PERSPECTIVES: AN OPEN INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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PUBLIC ANTHROPOLOGY

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As an example of public anthropology (following the model of the Kahn Academy), Dr. Borofsky has created short 10-15 minute videos on key topics in anthropology for introductory students. All 28 videos are available from the *Perspectives: An Open Introduction to Cultural Anthropology website*.

Learning Objectives

- Explain how the structure of academic careers, topical specialization, and writing styles contribute to difficulty with communicating findings from academic anthropology to a wider public.

- Identify examples of anthropological research that has contributed to the public good.

- Define public anthropology and distinguish it from academic anthropology and applied anthropology.

- Assess the factors that contribute to a desire for public engagement in anthropology as well as the obstacles to this engagement.

- Evaluate the ways in which accountability, transparency, collaboration, and the goal of benefitting others could contribute to reframing anthropology.

- Discuss actions that can be taken by anthropologists to facilitate social change.

INTRODUCTION

Was Julie Andrews right when (in the Sound of Music) she sang, "Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start?" Should authors follow her advice in writing textbook chapters by, at the

beginning, explaining the organization of the chapter so readers will know what to expect and be able to follow the chapter's themes clearly? I cannot sing Do Re Me half as well as Julie Andrews. But I will try to follow her suggestion.

This chapter begins with an outline of its organization—which topics follow others plus a little "secret." After this introduction, the chapter turns to (**a**) two puzzles stemming from anthropology's interactions with the broader public. It next (**b**) discusses how we might best define public anthropology given that different people interpret it in different ways, especially in respect to the field's ambiguous overlapping with applied anthropology. Building on these points, the chapter then turns to (**c**) public anthropology's four main strategies for enhancing the discipline's credibility with the broader public. The chapter concludes with (**d**) a section on facilitating change—guides for those who want to help transform people's lives for the better. Even without Julie Andrews singing, I trust this sounds interesting. **The chapter asks important questions and offers thoughtful answers that, I hope, will draw you into reflecting on the challenges public anthropology faces as well as how it seeks to encourage anthropology to better serve the common good.**

Before beginning, however, I should share a secret. You will see throughout this chapter—as in most anthropological articles and books—a host of references in numbered footnotes. You might ask why anthropologists are intent on citing colleagues extensively, especially when it is off-putting to students and the broader public. Seeing all the references with only a limited sense of who is being referred to and what they mean can be intimidating. Anthropologists use these references to show colleagues that they "know what they are talking about." It demonstrates that they are familiar with key literature relating to a topic. The citations also serve another purpose. They reinforce the discipline. The more anthropologists cite each other, the more they convey that anthropology is an important discipline with important things to say—just look at all the people and articles being cited. But intriguingly, many anthropologists only discuss the references in passing—usually for a sentence or two—just enough to show they are familiar with them.

As a result, these citations should be taken with a grain of salt. They involve anthropologists conveying, to each other, their intellectual mettle, their academic competence. Skip over them if they do not seem interesting. Do not let them intimidate you. Why do I use them? Simply stated, I am writing not only for you—a student reading this text—but also for colleagues who may review this chapter as well. They may be interested in exploring further some of the provocative things I say so I need to let them see my sources.

Why do I bold certain passages? I do this for three reasons.

1. It highlights key points in each section so the chapter is easier for you to read. Either before or after a bolded passage, there is additional material that amplifies the bolded text. This allows you to separate the key points from additional material that discusses and/or explains the central points being made.

2. If you are in a rush, you can skim the chapter's main themes by focusing on the bolded passages. You will get the main ideas but not the details and explanations that clarify the bolded points.

3. You can use the bolded passages to review the chapter once you have read it. Go back through the bolded points and see if you remember the chapter's key themes. If you come across a point about which you are unclear, simply read the neighboring text to clarify what the bolded

passage is about.

TWO PUZZLES

Turning to the chapter's key themes, let's start by exploring two puzzles. **The first puzzle:** By the time you reach this chapter, I hope you see how exciting anthropology can be. It deals with all sorts of intriguing questions about the human condition—how humans and their societies have evolved through time, what life is like in unfamiliar places, what human differences suggest about our commonalities, and how understanding them may facilitate better human relations. **And yet, most of the widely read, popular books that deal with anthropological issues—books that win prominent prizes and are bestsellers—tend to be written by non-anthropologists. Why is that?**

The second puzzle: Anthropologists have done much good in the world—not only helping to enrich human understanding of our past and present but also facilitating concrete changes that improve people's lives. **Yet anthropology's positive efforts have not often been highlighted in the world's newspapers or other media outlets**. **Again, why?**

Starting with the first puzzle, why non-anthropologists tend to write the bestselling anthropologically oriented books, let me offer three examples. Reading this textbook, you can see that books on the evolution of human societies, including how the West (meaning Western Europe, Canada, and the United States) became more developed than the "Rest" (i.e., non-Western societies), are standard anthropological fare. Many anthropologists have written about these topics. But only one book has become wildly popular: **Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*** (1997). The book won the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction, was the subject of a well-received PBS National Geographic special, and remained on the *New York Times* bestseller list for almost four years. Diamond studied anthropology as an undergraduate but obtained a doctoral degree in physiology. Starting out as a professor of physiology at University of California, Los Angeles, he is now a professor of geography.

Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity* (2012) is an insightful ethnography of life in an Indian slum. It provides a vivid sense of how people, despite overwhelming difficulties, not only are able to survive but at times are filled with hope for a better life. In the tradition of the best ethnographies, the book allows readers to understand and appreciate how the main characters navigate their lives through conditions that might surprise, and perhaps shock, some. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* won the 2012 National Book Award for nonfiction and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award and has been a *New York Times* bestseller. While Boo spent a number of years studying the people of Annawadi (a Mumbai slum near the airport), she is not an anthropologist. She is an investigative journalist, formerly of the *Washington Post* and now a writer for the *New Yorker*.

Anne Fadiman's *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* (1997) is a detailed, extended case study in medical anthropology that documents the miscommunications that developed between a Laotian refugee Hmong family and the medical staff of a Merced, California, hospital treating the family's epileptic daughter, Lia. It offers a nuanced, sensitive ethnographic account of the problems well-intentioned people face when they talk past one another. As the *New Yorker* observed, "Fadiman describes with extraordinary skill the colliding worlds of Western medicine and Hmong culture."[1] The book has received numerous honors, including the National Book Critics Circle Award for General Nonfiction and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Current Interest, and almost one million copies have been sold. (Sales of most anthropology books are around 2,000 copies). Fadiman refers to anthropologists

but is not one herself. When she wrote the book, she was a journalist and editor. She is now a writer in residence at Yale University.

There is no doubt that anthropologists would like to be read and recognized by audiences beyond the discipline. Such an accomplishment means more than just selling lots of books; it means having a public impact that stretches beyond the university.

Some anthropologists have been popular authors, most prominently, perhaps, Margaret Mead. Her 1928 book, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, which compared sexual experiences of Samoan girls with those of American girls, sold hundreds of thousands of copies. But such anthropologists are relatively rare today. Clifford Geertz won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism in 1988 and Robert Levy was a finalist for the National Book Award in 1974, but neither book sold particularly well beyond academia. Recently, another anthropologist, David Kertzer, won the Pulitzer Prize. But his book, *The Pope and Mussolini: The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe,* is, as its subtitle suggests, focused on details of European history, a topic outside the anthropological mainstream.

My point is this: Few anthropologists writing on anthropological themes today are widely read beyond the discipline. **The anthropology-oriented books that are best sellers and win prominent awards tend to be written by non-anthropologists, and when an anthropologist writes an award-winning book, it tends to be on a less-anthropological subject.**

What gives? Clearly, anthropologists have the skill and interest to write for the broader public**. I suggest, in part, that it is a matter of priorities**. Many anthropologists would enjoy a large, public audience (A survey in the *Chronicle Review* in 2016 indicated that 83 percent of the *Chronicle* subscribers sampled believed that academics should do more to shape public debate.)[2] For most junior professors, however, an even higher priority is promotion and tenure. To achieve these, they must demonstrate to their faculty review committee that they can produce serious, professional work. A key marker, if not the key marker, of significant professional work is the degree to which academic colleagues cite one's publications in their publications. It is often referred to as an author's intellectual impact.

