was able to arrive at my own answers by an infallible, rational logic. My logic did not match theirs. I was wrong to push them so hard to think my way.

### REFLECTIONS

In each of these cases Asmat people were attempting to adjust (short-term) and adapt (long-term) to the processes of induced change they were encountering. They were employing "traditional" coping skills in the face of "modern" pressures.

The lessons learned living among the Asmat for two years have served me well in the years that I have taught anthropology and continued other field work in the Denver community. They also have benefited me in my roles as an administrator at Metropolitan State College of Denver. These lessons were enriched by Friedl's insights and inspirations. Ultimately, they taught me something about myself. He had been quite right. My insights into Asmat culture did not really jell until I began to peel back the layers of my own culture. I had to reflect on the value of what I was witnessing.

Friedl visited me in the Asmat area in 1981. He was doing research of his own and I was helping him by doing some translation. At one point he asked a single Asmat person a question and I translated. It went something like this: "How do you feel about the co-op?" and – rather than the one respondent – an entire group answered with a 10-minute flurry. I turned to Friedl and summarily said: "They



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enjoy it.” This then happened a second and a third time. After a few more minutes he turned to me and frustratingly said: “If you learn anything from this experience, it’s that you gave me a *summary* and not a *translation*. I want a \$\$%%&& *translation*.” He had just sworn in fluent German without realizing it. We looked at each other for a second, then burst out laughing so hard that the Asmat thought we were crazy.

My work in rural Indonesia served me well in urban America. Urban anthropology became central to my later research. A real strength of Friedl’s lay in his work as a thesis advisor. I thought that the first draft of my Ph.D. dissertation was fantastic. I gave it to Friedl to review. When he handed it back, there was not a page of the 300+ that did not have a comment or correction on it. I was devastated. How could that be. English was his second language and it was my mother tongue. He had given me some hard love and humble pie to eat. The final dissertation was much the better for it.

When teaching his seminar classes he would say, after digging deep into that intellect and reflecting: “But, it seems to me...!” You knew in your heart that “here it comes...time to look further at the other side.” Friedl and the Asmat had helped in starting me on a wonderful journey and I owe them much for that. Friedl was truly what the Germans call a “Doktorvater,” a father doctor and advisor, a fictive parent who made his students part of his extended family. By contrast, the Asmat had simply been themselves and had taught me much in how to be myself.

*Ken Keller received his Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from the University of Colorado – Boulder. He taught for many years at Metropolitan State College of Denver, where he also served as Chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Behavioral Sciences. He later served as Acting Dean of Letters, Arts, and Sciences at the same institution. He is now retired. A former President of the High Plains Society, he can be reached at [kellerk@mscd.edu](mailto:kellerk@mscd.edu).*

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INEQUITABLE PARTNERS IN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH:  
REFLECTIONS ON COMMUNITY-BASED  
PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

JESSICA W. BLANCHARD

## ABSTRACT

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) promotes the idea that collaborative partnerships enable more equitable opportunities for community engagement, and more prominent roles for community partners in the ownership and control of project outcomes. The University of Oklahoma Community Networks Program (OUCNP) is a community-based participatory effort to reduce cancer health disparities in Native American and African American populations, and has created collaborative partnerships among diverse community partners including the historically All-Black towns of Oklahoma and two Oklahoma tribal nations. There are striking dissimilarities in collaborative capabilities among the community partners on this project. This article explores the implications of conducting CBPR projects with inequitable community partners, and how such partnerships are only truly collaborative once the infrastructural disparities that emerge within and among community partners are addressed.

**KEY WORDS:** CBPR, cancer control, African Americans, tribal nations, Oklahoma

## INTRODUCTION

The National Cancer Institute awarded \$95 million in 2005 to 25 research institutions across the country to implement the Community Networks Program (CNP), a five-year project "with an emphasis on developing efficacious community-based participatory interventions to reduce cancer health disparities" (RFA-CA-05-012). Researchers at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center received funds to develop the University of Oklahoma Community Networks Program (OUCNP). The OUCNP works to reduce cancer health disparities in Native American and African American populations in Oklahoma, and has created collaborative networks among university and state health institutions, health advocacy groups, an organization representing the historically All-Black towns of Oklahoma, and two tribal nations.

The specific African American and tribal community partners included on this project were identified on the basis of previous collaborative research relationships with project researchers. Additionally, the burden of cancer in Oklahoma, especially among African American and Native American populations, is significant. In general, African Americans have disproportionately higher incidence and mortality rates for many cancers and they experience higher risks for cancer because of lifestyle choices and barriers to appropriate cancer interventions. Cancer was also the second leading cause of death in 2003 among Native Americans in Oklahoma (Cobb and Paisano 1998; USDHHS 2000). The number of deaths associated with cancer among Native Americans aged 45 years and older

exceeds the next 3 leading causes of death (diabetes, unintentional injuries, chronic liver disease/cirrhosis) combined.

Despite the high burden of cancer present in both of these populations, their inclusion as community partners on the OUCNP is significant in that striking dissimilarities in collaborative capabilities exist among these specific African American and tribal community partners. Generally, the most glaring differences in collaborative capabilities are infrastructural and economic disparities that exist among these communities. Both tribal nations, for example, are at the forefront of the most prosperous areas of growth in the state, including being in the top 20 employers for the entire state of Oklahoma. Many of the All-Black towns, in contrast, represent some of the most economically and socially depressed areas in the state.

Such contrasts urge us to consider how highly disparate communities begin the difficult work of creating effective, equitable collaborative research partnerships, particularly as notions of 'equal' and 'collaborative' appear increasingly out of reach for some communities. At the core of the OUCNP is a commitment to community-based participatory research (CBPR) as both an approach to research design and a method for achieving measurable outcomes. CBPR promotes the idea that collaborative partnerships enable more equitable opportunities for community engagement, as well as more prominent roles for community partners in the ownership and control of project outcomes. This article explores the implications of conducting CBPR projects with inequitable community partners,



and how such partnerships are only truly collaborative once the infrastructural disparities that emerge within and among community partners are addressed.

## CBPR, THE OUCNP, AND COMMUNITY DISPARITIES

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) emerged as a constructivist-inspired and critical theoretical alternative to positivist paradigms in research (Israel et al. 1998; Wallerstein and Duran 2003). CBPR approaches focus on the mobilization of marginalized or vulnerable communities, “whose members experience limited access to resources and decision-making processes” (Israel et al. 1998:194). A central principle of CBPR is the importance of facilitating “collaborative, equitable partnership in all phases of the research, involving an empowering and power-sharing process that attends to social inequalities” (Israel et al. 2003: 56). The participatory legacy of CBPR crosses disciplines and has roots in a number of similar approaches that hold as their centerpiece three inter-related elements: participation, research, and action (Minkler 2005; see also Minkler 2004). These foundations challenge long-held standards within academia, including unequal power relations between researcher and subject, institutional guidelines for determining what is appropriate and effective research, and even funding trends in the public and private sectors (Minkler 2004: 687).

Inherent in statements about CBPR is the idea that partnership in community research always means *equal* partnerships. As described below, however, the collaborative capabilities of the community partners on the OUCNP are strikingly different, particularly with regard to financial resources and infrastructural capacity. Power imbalances among community partners resulting from differences in financial and infrastructural capacity can lead to “participation without influence,” or the invitation for communities to participate in some aspects of research but to not have influence over other parts (Schulz et al. 2002: 291). The following questions should therefore accompany evaluations of the use of CBPR in disparate communities. How do CBPR approaches currently account for differences in partnership capabilities? Is CBPR prepared to revise conventional classifications of *vulnerable* populations, particularly as these communities (as is the case with some tribal nations) procure more genuine self-representation as a result of self-contained institutional review boards, economic sustainability that overwhelms most university subcontracts, and infrastructures that are competitive at the state and federal levels? Should funding agencies and research institutions apply singular standards of evaluation to collaborative projects, such as the OUCNP, that incorporate highly disparate communities as research partners? Should all partners’ obligations and

responsibilities to a project be the same? If not, what are the implications for CBPR projects that seek to reduce health disparities but do not challenge infrastructural disparities among partners? In short, is CBPR either *collaborative* or *equitable* if it addresses one form of disparity while turning a blind eye to another? Answering these questions and drawing distinctions among collaboration, participation and equity in research are important as researchers and community members seek to affect health disparities outcomes in historically and culturally distinct communities.

CBPR has great potential to impact health disparities in communities “where there are social injustices and...to make changes in policy and the environment rather than changes in individual behavior” (Malone et al. 2006: 1915). The University of Oklahoma Community Networks Program (OUCNP) consists of a network that includes a consortium of academic researchers, health professionals and advocates, and three community partners: two tribal nations in Eastern Oklahoma, and an organization representing the Historic All-Black towns of Oklahoma. Activities central to the OUCNP include the improvement of cancer screening services, development of partnerships, pilot research projects, training of local health navigators, securing of external funding, and the implementation of community-specific activities geared toward increasing cancer screenings. The OUCNP consists of three phases designed to meet the study’s overall goals: capacity building, community-based research initiatives, and sustainability.

## DIFFERENCES IN INFRASTRUCTURAL CAPACITY

Independent efforts by each community partner to fulfill these three phases reveal the infrastructural disparities that existed among the community partners over the duration of OUCNP efforts. The two tribal partners began work on the final phase (sustainability) as partners working in the All-Black towns, as described later in this article, found it difficult to come by successes in the first phase (capacity building). The tribal partners largely employ their own tribally operated health care services while the All-Black towns rely heavily on partnerships with existing state services and health advocacy groups. The two tribal nations each have their own tribal health facilities, including multiple clinics and even hospitals in their tribal jurisdictional service areas (TJSA). One tribal partner operates ten separate health facilities in their tribal jurisdictional area, and the other operates eight such facilities. Each tribe has its own hospital and cancer programs for use by its citizens. Meanwhile, the All-Black towns have few such services and rely heavily on the OUCNP itself to arrange free or low-cost cancer screening services for town residents.





I will compare the capacities of one of the tribal partners and one of the All-Black towns to demonstrate further the differences in infrastructural capacity. The tribal nation is one of the largest in Oklahoma and at the forefront of tribal and state efforts to provide first-rate healthcare to its citizens. Preliminary organizational assessments for this tribal nation indicate at least twenty-four distinct agencies, both internal and external to the formal tribal organization, whose services directly impact the management of risk factors known to affect a population's health. In addition to involvement with tribal cancer programs, tribal programs offer services including financial and housing assistance, environmental protection, career services, food distribution services, veteran's assistance, mental health services and others. These programs address physical, psychological, financial and social needs, thus complementing the broader goals of tribal health services to create a healthy community environment for tribal citizens. While these agencies may not all participate directly in the effort to reduce cancer in the tribal population, each is valuable to the public health infrastructure of the tribe.

An organizational assessment of one of the rural All-Black towns reveals strikingly fewer agencies that provide health-related services specifically for town residents. This town has no established clinics in operation, and there are no services devoted to the facilitation of healthier residents. Many of the health screening agencies currently operating in this town participate as a result of partnerships established through OUCNP researchers and other outreach workers. Indeed, the only health-related infrastructural components in this town independent of OUCNP are a community improvement grant for nutritional programs, monthly dentistry services, and a local health clinic that operates irregularly and without steady personnel. Conducting cancer awareness activities, much less actual screenings, in towns like this with a blatant lack of established resources is difficult.

