Collaborative Options and Pedagogical Experiment in Anthropological Research on Experts and Policy Processes

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ABSTRACT: This article engages the current challenges that the ecology of designing and implementing ethnographic research today presents to the still powerful culture of method in anthropology, especially as it is manifested in the production of apprentice graduate dissertation research by anthropologists in the making. The Anthropology of Public Policy defines a recent and emerging terrain of anthropological research that challenges the culture of fieldwork/ethnographic method at the core of anthropology's practice and identity. Thus, what might emerge, in the author's view, is not a new or adjusted handbook of method, but a more far-reaching discussion of how the very function of ethnographic research shifts in response to this challenge in terms of collaboration and pedagogy.

KEYWORDS: Collaboration, multi-sited ethnography, pedagogy

This article is meant to supplement the methodological concerns of this collection, and, in so doing, reflects my interest in the current challenges that the ecology of designing and implementing ethnographic research today presents to the still powerful culture of method in anthropology, especially as it is manifested in the production of apprentice graduate dissertation research by anthropologists in the making.[1] Policy studies defines a recent and emerging terrain of anthropological research (see the exemplary studies of Greenhalgh 2008 and Wedel 2001), certainly of interesting new questions, but in order to pursue them, such an arena challenges the culture of fieldwork/ethnographic method at the core of anthropology's practice and identity. Thus, any consideration of what anthropology might achieve in this arena might begin with a discussion of this challenge.

What might emerge, in my view, is not a new or adjusted handbook of method, but a more far-reaching discussion of how the very function of ethnographic research shifts in response to this challenge that seems methodological in nature. Yes, anthropologists will still be expected to provide analytic-descriptive accounts of policy processes as they have always done in the pursuit of the ethnography of more traditional topics. However, to make collaborative norms and forms a cornerstone of a rethinking of method, as I argue for, will require other kinds of products of research, interventionist and experimental in nature, than are encompassed within the conventional ethnographic mode of writing. Collaborations generate their own forms of production, which at present can only be assessed in pedagogical experiments, such as the para-site project described below. A challenge for anthropologists pursuing collaborative research in arenas of

counterparts — of subjects who, as experts and analysts, often think along the same conceptual lines as the anthropologist — lies in the need to revise the basic form of research practice on which it has relied for the past century.

In terms of my previous writing, this article represents a further meditation upon the emergence of multi-sited ethnography, beyond the understanding of it through the 'following' metaphor that I introduced in the 1990s (Marcus 1998). Now, more than then, there are strong pressures that are affecting the viability and ambitions of ethnographic research in its mythic scenes of Malinowskian or Boasian encounter, however altered by 1980s critiques (Clifford and Marcus 1986), and beyond certain limiting scripts for it through which it still thrives (Rabinow et al. 2008). It is on ethnography's frontiers or edges of contemporary application, where anthropologists are redefining the time-space and practical boundaries of their projects in multiple theatres of reception, that basic questions of scale, function, purpose and ethics are being asked anew. These include research in realms of technoscience and society (see, e.g., Downey and Dumit 1997), among other kinds of expert knowledge forms (see Elyachar 2005; Maurer 2005; Riles 2006) including policy studies of primary interest to this collection.

Ethnographic writing and the reading of ethnographic texts, as in the 1980s, define important perspectives here, but an inquiry into the production of research itself within its professional culture, behind these still traditional forms and not limited by conventional thinking about the method within tales and classic procedures of fieldwork, which still offers a comforting ethos for anthropological practice, is where the theoretical action is now, so to speak. The pursuit of the low-tech phenomenology of ethnography—face-to-face—to which anthropologists remain committed, within the ecology of changing scales and forms of inquiry, amid experts of various

sorts, and driven by information technology, elicits an idiomatic makeover in the name of collaboration. Therefore, current efforts to produce collaborative ethnography within policy and expert circles are one route of access to the changing character of anthropology's classic method.