While there are other standards for assessing promotion and tenure, committees tend to fall back on cited publications in assessing a faculty member's achievements because clear metrics exist for the degree to which colleagues cite one's work. All committee members have to do is log on to Google Scholar, for example, and type the individual's name in quotes. (It also helps to include the author's discipline since Google Scholar does not differentiate between two scholars with the same name.) Until recently, there were no metrics for assessing an author's citations in the public press. Almost by default, then, anthropologists seeking promotion needed to demonstrate their competence through academic citation-oriented metrics.

There is also the matter of maintaining appearances. Promotion committees often encourage anthropologists to conform to certain professional standards. Mary Douglas, a famous British anthropologist, in a book entitled *Purity and Danger* (1966) emphasized social structures (including anthropology departments) "are armed with articulate, conscious powers to protect the system; the inarticulate, unstructured areas . . . provoke others to demand that ambiguity be reduced."[3] For some, seeking to speak to nonacademic audiences challenges academic practice. It creates ambiguity regarding who anthropologists should be writing for and to what end. Anthropologists usually need to be of high status to challenge academic practice in this manner safely. (Note that Margaret Mead, who was world famous, never held a senior academic position at a prominent university though, intriguingly, many universities asked her to speak at them.)

Moreover, **anthropologists tend to focus on fairly specialized topics.** In 1980, Eric Wolf wrote a famous editorial in the *New York Times,* stating "they divide and subdivide, and call it anthropology."[4] He was objecting to anthropology's tendency to turn from broad, holistic analyses to more limited, spe-

cialized ones. As part of their academic training, anthropologists usually learn to focus on narrow, specialized subjects. It enhances their status because, with a narrow niched subject, faculty members can be familiar with most of the associated professional literature. That is more difficult with a broad topic. While the books by Diamond, Boo, and Fadiman all deal with specialized topics, their authors are masters at showing how their topics fit into broader concerns that interest a range of readers. Many anthropologists, unfortunately, are not experienced in writing in this manner.

I face this issue as editor of the California Series in Public Anthropology. The series encourages scholars in a number of disciplines to write about major social concerns in ways that help the broader public understand and address them. Two presidents (Mikhail Gorbachev and Bill Clinton) and three Nobel laureates (Amartya Sen, Jody Williams, and Mikhail Gorbachev) have contributed to the series as authors of books or forwards. Given its prestige, many anthropologists are eager to write for the series, but it is often a struggle for them to write for broad audiences in exciting ways. Given their desire for promotion and tenure, it is often a bridge too far.

There is another often-unstated reason that I describe later in this chapter but want to briefly touch on here. **It relates to cultural hegemony, a term associated with the Italian Antonio Gramsci.** We might define cultural hegemony as the means by which a dominant group or perspective orders various beliefs, explanations, values, and worldviews so that they seem to be not only the norm—the expected way to behave—but also justify the status quo as natural and beneficial, thereby leaving the dominant group in control. **One might describe it as a means of dominating without having to apply overt power or violence.**

We can see this in the *New York Times*' review of Robert and Sarah LeVine's *Do Parents Matter?* The book's theme—that American parents should be less tense in raising their children—should attract a relatively broad range of readers, which presumably is why it was reviewed in the *New York Times Book Review* (2016).[5] The problem is that the LeVines were not able to step outside of an academic writing style to show the relevance of their ideas to a broad audience. Let me quote from part of the review:

Firm takeaways . . . are rare, though, peppered inside a dizzying survey of firsthand experiences and other studies: on toilet training, eating patterns, tantrums . . . It's not that any one culture has it figured out, but that practices "vary much too widely across cultures for us to accept uncritically the supposition that the mental health of American children is being put at risk by 'insensitive' infant care.'

. . . The LeVines have deep understandings of cultural contexts, allowing them to offer how-to-style pieces of advice: Co-sleeping makes life easier for parents and does not inhibit child development; a "skin-to-skin style of infant care" can foster more compliant children. But a combination of endlessly complicated cultural contexts and the limits of in-field research make these conclusions less than useful for Western readers. Toilet training is easier when conducted outdoors or on dirt floors. Compliance is more achievable when the child is put to work at age 6.

Most frustrating of all: "We don't have all the evidence needed to settle the question of whether the parental practices described in this book inflict harm on adult mental health." Someone should do that research and write a book about it. I would read it.

The LeVines are senior anthropologists who need not worry about tenure/promotion review committees. Their book addresses a significant topic. While attempting to write for a wider audience. They were not able to move outside the academic styles of presentation with which they were familiar and comfortable. Instead, they remained within the cultural hegemonic framings of anthropology and the academy.

The same pattern can be seen in the rise of internet sites associated with anthropology. In principle, the changing media landscape should widen readers' interests, presenting them with a rich wealth of information. But more frequently than not, readers focus on websites that fit their existing interests and often remain within their own intellectual "bubbles." One sees this with anthropological efforts to reach a broader public with websites such as [Sapiens](#) and [Anthro{dendum}](#), which seek to make anthropological insights available to a wide audience. But the way they frame the issues, choose topics to cover, and present the information limit their readership.

In brief, despite a desire to reach wider audiences, we see the difficulty even senior anthropologists have in escaping the hegemonic frameworks of their discipline and academia. They are uneasy operating too far outside their comfort zones, too far outside the frameworks they have grown accustomed to as scholars.

Let's turn to the second puzzle—why anthropologists tend not to be more recognized for helping others and nourishing the common good. Again, we will consider three examples. The first concerns individuals faced with arbitrary bureaucratic demands. In 1978, six elderly Native American women from the Bannock and Shoshoni tribes in Idaho were accused by a local social services agency of fraud and required to pay $2,000 each in restitution. The fraud accusation was based on the belief that these women had misled the U.S. government about their incomes and, hence, their eligibility for Supplementary Security Income support. Anthropologist Barbara Joans acted as an expert witness for the women in court. She emphasized that the women had an imperfect grasp of English and, as a result, a limited understanding of government regulations. Joans "concluded that the social services personnel and the Indian women were operating at different levels of English and cultural understanding . . . [consequently] the women would not have been able to comprehend what was expected of them."[6] The judge agreed with Joans' conclusion and decided that, henceforth, "social services personnel would have to use an interpreter when they went to the reservation to explain programs and their requirements."[7] The women did not lose their government benefits.

The second example involves a study of a government program—the Experimental Technology Incentive Program (ETIP) set up by the U.S. Department of Commerce[8] that sought to stimulate innovation among American companies. Gerald Britain, an anthropologist, spent more than two years observing the program and provided an in-depth evaluation of its effectiveness. Britain suggested that, despite its good intentions, the program was caught in a structural bind. Companies had little incentive to follow through on the program's suggestions and had their own priorities. Moreover, the program had a high rate of staff turnover, which meant that its projects were often erratically supervised. What ultimately proved the program's undoing was its inability to spend all of the funds allocated to it. Its surplus of roughly $2 million brought the program to the notice of prominent administrators, and, after a brief investigation, the Commerce Department terminated the program. Through his fieldwork, Britain was able to explain why a government program might fail despite its value and good intentions.

The third example concerns the Vicos Project, which is often praised within the discipline as an important effort by anthropologists to assist with third world development. In 1952, guided by Alan Holmberg, Cornell University leased "Vicos," a Peruvian highland hacienda (farm) with roughly 1,800 Quechua-speaking residents, to conduct agricultural experiments. "Between 1952 and 1957 Holmberg, with colleagues and students, initiated a set of social, economic, and agrarian changes . . . By the end of a second lease in 1962, sufficient political pressure had been brought to bear . . . to force the sale of Vicos to its people."[9] Despite this positive result, some have challenged the project's overall success. According to Paul Doughty, who participated in the project and revisited Vicos years later, "In the decades since the end of the project [officially in 1966], the community experienced numerous successes as well as failures as an independent community. Its attempts to diversify the economic base were often thwarted

[by others] and the farming enterprise was affected by plant diseases [and] bad market prices . . . For several years from 1974–80, self-serving government manipulations left the people in the community confused, corrupted their leadership, and eroded their confidence."[10] Still, Doughty concluded that the Vicosinos had "altered their society from one of denigrated serfdom and subordination to become an autonomous community of Quechua highlanders fending for themselves on a par with others in Peru's complex and uncertain milieu."[11]

Many other examples like these demonstrate anthropology's ability to empower people and facilitate good, but they often go unnoticed by the broader public. Why? Let me suggest four reasons. You are welcome to add others.