The dissimilarities in infrastructure between the tribal partner and the All-Black town described above are clear. This comparison tells us a few things: the screening implementation process that works for one set of partners is not necessarily going to work for another, the lack of sustainable resources in some communities suggests a need for innovative interventions at the local level, and we should not limit ourselves to the enhancement of *existing* infrastructure but should also promote the development of *new* infrastructure. Finally, the disparities above speak to the need for a better understanding of the local conditions that affect project outcomes and that create major differences among the participating communities in the OUCNP. Such local assessments can also help point out limitations inherent in the CBPR paradigm.

## HEALTH, CANCER, AND COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH IN AN ALL-BLACK TOWN

The All-Black town featured in the above comparison is one of the largest of the historic All-Black towns located in eastern Oklahoma. "All-Black Towns," a formal designation referring to a specific number of historic towns, were established largely throughout eastern Oklahoma between the end of the Civil War and the early 1900s as utopian enclaves (McAuley 1998). These historic communities, many established prior to the formation of Oklahoma statehood in 1907, were founded upon the journeys of black migrants from the Deep South who sought the promise that an All-Black Town held in the early 1900s. Residents in the towns were recruited primarily from the southern United States. A promotional ad recruiting residents for a growing All-Black town in 1905 reads, "This is the homeseekers [sic] opportunity to secure a good home in a Negro town.... Join the number and spend one week in a Colored town where everything is owned and controlled by Colored people." The Great Depression, however, dried up the flow of migrants into the towns as it dried up the towns' once booming economies. Over the last 50 years, these towns have experienced more out-migration than in-migration. The original 30 All-Black towns have now been reduced to 12, ranging in population from 34 to 1,441. The town at the focus of this article remains one of the largest All-Black towns with an official population of 1,126. This number includes a substantial Mennonite community and the population housed at the local correctional facility, both located in the town's limits but notably outside of the local community structure.

The promise of greater opportunity in distant places has caused this town's population to be older than the general population of Oklahoma, composed mainly of descendants of the original town founders, not new residents. By nearly all accounts, including those of residents, the heyday of this particular All-Black town is long passed. A newspaper description of the town in 2005, one hundred years after the town recruitment ad, reads, "The overriding spirit of the town had been self-sufficiency outside the white power structure. But today, that fight is about over, at least in the West, and [it] is on the verge of blowing away on the wind" (Jonsson 2005). The once flourishing downtown area of this All-Black town, according to *Preservation Oklahoma*, now "lacks the economic reinvestment needed for it to flourish" (preserveok.org). In fact, many of the All-Black towns in this project represent some of the most economically depressed communities in the state.

Today, the buildings in the town's historic business district remain largely vacant and absent of consistent economic activity. The residential lots surrounding the immedi-





ate downtown area are often overgrown, and the town's only public high school was recently shut down due to lack of resources and enrollment. Pecan Street, the town's main street, is peppered with cars that seemingly go nowhere from day to day. These cars are points of convergence for mostly male residents without reliable employment, as well as points of contention for town elders who believe these young men could be more productive. Pecan Street is where local news travels, where social relations are fostered, and where town residents keep track of visitors entering town.

The town at the center of this article, while listed on the Preservation Oklahoma's Endangered Places list ("Places to Watch" n.d.), strives to maintain the remnants of the once-flourishing downtown commercial district that is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR 75001568). Despite social and economic challenges resulting from changing demographic trends and low economic productivity over the past several decades (Boddie 2002: 324), the town's present-day vibrancy continues to be grounded in the families that founded the town and who are still represented at local family reunions, the annual rodeo, memorial services, and holiday celebrations. A local community-based revitalization organization has recently made great strides to improve the community, particularly in the areas of agriculture, economic development, education, fundraising, government, public relations, tourism, and cultural revitalization ("The Town of Boley" n.d.). The town has been successful in acquiring community improvement grants, most recently including the *Reader's Digest We Hear You America*, a national campaign to recognize grassroots efforts of towns facing economic hardship during the recent recession (Reader's Digest 2011). The foundation for many community rejuvenation efforts remains the families and community institutions that have grown this town since its inception in the early 1900s. The town's many active church congregations and congregants, more than county or statewide organizations, remain one of the most constant sources of both informal and formal social service programs for community residents (Boddie 2002: 325).

I have worked in this particular All-Black town on and off for about six years on various cancer-related projects. I began work on the OUCNP nearly two years after the project's inception, and it was under the auspices of "collaborative research" that I again came to travel north on the familiar Pecan Street to work with town residents. Residents almost always prove willing to at least hear about the "next cancer project," though it is unclear how much they really expect it to help. Periodic cancer awareness events indicate that residents are interested, and perhaps hopeful, that resources are increasingly available to

them. Town elders fervently collect bags of awareness materials for themselves and others who do not make it out to local cancer functions but might appreciate the gesture. On the other hand, town residents do not generally take advantage of free cancer screenings offered through coupon, appointment, or "group screening" day, when accommodations are made to transport residents into the city for a free mammogram or colonoscopy. I spoke about these frustrations to the one-time nurse who would drive three hours a day to give her time in a rundown clinic on Pecan Street. She reiterated what I knew from years before: you offer free services long enough and consistently enough and you might just get residents to *think* about it. Awareness is good if you want to start to see results in these towns—but trust is better.

## TRUST AND THE RESEARCH RELATIONSHIP

Mistrust of researchers within many African American communities is central to many residents' perceptions of the illness experience and their health-seeking behaviors. The lack of trust that accompanies many research endeavors, particularly in underserved populations, has been well documented (Chataway 1997; O'Fallon and Deary 2002; Wallerstein and Duran 2003). According to Israel et al. (1998:183), mistrust in community-based research is "based on a series of research endeavors that produced no direct benefit (and possibly harm) to the participants, no feedback or dissemination of research results back to the community, and a lack of sustained effort on the part of researchers to maintain relationships." Some studies indicate that African Americans are less willing to participate in research studies and clinical trials (Shavers-Hornaday et al. 1997). Residents in the All-Black towns frequently cite the Tuskegee Syphilis trials as evidence of the mistreatment of African Americans by the biomedical community, and data from these communities suggest that residents minimize both "their dependence on interactions with outsiders" and the "use of extra-community health resources" (Foster 2004:509). Specific practices include downplaying signs of illness, delaying biomedical treatment, and bypassing treatment facilities in predominantly Euro-American communities in favor of more distant, urban facilities perceived to be more accepting of minority patients (Foster 2004). These practices, combined with the absence of local health care resources, contribute to high mortality rates from cancer and negative health experiences for community members.

One of the few public places in this All-Black town, aside from local churches, to regularly engage residents is the Community Center located on Pecan Street. A senior lunch program provides elder residents with a warm meal and an opportunity to socialize and, of course, an occasion



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for researchers to be present. The senior lunch in this town is highly illuminating of dynamics in the community associated with gender, age, race, and even subtle distinctions based on one's status as a community insider. A group of four Caucasian men in their thirties and forties came into the community center for lunch one day. The men's uniforms made it clear that they were some type of construction workers, and the boldness with which they entered the room and sat at the first available table made it clear that they were outsiders to the community. The men unknowingly sat at the "women's table," yet another indication that they were unaccustomed to local conventions. Despite my interest in watching this uncomfortable dynamic play out, I let the men know that they (not to mention the women) might be more comfortable if they moved to the other table. The men moved, only to have an elder man make it clear that the lunch was not intended for them anyway, to which the visiting men abruptly left. I understood the men's discomfort, as I had eaten lunch there while sitting across the table from the same woman for two years before she ever initiated conversation with me. Wariness of outsiders, not unlike many inclusive rural communities throughout Oklahoma, is expected in this town.

To build trust in a town like the one described in this article one must be *persistent*; to maintain it one must be *consistent*. The same nurse who once gave this advise to me eventually discontinued her own work at the local clinic on Pecan Street amid rumors of administrative wrongdoings. Residents in the town seemed uninterested in probing the details of this incident, presumably because they have become accustomed to sporadic cases of resource mismanagement and business venture failings. My frustration at the clinic's closing appeared greater than the frustrations of residents who stood to gain the most from the clinic and any cancer screening programs that might be housed in the clinic. This clinic had been the most promising location for one such local cancer-screening program known as Take Charge!, an Oklahoma State Department of Health program that offers free mammograms and clinical breast exams to underserved women across the state. The program currently has regional nurses operating in every county in eastern Oklahoma except for Okfuskee County, where this particular town is located. The implementation of this program in this community would have been the first such cancer screening service to directly impact residents of an All-Black town. Plans to implement the program in the run-down clinic involved a collaboration of state health institutions, regional nurses with the Take Charge! Program, OUCNP outreach coordinators, the former clinical nurse, and interested community members. OUCNP staff also had begun to train local residents to serve as community health

navigators, a role that would enable locals to recruit participants, schedule appointments, and provide patient follow-up.

The implementation of a Take Charge! Program in this community was underway for the last two years of the OUCNP, and town residents expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of being able to access and oversee local breast cancer screening services. Every step forward in the building of this local initiative, however, seemed to be followed by at least two steps back. Plans to open the new Take Charge! clinic were abruptly suspended at the request of the State program directors. A number of circumstances, some mentioned in this article and others still unknown, led to the suspension of plans for this Take Charge! clinic. The successes and, more often, the challenges of such efforts bring pause to the idea that collaborative research is a concrete means to systematically rewrite the everyday realities that shape the health of a community. The steps taken by the OUCNP, however, reinforce the ongoing need to develop sustainable resources and platforms on which mostly rural towns like Oklahoma's All-Black towns can participate more fully in collaborative efforts to reduce cancer disparities.

Efforts to promote free cancer screenings to town residents have thus far been ineffective, in part, because the screenings are conducted in largely Euro-American areas or urban areas at least an hour away from the town. Despite arrangements for qualified residents to receive free breast, cervical, colorectal and prostate screenings in neighboring cities, the only screening activities that have attracted participants from this particular town have been Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood tests conducted on-site. The Oklahoma Blood Institute (OBI) performs PSA tests for a fee of \$85 (or \$65 if also donating blood). OUCNP researchers secured funding from the Oklahoma State Department of Health for payment for these tests. On-site screenings are concrete interventions that directly address transportation barriers and time limitations. Perhaps more importantly, on-site screening programs potentially create locally monitored environments that enable town residents to develop trust in state agencies willing and eager to provide services in an otherwise overlooked area of the state. To be clear, successful effort to implement the Take Charge! Program in this town would have absolutely satisfied the need for a locally monitored cancer screening service had such plans not been abandoned with the closing of the local clinic.

It is not a coincidence that towns like the one described in this article have been excluded from many public health initiatives. The following are reasons given to me by various health providers for not performing on-site





screenings in Oklahoma's All-Black towns: low turnout rates, apathy, noncompliance, or suggestions that outreach workers might be more comfortable (or even safe) in more 'neutral' location outside of the towns. As a Caucasian female advocating for health screenings in the All-Black towns, other Caucasian health service providers have expressed to me on multiple occasions their own fears, hesitations, and even aversions to working in the areas surrounding these towns. It is critical to make public health institutions and health providers aware of the specific and accurate barriers that exist in underserved communities, and to provide suggestions for overcoming them. The most effective way OUCNP could address issues of mistrust, and to affect health seeking behaviors resulting from that mistrust, is to implement a local cancer screening program to create a platform on which community partners can serve their towns, residents, neighbors, and concerning the OUCNP, to participate as influential partners in collaborative research goals.

## CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The case in this article suggests that CBPR projects must not invite participation from disparate community partners without addressing health disparities in community-specific (and relevant) ways. This observation speaks to the important distinction between "participation" and "participation without influence." Misguided or unmediated inclusion of inequitable community partners in research can lead to further marginalization of one group. Further, highly disparate community partners stand to experience increased frustration at differences in measurable achievements among groups. Inattention to dynamics among disparate community partners has the potential to disenfranchise current or future community partners in CBPR initiatives.

The challenge for collaborative research, according to Krieger and colleagues, is "to equalize the power imbalances between less influential community partners and more powerful public health researchers" (Krieger et al. 2002: 374). I do not fully buy the idea that collaborative research alone is ever capable of equalizing the power imbalances that exist in some of the communities in which we work; an "equal but different" approach only denies the material and experiential consequences of inequality (see McDowell and Jeris 2004: 82). "Community partners" and "equal partners" are not synonymous; the comparative examples of the tribal partner and the All-Black town make this clear.

The results of the OUCNP also suggest the value of capacity building to the success of all phases in multi-partner, collaborative projects. The OUCNP produced a number of great successes over the past five years, par-

ticularly the marked increase of reported cancer screenings among tribal partners. During the first two years as a partner on the OUCNP, one tribal partner reported marked increases in tobacco, breast, and colorectal screenings, decreases in obesity rates, and increases in rates of physical activity, tobacco cessation, and participation in tribal healthy living activities. The tribe's health services reported colorectal cancer screening rates among adults aged 50 and over increased from about 30% to nearly 38% between 2006 and 2007. These rates continued to increase from about 45% to over the *Healthy People 2010* goal of 50% between 2008 and 2009 (Grim 2010). In contrast, OUCNP's efforts to impact cancer screening rates in the All-Black towns were less effective as a result of infrastructural barriers and local concerns discussed in this article. For example, only a single resident from one of the partnering All-Black towns participated in a free colorectal cancer-screening program over the duration of the OUCNP. Perhaps more measurable outcomes in cancer screening would have been possible for all OUCNP community partners if infrastructural disparities among them had been less pronounced and if project goals had been more relevant to the needs of each partner. The OUCNP ended in 2010 and applications for grant renewal were submitted shortly thereafter. The All-Black towns were not included as independent community partners on the grant renewal, a decision that represents the compromises researchers sometimes make to engage in CBPR. The OUCNP did not receive funds for renewal.

A cornerstone of CBPR is more prominent roles for community partners in the ownership and control of project outcomes. Despite the discrepancy in measurable outcomes among OUCNP community partners, such as increased cancer screening rates, it is important to note that residents in the All-Black towns did not compromise locally established and preferred health-seeking practices to compete more equally with the tribal community partners. Town residents maintained control over their own levels of participation in project activities, with some town residents choosing to pursue cancer screening and follow-up care independent of OUCNP initiatives. Residents in the towns exhibited a general reluctance to participate in OUCNP cancer screening activities, particularly when these services required residents to travel outside of their communities, depend on outsiders, or participate in non-local or state-sponsored programs. The outcome, therefore, is not to have equal impacts among disparate communities but to establish localized resources to serve and respect disparate needs.

Revisiting a question posed earlier in this article: is CBPR prepared to revise conventional classifications of vulnerable populations without also addressing the possi-



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bility that inequitable outcomes in community-based interventions are both realistic and meaningful? Krieger et al. (2002: 374) suggest, "partners in community-based research determine the degree and nature of participation that is best suited to the project at hand." Collaborative participation is ineffectual if even one community partner participates in research without the same capability to exercise influence over the research. Success in CBPR projects must not be exclusively measured by increased resources, decreased cancer incidences, or the ability to secure funding. Success should instead rest on the establishment of goals relevant to local needs and attainable according to the existing and potential capacities of all research partners.

Jessica Blanchard received her Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Oklahoma in 2010. Her research interests focus broadly on the discursive and experiential dimensions of contemporary native community life, with special expertise on cancer health disparities and the facilitation of community-based research partnerships among tribal nations, African American communities, and health advocacy organizations. This research is made possible by grants provided by the National Institutes of Health and the Oklahoma State Department of Health, Prevent Block Funding. Blanchard currently holds a postdoctoral research position at the University of Oklahoma's Center for Applied Social Research. She can be reached at [jessicawalk-er@ou.edu](mailto:jessicawalk-er@ou.edu).

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## ABSTRACT

North American Micmac Indians in the classroom and in the community organize themselves into work groups for mutual benefit via cooperative sharing. Motivation is not through individual competition but rather by way of working together. Micmac leaders and teachers know so. They prompt students in the classroom and people in the community, as at Burnt Church, New Brunswick, Canada, to organize into groups around work projects. By doing so, the Micmac group ethic is invoked. The group ethic is traditional, and it continues today as this article demonstrates.

**KEY WORDS:** Micmac Indian leadership, classroom motivation, group values and ethic

This paper draws upon my ethnographic field work among Micmac Indians in eastern Canada. It highlights one community's leadership dynamics showing creativity that benefited the community, if only temporarily, in a cross-cultural situation (Van Horn 1977).

The Micmac Indians basically stayed where they were aboriginally. European explorers and settlers advanced around them (Upton 1980). Micmacs are speakers of Micmac, an eastern Algonkian language, and are bilingual in English (Van Horn 1975). They reside primarily in Canada – in Quebec (Bock 1962; 1966), New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia (Wallis and Wallis 1955; Nietfeld 1981) and in the United States primarily in Maine and Massachusetts (Guillemin 1975; Prins 1996). Traditionally, the Micmacs hunted, gathered, fished and gardened (Wallis 1961; Wallis and Wallis 1955). For gardening, they augmented their subsistence pattern with the limited horticulture characteristic of a northern climate with a short growing season. Micmacs have the

dubious distinction of being among the first North American Indians to have been contacted by Europeans — with the discovery of Cape Breton (Nova Scotia) by the French Bretons in 1504 (Hoffman 1955:7).

For New Brunswick Micmacs, European contact is traced to 1534 and Jacques Cartier's North Atlantic expedition from France. His party chanced upon Miramichi Bay and the Bay of Chaleur. Trading with Micmacs took place from ships and later on shore (Guillemin 1975:25-27).

In modern times, Micmacs of Canada and the United States spend extended periods of time working in such cities as Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts, and in such entities as shoe factories. They serve as seasonal harvesters in the potato fields of Maine and the blueberry

patches of Nova Scotia. Monies are often sent back to family members in the Canadian or United States home villages (Guillemin 1975:83).

I emphasize the fact that the Micmacs were not pushed westward like many North American indigenous peoples due to European exploration and settlement. Even if vastly reduced with designated reserves in Canada, Micmacs live in historic communities of their own (Patterson 1972:4). The counterpart in the United States would be designated Indian reservations. None seems to exist for Maine Micmacs, but the United States Government officially recognizes the Aroostock Band of Micmac Indians without a formal land base (Bureau of Indian Affairs 1997:21).

## THE BURNT CHURCH SETTING

This article's setting is the Micmac community of Burnt Church, New Brunswick, Canada. The name stems from the Seven Years' War of 1756 to 1763, known as the French and Indian War in the United States (Anderson 2000). At the time, the Micmacs sided with the French against the British, who were struggling for control of North America. Micmacs hid Acadians, who were French settlers, and saved some from the expulsion out of Nova Scotia by the British that began in 1755. Acadia included what is now western Nova Scotia and eastern New Brunswick. New Brunswick was heavily settled by Loyalists to Great Britain after the American Revolution and became a separate British colony in 1784. It was a founding province within the Dominion of Canada under the British North America Act of 1867. The Indian Act became law that same year. It established the initial Micmac reserves in the Maritime Provinces, including the one at Burnt Church (Ganong 1904 and 1908; MacBeath and Chamberlin 1965; MacNutt 1967; Department of Indian Affairs 1970).

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Having been shipped to France from Nova Scotia circa 1755, many Acadians starting in 1765 then settled in Louisiana, continued to speak a distinctive dialect of French, and became known as Cajuns. They maintain this ethnicity today.

The naming of Burnt Church derived from Acadian fugitives eventually building a church there along the Miramichi River as it opens into Miramichi Bay, to give thanks for their safety and to honor their Micmac benefactors. It was for mutual Micmac and French worship because by the mid-eighteenth century through missionaries, many Micmacs had become Catholics, at least nominally as they are today. On September 17, 1758, a British patrol from a man-of-war skirting Miramichi Bay set fire to the church (Ganong 1914:304). The name Burnt Church therefore came into being.

This Micmac community is situated on the north shore of Miramichi Bay near the primarily English-speaking community of New Jersey, New Brunswick, to the southwest and equally near to the primarily French-speaking community of Neguac to the northeast. People who live in New Jersey are monolingual in English. Those who live in Neguac are bilingual in French and English and are of Acadian heritage. The Micmacs of Burnt Church are bilingual in Micmac and English, as noted previously (Van Horn 1975).

Residents of Burnt Church, like those of other Indian communities relatively close to the U.S. – Canadian border, enjoy the practice and freedom of crossing the international border at will to work for extended periods or to visit. This privilege derives from the Jay Treaty of 1794 between the United States and the United Kingdom. This border divided the Micmacs' aboriginal territory, and "border tribes were free to travel back and forth ... for hunting, fishing, and trading purposes" (Prins 1996:48).

With bilateral descent, Micmacs have traditionally regarded the patrilocal extended family as an important entity for different types of political, economic, and social cooperation. One's relatives are determined equally through both one's mother and father. With patrilocal residence at marriage, different patrilocal extended families cluster in different sections of their own on a Micmac reserve. Several families constituted a band with one band per village. Band leadership resided in a headman holding the office in part via inheritance from his father and partly by way of consensus of the family heads of his fitness to lead. The Micmac headman today is a Micmac chief who is elected every two years along with members of the community's band council – the Burnt Church Micmac Indian Band Council.

Traditionally, village heads would meet annually to re-allocate hunting and fishing territories among patrilocal extended families (Speck 1915; 1922). Variables included

rough population estimates of the fluctuations in the species preyed upon and changes in Micmac family size. Such estimates were used to adjust boundaries of each family's subsistence territories. Traditionally, the emphasis was regional; today it is larger as one Micmac people united into the Micmac nation (Prins 1996:65).

With no plow agriculture and no animal husbandry, income at Burnt Church derives from a small commercial cooperative that involves fishing and harvesting evergreens for pulp wood and "Christmas trees." It is a men's group. Another cooperative is of women who make and sell handicrafts including beadwork operating out of a building known as the handicraft center. There are some salaried jobs. The elementary school employs six teachers, including a teaching principal, plus a janitor who cleans the community hall and medical clinic. There is a community nurse and a welfare officer for social assistance. A Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) constable, a Micmac Indian, is stationed here. One family runs a small grocery store at Burnt Church. Potential exists for more small businesses, but Burnt Church is not as developed as the much larger Micmac reserve of Eskasoni in Nova Scotia (Strouthes 1998). The modern church at Burnt Church operates as a mission out of Chatham, New Brunswick, on the south shore of the Miramichi opposite Newcastle on the north shore. A priest comes on Sundays to conduct a worship service and visits individuals, as needed, at other times.