Collaborative Imperatives

The spectral figure of fieldwork as collaboration has long haunted the overwhelmingly individualist conventions of producing ethnography (see Lassiter 2005). From time to time, the exposure of the repressed or suppressed collaborative relations of fieldwork have served the purposes of critique (as in the 1980s) or the effort to make fieldwork normatively collaborative in the highly politicised terrain of social movements among the peoples who have been anthropology's traditional subjects. There has also been a long, but intermittent history of collaborative research in anthropology, in its own self-organisation and in its joining interdisciplinary projects, corresponding to periods of expansion, optimism and the availability of resources in the development of university disciplines (famously, for example, the Torres Strait expedition of the early twentieth century, and the Chiapas project in the mid-twentieth century; infamously, the Neel/Michigan studies of the Yanomami (see Borofsky 2005)).

In the context of the history of fieldwork, it has been primarily ethical concern about effacing the informant and being complicit with colonial and postcolonial power that has driven the motivation to encourage an explicit, normative modality of fieldwork as collaboration (see Lassiter 2005). In the context of the history of anthropology as an institution, it has been primarily disciplinary ambition, and sometimes intellectual excitement in the making and breaking of reigning paradigms that has driven collaboration in the past.

But today, the salience of a norm encouraging collaboration in anthropology has a different generic source and a different expression than in either of these past motivations: ethical concern or disciplinary ambition and innovation. The dominant form of collaboration of the present era is the technology-driven collaboratory (as Wikipedia (2008) defines it: 'an environment where participants make use of computing and communication technologies to access shared instruments and data, as well as to communicate with others'). Collaboratories have dramatically encouraged the adoption and experiment with forms of collaborations within the traditions and cultures of enquiry across many disciplines and in the way that universities are restructuring themselves. In some such cultures of enquiry, like anthropology, however positively collaboration was valued in the past, the current tendency, originating in efforts to organise knowledge making within the oceanic and global realm of connectivity, is experienced as pressure, as imperative to which the reaction, while it might be creative, is also anxious, and sometimes defensive. The lone fieldworker inserting herself into a community, or increasingly, into a dense network of collaboratories and collaborations as a way of pursuing projects of all kinds, is a challenged identity, perhaps only fully legitimate within her own professional culture of origin and eventual return.

The aesthetics of research practice are deep within and constitutive of the professional culture of anthropology, which is strongest in apprentice pedagogy and in the norms of evaluating results of research within the community of anthropologists, together still holding the practice of ethnography in place within its traditions, and these strongly regulative professional aesthetics will not be denied under current pressures and imperatives to be collaborative. These aesthetics are individualist, face-to-face in nature, as in the mythic scene of Malinowskian, and more lately Geerztian encounter. The creative, experimental question

at the moment is not (or not yet) how are these aesthetics to be overcome, but rather how are they to be adapted to equally powerful pressures to produce ethnographic knowledge within the terrain and ecology of collaboratories.

The problem for ethnography in assimilating collaborative strategies and norms of research practice, finally, is not so much to preserve doctrinally the individualism it entails (i.e., the preservation of individual performance, expressions and rewards of inquiry), by providing a cocoon or a protective mimicry for it in the current environment, to make it pass like a form of the 'native' emergent collaboratories today. Rather, it is to preserve what is valuable, even precious, in an older, simpler technology of knowing that the individualist aesthetic of ethnography entails even in its new environments of collaborative and distributed knowledge forms. These are organised in oceanic cyber space, which ethnography engages in closely observed conventional sites, in laboratories, in boardrooms, in villages and other existential locations.

Therefore, experimental collaborative strategies of ethnography now in anthropology arise not as much from their history of ethical concern for the other, so to speak, as from new ecologies and scales of research that challenge anthropologists to produce the scene of fieldwork and its aesthetics within and across scales that are now hyper-organising as collaboratories, which are imbued with 'the vision thing', imaginaries of practice that are conceived in emergence. For example, my ongoing research on the programmes and ideologies of contemporary social philanthropy, forged particularly in foundations that derive from corporate and private wealth amassed from enterprise in new information technologies, indicate that they functionally recognise collaborations as the only kind of operators in their vast ambitions of global transformation. And it seems to be the job of a wide swath of social/cultural anthropological research today

to work through such corporate visions and programmes, and their expert beneficiaries, as 'native points of view'—to evoke the old interpretative object of ethnography—as imaginaries of anticipation and possibility found within the collaboratories, or assemblages, of institutional and other sorts of actors in the contemporary (see Strathern 2004; Ong and Collier 2005; Rabinow 2003).