First is the complexity of change. Consider the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. It led to two major laws that have helped transform American society: the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. They were a long time coming—a century, in fact, after passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 (formally ending slavery). It is difficult to pinpoint one event that led to their passage. Part of the impetus for the Voting Rights Act stemmed from the violence faced by black marchers, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in Selma. Without the organizing of Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the actions of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the rise of television that allowed millions to witness the violence of Selma, the political skills of President Lyndon Johnson, and a coalition of liberal Democratic and Republican legislators, the bills would never have passed. With so many involved, it is hard to specify one event or person that was the tipping point that led to their passage.

Anthropologists played a role in the Civil Rights Movement. Before World War II, Franz Boas and Margaret Mead emphasized that changing social environments could lead to significant behavioral changes. In 1939, Hortense Powdermaker wrote an insightful ethnography of black life in Mississippi that dealt with economic and political barriers that limited black success. Even though Boas, Mead, and Powdermaker helped develop the intellectual framework for the 1964 and 1965 laws, they are rarely mentioned in relation to the Civil Rights Movement because they were not directly involved in the events that led to the bills' passage.

A second factor was noted by Shirley Fiske, who described anthropologists as frequently working from the bottom up. Anthropologists are not highlighted as key change agents because they do their work away from the political spotlight, slowly chipping away at the problem. Regarding anthropological work on climate change, Fiske writes:

Anthropologists have been involved at every step, from the formation of interagency committees in the 1990s, to membership on the National Academy of Sciences studies, to contemporary efforts to insert the social and power dimensions into concepts like "vulnerability assessment" that are building blocks of the National Climate Assessments required by statute. It is not just one person, but the continuing insertion of the "bottom up" approach.[12]

Anthropologists often provide important data regarding what happens "on the ground," but those who actually make changes usually get the credit. In terms of the 1964 and 1965 laws, the spotlight was focused on the major political figures involved—Martin Luther King and President Lyndon Johnson.

A third factor relates to anthropologists working in "third world" settings studying the less powerful on the margins of Western society. President Obama's mother, Ann Dunham, was an anthropologist who conducted valuable fieldwork in Indonesia, but to the broader public, the main value of her work was that she took her son along with her, broadening his international perspective. Helping six elderly

Bannock and Shoshoni women is valuable. The Vicosinos who gained control over their land appreciated Cornell's efforts. But such efforts usually do not draw much attention outside of anthropology.

Fourth, given the everyday onrush of information, references to anthropologists in the news media rapidly fade from the spotlight. Ann Kingsolver, an anthropologist at University of Kentucky, was cited in an *Economist* article on Appalachia in 2015, but the *Economist* provided its readers with many other articles on the United States as well. With a host of new articles the following week, she became just one voice among many for the month.[13]

For this situation to change, anthropologists need to demonstrate the good they do on an ongoing basis. Presently, the benefits they bring appear to be episodic—a bit here, a bit there. For the public to take greater notice, the discipline as a whole rather than a few individuals must consistently demonstrate how anthropology nourishes the common good. Sadly, it does not do that yet.

I hope that the preceding discussion has helped to unravel the two noted puzzles—why the most popular anthropological works today tend to be written by non-anthropologists and why anthropological efforts to do good are often less recognized by the broader public than they might be. Many anthropologists wish to be publicly recognized outside the discipline, but both overt and covert frameworks reinforce the status quo. Facilitating change will involve refocusing the discipline away from the specialized interests and academic priorities that dominate it now and toward work that directly benefits society more broadly, that serves the common good.

I make this point about structural constraints and hegemonic frameworks before defining public anthropology for an important reason. While anthropologists are often eager to push their ideas and deeds out to the broader public, they tend to pass over the need to address the subtle but significant covert obstacles they face.

In the next section, you will see how different anthropologists perceive public anthropology and how concern for public engagement has varied over time. I leave the tricky part—how anthropologists might overcome the structural constraints limiting public engagement—until later.

DEFINING PUBLIC ANTHROPOLOGY

Let me offer a brief definition of public anthropology: Public anthropology focuses on the interface between anthropology as an academic discipline and the broader public that supports and, ideally, finds much value in it. This works as a definition you can recite to others. It emphasizes the role the public plays in supporting anthropology as well as that anthropology is not an academic island unto itself. Still, it does not address certain subtleties.

Public anthropology has gone from a term I created in the 1990s as a name for the California Series I edit to a term that now has more than 100,000 links in Google Search. I coined the term because it represented a goal of the series: addressing public problems in public ways. Public, in this sense, contrasted with academic styles of presentation. As phrased in the front matter of early books in the series, "the California Series in Public Anthropology emphasizes the anthropologist's role as an engaged intellectual. It continues anthropology's commitment to being an ethnographic witness, to describing in human terms how life is lived beyond the borders of many readers' experiences. But it also adds a commitment through ethnography to reframing the terms of public debate—transforming received, accepted understandings of social issues with new insights, new framings."[14]

Public anthropology has taken on added significance since the series began. It has become an institutionalized part of the discipline. There is an Institute of Public Anthropology at California State Uni-

versity Fresno, a public anthropology lecture series at University of Waterloo, a public anthropology post-doctoral fellowship at the Field Museum, a master's program in public anthropology at American University, a faculty focus in public anthropology at Tufts University, a public anthropology review section and a public anthropology editor at *American Anthropologist*, a master's degree in public issue anthropology at University of Guelph, a doctoral program in antropología de orientación publica at Universidad Autonoma de Madrid in Spain, and a public anthropology category for posts at *Savage Minds*. Courses dealing with public anthropology are taught at a number of North American schools.

Different groups use the term in somewhat different ways. In the master's program in public anthropology at American University, for example, students "explore the workings of culture, power, and history in everyday life and acquire skills in critical inquiry, problem solving, and public communication." A Tufts University web page states that "Public anthropology includes both civic engagement and public scholarship . . . in which we address audiences beyond academia. It is a publicly engaged anthropology at the intersection of theory and practice, of intellectual and ethical concerns, of the global and the local." The Public Issue Anthropology program at University of Guelph explores "the interface between anthropological knowledge and issues crucial to governance, public discourse, livelihoods, [and] civil society." The *American Anthropologist*'s review section highlights "anthropology of general interest to a wide audience" (an earlier version of the section's purpose suggested its articles were aimed at nonacademic audiences).

In recent decades, other terms have arisen that cover some of the same intellectual territory. Let me offer a sampling. Thomas Hylland Erikson stated that "*Engaging Anthropology* takes an unflinching look at why the discipline has not gained the popularity and respect it deserves."[15] Kay Warren wrote, in an article entitled "Perils and Promises of Engaged Anthropology," that engagement involves "investigations that consider such issues as social justice . . . [and] globalization's impacts."[16] *Practicing anthropology* works "to understand and help people around the world." It adds, "we also turn up in places you might not expect to find us, including the fields of agriculture, computer science, law enforcement forensics, and more."[17]*Activist anthropology*, according to the University of Texas Anthropology Department, is "predicated on the idea that we need not choose between first rate scholarship on the one hand and carefully considered political engagement on the other." Charles Hale stated that there need not be a "contradiction between active political commitment to resolving a problem and rigorous scholarly research on that problem."[18]

Despite the florescence of terms, public anthropology remains the preferred one. If we use a Google search as a rough standard, public anthropology (as previously noted) generates more than 100,000 links. There are roughly 38,000 for practicing anthropology, 10,000 for engaging anthropology, and 4,000 for activist anthropology. Why have these other terms not replaced public anthropology? I am not sure. But I suspect it derives from the fact that the other terms are not as institutionalized, not as embedded in the discipline's social structures as public anthropology. They are not associated with programs, lecture series, and book series as public anthropology is.