## CREATIVITY AND ITS CONSTRAINTS

The creativity alluded to in the title of this paper refers to an idea of some years ago that the Micmac band chief at Burnt Church had to increase funds for major home repairs and improvements (Van Horn 2008). Federal funds could be gotten to construct new houses. But no category existed to fund such improvements as rewiring an older frame house when needed or for up-grading the electrical system when new appliances including electric stoves were introduced. (The protagonist is hereafter referred to as the chief.) He saw a need, temporarily realized it, and saved the government money in the process. The chief demonstrated that a major-repairs program was less expensive than building new homes from scratch. The agency in question was the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs (CDIA) of the federal Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The chief's idea was to seek CDIA funds for rent for individual families to occupy their own houses. The deed of home ownership would be turned over to the band's tribal government – the Band Council of the Burnt Church Band of Micmac Indians – which approved the plan by passing the legislative equivalent of a municipal ordinance.



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The plan worked well. Funds were sought and received to install new electrical wiring, new siding plus constructing new rooms as add-ons and replacing weathered roofs. Implementation was gradual. The chief had the different family heads deed over the titles to their homes to the band council. The welfare officer, the Burnt Church Micmac in that office, in turn initiated the rent requests to her counterparts in the CDIA regional office involving a welfare-officer hierarchy resulting in routine approval.

The rent-request process worked so well that the chief told other New Brunswick Micmac chiefs about his plan. He even alluded to it in front of visiting CDIA officials. That was the plan's downfall. After some investigation, the chief was abruptly hit with a stop-order. The CDIA ordered him to cease what he had been doing because regulations had no provision for this practice and type of funding.

Thus, according to the CDIA, no precedent existed for the chief's innovative plan. There was no proper budgeting category for legal federal funding to pay rent. Even though the CDIA officials involved had signed off on the monthly home rental payments under the plan's deed transfers, they felt deceit had been at play. The chief felt he had deceived no one. Had he not discovered a legitimate bureaucratic way to meet a community need? Had he not shared his solution openly with all concerned? But the paperwork had to be undone and the plan was abandoned.

## THE GROUP ETHIC

My understanding is that the chief acted out of what is known as the group ethic among Micmac Indians (Van Horn 1983; 2002). Micmacs working together in groups for specific, particular purposes is an important cultural value that is congruent with Micmac egalitarianism. Situations include classroom and business settings as well as incidents of behavior in the wider community. Data for analytically suggesting the Micmac group ethic come from my direct observation via field work plus the life histories of the many Burnt Church community members I interviewed as part of ethnographic field work (Van Horn 1977).

For sharing money and for performing household and other work tasks the patrilocal extended family is a basic economic unit and a traditional political unit. Jeanne Guillemin refers to a Micmac reserve as a conglomerate of extended families with "the extended family ... [including] three or four different generations" (1975:83). Ideally within the patrilocal extended family, cooperation is the norm. Culturally, Micmacs value people over things and freely share their knowledge, material possessions, and other resources with fellow Micmacs.

The Micmac emphasis on sharing freely within a reference group can be seen in the elementary school at Burnt Church. This sharing happens even during tests, much to the

chagrin of the mostly European Canadian (hereafter, Euro-Canadian) teachers and teaching principal. During field work, I spent some time in the classroom. I frequently observed by sitting in the third grade class of the only Micmac teacher on the staff at the time. She is a college graduate and holds a teaching certificate. Her classes when I observed them were generally noisier than the other elementary school classes. Her students tended to talk more freely while in her class.

True to Micmac culture, learning was achieved through group activities. Subgroups would be formed for the different subjects in the third grade, and the students worked together expressively to solve subject-matter problems and to review previous lessons. I was greatly impressed with one little girl in the class next to whom I sat during an arithmetic lesson. This student was delightfully alert, and immediately showed me what her teacher and her classmates were doing, what types of problems they were solving, and what numerical concepts they were employing to do so. She did this on her own with no prompting from the teacher. She repeated to me what the teacher was doing. She had included me, to my honor, in the work group of which she was a part. Her enthusiasm was apparent. She demonstrated pride, too, in showing me and sharing with me the work of her group.

As part of my field work, the privilege was granted to me to teach the sixth grade from time to time as a substitute teacher at Burnt Church. I saw how Micmac students readily share their knowledge. Having presented a lesson on one occasion on famous North American Indian leaders in history, I gave a quiz to see what the class had learned. The students began to talk among themselves. My prior European American (hereafter, Euro-American) experience dictated that I tell the students to be quiet and do their own work individually.

But realization came quickly. I was being ethnocentric. Why not permit talking during the test? I was delighted to learn afterwards that everyone in the class got an "A." Not only did my students listen to and evaluate explanations from each other as answers to questions. They also voluntarily took information home and elsewhere in the community. As soon as the next day, I was hearing factual details from a history lesson from people I would casually come across. Many adults, including parents of the students, shared with me information that I was teaching in the sixth grade classroom. The father of one boy I taught reiterated highlights to me in the small local grocery store. Such information as I conveyed in the classroom was seemingly much appreciated. Presumably, it was learned well, judging by the number of times it was accurately told and re-told.

From such observations and interactions with both the students and teachers, I believe that this group method of



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teaching, versus an emphasis on individual performance and competition, maintains a level of interest and participation characteristic of a Micmac class that might otherwise be lost by the methods of the Euro-Canadian teachers. My own life experience with Euro-American teachers from elementary school through high school, college, and graduate school confirms this belief.

Euro-Canadian and Euro-American teachers tend to motivate students through individual competition by encouraging competitive performances between and among individuals. My experience shows that this approach is not effective among Micmacs. Certainly, it is not as effective as the group approach that draws upon the Micmac group ethic. My sixth grade teaching at Burnt Church was a discovery process for me and revealed the meaningful result of the Micmac group ethic in action in the class and in the community.

The principal at Burnt Church confirmed my findings. The most effective teaching device that this principal/teacher had found in working with Micmac children is the group project. He came to use this method for virtually every subject covered in the sixth grade. He would direct his six graders to work together in small groups to gather a body of data and to analyze it by applying it to stated problems. Each project consisted of a series of questions that would be answered in a joint report written together by all of the members of a group.

## CONCLUSION

As a cultural value, pride in group achievement takes precedence over individual accomplishments among the Micmacs. The way to motivate Micmacs is to recognize each one's role in a group. Then appeal for the best performance of each individual as a group member in the name of the group. Micmac persons tend to find personal satisfaction and social identity as a member of a group. Men's work groups at Burnt Church include construction workers, skilled carpenters, fishermen, and wood-cutters. Women comprise the work group of handicraft manufactures. There are three ongoing committees of men and women: The Church Committee, the Health Committee, and the School Committee. Members in each case are appointed by the chief. Each committee reports to the band council, of which the chief is the presiding officer. Individual committee and council members work toward the success of the group of which they are a member and the ultimate collective success of the band as a whole. The overall situation of different roles for different groups is consistent with Micmac egalitarian values.

Daniel Strouthes (1998) establishes the relationship between Micmac sharing, leadership, and motivation as follows, confirming Micmac egalitarian values and the Micmac group ethic:

[Micmac] people strive to share with others at least partly to increase personal prestige.... Those who work hard and productively and who share the fruits of their labor enjoy prestige and, if their other qualities warrant, positions of leadership (Stouthes 1998:44).

The way to motivate Micmac students in the classroom and people in the community, as the chief well knew at Burnt Church, is to organize individuals into groups around work projects and to invoke the Micmac group ethic. Group activities lead to cooperation and consensus to work together. If competition is called for, it occurs on behalf of a group with its members striving together and not in competition with each other. Survival for Micmacs as a culture and a people has depended on their group ethic in the past; it does so today. The chief was right. He was able to promote group cooperation among his people but unable to sustain it with the CDIA.

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## ABSTRACT

Before the new Republic of South Sudan can be considered a viable state, oil revenue-sharing, debtsharing, borders, citizenship and migration, and infrastructure development must be considered. By analyzing the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the current fragile peace in South Sudan, post-secession, the international community can learn innumerable lessons about how to promote sustainable peace at the conclusion of enduring civil wars.

**KEY WORDS:** Oil, development, Comprehensive Peace Agreement, South Sudan

## OVERVIEW

"Sudan's half century of woe" (Smillie and Minear 2004: 110) has left what once was Africa's largest country a chaotic mess. Mutual distrust, repeated retaliation, unfair allocation of resources, and poor governance resulted in a devastating civil war that left over two million dead and nearly five million displaced. The eventual signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and South included an agreement that a referendum in which the South could vote for unity or secession would be held in 2011. Votes tallied in this recent referendum added to over 98 percent southern support for secession. Although the formation of the world's 193<sup>rd</sup> country is an incredible feat, it does not preclude difficulties; much work must be done on an abundance of important issues before the Republic of South Sudan can be considered a viable state. By analyzing the case of South Sudan since the 2005 CPA, the international community can learn a great deal about how to promote sustainable peace at the conclusion of intense and enduring civil wars.

## THE 2005 COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AGREEMENT

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is a set of protocols signed in January 2005 between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)/Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Bringing such agreements to fruition is notoriously difficult (Stedman 2001). The formal goal of the CPA was to make unity an attractive option, with Southern independence as the option of last resort. In the Chapeau of the CPA itself (p. xii), it reads: "the successful implementation of the CPA shall provide a model for good governance in the Sudan that will help create a solid base to preserve peace and make unity attractive." The United

Nations mission that employed in both the South and the North (UNMIS) had the same mandate of making unity attractive. Other intended objectives of the CPA were:

- To implement a ceasefire to end the second Sudanese civil war,
- To agree on the principles of governance,
- To equitably share resource revenues,
- To equitably share power,
- To properly invest in chronically neglected rural areas (Eagle 2010), and
- To realize the right to self-determination for the people of South Sudan (Abedje 2011).

With all its optimistic intentions, the CPA had mixed results. The transition to agreed-upon democratic governance in the North has still not occurred, mainly because President Omar al-Bashir continues to push for the North to be ruled under Sharia law. With the unified government's failure to transform the Republic of the Sudan into a more equitably governed country, the 2011 referendum was meant to be an internationally recognized chance for the Southerners to voice their will. "The Comprehensive Peace Agreement opened an opportunity to turn the devastation of more than 20 years of the most recent civil war into a new era of peace and prosperity. But peace in southern Sudan remains fragile, with governance and rule of law structures in need of strengthening" (Eagle 2010).

## THE REFERENDUM AND THE FIRST SIX MONTHS

The recent referendum on southern independence was an integral part of the CPA that formally ended the protracted civil war between the North and South. Nearly four million people in Sudan and the diaspora registered to vote in the referendum that took place between January 9



and 15, 2011; over 98 percent voted for independence. The preparation for the referendum was supposed to be done over three years, but it was nonetheless successfully thrown together in about four months. Despite a few localized incidents of violence during the voting; the Carter Center, United Nations, African Union and European Union all commended the erstwhile Republic of the Sudan for remaining peaceful during the voting process (Richmond 2011b). Following a six month interim period in which the new state of governance was enforced, the Republic of South Sudan officially became its own country on July 9, 2011. After decades of suffering and mistrust, the first six months following the referendum were primarily a noteworthy success (cf. Langfitt 2011).