The emergent forms and norms of collaboration in ethnographic method today, alongside and operating within its complex objects of study—themselves collaboratories—would function as cocoons or incubators of concepts, ideas, shared with subjects, which serve to re-scale and slow them down, and modulate them to the tempo at which anthropologists have traditionally done their work (Marcus 2003). Anthropological collaboration of this sort would create a belated, but relevant form of ethnographic knowledge in relation to the scale and pace of its contemporary objects and contexts of study.

Therefore, there are two functions of collaboration now in the re-invention of anthropological ethnography—one is to create the conditions within the bounds of research projects to generate the kind of results that ethnography has traditionally contributed to and valued—perhaps conceived as concept work that requires a space and tempo that slow things down. Collaboration thus creates the opportunity for the process that is distinctive of ethnography in its current scenes of fieldwork. A treatise would be required to describe systematically what would actually happen to the tropes, habits and aesthetics of the anthropological tradition of research thus preserved. This treatise would be pedagogical in its concern, since this is where method is most at stake in anthropology today (see Faubion and Marcus 2009 and Westbrook 2008, both written in this pedagogical spirit).

The other function is to create an adapted identity and space for ethnographic projects to operate in the collaboratory arrangements of others as subjects. The individual fieldworker in these complex spaces is increasingly an alien, uneasy presence for which mere affiliation with a disciplinary or professional community/collective is not a sufficient surrogate for belonging to a collaborative research effort or team of varying scale. Collaborations built into ethnographic research provide identity and space in topological terms to relate the human scale of ethnography, to which its aesthetics of method remains committed, to the complex scales of collaboration in which it must define its own objects and boundaries.

Therefore, collaboration can be in any ethnographic project an ambiguous process. On the one hand, it is a proffer to subjects to create the classic conditions of fieldwork; on the other hand, it is a proffer to colleagues to produce collective work. I want to pursue this ambiguity by referring to my understanding thus far of a notable current effort to innovate an anthropological scale research collaboratory: the ARC (The Anthropology of the Contemporary Research Collaboratory; see <http://www.anthropos-lab.net/>), based at the University of California, Berkeley.

I have been privileged to follow the evolution of this project and to have conversations with its principals. Its development thus far is worth a full account as a case study in the re-invention of anthropological research aesthetics, but here I want to contemplate it in relation to the differing approaches to collaboration that it more generally illustrates.

ARC has two primary identities interestingly integrated and managed. Initiated by Paul Rabinow and his former students, Stephen Collier and Andrew Lakoff, it is both a project that does research on biosecurity—its contemporary modalities, paradigms and institutions—and it seeks to experiment and design new forms and norms of enquiry with roots in anthropology, but as informed by the broad transformation in theory and practice during the 1980s and 1990s that characterised academic disciplines concerned with the study

of culture. On the one hand, it has produced a collaborative form that seems to be of the conventional social scientific sort generated by an ecology of expectations, determined by sources of funding and the institutional cultures of expertise and science with which ARC interacts—in this sense, and in a formal way, it has 'gone native'. On the other hand, in its collegial intimacies, through the research that it has proposed to do, and understanding the moving ground of older methods, it has the ambition of innovating practices of once ethnographic inquiry by viewing its research tasks as experiments in this regard. The ARCists are second-order observers of their own research functions.

This could result in a dizzying complexity of perspectives if it were not for the natural logic of group process—decisions to go one way rather than another, to determine emphases. In my outsider's observation and interest in this process thus far, I am fascinated by two models of collaboration that the ARC suggests, and that I can only sketch here. Each poses a way in which the development of collaboration within the current professional culture of anthropological ethnography might go.