PUTTING PRESENT CONCERNS IN PERSPECTIVE

It is important to place public anthropology's current popularity in historical perspective. Readers should note that anthropology has not always been as isolated from the general public as it seems today. James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*, and Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* engaged a wide range of readers outside the academy in stimulating and important ways dur-

ing the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s, anthropologists often played prominent roles in public arenas. In May 1936, for example, Franz Boas appeared on the cover of *Time Magazine*, which referred to Boas' *The Mind of Primitive Man* as the "Magna Carta of self-respect" for non-Western peoples. Margaret Mead was a cultural icon. During the 1950s, she was the most widely known and respected anthropologist in the world. Upon her death in 1978, tributes came not only from the president of the United States but from the secretary-general of the United Nations. In 1979, she was posthumously awarded the United States' highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Why did anthropology become less publicly engaged? Basically, an academic trend that had been building since the early 1900s came to dominate the discipline. By the late 1960s, anthropology had very much embraced the academy (or university), and the academy had very much embraced anthropology. The founders of anthropology in the mid to late 1800s resided outside universities, either as private scholars (e.g., Henry Lewis Morgan) or as government employees (e.g., James Mooney and John Wesley Powell). But with the rise of universities as centers of learning in the late 1800s—for anthropology, it started with Franz Boas becoming a professor of anthropology in 1899 at Columbia University—more and more anthropologists became associated with academic settings.

What is striking about anthropology's early years is how few anthropologists there were. The American Anthropological Association had 306 members in 1910 and 666 in 1930. "Some elders of our tribe," George Stocking noted, "can recall an age when most anthropologists knew each other personally, and [conferences] could be held . . . in one meeting hall of modest size."[19] This meant that anthropologists who wrote books had to write for wider audiences if they wanted anyone to publish them. The anthropology market was too small to attract major publishers. Here is how Raymond Firth phrased it regarding his ethnography of Tikopia, a Polynesian island in the South Pacific:

In writing *We, The Tikopia* . . . I had to cater for a nonspecialist readership . . . in the mid-thirties [1930s], the name Tikopia would be completely meaningless to the outside world . . . I believe then as now that . . . anthropology by its very nature ought to have a wider appeal than its tiny specialist market indicated. I had been supported in this view by the enthusiastic response to my public lectures and broadcasting talks to schools. So I tried to broaden the interest of the material—opening of the book "reads like a novel" as a friend remarked—without sacrificing the scientific rigor of its exposition."[20]

A key turning point in this process was the expansion of student enrollments at American universities in the 1960s associated with the post-World-War-II baby boom. This led to expansion in the number of anthropology departments and, consequently, in student anthropology majors. This meant teachers no longer had to write primarily for public audiences if they wanted to be published. They could write their books solely for students taking anthropology courses. This trend continues today with further expansion of the discipline. The American Anthropological Association now has more than 10,000 members, and academically oriented publishers find it profitable to focus solely on classroom sales for anthropology books.

Especially striking, relative to Firth's work in the 1930s, is how anthropologists frame their work today. Current works often have a "turned inward" quality. Seeking a broader public is less of a priority. As Andrew Abbott noted, "Since professionals draw their self-esteem more from their own world than from the public's [today] . . . The front-line service [i.e., engagement with the public] that is both their fundamental task and their basis for legitimacy becomes the province of low-status colleagues and para-professionals."[21] One sees this in the tendency for large introductory classes to be

taught by lower-status adjuncts, for example. High-status full professors tend to teach small advanced courses in their specialties.

Drawing on Mary Douglas once more, we might frame the effort to keep the broader public at bay—while accepting its funding—in terms of purity and pollution. Moving beyond the academic pale makes faculty impure—it "pollutes" them (Margaret Mead's failure to gain a prominent university position is a prime example). The pure remain comfortably ensconced within anthropology departments producing work that few read outside the discipline.

PUBLIC ANTHROPOLOGY'S RELATION TO APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY

A question commonly raised about public anthropology is how it differs from applied anthropology. In answering, let me start with a personal anecdote. After I coined the term public anthropology, I was under pressure to demarcate how it differed from applied anthropology, which surprised me. I wondered why various academics felt a need to make a clear delineation between ambiguously defined fields as if they could differentiate between them as one does with cars (e.g., Fords versus Hondas) or baseball teams (e.g. the Boston Red Sox versus the New York Yankees). I understand the desire for clarity but personally feel uneasy making precise delineations between the fields. What follows is a suggestive sense of how they differ—no more.

Perhaps the best way to differentiate public and applied anthropology is by understanding the different contexts in which they developed. Applied anthropology has its roots in late nineteenth century American and British colonialism. The focus was on understanding how various indigenous groups lived in order to govern them more effectively. E.E. Evans-Pritchard's famous studies of the Nuer, for example, were financed by the British government of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan to understand why the Nuer were opposing colonial rule. The American Bureau of Ethnology had a similar aim. It sponsored precedent-setting studies by Cushing, Dorsey, Stevenson, and Mooney to understand the dynamics of certain North American Indian tribes and how they were changing under American domination.

In 1941, a group of anthropologists formally established the Society for Applied Anthropology "to promote the investigation of the principles of human behavior and the application of these principles to contemporary issues and problems." The society's opening statement in its journal noted that "*Applied Anthropology* is designed not only for scientists, but even more for those concerned with putting plans into operation, administrators, psychiatrists, social workers, and all those who as part of their responsibility have to take action on problems of human relations." Today, the society's website repeats the first sentence ("to promote the investigation of") and then continues: "The society is unique among professional associations in membership and purpose, representing the interests of professionals in a wide range of settings—academia, business, law, health and medicine, government, etc. The unifying factor is a commitment to making an impact on the quality of life in the world." In a recent review of the field, Trotter, Schensul, and Kostick wrote that applied anthropology tended to have a pragmatic, practical orientation motivated by two concerns: "One is to produce research that has straightforward findings that can be used for direct interventions or implications that can lead to recommendations for policy change . . . The other is to test and improve anthropological theory through devising experiments in sociocultural interventions or policy changes."[22]

Public anthropology grew out of a different context. I coined the term to give an upbeat, positive name to the California book series I was developing in the late 1990s. Why did I not employ applied anthropology in the series title? Partly because it was already widely used. I wanted something new,

something different, that could catch people's attention. Another reason was that applied anthropology no longer had the same innovative "buzz" that it had in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. It had become part of the established order.

The tension between applied and public anthropology became clear when, soon after publishing an article on public anthropology in *Anthropology News*, an applied anthropologist, Merrill Singer, wrote an article entitled "Why I Am Not a Public Anthropologist" (2000). He offered a two-fold critique of public anthropology: (1) it ignored work applied anthropologists had done to date in this field and (2) it could lead to a two-tier system in which public anthropologists became the high-status theoreticians while applied anthropologists became lower-status grunts in charge of addressing concrete, practical problems.[23] If the author had read what I had written prior to publishing his piece, he would have seen that I did not mean to disparage applied anthropology. Why, I wondered, was there not room for both of us—whatever we called ourselves? Certainly there were many people and many problems needing urgent attention. It puzzled me that some academics wanted to argue over definitions and status given all the problems of the world.

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Rather than being drawn into what Sigmund Freud called "the narcissism of small differences" (related groups arguing over small differences to differentiate their identities), I prefer to step back and look at a bigger picture. **Since at least the founding of the Bureau of Ethnology in 1879 under John Wesley Powell, American anthropologists have sought to address the problems of various groups of people.** Prominent in those early years was the work of James Mooney, who described the ghost dance, a religion sweeping Indian tribes of the American West in 1889 and 1890 in response to American domination. He also provided vivid details about a cavalry massacre of more than 200 Sioux at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890. **The commitment to social engagement continued into the twentieth century even as anthropology became institutionalized as an academic field within universities.** Franz Boas was very much an activist. He opposed racist theories popular in the United States and Europe during the 1930s. Anthropologists, moreover, were actively involved in the Allied war effort during World War II. The well regarded anthropologist Cora DuBois served with the Office of Strategic Services, for example. She was awarded the Army's Exceptional Civilian Award as well as the Order of the Crown by Thailand.