## SOURCES OF MUTUAL DISTRUST

The Republic of the Sudan as a whole began to lose hope for national unity and economic prosperity when serious political marginalization of the periphery became commonplace (Ylonen 2005: 110). This culturally and regionally imposed marginalization resulted in socio-economic grievances that unfortunately still continue today (Ylonen 2005: 100). Among many other issues, oil revenue-sharing, debt-sharing, borders, citizenship and migration, an influx in returning refugees, and infrastructure development must be considered before the world's newest country can be economically and socially stable.

## Oil Revenue-Sharing

"Natural resources are usually geographically concentrated in a particular part of a country, so countries that are heavily dependent upon natural resource exports are likely to be prone to secessionist movements" (Collier and Hoeffler 2006: 41). Access to and control of petroleum wealth played a decisive role in sustaining and escalating the Sudanese civil war. As the primary force behind the Republic of Sudan's economy, oil played an integral role in financing the government war effort. Sudan is a perfect example of the issues caused by oil. Looking back, "it is estimated that the government spent up to \$1 million per day for the war in 2001. Apart from making arms acquisition possible, the oil revenue has given rise to an internal arms industry catering for the [Northern] government war effort" (Ylonen 2005: 123). The problems with Sudan's resource allocation are as follows:

- 70% of Sudan's oil fields are in the South, but they must work with the North to get the oil to the refineries and seaways for export.
- "Sudanese oil currently represents a modest but rising share of the world's total supply; some oil engineers claim that Sudan may have the largest

unexplored reserves in the world. If shipments to China, India, Malaysia, and Sudan's other major clients were precipitously halted, these countries would seek oil elsewhere, forcing up world prices of crude" (Natsios, 2008: 87).

- The CPA established a 50-50 revenue-sharing agreement, but through 2010 the North seized the majority of the revenues.
- The US Energy Information Administration said, "In 2009, according to the International Monetary Fund, oil represented over 90 percent of export earnings. For South Sudan (Juba), oil represented 98 percent of total revenues for the year compared to Khartoum at 65 percent" (Thurston, 2011). With currently no other viable options ready to be major export revenues, many believe the South should receive the majority of oil revenue.

In other words, the majority of the oil found in Sudan is in the South but the only way to currently get it out of the country is to ship it through pipelines and refineries located in the North. On one hand, a move by Khartoum to cut off oil revenues to the south would be considered an act of war (Natsios 2008: 83). On the other, the possibility of South Sudan building a pipeline through Kenya or Uganda/Tanzania would only increase the anger and vengeance of the Northern government. In light of the formation of this new country, a new revenue-sharing agreement must be negotiated which both sides must be willing to implement fully.

## Debt

"Most of Sudan's debt dates back to the days of late president Ga'afar Nimeiri. It grew from \$9 billion in 1985 to \$37.8 billion [by February 2011]. It is believed that [the Republic of the] Sudan owes Britain close to \$1 billion in debt" (Suleiman 2011). After the excesses of the 1970s, the Republic of the Sudan owed more money to the International Monetary Fund than any other country in the world" (Scroggins 2004: 89). Khartoum and Juba will have to work together to decide how to divide this vast obligation. Jon Temin, director of the Sudan Program at the Washington-based US Institute of Peace, says there are various ways to solve this issue (Eagle 2010):

- Identify what projects added to the debt and attribute the debt accordingly.
- Debt could be divided based on population size.
- Debt could be divided based on the region's share of gross domestic product.
- Both Sudan and South Sudan could work equitably with creditors to alleviate this enormous financial burden.





To be respected by the international community, both sides must agree on how to allocate this colossal financial burden, and follow through with their promises.

## Abyei

Sudan's north-south boundary is one of the longest between neighboring African countries. The main flashpoint of this border area is the clash over Abyei, an oil-rich enclave that encompasses an area of about 10,460 square kilometers (Mouliid 2011). In addition to ongoing disputes about the allocation of Abyei's oil resources, the town continues to be a helpless pawn in the dispute over which side of the country this oil belongs. Interestingly, oil from this area is mostly gone; the one remaining oil field only accounts for about one percent of Sudan's annual oil production. When the final stages of the negotiations for the CPA were underway, the Abyei area was undeniably "oil rich." Heglig, Bamboo, and Diffra oilfields produced a combined 76,6000 barrels per day (bpd), which amounted to 25 percent of [then-unified] Sudan's annual oil production. The 2009 estimates dropped the amount to 28,300 bpd. With Heglig and Bamboo decidedly outside Abyei in a ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, "the only oilfield now remaining in the Abyei equation is Diffra, estimated to have produced just 4,000 bpd in 2009 – less than 1 percent of [South] Sudan's current annual production" (Hamilton 2010).

Regardless of the diminishing oil exports, Abyei remains an extremely fertile area that is attractive for cattle-grazing. The River Kiir (in Dinka)/Barh el-Arab (in Arabic) is one of the only sources of water during the region's harsh dry season, "meaning it is the only place to graze livestock for many months of the year. Without it, the nomadic population could not survive" (Hamilton 2010). Therefore, the heart of this matter centers on grazing rights for cattle, which are fundamental to the traditions and economies of both sides of this conflict. The two sides of this bloody battle can be concisely distinguished as follows:

Abyei is the traditional home of the Ngok Dinka, a tribe with a strong identity to the South and a history of joining forces with the South during the most recent civil war.

- However, this area is also the seasonal home of the nomadic Misseriya tribe, who strongly identifies with the North. For years, the Misseriya tribe has used this area on their migratory route as grazing grounds for their cattle during the dry season.

"The Abyei Protocol safeguarded Misseriya migration routes...[But now] critics like [Roger] Winter argue that Khartoum [continues to] manipulate the Misseriya by not explaining that peace protects their rights. 'It is too easy for those who wish to undermine the CPA to exploit the fear on the part of the Misseriya that ceding Abyei to the south would cut them off from access to dry-season grazing...The

north argues that Abyei ...has always been part of the Arab north'....The two tribes shared this land peacefully for centuries before the discovery of oil" (Mouliid 2011). Unfortunately, with the devious support of Khartoum, the two tribes are now fighting each other in a bloody battle for this land.

It is of the utmost importance that solutions be found to concerns of cross-border migratory issues like routes, movement, security, and taxation (Eagle 2010). Without an agreement, localized conflict over this unresolved issue is inevitable.

## Citizenship and Migration

As is evident in the border dispute and its relation to Abyei, the rights of citizens are also a major issue in this conflict. The main issues are explained herein:

- President Omar al-Bashir has been outspoken about not allowing dual citizenship for those that live in the North but work in the South. Although al-Bashir refuses to allow dual citizenship, he says he does favor establishing a set of economic and developmental agreements with Juba (Eagle 2010).
- Al-Bashir also continues to try to implement Sharia law, meaning Christian citizens who fled the conflict in the South and created lives for themselves in the North will be forced to either live under Sharia law or permanently move back South.
- Migratory routes for Misseriya pastoralists are contested.

In addition to both the lack of possibility for dual citizenship as well as the pressure of implementing Sharia law, the issue of the nomadic pastoralists is also complicated. "Because a solution to the Abyei problem has yet to be brokered, the annual migration is currently on hold, and incidents of violence have broken out" (Eagle 2010). The best solution is to keep the mutual North/South border as porous as possible, an effective border policy already in place between Sudan and Egypt. On that border, citizens enjoy the "four freedoms," which are movement, residence, ownership, and work in either country. This encourages the free movement of traders and herders essential to the economy (Eagle 2010). Earlier, this solution had worked between the Republic of the Sudan and Chad. Without an agreed-upon decision about citizenship and migration, the conflict along the border will spiral out of control.

## Returning Refugees

UNHCR and other relief agencies believe as many as 800,000 southerners will have returned from the north in 2011 alone. From late 2010 through early 2011, an estimated 200,000 southerners had returned, and UNHCR expected about 75,000 more in the following months (Schlein



2011). Of course, these returning refugees will require help restarting their lives in:

- Learning local farming techniques,
- Legally acquiring land,
- Reuniting their families, and
- Building homes.

Unfortunately, "about 2.5 million Southern Sudanese experienced food insecurity last year, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network. That figure was 40 percent above the average during the previous decade. World Food Programme officials have told Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) that the sharp rise in the number of people requiring food aid coincided with an influx of returnees in the run-up to January's independence referendum" (IRIN 2011). To prevent the reoccurrence of civil strife, properly dealing with the flood of returning refugees in the context of food security is another key to ongoing peace.

## Infrastructure Development

"By many yardsticks, [South Sudan] is the least-developed place on earth: 70 percent of its people have no access to any form of healthcare, one in five women die in childbirth, and one in five children fail to make it to their fifth birthday" (Thurston 2011). Unfortunately, support for development has been painfully slow in coming. Roger Middleton, a researcher for the London-based Chatham House research center, explained that although there was a "Unity Fund" set up by the CPA that was to spend oil revenues on development projects, there was little activity on this front until just before the elections. The funds were meant to help build roads, railways, schools and hospitals to show a benefit of remaining united with Sudan, but this opportunity to promote unity sorely missed the mark (Eagle 2010). To help expand infrastructure, South Sudan plans to:

- Build a new capital. Juba as the historical regional capital lacks prime land for investment and therefore countries that recognize the existence of South Sudan will not be able to build embassies. The issue of establishing a new capital was renewed at a Council of Ministers meeting in early 2011 in which the government reached a decision to relocate the capital to a new, more suitable location elsewhere in the South, potentially at Gondokora Island in Central Equatoria. Although located just across the Nile in Greater Juba, the idea of moving the capital continues to be contested (Sudan Tribune 2011).
- Build roads. There are currently less than 30 miles of paved road in a country the size of Texas, making imported food and aid distribution prohibitively costly. Work crews recently started the country's first long-distance paved highway, a 192 kilometer,

USAID-funded stretch that will cost \$225 million (Richmond 2011a). The Juba-Nimule road will be the largest infrastructure project in South Sudan by far (Mahr 2011). It will connect Juba to Uganda, making it the first paved road to connect South Sudan to "the international community." Absence of roads is creating a humanitarian crisis in Jonglei State and other areas, as peacekeepers are unable to reach some of these areas.

Not to be ignored, there is also much country development to be done in regards to communications, clinics, schools, and water and sanitation systems. Multifaceted types of development must be considered for the Republic of South Sudan to be a viable state.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Does "institutionalization before liberalization" work?

There is no way to tell with any certainty yet that Roland Paris' "institutionalization before liberalization" approach to state-building has worked in South Sudan. Institutionalization before liberalization includes postponing elections until moderate political parties have been established, designing electoral rules that reward moderation rather than extremism, encouraging non-violent and diverse civic associations, controlling hate speech, promoting equitable economic reforms, and creating a neutral bureaucracy (cf. Williams 2005). Paris' approach "begins from the premise that democratization and marketization are inherently tumultuous transformations that have the potential to undermine a fragile peace" (Paris, 2004: 7). If liberalization and marketization in post-conflict societies occurs too rapidly, international efforts may actually revive ethnic tensions and violence instead of reducing them (Paris 2004: 6).