A key question here is the conceivably variable role of the individualist project of ethnographic research, as the component or modality of the ARC that evolves collaboratively. By one model, let us say, the science version of ARC (and the one that I think it actually favours), the principals develop an increasingly coherent perspective on particular topics; they process fieldwork as data for their own concept work—collaborative artifice and innovation is concentrated in the work of the principals. The collaboration within the scene of fieldwork—traditionally repressed and underdeveloped—while recognised, is clearly subordinated, as an object of experiment, to the collaboration of the principals in their concept work. The creation of knowledge in the scene of fieldwork itself—partial to the traditional mythos of fieldwork—is displaced for

innovations in collegial collaboration. This is a true diminution of the individualist fieldwork project and its ideologies, in that fieldwork becomes more narrowly like data collection for conceptual reflection and refinement in the ARC Lab, rather than the originary scene of insight and conceptual advance, buried in field notes, and which, in the classic mythos, the fieldworker works through and reports to a sympathetic and interested professional community when she returns to the equivalent of the ARC setting in the university. (At this point I invite the reader to visit the ARC website to gain a sense of its specific projects, and their progress, as well as the quite interesting reflexive discussions that the principals have produced over time about the same issues of critique that I am raising here.)

By the other model, let us say the avant gardist model of experimentation, the accent is on the found collaborations in fieldwork investigation, making something of the long repressed collaborative basis for developing ethnography in the field. It is closer to the longstanding ideologies of fieldwork, with the individualism diminished in favour of developing the collaborative impulse always there, but now not out of ethical concern, but from the conditions that constitute the subjects and objects of ethnography today.

In this version, the ARC finds and assimilates diverse projects of ethnography, already going on out there, with speculation and surprise; it is porous to the collaborative forms and norms being innovated in fieldwork and its own collegial collaborations are driven and stimulated by this. It sacrifices precision and analytic power in results for constantly pushing the categorical boundaries of biosecurity paradigms. It remains a bit of the outlaw in these paradigms, as anthropology has traditionally preferred to be, as part of its aesthetic. In the science model, the work becomes more refined as it expands—there is increasingly better control of the conceptual apparatus rather than openness to inclusion of diverse topics,

and research on its peripheries. Participation in working on, changing, the major paradigms of biosecurity matters more than critique from the margins.

Now, the ARC has both of these collaborative styles within it, and as such it is one prototype for how the reform of method out of anthropology might be grown. But ARC in its experimental ethos is more than a research project that inventively engages the imperative of collaboration within the sensibilities of the anthropological tradition of ethnography. It also has pedagogical intent, moving towards becoming a design studio of sorts for rethinking and altering the norms and forms of dissertation training and production in anthropology. These changes are occurring on a widespread basis, but more circumstantially and by negotiating older models and the conditions of fieldwork than by articulation, design and rethinking what fieldwork becomes in a broader sense of the research terrain (see Rabinow et al 2008 and Faubion and Marcus 2009 for examples). This is precisely what discussions of collaboration—its meanings, ideologies, present forms—precipitate. Therefore, now I want to consider the question of apprentice pedagogy in becoming an anthropologist and its strategic importance as a site for considering the re-articulation of the norms and forms of ethnographic research.

Pedagogical Imperatives

Classic anthropological ethnography, especially in its development in the apprentice project/dissertation form, was designed to provide answers, or at least data, for questions that anthropology had for it. Nowadays, anthropology itself does not pose these questions. Other domains of discussion and analysis do—some academic or interdisciplinary in the conventional sense; others not—and thus it is a contemporary burden of projects of anthropological research—and especially apprentice ones—to identify these question-asking domains—also, domains of reception for particular projects of research—as a part of learning the techniques of research itself. Therefore, particular policy or development programme arenas with many players—NGOs, governments, international organisations, indigenous and social movements—define the terms of anthropological research more powerfully than does any discipline-derived paradigm or centre of debate. The very parties that are the primary audiences of such research are also its subjects. Thus, ethnography in its most classic inclination to make 'subjects' of all of its interlocutors must develop the methodological practice today of making colleagues, fellow experts, frames of analytic discourse ethnographic subjects themselves in designing the multi-sited terrains of its research projects. Much ethnography shifts today from the study of culture or cultures to the study of knowledge-making processes, broadly conceived and diversely located, and in which its own expertise participates. Here the practical and decisive theoretical influence of Foucault in framing the topics and objects of research of much contemporary ethnography has been apparent, providing the concepts of 'problematisation' (see Rabinow 2003) and 'governmentality' as key resources in the shaping of its projects.