Margaret Mead noted that anthropologists coming out of the war years realized "their skills could be applied fruitfully to problems affecting modern societies and the deliberations of national governments and nation states."[24] One of the highlights of this post-World-War-II period was the Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology (CIMA), which represented "the largest research effort in the history of American anthropology" and involved roughly 10 percent of the American anthropological profession conducting fieldwork for the U.S. Navy in Micronesia (which the Navy had a mandate to administer).[25] In the 1960s, anthropologists such as Marvin Harris and Marshall Sahlins played prominent roles in establishing the first "teach-ins"—activist public discussions held at universities—opposing the Vietnam War. They wrote prominent pieces in widely read publications such as *The Nation* and *Dissent*.

In the late 1980s, public engagement was once again popular in the discipline. In 1972, 88 percent of new PhDs were employed in academic settings and just 12 percent were employed in nonacademic set-

tings. But in 1988, 54 percent were employed in nonacademic settings.[26] This change in the job market both symbolized and encouraged increased engagement with those outside the discipline.

And yet, each time these efforts languished. The efforts of Boas, Harris, and Sahlins are still remembered, but their efforts are not that frequently emulated today. The CIMA Navy project is a distant memory, known mostly through a book that documented it. In 1997, 71 percent of new Ph.D.s were hired for academically related positions and 29 percent for nonacademic positions.[27]

TAKING STOCK OF WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE HEADING

Let me highlight three summarizing points relating to the preceding sections. First, despite the institutionalized structures and hegemonic frameworks limiting public outreach (noted in the opening section), public engagement seems to repeatedly return to excite the discipline. Why? Victor Turner's concept of anti-structure suggests an answer. Turner highlights "two alternative 'models' for human relations. One involves society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions."[28] The other, termed anti-structure, opposes society's formal structures, emphasizing instead alternative, less conforming orientations. He writes that "there would seem to be—if one can use such a controversial term—a human 'need' to participate in both modalities."[29] Public engagement is not precisely the same as Turner's anti-structure. Still, it emphasizes a different form of accountability from standard academic practice. It reaches out to others beyond the discipline. It supports a different style of prose. It focuses on actively addressing the world's problems.

Since they are ensconced in departmental structures, one might suggest many anthropologists periodically long for greater social engagement and public recognition. They tire of the narrow, inward-looking academic structures that pervade the discipline. They reach out, seeking to engage the public on its own terms, not theirs. But their efforts usually do not last—they lack structural support that would allow them to be more than momentary bursts of enthusiasm. In this context, anthropologists' attempts are temporary transformations, momentary defiances, of the established order. With time, anthropologists mostly return to the professional grind centered on academic standards of accountability and pursuing their separate interests in their separate ways.

Second, applied anthropology has an ambiguous relationship with mainstream academic anthropology. On the one hand, applied anthropologists might feel proud that they have resisted the academic structures of the discipline—perhaps better than any other group in the discipline's history. They now have their own formal society (Society for Applied Anthropology), annual meetings, and their own journal (*Human Organization*), and applied anthropology is seen as a major disciplinary subfield (along with cultural anthropology, archaeology, biological anthropology, and linguistics).

On the other hand, applied anthropology has succeeded by adopting certain academic structures. Despite determined effort to engage outside the academy, a sizable number of applied anthropologists hold university positions. There are at least two reasons for this. First, to become a certified applied anthropologist, one needs a graduate degree. The field can only intellectually reproduce if a sizable number of applied anthropologists remain at universities to train new generations of applied anthropologists. Second, given that applied anthropology is now very much a part of the discipline, anthropology departments are a prime source of paid positions so many of the applied anthropologists who attend the society's annual meeting and publish in its journal are academics. They give the meeting and journal an academic feel while, at the same time, espousing to be different from mainstream anthropology.

Third, if public anthropology is not to befall the fate of such trends, it must reflect on how it can reframe certain academic structures. Might I suggest this brings us back to Julie Andrews? If we want public anthropology to make a difference in people's lives, we need to start at the beginning—with the underlying structures of the discipline that repeatedly limit public engagement. To effectively address public problems, we need to address them on the public's terms, not our own. That means not simply listing a set of academic studies that others should attend to and follow—as one might offer to academics. It means rethinking what anthropology does and how it does it. It is within this context that readers can perceive public anthropology's revolutionary intent. Public anthropology seeks to revise key academic structures. It seeks to transform the structures that prevent anthropology from becoming more interdisciplinary, more publicly engaged, more focused on helping others.

Cultural hegemony, you will recall, is a term associated with Antonio Gramsci, a prominent Italian communist. (He spent more than ten years in prison because of his opposition to Mussolini and fascism.) In relation to anthropology, cultural hegemony refers to the themes previously discussed—the focus on publishing academically oriented books that enhance one's professional career and the reward system that makes deviance from academic standards dangerous for those who wish to be promoted. The term refers not only to helping maintain the status quo but to making it seem as if the status quo is a reasonable, appropriate way to behave. My point is this: If we want to change the discipline and the broader academic structures that support it, we must perceive the hegemonic constraints that limit social engagement in the discipline.

The question is how to facilitate such change. The following section offers suggestive strategies. With the first two strategies, the hope is that anthropology can become a more credible discipline in the public's eyes by improving its accountability standards and providing greater transparency regarding how certain results are achieved. The third strategy is based on the idea that anthropology works best when it involves collaboration with others. Anthropologists need to work with other groups, other organizations, to facilitate significant change. Anthropologists need the power and resources those organizations provide. Addressing the larger society's concerns regarding accountability and transparency offers a means by which to reach out to others—since many beyond academia are interested in facilitating precisely those changes within the academy.

The fourth strategy suggests anthropology can further its credibility by focusing on helping others instead of mainly striving not to harm them—the discipline's current ethic. Anthropologists' efforts to help others have, as previously noted, been well-intended but episodic. They have occurred irregularly rather than representing a broad disciplinary effort. Anthropologists should strive, as best they can, to help the people who help them in their research.

Let me share another secret with you. These strategies may be a bit too bold for some anthropologists who, ensconced in traditional academic ways, have grown comfortable with the status quo. They might long for greater public recognition but are not necessarily be eager to change. If you are interested in exploring anthropology beyond the introductory level, these strategies offer a way for you to participate in changing the discipline for the better and, through that change, the broader world as well.

A FRAMEWORK FOR RESHAPING THE DISCIPLINE

This section sets out in detail the four strategies for reframing the discipline. A later section invites you to grapple with ways to facilitate social change.

(1) Accountability—Moving beyond judging faculty members by the number of academic papers they

publish to judging them by whether what they have written helps others rather than just their careers. Anthropologists tend to assess the intellectual quality of their colleagues by the published works they produce. According to Deborah Rhode's *In Pursuit of Knowledge: Scholars, Status, and Academic Culture*, "Because academic reputation and rewards are increasingly dependent on publication, faculty have incentives to churn out tomes that will advance their careers regardless of whether they will also advance knowledge."[30] She notes a report by the Carnegie Foundation that more than a third of faculty members surveyed believed that their published works were mostly assessed in terms of quantity rather than quality (at schools with doctoral programs, more than 50 percent of the faculty members held that view).[31]

Instead of focusing on quantitative calculations of accountability, such as publishing a certain number of articles per year (or books every few years), I suggest that accountability would be better assessed in more pragmatic terms: How socially significant is the problem being addressed? To what degree does the author successfully address it? What impact does the author's published work about this problem have outside the academy?