With a six-year interim period between the CPA and the referendum, South Sudan was able to begin this institutionalization. Delaying democratic and market-oriented reforms until effective domestic institutions were established was a strong step, but equitable reforms and a neutral bureaucracy must be encouraged for South Sudan to be a politically stable and fully independent state. The institutionalization before liberalization approach "prioritizes domestic institution building before democratic and market-oriented reforms are introduced into the fragile environment. Once national institutions have the capacity to support liberalization, these reforms can be implemented with gradual and deliberate steps" (IAHPCR 2008). Using the Republic of South Sudan in the next decade as a case study, the "institutionalization before liberalization" approach can be further analyzed to better determine its usefulness. Hopefully, analysts will find that this approach has been successful at keeping transitioning countries like South Sudan at peace.

*Is South Sudan's self-determination an invitation for other countries to secede based on ethnic lines?*

Some believe that South Sudan's secession will provoke a domino effect of unwarranted secessionist tendencies all over Africa. Others also warn that citizens will realize the failures of their national governance and many countries on the continent will disintegrate. As can be seen in the Arab Spring in North Africa, many countries in the region are not only upset with their government but also with the formation of the state itself. The interest in separation is spreading, as can be seen in the following cases (Eagle 2011a):

- Somaliland has been inspired by the secession of South Sudan. Somaliland declared its independence 20 years ago and since then the south has been engulfed in anarchy and civil war. Somaliland is determined now more than ever for the African Union and Somali Democratic Republic to recognize it as its own country.
- Nigeria is much like Sudan in that it also suffers from ongoing tensions between the country's Muslim and Christian populations. It was thought the defeat of the Biafra made country division impossible, but South Sudan's recent experience is rekindling their hope for secession. The main difference between South Sudan and Nigeria, however, is that Nigeria is more divided into states instead of large regional religious divides. In other words, South Sudan's secession is different than Nigeria's tensions because the vast majority of those in the North of Sudan practice Islam while the Southerners mainly practice Christianity and/or Animism. Most of Nigeria's 36 states encompass a set of different ethnicities and religions. Hopefully this difference will help Nigeria remain unified and secure as one.
- In 1990, south of Yemen was its own state. Activists are once again beginning to fight for a separate state again.
- The best candidate for secession is Kurdistan in northern Iraq. Already considered a quasi state, they are functioning almost entirely on their own. They are very much on the road to gaining support for statehood.

Senegal, Angola, Tanzania, and Western Sahara have all had separatist movements in their recent past. But will these countries actually separate?

### **What makes South Sudan's case different from other countries hoping for self-determination?**

Many analysts believe that there is a specific reason that other countries will not have a successful secession movement as previously considered. Jon Temin of the US

Institute for Peace reminds that there are two countries in particular that have had long, bloody wars for independence: 30-plus years in Eritrea (from Ethiopia) and 50 years in Sudan. Nowhere else in Africa is there such a bloody history in the long fight for independence, and therefore nowhere else will people so seriously fight for self-determination (Eagle 2011b).

### **What is the role of outside support in secessionist movements?**

Without outside backing, secessionist movements are far less likely to occur. Erin Jenne argues that the single most important determinant in secessionist movements is external military and financial support. Furthermore, "for every unit increase in outside military support, a minority is 68 percent more likely to advance secessionist demands" (2006: 25). In the instance of South Sudan, both the South Sudanese in the diaspora as active supporters of secession and outside governmental support from countries like the United States in helping mediate the creation of the CPA played a major role in the country's self-determination. Temin also says that "today the only other region in Africa to enjoy significant international support for its liberation struggle is Western Sahara, where the Polisario Front has been fighting for independence from Morocco. The United Nations granted the group official recognition 31 years ago" (Eagle 2011b). Without financial and military backing from outside, international and local support for secession would be minute.

### **CONCLUSION**

Wars fought over self-determination are both deadlier and more entrenched than wars fought over any other ideology (Jenne 2006: 8). The immense loss of life and home of millions of Sudanese people cannot be repeated. Issues of revenue-sharing, debt-sharing, border disputes, citizenship, refugees, and development all must be effectively and immediately handled to promote peace in South Sudan and the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

"Of the African Union's 53 members, eight or nine could currently be described as war zones, and there are plenty more – such as Chad, Togo, and Guinea – that could go that way at any moment" (Ellis 2005: 2). It is possible, though unlikely, that other countries will follow suit and secede as South Sudan has. Either way, the international community must remain vigilant to the atrocities of marginalization due to war and authoritarian governments if we are to encourage sustainable peace and development. To reduce the loss of innocent lives, we must learn to understand the progression and severity of underlying aspects of enduring conflicts much earlier. And when there is no other option, we must learn to embrace and support the creation of a new

state.

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## RESEARCH REPORT

### STAFF CARE AND HUMANITARIAN AID ORGANIZATIONS: A MORAL OBLIGATION

CHARLOTTE MIN-HARRIS

#### ABSTRACT

This article suggests it is the moral imperative of humanitarian aid organizations to promote further research on effective coping strategies for staff care and self-care. Stressors are intrinsic to humanitarian aid work. However, organizations need to put aside "egos" and share experiences as a foundation for effective staff care systems. Burn-out can be avoided, which is crucial to sustained beneficiary support and organizational success.

**KEY WORDS:** moral imperative, staff care, self-care

#### STAFF CARE AND HUMANITARIAN AID WORK

InterAction defines staff care as "self care and institutional responses to stress among humanitarian workers in particularly difficult and stressful environments." USAID expands this definition to include "broad issues ranging from personal emergency preparedness and response to staff wellness on a day-to-day basis, including physical and psychological wellbeing in the workplace" (Curling and Simmons 2010). This article addresses the issues surrounding the need for more holistic organizational wellness policies, programs and self-care systems for relief workers.

It is clear that the context of humanitarian aid work is intrinsically stressful. The staff of humanitarian aid organizations increasingly works in complex environments where problems related to prolonged civil conflicts, extreme poverty, personal tragedies and natural disasters are constant companions. They often experience overwhelming workloads, long days and a lack of privacy and personal space—many are separated from loved ones for extended periods of time. These stressors place aid workers, whether national or international, at risk of experiencing traumatic and cumulative psychosocial effects. Although a significant level of stress is likely inescapable, in the short-term, these stressors can leave humanitarian staff feeling overwhelmed, insecure, fearful or chronically fatigued. In the longer-term, these stressors can have more serious effects of burnout, chronic anxiety and depression, apathy and post-traumatic stress syndrome. Self-destructive behaviors, such as heavy drinking, aggressiveness to co-workers and risky sexual behavior, are not uncommon. Despite their tireless efforts, these stressors put humanitarian workers at risk of causing more harm to the mission and to the people they are trying to serve. They are the help-

ers but they can also become the victims, as many lack the support for self-care by their agencies (cf. Gilbert 2006).

Although further study about the wellbeing and long-term staff care of humanitarian aid workers continues to evolve, the need for more transparent research to promote effective coping strategies and staff psychological security is paramount towards enhancing the capabilities of aid workers and sustaining their long-term involvement. Research is needed to lay the foundation for "Sphere-like" standards, norms and practices for staff care and self-care in the sector. The Sphere Project was initiated in 1997 by a group of humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and identified a set of minimum standards to represent sector-wide best practices. The author submits that similar minimum standards and framework for best practices of staff wellness should be identified as humanitarian aid workers are at risk while "crossing the psychosocial boundary" when caring for the "repressed, oppressed and depressed" (Van Arsdale 2011). Agencies need to actively engage in sharing experiences as a foundation for effective staff care systems; strong and sustained management support is crucial for their long-term organizational success.

#### PERSPECTIVE OF AN AID WORKER IN THE FIELD: GOING BEYOND "LIP SERVICE"

*"I do not feel that my organization has any real support mechanisms in place for staff here, despite "lip-service" about the importance of taking care of oneself, etc. There is a complete lack of team building, personal interest in most expatriate staff, encouragement or support from management at the*

# The Applied Anthropologist



CHARLOTTE MIN-HARRIS



Staff Care and Humanitarian...

*field level. We have no opportunities for training on security, stress management, or psycho-social issues, let alone ongoing training programs. There is a lot of pressure to work very long hours--in fact, to work almost constantly--with very little time off. The management and staff structures feel quite unstable (due to retention issues but also due to discontent and frustration among staff), creating a permanent sense of instability which is itself stressful. Interpersonal issues among senior staff also create a stressful work environment. One of the most challenging aspects of the work here is the lack of any true support structure, including close friendships or relationships. As these would most likely come from fellow staff (due to the isolation and lack of other social outlets in our location), the lack of team-building and failure to create any sense of team unity seems to me to be highly problematic"* (Headington Institute 2007).

This relief worker's experience exposes a common theme that systems have not been well developed or shared among home aid agencies or field managers to adequately address staff wellness issues beyond proverbial "lip service". According to Lisa McKay of the Headington Institute (2011), part of the reason that there is not more shared information or emphasis placed on staff wellness is attributable to agency ego. McKay states there is an "inherent resilience of many aid workers that an organizational culture of strength, independence and 'machismo' is not uncommon in humanitarian agencies...the managerial message, often unspoken, has tended to be, 'If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen'." This is disturbing since aid organizations, simply by their mission alone, are tasked to help others. However, it is a reality; and, agency ego is grounded in a struggle for funding and market share (Hoffman and Weiss 2006). The institutional "machismo" rivalry illustrates the need for agencies to step back from their stance of competitiveness and consider it their *moral obligation* to take care of their own. This, in fact, will help assure their sustainability in the marketplace. To illuminate this point, I refer to Van Arsdale's "should, would, could" paradigm, emphasizing the "should" level of what an organization is obligated to do from a moral perspective (Nockerts and Van Arsdale 2008). "Should" there not be a moral argument that aid organizations put their egos aside and commit to the wellbeing of their own staff as much as they commit to the mission and beneficiaries of whom they serve? "Would" it not elevate the capabilities of their staff if agencies championed shared experiences and collaboration of systems? "Could" best practices be operationalized across the sector despite institutional rivalries? Without a commitment by agencies to address these questions, long-term effectiveness of humanitarian assistance missions is at risk.

## Staff Security: Physical and Psychological

The context in which humanitarian aid and development staff live and serve means accepting risk. In the last twenty years, the number of attacks on aid workers around the world has risen and continues to grow sharply. Nearly 80% of aid worker victims are nationals of the country being served. The average number of national staff victims more than doubled between 1997 and 2005, from an average of 56 victims per year in the first half of the period, to 115 in the second (Smick 2007a). However, this does not mean that international aid workers are less at risk. International aid work has the fifth highest job-related death rate among U.S. civilian occupations, and is the only one for which the cause of death is predominantly intentional violence. Between 1997 and 2005, nearly as many international aid workers were killed in the line of duty as international peacekeeping troops (Smick 2007b).