In this development, the function of the research project is not simply descriptive–analytic, to provide a contribution to an archive or debate that has been constructed by the discipline—it has not. At best, contemporary anthropology provides a licence and an authority to engage, not a reception itself. No wonder then that the current dominant impulse and fashion at the core of the discipline is to call for a 'public anthropology'. It remains to think through what this means beyond doing good. In this licence, the function of ethnographic research out of anthropology becomes a mediation in some sense; it takes on agency. It is an experiment and a potential intervention

that depends on the response of its subjects for any critical effect it might have. It sutures communities and contexts together in addressing those communities, and in presenting its results in constructed contexts of collaboration as a key issue in the increasingly broader design of research beyond mere fieldwork (see Faubion and Marcus 2009).

Indeed, students are pursuing questions that fieldwork itself in its conventional Malinowskian aesthetics (intensive participant observation in communities of usually subaltern subjects) cannot answer. And it is in the process of apprentice research—in dissertation making—that an anthropologist is most subject to these aesthetics and regulative ideals of research practice as they are imposed, not by rules of method, but by the profound and redundantly instilled psychodynamics of professional culture. Here the process on its own is not at all stuck, but in transition. What is missing is an articulation of these changes—and talking of the observable vulnerabilities of the old practices as a way to systematically formulate alternatives and modifications. For example, the reading of exemplary ethnographies does not so much serve in any straightforward way, as it once did, of teaching method—exemplars to follow or moves to try out—as collections of 'symptoms' that provide clues to alternative pedagogical strategies. Therefore, ethnographies no longer reflect the classic fieldwork situation, but rather the broader topology of research, encompassing classic fieldwork, which requires a more complex notion like design, a concept of research process which I am currently interested in exploring as applicable to anthropology compared to its long-established uses in architecture, art, engineering and other fields (see Marcus 2007; also consult the Center for Ethnography [University of California, Irvine] website for planned events on this topic).

This is where anthropological models of collaboration, discussed earlier as a contemporary imperative and condition of enquiry across disciplines, could make a considerable difference. They immediately suggest a broader frame for constructing research than that which is focused on the norms for preparing for and conducting conventional fieldwork and then reporting on it in a dissertation. At present, as a halfway measure, what prevails is a renewed experimental ethos for the conduct of ethnographic research, which makes a virtue of the contingencies deep within its traditional aesthetics, and which works very well for the exceptional talents who enter anthropological careers by embracing this experimental ethos.[2] In producing standard work, however, the experimental ethos serves far less well—more often it produces rhetorically driven repetitive versions of singular arguments and insights. A fuller account is badly needed of what kinds of questions contemporary ethnography answers, with and in relation to whom, what results it might be expected to produce on the basis of what data. All of these very elementary questions are in urgent need of being addressed again with ingenuity and theoretical insight. There are a number of ways in which to produce such a reconsideration by looking ethnographically at current negotiations and compromises with the aesthetics of method in the course of dissertation projects as they unfold (see Faubion and Marcus 2009). At present, if one listens to student tales of fieldwork, what transpires is far more complicated and interesting than expectations of fieldwork reporting allows for. To probe the collaborative dimensions of contemporary research, which the present ideological tendencies surrounding collaboration encourage anyhow, would generate informally and formally different accounts of fieldwork, leading to a much needed broadening of the pedagogical expectations of dissertation research.

I want to conclude this section on pedagogy, as I did the first one on collaboration, with a discussion of a particular example, this time referring to my own effort to implement a so-called para-site experiment in the pedagogy of

graduate research, through the recently established Center for Ethnography at University of California, Irvine (see http://www.socsci. uci.edu/~ethnog/). In an extended quotation, I reproduce the Center's explanation of this experiment:

The Center As Para-site in Ethnographic Research Projects:

While the design and conduct of ethnographic research in anthropology is still largely individualistic, especially in the way that research is presented in the academy, many projects depend on complex relationships of partnership and collaboration, at several sites, and not just those narrowly conceived as fieldwork. The binary here and there-ness of fieldwork is preserved in anthropology departments, despite the reality of fieldwork as movement in complex, unpredictable spatial and temporal frames. This is especially the case where ethnographers work at sites of knowledge production with others, who are patrons, partners, and subjects of research at the same time.