The vast majority of funding for anthropological research comes from nonacademic agencies and foundations. A key criterion for funding is that the research must be valuable for a relatively broad public rather than only a few individuals. The National Science Foundation (NSF), for example, requires that all proposals and final reports specify the "broader impacts" of the research, which NSF defines as encompassing "the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired, societal outcomes" and written "insofar as possible, [to] be understandable to a scientifically . . . literate lay reader."[32] The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research affirms that "realizing the full potential of our Nation's investment in health research requires that science inform both practice and policy . . . we can stimulate relevant and usable research that is informed by the needs of end users whether they are healthy individuals, patients, practitioners, community leaders, or policymakers."[33] Paralleling these perspectives, the United Kingdom's Research Councils UK (RCUK) stresses a commitment to "supporting and rewarding researchers to engage with the public."[34]

Despite affirmation of these standards by funders, many anthropologists still opt for academic standards that focus on the number of academic colleagues who cite their work. They also focus on who obtains research funding. British anthropologist Adam Kuper has suggested that "The [grant] review process rewards people who can write good proposals even if they failed to deliver on earlier grants. Few foundations evaluate the research they fund . . . The best credential for a fellowship is a previous fellowship. And landing a grant usually wins you more kudos than getting out the results of your research."[35] In other words, the path to success often lies in claiming to advance knowledge rather than in demonstrating that you have.

The primary value of focusing on outcomes is that outcomes can be assessed fairly directly. Do the results effectively address the problem? Do they contribute to building coherent, cumulative knowledge that can be used beyond the discipline to address real problems? Do they improve other people's lives?

Take Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo's *Poor Economics* as an example. The authors systematically identified approaches that work best for particular problems. For example, they compared programs for preventing malaria and asked which program had a better chance of being used in a group of villages—malaria nets given away free to villagers or malaria nets that villagers had to partly pay for and hence had an incentive to use properly? Rather than assuming the answer, they compared randomized groups in several locales using various levels of financial support provided for acquiring the nets. Based on that information, they were able to draw conclusions regarding the best way to distribute the nets in a range of locales to fight malaria effectively. They found that (a) all of the villagers accepted free

nets but, as the price went up, fewer did, and (b) there was no difference in use of the nets based on whether the villagers paid for them.[36] Apparently, people valued the nets regardless of how they got them—because they helped fight malaria.

The Nobel-winning author Robert Solow described *Poor Economics* as follows: "Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo are allergic to grand generalizations about the secret of economic development. Instead they appeal to many local observations and experiments to explore how poor people in poor countries actually cope with their poverty."[37] This represents anthropology at its best. By comparing the effectiveness of different approaches, anthropologists can develop a comprehensive understanding of how to address a problem in a particular context.

When advocating for this sense of accountability, it is important not to get caught up in academic rhetoric concerning objectivity. As the social sciences moved into universities in the late 1800s, objectivity in the social sciences took on a different meaning. It came to refer to avoiding politically charged topics that might upset the political and financial elites who often helped fund and direct universities. Mary Furner, in *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science, 1865–1905*, described how professionalization changed what it meant to study a social issue.

The professionalization process altered the mission of social science [within universities]. Only rarely [as the twentieth century proceeded] did professional social scientists do what no one else was better qualified to do [and what they had done decades earlier]: bring expert skill and knowledge to bear on cosmic questions pertaining to the society as a whole. Instead, studies and findings tended to be internal, recommendations hedged with qualifiers, analyses couched in jargon that was unintelligible to the average citizen. . . . The academic professionals, having retreated to the security of technical expertise, left to journalists and politicians the original mission—the comprehensive assessment of industrial society—that had fostered the professionalization of social sciences.[38]

Objectivity does not lie in avoiding certain politically charged topics. The issue is not whether an individual has an "agenda"—one could suggest that everyone has biases of one sort or another. Being a "disinterested professional" does not mean being uninterested in the world outside one's laboratory. **It means putting the larger society's interests ahead of one's own personal interests or the interests of those for whom one works. Objectivity derives from open, public analyses of divergent accounts. We know an account is more objective—more credible, more scientific—after various individuals, whatever their personal biases, independently confirm the claims made. The opposition is not between objectivity and advocacy; it is between claiming objectivity and substantiating it.** Anthropologists who claim to act in a disinterested manner with no hint of social advocacy are not necessarily being objective. Objectivity comes from others confirming one's data. If the data cannot be confirmed, it is critical to understand how and why this limits the claims one can make.

(2) Transparency—Moving beyond highlighting conclusions that attract attention to allowing others to understand how these conclusions were reached. *Lancet*, one of the world's leading medical journals, reported in 2014 that perhaps $200,000,000,000 (that is, 200 billion dollars), which constitutes about 85 percent of all global research spending, is likely wasted on poorly designed and poorly reported research studies. Since this is a rather shocking figure, let me offer the actual words from *The Lancet*. Macleod et al. report:

Global biomedical and public health research involves billions of dollars and millions of people . . . Although this vast enterprise has led to substantial health improvements, many more gains are possible if the waste and inefficiency in the ways that biomedical research is chosen, designed, done, analysed,

regulated, managed, disseminated, and reported can be addressed. In 2009, Chalmers and Glasziou . . . estimated that the cumulative effect was that about 85 percent of research investment—equating to $200 billion of the investment in 2010—is wasted.[39]

In a related article, Glasziou stated that "research publication can both communicate and miscommunicate. Unless research is adequately reported, the time and resources invested in the conduct of research is[sic] wasted . . . Adequate reports of research should clearly describe which questions were addressed and why, what was done, what was shown, and what the findings mean. However, substantial failures occur in each of these elements." [40] Related to this point, the *Economist* reported that "half of clinical trials do not have their results published . . . Proportionally, the worst culprits are government and academia."[41]

In an article entitled "Many Psychology Findings Not as Strong as Claimed," in the *New York Times,* Benedict Carey reported:

The past several years have been bruising ones for the credibility of the social sciences. A star social psychologist was caught fabricating data, leading to more than 50 retracted papers. A top journal published a study supporting the existence of ESP that was widely criticized. The journal *Science* [one of the world's leading journals] pulled a political science paper on the effect of gay canvassers on voters' behavior because of concerns about faked data. Now, a painstaking years long effort to reproduce 100 studies published in three leading psychology journals has found that more than half of the findings did not hold up when retested.[42]

These studies make clear there is a real need for transparency in research so others can properly review, assess, and, if possible, confirm important studies. Two hundred billion dollars is a lot of money to spend on questionable research.

Let me offer two examples of the importance of increased transparency in anthropology. First, there is heated debate over whether the Yanomami (living in the Amazon region between Brazil and Venezuela) were once particularly violent and, in frequent wars, killed numerous opponents. Because some have viewed the Yanomami as exemplifying tendencies of "early man," an incorrect assumption in my view, the issue has drawn worldwide attention regarding just how violent "early man" was. The issue also carried serious political implications for the Yanomami. If they were indeed as violent as some had portrayed them, the Brazilian government felt they should be broken up into several small reserves rather than be permitted a large single reserve that would help prevent gold miners from entering the Yanomami's territory. (After considerable debate, a large single reserve was established in 1992.)

Though much has been written on the topic, reliable data are needed to assess the **Yanomami's level of violence accurately.** All we have are ambiguous anecdotal assessments and suggestive statistics that might or might not be valid. The argument revolves around data reported by Chagnon in a famous article in *Science* (1988).[43] But these data have not been made public making it impossible to confirm them. Chagnon indicates he has "never published data that would enable someone to determine who specifically was a 'killer,' his name, his village, his age, how many wives he had, and how many offspring. In short, the data needed to make the criticism that Fry makes [questioning the validity of Chagnon's statistics] cannot be gleaned from my published data."[44] If Chagnon will not release his data so others can confirm them, readers might wonder if new research might be conducted. The problem is that the Yanomami have since been pacified. Readers might think, therefore, that anthropologists would just drop the debate, admitting it is unresolvable until Chagnon makes his data public. But that has not happened. Anthropologists continue to get into heated arguments over the topic. Just ask one of your teachers who specializes in lowland South America about this and see how she or he responds.

The second example is Herrnstein and Murray's widely discussed book, *The Bell Curve* (1994), which

suggested that differences in intelligence among "races" (as they defined them) performed differently on certain IQ tests. From this debatable proposition, the authors implied that whites appeared to be more successful economically than blacks because whites were more intelligent.