In addition to these physical security risks, there are growing psychological risks for aid workers. Research has indicated that the longer aid workers are in the field, the more psychosocial support may be needed. Illuminating research was conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2000, in which longitudinal impacts on humanitarian aid workers were studied over a period of time. What the CDC found was, at around the fifth assignment, there was a dramatic increase in levels of clinical anxiety, depression, cumulative stress, burnout and potential post-traumatic stress disorder. Surprisingly, the longer people work (as aid workers) does not necessarily mean that there is more resilience. In fact, it could be that the longer people work in this field, the more they are cumulatively negatively exposed and affected (Gregor 2004). Burnout and turnover of staff indeed are becoming realities for aid organizations. From an economic perspective, this loss of knowledge capital as well as organizational capacity can become a debilitating outcome.

The awareness of long-term psychological risk becomes more significant. Based on a study by New York University's Center on International Cooperation and the Humanitarian Policy Group of the Overseas Development Institute, the total aid worker population grew by 77% between 1997 and 2005, even though incidents of violence against aid workers rose (Smick 2007b). The increased levels of violence, coupled with the increased population of relief workers, have prompted agencies to devote more time and resources to ensure the *physical* safety of their staff through better contingency planning, monitoring and training. I contend, to maximize effectiveness, this increased level of physical security should be coupled with increased levels of *psychological* security. The wellbeing of relief workers is in jeopardy if they are not benefiting from a cohesive frame of policies and programs. Especially for the first-assignment workers, there are additional risks if the training and brief-





ing do not include adequate and integrated preparation of psychological issues pre-deployment. Further, if there is pressure to ensure the visibility of the home organization—due to institutional rivalry—the quality of interventions in the field are at risk. Therefore, there is a moral justification (obligation) for the provision of comprehensive wellbeing programs given the degree of threat, hardship and instability to which aid workers are exposed.

### Steps Taken by the ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) made efforts to address this issue as illustrated after a security incident in 2006:

*“In the early hours of 17 December 2006, six members of the Red Cross team working at the ICRC hospital in Novye Atagi, Chechnya, were murdered in their sleep by a group of masked men using weapons fitted with silencers. A seventh delegate was wounded but managed to escape with his life” (Bierens de Haan 2007).*

The author of this excerpt was the ICRC Medical Officer responsible for stress management and cited a specific process that the ICRC implemented to ensure staff wellness imposed by this tragedy.

ICRC's first measure, as part of its support program, was to send a rescue team immediately to the scene. This team consisted of two “rescuers” from headquarters—one responsible for the geographical zone in question to implement operational decisions and a doctor whose sole role was to manage the stressors. Although they were not directly involved in the incident, the strategy was intended to bring a level of objective strength. The second measure was to hold an emotional debriefing (a critical incident stress debriefing, or CISD) within 72 hours following the incident. The doctor acted as the group leader and led the debriefing to motivate free expression of feelings in a confidential and safe environment. This method helped to identify staff members who needed individual psychosocial support. The third measure was to hold a funeral ceremony, with coffins, to demonstrate solidarity to the survivors while beginning the grieving process. The fourth measure was a rapid return of the survivors—with their deceased colleagues—to the home agency for recovery.

As part of staff care, these measures were incorporated into ICRC's stress management program, consisting of three phases: a briefing before the assignment, support during the assignment, and protection upon return from the field. In the case of the survivors, the last phase was critical. Although these measures highlight a system to weave together physical and psychological security, there is no transparent research to determine how well these coping strategies worked in light of the tragedy. Although it is

likely that the survivors felt a sense of comfort and strength upon the arrival of the two key senior staff members—who had a clear and objective agenda—without later shared communication, one wonders how effective the program was in addressing both staff care and self-care issues. This supports the sector's need for deeper research focused on evaluating the burden of relief work on those who deliver humanitarian aid services.

### STRENGTHENING STANDARDS FOR STAFF CARE

Although more transparent research is needed, it is clear that the ICRC is trying to make a shift in the right direction. The need for stronger staff wellness strategies is expected to increase in the deteriorating security context of the humanitarian aid environment. However, as there are no shared sector-published norms and guidelines (such as Sphere Standards), more agencies need to make stronger provisions for staff support in their own policies and programs. This has been reinforced by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which has published guidelines on psychological support in emergency settings (IASC 2007). The report specifies that the “provision of support to mitigate the possible psychosocial consequences of work in crisis situations is a moral obligation and a responsibility of organizations exposing staff to extremes.” Although this is a good start, this report would be more powerful if it illustrated sector best practices of benchmarks and thresholds. Even the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Code of Conduct (2011a) does not address the suffering needs of staff in the same context as the suffering of those they try to serve.

### SUPPORT OF A HOLISTIC MODEL: THE HEADINGTON INSTITUTE

The Centre for Intercultural Learning (2011) stresses: “It is the moral obligation of aid organizations to commit to comprehensive and holistic programs and policies as part of their human resources and risk management efforts.” Until a standard set of norms and practices become institutionalized in this effort, outside groups will have to fill the gap by assisting humanitarian aid organizations with their staff wellness programs. The Headington Institute, an organization that works to strengthen humanitarian organizations by providing training, research, and consultation, has a mission “to care for caregivers worldwide by promoting the physical hardiness, emotional resilience, and spiritual vitality of humanitarian relief and development personnel” (2011). In this spirit, the organization has developed provisions to incorporate holistic, ongoing emotional staff care programs into a relief agency's wellness models through (a) pre-assignment screening and orientation, (b) support during employment and debriefing, and (c) aftercare upon return policies (which could maximize the impact of ICRC's 3-phase





general support program [2011b]). Other support groups, such as the Antares Foundation and People in Aid, are also helping aid organizations set up holistic psychological support programs. I support the Headington Institute's more holistic approach to organizational staff wellness policies. The Institute's guidelines are outlined below.

### Screening and Orientation

It is in everyone's best interest to employ staff who are psychologically suited for relief work if they are deployed to demanding and changing environments. What attributes are best suited to do this kind of work? According to an article in *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine* (Elsharkawi, et al. 2010), "The ability to rapidly adapt to changes in culture, working and living conditions, language and professional practice and standards is a fundamental prerequisite for aid workers. The most successful tend to be those who have had relevant prior experience. Aid workers must be able to coordinate, build and work in teams and interact with communities across sectors (health, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition, security, gender, the environment). This is essential during the early post-disaster phase."

If individuals are found to be well suited for this work, the Headington Institute recommends that the orientation aptly prepare staff to become *self-aware* of the associated risks, both physical and psychological. This "ground up" training includes stress management techniques, spiritual work, relaxation exercises, rest and nutrition information, and other coping skills to bring personal levels of meaning to staff members' work.

### Support During Deployment

The Headington Institute encourages managers and supervisors to employ support for relief workers by addressing emotional and spiritual needs as part of ongoing staff wellness. This can include frequent communication with the home office, family, friends and co-workers. In addition, "break" and "exercise" areas, specific work rules and schedules, regular "defusing" sessions for airing frustrations and issues, staff communication and recognition, basic physical comforts and resources, and social support elevate morale and wellbeing. The Institute's holistic (and cutting edge) belief is that relief staff benefit from having a sense of safety, control and choice. Overall staff satisfaction can improve if supervisors and field managers employ these empowering tools. However, since many aid organizations have an engrained sense of "ego" built into their cultures, staff may find it a show of vulnerability and weakness (even guilt) to acknowledge that measures of self-care are needed. No one is impermeable to emotional suffering. For this reason, it is critical that staff care policies and programs include measures that help staff members at all lev-

els to recognize the signs of stress and burnout, and the appropriate coping strategies that empower the "helper" while deconstructing opportunities to become the "victim." Otherwise, relief workers can become emotionally "displaced" and disconnected from their sense of identity and to the mission at-hand. "Cultural training methods to improve cultural empathy, interpersonal problem-solving techniques and reinforcement of self-efficacious behaviors" are needed to help humanitarian workers' effectiveness and wellbeing (McFarlane 2004). Staff wellness and self-awareness measures are not mutually exclusive. Aid workers should feel empowered in this difficult line of work to acknowledge the fears, doubts and insecurities of what they experience in the field.

### Aftercare Upon Return

Returning home often requires a significant time for adjustment and reintegration as many stressors manifest themselves at the end of (and sometimes long after) an aid worker's assignment. The Headington Institute addresses the need to encourage formal, and multiple, debriefings to help individuals process the meaning and impact of their experiences. These debriefings should focus on: history giving, exploring expected emotional reactions, reviewing basic education about traumatic stress and simple stress reduction techniques, and general follow-up. Efforts also can include referrals for personal counseling, family therapy, and spiritual direction.

### BEST PRACTICES

The innovations of support groups, such as the Headington Institute, demonstrate what can work best to support staff wellbeing. This information is powerful and can help to advance stronger holistic policies and programs across agencies. To this end, agencies need to share their knowledge and cross-cultural learning to create "best practices," especially for smaller relief organizations that have fewer resources. Civil – military specialists Hoffman and Weiss (2006) agree: "Aid agencies do not place a high-enough value on compiling their own experiences and sharing them with other institutions. This step is the first in learning." By sharing this learning, aid organizations can be empowered to develop practical and achievable strategies to meet the duty of care for staff while providing inputs for emergent norms and standards.

The ICRC seems to have recognized the need for an organizational culture shift by elevating the awareness that staff health is not a taboo, and understanding—more importantly, respecting—psychosocial support for staff as imperative to both the agency's and the staff's long-term wellbeing. In fact, to further promote psychosocial support, the ICRC has recently initiated a program to offer services





to the families of staff in the field. The next step for the ICRC, and other agencies, is to take what they have learned and advocate for the creation of improved norms and practices. This will create a balance of their moral obligation to staff wellness with the practice of shared knowledge (Van Arsdale 2011). While research is emerging to better understand the long-term impact of aid work on the emotional wellbeing of relief staff, current evidence supports the need for long-term psychological and spiritual support to reduce burnout and psychosocial distress. As a result, humanitarian workers are placing a growing importance on social-wellbeing support in the increasingly insecure environment of relief work; adverse "institutional egos" will be impacted.

Without these tireless relief workers, who else will help the intended beneficiaries of humanitarian aid outreach? This article is ultimately concerned with this question, and with the moral imperative that aid organizations *should* put their egos aside and commit to the wellbeing of their own staff, as much as they commit to the welfare of those they serve. Lip service is simply not enough.

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## RESEARCH REPORT

### EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES: BENEFITS, BEST PRACTICES AND PARTNERSHIPS

PHILLIP PRICE

#### ABSTRACT

In recent years the provision of education in emergencies has demonstrated a marked rise in international support. Its positive effects are being demonstrated. This article highlights reasons for this shift, advances in best practices, and a key partnership furthering this initiative between the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Sphere Project.

**KEY WORDS:** emergency education, INEE, Sphere Project

#### INTRODUCTION

*I have seen how one year of school changes a child and how years of school transform that child's future. I have watched as the power of education saved families from being poor, babies from dying and young girls from lives of servitude. And I have lived long enough to see a generation of children, armed with education, lift up a nation.*

~Graça Machel, Mozambican politician and humanitarian

The right to an education for all is meant to help ensure a life of dignity and is enshrined in numerous international documents and conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Covenant of Economic, Cultural, and Social Rights. Yet while this fundamental right—often referred to as an “enabling right”—applies to all (UNESCO 2000), regardless of circumstance, it had often been considered of secondary importance in both natural and human-caused emergencies. However, in recent years this trend has begun to shift. In 2004 the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) released the *Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies*; in 2006 the Global Education Cluster was formed to strengthen preparedness, coordination and technical capacity in educational emergency response; and in 2008 the Sphere Project announced a companionship agreement with the INEE (Save the Children 2009; INEE 2009b). Through these efforts, among many others, integrating education into all stages of emergency response has become a higher priority for both aid agencies and donors. This brief highlights several reasons for this shift in mindset and practice by outlining the tangible benefits of incorporating education into emergency response, and furthermore shows how this

shift is exemplified by the work conducted by the INEE and the Sphere Project, including implications of their recent collaboration.