In the absence of formal norms of method covering these de facto and intellectually substantive relations of partnership and collaboration in many contemporary projects of fieldwork, we would like to encourage, where feasible, events in the Center that would blur the boundaries between the field site and the academic conference or seminar room. Might the seminar, conference, or workshop under the auspices of a Center event or program also be an integral, designed part of the fieldwork?—a hybrid between a research report, or reflection on research, and ethnographic research itself, in which events would be attended by a mix of participants from the academic community and from the community or network defined by fieldwork projects. We are terming this overlapping academic/fieldwork space in contemporary ethnographic projects a para-site.[3] It creates the space outside conventional notions of the field in fieldwork to enact and further certain relations of research essential to the intellectual or conceptual work that goes on inside such projects. It might focus on developing those relationships, which in our experience have always informally existed in many fieldwork projects, whereby the ethnographers finds subjects with whom he or she can test and

develop ideas (these subjects have not been the classic key informants as such, but the found and often un-credited mentors or muses who correct mistakes, give advice, and pass on interpretations as they emerge).

We invite graduate students engaged with ethnography at UCI and elsewhere to propose projects where the Center event can serve as a para-site within the design of specific research endeavours. This theme signals an experiment with method that is directed to the situation of apprentice ethnographers, and in turn stands for the Center's interest in graduate training and pedagogy as a strategic locus in which the entire research paradigm of ethnography is being reformed.

The first event that represents such an experiment occurred on 5 November 2006. Jesse Cheng, an advanced graduate student, studied a movement among activist lawyers to mitigate the death penalty in capital cases. A practicing lawyer himself, Cheng worked with them and in other directions that their activities suggest to study the operations of the death penalty through the para-ethnographic, descriptive-analytic work that the mitigation lawyers produce in their advocacy. He conducted his own investigation through the forms of their investigation. This is the analogous space of the classic 'native point of view', but without a compass in traditional practices to do this kind of research that requires collaborative conceptual work to enable a project of anthropological ethnography.[4] This work needs a context, a space, a set of expectations and norms, better than the opportunistic conversations that occur in just 'hanging out'. The para-site experiment is intended to be a surrogate for these needs of contemporary research that are certainly anticipated in practice but still without norms and forms of method. It encourages addressing issues of design before a concept of design has re-invented the expectations of pedagogy in anthropological training. Undoubtedly, the para-site will take different shapes and participations between the field

and the conference room in other dissertation projects. But in all cases, it is a response to the imperative to materialise collaborative forms in contemporary ethnographic research.

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Notes

1. This article reflects background thinking for a number of projects near publication: Rabinow et al. (2008); Faubion and Marcus (2009); Westbrook (2008). They observe a major transition occurring in anthropology's signature fieldwork-ethnography tradition embedded in the habits and learned aesthetics of its professional culture.

2. Hans Jorg Rheinberger's (1997) formulation of 'the experimental system' with biochemical research in mind has been influential for a number of anthropologists, working in the arena of science and technology studies, in providing them with a cogent and substantive (rather than merely metaphorical) understanding of how ethnographic inquiry currently unfolds as experiments. Without evoking the term experiment, Marilyn Strathern (2004), in a manner consistent with the spirit of Rheinberger, celebrates the resiliency of 'plain old' ethnographic inquiry in the midst of very elaborate collaboratories.

Compare:
> Rheinberger: 'Experimental systems are to be seen as the smallest integral working units of research. As such, they are systems of manipulation designed to give unknown answers to questions that the experimenters themselves are not yet clearly able to ask.' (1997: 14)

with
> Strathern: 'Social anthropology has one trick up its sleeve: the deliberate attempt to generate more data than the investigator is aware of at the time of collection…a participatory exercise which yields material for which analytical protocols are often devised after the fact…ethnography allows one to recover the antecedents of future crises from material not collected for

the purpose…to anticipate a future need to know something that cannot be defined in the present…' (2004: 5–6)

I find this a very appealing mystique for ethnography, and contemporary ethnography could perhaps function in this way. However, whereas Strathern's rendition of a Rheinberger-like experimental virtue in ethnographic research seems to arise from the application of its time-tested individualist aesthetics, for me it can only arise from the latter's revision through new norms and practices of collaboration, which are then anthropology's 'experimental system' and should be thought through as such.