Needless to say, the book caused a stir in the press. Early reviews, drawing on the statistical analyses the authors provided, were generally positive. Nicholas Lemann noted a key reason for the positive reviews: "The ordinary routine of neutral reviewers having a month or two to go over the book with care did not occur . . . The [initial] debate . . . was conducted in the mass media by people with no independent ability to assess the book." Early reviewers had to base their reviews on the statistics provided by Herrnstein and Murray, "It was not until late 1995 that the most damaging criticism of *The Bell Curve* began to appear, . . . ***The Bell Curve*, it turns out, is full of mistakes ranging from sloppy reasoning to mis-citations of sources to outright mathematical errors."** [45]

In other words, without the ability to carefully analyze the data supporting an author's conclusions, allowing others to confirm the author's assertions, the social and medical sciences cannot produce credible results on which the public may rely. Without transparency, it is mostly people offering suggestive but unproven uncertain possibilities.

Are you puzzled by why the Center for a Public Anthropology is not the Center for Public Anthropology? Do you know what the phrase "a public" refers to? It emphasizes making anthropology's dynamics more public, embedding the focus on transparency in the name of the center.

(3) Collaborating with others—Moving beyond working alone to working with others to facilitate significant change. Working on their own, anthropologists rarely have the power to bring significant social change. To be effective, they usually need the energy, resources, and momentum generated by larger organizations that have the ability to mobilize people and persist in a project through time**. Stated succinctly:** *Public anthropology works best when it collaborates with others.*

Before providing examples of anthropological collaboration, let me discuss three points to place both the strategy and the examples in context. First, the key to getting readers to take note of what one writes often lies less in what is disclosed than in to whom the information is disclosed. Anthropologists should target their information to those most interested in it while being sure to present it in a form that these interested parties can readily use. The value of targeted transparency—providing institutions with truthful public information they need to discredit the claims of competitors—is that there is a ready group of individuals committed to publicizing it. When reporting on where foreign aid does (and does not) work, for example, anthropologists could focus on reporting the information to organizations that compete financially with ones that wastefully spend aid grants.

Second, targeted transparency makes clear why anthropologists need to reach beyond policymakers to other constituencies in presenting their information. Providing information solely to policymakers (who then use it at their discretion) can be a dangerous tango. To have credibility—to really speak truth to power—cultural anthropologists cannot be pawns of the powerful. With their academic appointments and tenured positions, anthropologists can be respected, independent critics. Yes, anthropologists should collaborate—both formally and informally—with a range of social and political institutions. But anthropologists need to retain a certain independence so their information and insights are not buried by those seeking to maintain the status quo. Simply reporting information back to those who fund one's research or pay one's salary means important information is unlikely to ever become public. Anthropologists need to reach out to others who will use their information and build on it to facilitate change.

Third, if you accept my point regarding cultural hegemony—the structural and cultural constraints that limit the discipline's public engagement— then collaborating with those outside the discipline offers a way to overcome such constraints. Since many outside the academy are concerned about higher

education's limited accountability and transparency, collaborating with outside groups offers a means by which to address these problems.

My first example of anthropological collaboration is Partners in Health (PIH), a nonprofit organization that builds medical support programs on communities' existing structures and uses community personnel as staff. Two of the medical doctors who founded the organization, Paul Farmer and Jim Yong Kim, both have PhDs in anthropology. According to its website, PIH's mission is to "provide a preferential option for the poor in health care. By establishing long-term relationships with sister organizations based in settings of poverty, Partners In Health strives to achieve two overarching goals: to bring the benefits of modern medical science to those most in need of them and to serve as an antidote to despair."

Collaboration is central to PIH's organization, as the *Catalogue of Philanthropy* notes:

Health programs should involve community members at all levels of assessment, design, implementation, and evaluation. Community health workers may be family members, friends, or even patients who provide health education, refer people who are ill to a clinic, or deliver medicines and social support to patients in their homes. Community health workers do not supplant the work of doctors or nurses; rather, they are a vital interface between the clinic and the community . . . PIH doesn't tell the communities we serve what they need—they tell us.[46]

PIH perceives community health workers as critical partners in a patient's care:

For nearly three decades, PIH has hired and trained community health workers to help patients faced with . . . challenges receive care. Our 12,000 community health workers around the world visit patients at home, assess their health, and link them with clinics and hospitals.

In Haiti, where PIH's community health worker program originated, they are called *accompagnateurs* to emphasize the importance of accompanying people in their journey through sickness and back to health.

Living in the communities where they work, community health workers are trusted and welcomed into patients' homes to provide high-quality services for a wide range of health problems. A patient beginning treatment for tuberculosis, for example, is paired with a health worker who visits every day to supervise treatment and ensure the patient takes medications regularly and correctly. For people living with HIV or other chronic diseases, this support enables them to live longer and healthier lives.[47]

In brief, PIH emphasizes community collaboration in extending its effectiveness as a health care provider. The *accompagnateurs* are key partners in treating patients.

Another example of working with others is the Center for a Public Anthropology's collaboration with Altmetric.com on the Metrics Project. Working together, we provide metrics on anthropological articles and books highlighted in the world's major news outlets, thereby broadening the metrics used to assess a faculty member's intellectual work. By offering clear metrics of public engagement to both deans and department chairs, we hope to support anthropologists becoming more publicly engaged—thereby addressing the first puzzle noted at the beginning of the chapter.

It would be impossible for the Center to gather the data needed for the Metrics Project, which are collected using digital object identifiers (DOIs) of articles and books to search for references in media around the world. Altmetric is proficient in gathering these data in the social sciences; the center is not. But Altmetric tends to work with librarians, the Center with social science chairs and deans. With the Metrics Project, the Center broadens the reach of Altmetric's work.

A third example is the Center's work with members of the U.S. Congress. Until recently, relatively

few researchers—approximately 11 percent—complied with the NSF requirement to submit project outcome reports following completion of their research to report the benefits of their work. Working with student volunteers, the Center brought this problem to the attention of members of Congress, who in turn raised the issue with NSF. Over a four-month period, completion of the benefit reports rose to roughly 80 percent. Obviously, the Center could not facilitate greater completion of the project outcome reports on its own. Congress was not aware of the problem until the Center and students brought it to light. Working together, the Center and congressional members were able to raise the percentage of NSF project outcome reports substantially.

(4) Benefiting others—Moving beyond "doing no harm" to demonstrating how anthropology actually benefits others. Presently, the American Anthropological Association's code of ethics (2012) focuses on "doing no harm." What happens, however, when—as occurs at many fieldwork sites—the people the anthropologist is studying are suffering from a range of maladies? Do anthropologists leave the people be because they are not the source of the maladies or do they try to help the people who are helping them with their research?

The agencies that fund anthropological research are entitled to ask whether it is enough for anthropologists receiving grants to "repay" the funding agency and, more generally, the larger society by affirming that they did no harm to anyone in spending the thousands of dollars given them. Or should the funding agency expect a more positive response—that the anthropologists actually sought to address a problem that would benefit a group of people in some helpful way?

Contrary to popular belief, the Hippocratic Oath that medical students affirm on becoming doctors does not primarily focus on "do no harm." The original phrasing of the oath in Epidemics, I,II states that, "As to disease make a habit of two things—help, or at least, to do no harm." The phrase "first, do no harm" likely derives from Thomas Inman, a nineteenth century house surgeon. Why anthropologists should focus on "do no harm" in their code of ethics—rather than on helping others—is an interesting question.

Anthropology's "do no harm" standard is both out of date and somewhat self-serving. It is drawn from a period in the late 1800s and early 1900s when anthropologists sought to differentiate themselves from missionaries and colonial administrators who sought to reshape indigenous societies. Anthropologists did not try to remake these societies; they consciously tried to avoid changing them. But this context no longer holds. The "do no harm" ethic is now self-serving in that it allows anthropologists to skirt certain moral dilemmas and obligations. When you ask people for help – such as in your research – you are usually expected to return the favor in some form at some time. That reciprocity is a key principle of social relations (articulated in an anthropological classic, *The Gift,* by Marcel Mauss in 1925.