#### WHY EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES?

Education in emergencies saves lives. Conflict and disaster destroy normalcy and upend the lives of those affected, this being especially true in the case of children (cf. UNICEF 2010). Young people caught in emergency situations are thrown into unfamiliar and hostile realities, often without the safety nets they once enjoyed, such as school and family. Quality educational initiatives employed at the outset of an emergency can mitigate these circumstances and provide much needed survival skills to understand the dangers of a new environment. These include initiatives to teach landmine awareness, living and surviving in refugee camps, basic health and hygiene information, how to protect oneself from sexual abuse, and the provision of psychological support (Nicolai 2006). Education also protects the lives of children through the creation of a safe space. As noted in their 2004 *Minimum Standards Handbook*, the INEE states that “quality education saves lives by providing physical protection from the dangers and exploitation of a crisis environment. When a learner is in a safe learning environment he or she is less likely to be sexually or economically exploited or exposed to other risks such as recruitment into armed forces or organized crime” (INEE 2004; Roger 2002).

Education in emergencies promotes developmental skills. Susan Nicolai (an emergency education officer with Save the Children Alliance) asserts that although basic survival skills are an essential component of emergency education, “individual and social development skills are equally important [and] having at least one constant in a daily life full of change can help children continue growing



both individually and socially” (2006). As Nicolai simply states, education in emergency helps children “learn to be.” The importance of this skill set cannot and should not be underestimated in climates where youth are exposed to prolonged periods of psychological distress and/or violence.

Education in emergencies can enhance development and stability. In their 2009 *Re-Write the Future* policy brief, Save the Children (2009) states that in the longer term education can be a critical ingredient in the reconstruction of post-conflict post-disaster societies, promote conflict resolution, tolerance and respect for human rights, increase children’s earning potential, and play a central role in reducing the impacts of future disasters by incorporating Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies into national curricula. This sentiment is echoed and supported by the INEE findings (2004) that a “quality education contributes directly to the social, economic, and political stability of societies...and education reform, which can start soon after an emergency, is necessary to help ensure the protection of education systems and set conflict-affected societies on paths to sustainable peace and development.” Peter Buckland, a senior education specialist, further underscores education’s role in stabilizing conflict when he states that “[w]hile education does not cause wars, nor end them, every education system has the potential either to exacerbate or mitigate the conditions that contribute to violent conflict” (2006: 7).

Education in emergencies can provide core academic skills. While situational demands will most likely push these programs further along the emergency response continuum, they simply cannot be ignored. A brief look at the numbers of children affected by disasters confirms this point. According to the Save the Children Alliance, more than half of the estimated 72 million children out of school live in conflict-affected states, millions more in areas hit by natural disaster, and on average these children spend eight years in displacement (INEE 2009b). These statistics not only portray the magnitude of the problem, both in number of youth affected and the duration of these negative ramifications, but also highlight the futility of pursuing the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary education without seriously addressing the need for education in emergency situations (UNICEF 2010). Allowing generations to go uneducated until a crisis is resolved is not a viable option if the international community is to meet its collective Education for All (EFA) commitments. Furthermore this lack education can lead to more unrest and an exacerbation or reoccurrence of hostilities in conflict zones.

Further, people negatively affected by natural disasters and conflict ask for emergency education. Sphere Project (2004), INEE (2004), and Save the Children (2009) reports all confirm that during times of crisis education is a

high priority. Schools are often at the heart of a community and education is viewed as the key to providing a better life through increasing each person’s ability to participate fully in the life of their society—economically, socially and politically (INEE 2004). Without this societal element people can quickly lose hope for a brighter future. The International Rescue Committee’s report, *Educating Children in Emergency Settings*, speaks to this: “Despite the folklore of our work, these crises are more often not life-or-death situations. Rather the predominant experience is a hopeless and purposeless existence” (INEE 2009b). Empirical evidence has shown that education can be an effective salve for this sense of despair.

## EDUCATION AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

### The Sphere Project

Founded in 1997 by a consortium of humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, the Sphere Project is represented through its standards handbook, a broad process of collaboration, and an expression of commitment to institutional quality and accountability. All of this attempts to provide a universal set of minimum standards in emergency response to address five key sectors of concern: water supply and sanitation, nutrition, food aid, shelter, and health services (Sphere Project 2004). Underpinning these aims are two core concepts, “that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of calamity and conflict, and second, that those affected by disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance.”

In 2000 Sphere issued the first edition of its handbook. This manual was updated in 2004 and 2011 to reflect changes in the field of humanitarian assistance. All of these documents are grounded in the organization’s Humanitarian Charter as well as the “principles and provisions of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, refugee law and the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief” (Sphere Project 2004). These are not intended to be a step-by-step guide to disaster response, but rather should provide an operational framework in which aid agencies can adapt best practices to fit the context of a particular emergency, and provide a mechanism by which humanitarian actions and results can be measured.

How these standards translate into tangible outcomes is a two-fold process. First, the standards are qualitatively defined to be applicable to nearly any disaster setting. Second, the standards are reinforced by qualitatively or quantitatively measured key indicators which function as tools to measure the impact of processes used and programs implemented (Sphere Project 2004). Through this approach the Sphere standards can take on a universalistic





framework while remaining relevant at a local level. This is of great importance when working on cross-cutting issues such as protection, as well as assessing and identifying vulnerable groups in a specific emergency context.

### INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies

From its early visualization at the 2000 World Education Forum's Strategy Session on Education in Emergencies, the INEE quickly grew into a "global network of NGOs, UN agencies, donors, practitioners, researchers and individuals from affected populations working together to ensure the right to education in emergencies and post-crisis reconstruction" (INEE 2004). By 2004 this network, which then included over 2,250 individuals from over 50 countries, released a set of standard minimum guidelines for the implementation of education in emergency situations. The foundation was set in its rights-based approach, which rests solidly on the large corpus of International Human Rights Law (IHRL), International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and refugee law, as well as the Sphere Project's Humanitarian Charter. The underlying premise of this method is that while some prioritization must occur during crisis, "human rights in emergencies are the same as human rights at all times and in all situations; they do not disappear, cannot be diluted, or put on hold" (INEE 2011). This includes the right to an education.

Additionally the INEE standards, like the Sphere standards, are meant to be applied universally. They were designed to be flexible enough to accommodate the multitude of complex emergency situations that can and do arise, while at the same time providing a framework which can produce concrete results and accountability measures. In order to accomplish this balance each standard is divided into three separate but interrelated implementation guidelines:

1. **Minimum Standards:** These are qualitative in nature and specify the minimum levels to be attained in the provision of educational response.
2. **Key Indicators:** These are "signals" that show whether the standard has been attained. They provide a way of measuring and communicating the impact, or result of, programs as well as the process, or methods, used. These may be qualitative or quantitative.
3. **Guidance Notes:** These include specific points to consider when applying a standard and indicators in different situations, guidance on tackling practical difficulties, and advice on priority issues. They may also include critical issues relating to the standard or indicators, and describe dilemmas, controversies or gaps in current knowledge (INEE 2004).

This sequencing is aimed at facilitating project success by allowing the practitioner to apply a set of best practices within a local context to gauge the vulnerability of affected populations, as well as understand the capacity that each of these groups has in the implementation of educational interventions. Furthermore, and of significant note, the INEE standards "constitute the first global tool to define a minimum level of educational quality in order to provide assistance that reflects and reinforces the right to a life of dignity" (INEE 2009a; INEE 2009b).

### The Sphere Project and INEE Collaboration

Through the brief descriptions provided here the importance of education in emergencies and the reinforcing missions of the Sphere Project and the INEE become clear. Thus, it seems that the collaboration between these two frameworks is an idea whose time has come. The formal partnership language reads:

The INEE Minimum Standards present a global framework for coordinated action to enhance the quality of educational preparedness and response, to increase access to safe and relevant learning opportunities, and to promote partnerships for inter-sectoral linkages with health and hygiene, water and sanitation, food aid/nutrition and shelter. The use of the INEE Minimum Standards as a companion to the Sphere Project's Minimum Standards in Disaster Response will help ensure these linkages are made at the outset of an emergency through multi-sectoral needs assessments, followed by joint planning and holistic response (INEE 2009b).

This statement, although not including emergency education as a distinct chapter within the Sphere handbook, clearly identifies education's salient role in crisis response. This realization is important for a variety of reasons. One is an increased pressure on donors to fund longer-term educational projects and not just the "relief-bubble." A second is that by integrating education into all phases of emergency response, humanitarian organizations will be providing an often neglected, yet community prioritized, intervention. And third, but by no means last, this collaboration will and has led to positive results for those affected by natural disaster and conflict.

If development is the process by which vulnerabilities are reduced and capacities increased, as Anderson and Woodrow (1998) posit, then the partnership between INEE and Sphere should be seen as an encouraging step forward. To illustrate this statement, comparing the linkages between two of the standards demonstrates how joint planning and using the standards in tandem should achieve both



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Education in Emergencies...

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| <p><b>INEE Analysis Standard 1: Initial Assessment</b><br/>A timely education assessment of the emergency situation is conducted in a holistic and participatory manner.</p>                         | <p><b>Sphere Common Standard 2: Initial Assessment</b><br/>Assessments provide an understanding of the disaster situation and a clear analysis of threats to life, dignity, health and livelihood to determine, in consultation with relevant authorities, whether an external response is required, and if so, the nature of the response.</p>                |
| <p><b>INEE Analysis Standard 2: Response Strategy</b><br/>A framework for an education response is developed, including a clear description of the problem and a documented strategy for action.</p> | <p><b>Sphere Common Standard 3: Response</b><br/>A humanitarian response is required in situations where the relevant authorities are unable or unwilling to respond to the protection and assistance needs of the population on the territory over which they have control, and when assessment and analysis indicate that these needs are unmet (2009b).</p> |

these aims and deliver a more holistic set of programs aimed at relieving suffering:

While this partnership obviously necessitates a great deal of research and continued refinement, projects that combine education and shelter, education and water/sanitation, education and health, education and nutrition, and education and protection are already having positive effects on the lives of those affected by crisis. This collaboration is the culmination of a shift in attitudes and priorities in the field of humanitarianism, and while it brings with it the inherent difficulties of preserving and protecting education during emergencies, the research points to the rewards being worth the risks. To paraphrase Nelson Mandela (2000), "it will be the youth who make the future. It will be them, not us who will fix our wrongs and carry forward all that is right with this world." However, for his words to become reality, a large degree of responsibility rests on the collective obligation of those working to alleviate suffering and provide aid, to ensure those affected by crisis are provided with the opportunities they require to rebuild what was lost.

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