3. The usage is inspired by the concept for the 8th volume of Late Editions, the fin de siecle series of annuals, edited by George E. Marcus through the 1990s: *Para-Sites: A Casebook Against Cynical Reason* (2000).

4. The following is the reaction I sent to Jesse Cheng, who orchestrated the first para-site experiment, at UCI, 4 November 2006, within his dissertation research. It deals with (1) how the form of para-ethnographic engagement, which defines the basis of epistemic collaboration in contemporary fieldwork, might be located and clarified through the holding of a para-site event, as a stand-in for collaboration in the absence of explicit norms for it in the present state of training in ethnography; and (2) how such a para-site needs a 'third'—a common object or a specific community of reception to address—like high-minded debates about the death penalty—as the basis for the complicit solidarity on which collaboration might be created in contemporary contexts of research, full of causes and activist motivations:

Jesse,
> That was a great first para-site effort… Just a couple of personal observations:

> For me, the key to exploring 'reflexive knowledge' ethnographically among expertises and 'projects' of various sorts in the world, like death penalty mitigation, is to locate/discover where and how it is constituted para-ethnographically, so to speak —to find a 'form' amidst practices of your subjects and counterparts in ethnographic research. In our session, this moment materialized after lunch, when Russ [one of the mitigation experts] revealed in response to my question that all of this

elaborate research is built into the advocacy process as a 'front-loaded' phenomenon in a situation of anticipation. And then at the end, Bill [Maurer, anthropologist at UCI attending the event] crucially associated this 'space' with the formulation of the nature of contemporary ethnography itself as anticipatory. So this is a space of both 'fact-finding' and the imaginary, depending upon the development of reflexive knowledge. The question remains of what the role of the ethnographer/fieldworker is in this 'found' space of para-ethnography. To describe it? To analyze it? To partner with it? To encourage the development of it? To pass it on, represent it elsewhere by some sort of mediation?

And this gets to some of the remarks of the final discussion of the event about what the stakes for anthropology are in research like this—for its own disciplinary project—and not part of helping to strategize, where the anthropologist participant might be perceived by the mitigation experts in the role of consultant (this is your 'participant observation' role, your 'blending in' identity in this kind of research). What is in this research for anthropologists themselves when they, in their own disciplinary discussions, have not really created a context to receive it as part of a significant problem that they have defined? Well, my current solution to this problem of anthropologists themselves making something of topics that they themselves have not developed is that work in anthropology like yours has to be designed with a 'third' primary area of reception for ethnography in mind—that is, neither the community of anthropologists who are not prepared to discuss such work deeply, nor the subjects themselves who have their own purposes and interests in developing your work with you. So what is this 'third' arena of reception in which your work should have [an] impact?—that is a key problem and integral responsibility of conducting ethnographic research today. It is as much a problem of ethnographic analysis as describing the work of your subjects—the mitigation lawyers—itself. It could blur into anthropology as activism, but I consider it first and foremost a theoretical and analytic problem of ethnography itself.

Well, in your case, I evoked high-minded, often high literati discourse on capital punishment that usually has no subtle knowledge of ethnographic objects/subjects (with the reflexive knowledge work that goes on in fieldwork), but cumulatively is really important in influencing broad public change in social thought about issues such as capital punishment. I think that if your work is to have effect, it has a real contribution to make at this level of high literati policy debate, and it is an explicit task of design in your project to consider this realm of reception—as itself another, 'third' site for ethnographic understanding.

So ethnography in its production is inherently dialogic where the key partners to dialogue are often not just the 'natives'. This means the very conception and design of projects of ethnographic critique should incorporate a deeply understood (itself ethnographic in nature?) dimension of intended reception outside the scene and interests of fieldwork itself… In this mode, the ethnographer sees the function of his work as mediation in a very specific politics or topology of knowledge that incorporates anticipated reception.

George

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