Returning for a moment to the Yanomami, there have been questions over the years about whether the unconfirmed reports of their violence harmed the Yanomami. Focusing on this question has allowed anthropologists to side-step a critical concern: What tangible benefits have come to the Yanomami for helping a host of anthropologists in their research over several decades? Chagnon made well over a million dollars from his various books and movies. Other anthropologists have not made as much, but their publications have allowed them to gain promotions and salary increases that put their standard of living well above the average American's. Mostly they supplied the Yanomami with minor goods and guns. Only a few individuals, such as Bruce Albert, sought to address the critical health problems decimating the Yanomami highlighted in Kopenawa and Albert's *The Falling Sky (2013).*

Rather than focusing on not harming others, which can be interpreted in various ways by people with different agendas, anthropologists might focus on helping the people who help them in tangible ways, which would certainly enhance indigenous groups' perceptions of anthropologists. It would also enhance public perceptions of anthropological endeavors—presenting them not as self-

serving exercises in career building but as mutually beneficial efforts in understanding and helping others.

FACILITATING SOCIAL CHANGE

The preceding strategies are aimed at improving how the public perceives anthropology—especially in terms of anthropology's credibility and value. In this section, we turn to specific ways anthropologists could facilitate change. The standard model for anthropologists is to be hired by companies or government agencies interested in helping others—in the role of consultants, cultural intermediaries, or researchers. The suggestions presented here are somewhat different. They offer alternative approaches that anthropologists might pursue. They are meant to offer additional possibilities.

(1) If you accept my point regarding how cultural hegemonic structures shape resistance to change, then collaborating with others beyond the academy is critical. What is needed are the staying power and resources that large organizations provide. Given concerns in the broader society about accountability and transparency in higher education, anthropologists have a means for reaching out to various pubic groups. The value of targeted transparency—providing key institutions with truthful public information needed to discredit the claims of competitors—is that there are groups ready to publicizing the information anthropologists provide. We see this particularly in the next two strategies—conceptualizing important issues and exposés.

(2) Conceptualizing important issues: At its core, anthropology embodies comparison. By comparing one group to another, anthropology allows people to step outside their parochial perspectives. It provides frameworks that voters, politicians, officials, and activists can use to conceptualize a problem and take effective action to address it. Here is an example.

Based on comparative work in Pakistan and Norway, Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth wrote that "Contrary to what is still a widely shared view, I [have] argued that ethnic groups are not groups formed on the basis of shared culture, but rather the formation of groups on the basis of differences of culture . . . The contrast between 'us' and 'others' is what is embedded in the organization of ethnicity."[48] He asserted that there are few clear, distinct cultural boundaries. Rather, a range of continuous variation exists across a geographic area. Oppositions make cultural distinctions come alive. Barth suggests that behind many cultural conflicts—such as the bitter tensions between Arabs and Christians, Ukrainians and Russians, Sunni and Shiite Arabs—are "ethnic entrepreneurs."

The conflicts we see today are the work mainly of middle echelon politicians who use the politics of cultural difference to further their ambitions for leadership. This is tempting to them because in ethnic identities they see a potential constituency, so to speak, waiting for them, and all they need to find is the key to set the process in motion. Leaders seek these constituencies and mobilize them by making select, contrastive cultural differences more salient, and . . . by linking them to grievances and injustices . . . They engage in confrontational politics.[49]

To reduce ethnic conflict, Barth suggests bringing how these political entrepreneurs work into the open. Rather than letting these entrepreneurs emphasize group differences, we should focus on people's common ground.

We need to reduce the saliency of . . . particular differences, and draw [people's] attention to all the other crisscrossing differences and the joint interests they have. We want to create arenas, specifically

for negotiations, where one can work from common interests and move outward . . . You don't start with opposed constituencies and try to bring them together. You start with the common ground. You ask what the shared interests between the parties are. Then you negotiate to expand that common ground.[50]

In a sense, this is what Boas did in his work on race—and is why *Time* magazine recognized him. Anthropologists can conceptualize new ways to solve serious public problems. Through their clarity, documentation, and power, they can draw politicians, key decision-makers, and the larger public to give them serious consideration. It involves the power of ideas to reframe and clarify problems so as to facilitate effective action. But to do so, anthropologists must collaborate with others and target their insights to those who are most willing to use them effectively. They cannot simply speak out, expecting others to listen, as occurs in their classes. Anthropologists need to identify the individuals and organizations that can take advantage of their innovative framings and strive to insure that those individuals and organizations make use of them.

Could you apply Barth's insight to help reduce racial and social tensions at your university? If so, how? If not, why not?

(3) Exposés—Effectively speaking truth to power. There is an excitement in challenging authority, especially when you can expose illegal or inappropriate activity. There is less excitement in what frequently follows. You are often ignored. Not every exposé makes headlines. Moreover, those that do are often forgotten in the onslaught of later news. **In announcing an exposé, the question is how you can get others to recognize it and take action to address it. Let's explore two case studies.**

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, an anthropologist at UC Berkeley, used her ethnographic skills to facilitate the trial of the first person ever convicted of organ trafficking. The following report appeared in *Bloomberg Business.*

A New York man admitted to brokering black-market sales of human kidneys to three Americans, becoming the first person convicted in the U.S. of organ trafficking. Levy Izhak Rosenbaum, 60, pleaded guilty today to three counts of organ trafficking and one count of conspiracy in federal court in Trenton, New Jersey. He said three ailing people in New Jersey paid him a total of $410,000 to arrange the sale of kidneys from healthy donors and an undercover FBI agent paid him $10,000. A 1984 U.S. law bans the sale of human organs.[51]

Interestingly, most of the news reports did not mention the role Scheper-Hughes played. However, Wikipedia in its description of "Operation Bid Rig," the New Jersey political corruption scandal based on an FBI "sting operation," noted that "anthropologist and organ trade expert Nancy Scheper-Hughes claimed that she had informed the FBI that Rosenbaum was 'a major figure' in international organ smuggling."[52] Quoting Scheper-Hughes:

I went to the media, to CBS, to *60 Minutes*, and then to *48 Hours*, which did send an investigative reporter, Avi Cohan, to meet me in Israel where we spoke to patients who had had 'undercover' transplants at hospitals in NYC, Philadelphia, the Bay Area, and Los Angeles. CBS decided not to do the exposé. I was stumped. No one wanted to accuse surgeons, or prevent a suffering patient from getting a transplant, even with an illegally procured kidney from a displaced person from abroad.[53]

Thus, it took several more years for the New Jersey FBI office to arrest Rosenbaum in 2009 as part of

a much larger organized crime sting. Because Rosenbaum was involved in another case that was more important from the FBI's perspective, the agents finally followed up on Scheper-Hughes' information.

A second exposé continues to make world news—Edward Snowden leaking classified government documents about the activities of the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA). Wikipedia summarizes the case:

On May 20, 2013, Snowden flew to [Hong Kong](#) after leaving his job at an [NSA facility in Hawaii](#) and in early June he revealed thousands of classified NSA documents to journalists [Glenn Greenwald](#), [Laura Poitras](#), and [Ewen MacAskill](#). Snowden came to international attention after stories based on the material appeared in [*The Guardian*](#) and [the *Washington Post*](#). Further disclosures were made by other newspapers, including [*Der Spiegel*](#) and the [*New York Times*](#).

It was revealed that the NSA was harvesting millions of email and instant messaging contact lists, searching email content, tracking and mapping the location of cell phones, and undermining attempts at encryption via Bullrun and that the agency was using cookies to "piggyback" on the same tools used by internet advertisers "to pinpoint targets for government hacking and to bolster surveillance. The NSA was shown to be "secretly" tapping into Yahoo and Google data centers to collect information from "hundreds of millions" of account holders worldwide by tapping undersea cables using the MUS-CULAR surveillance program.[54]

It might seem obvious that Snowden's whistleblowing would garner wide public attention since it involved explosive documentation on the degree to which the NSA was collecting information most people thought was private. **What is less known is that the *Washington Post* published related information in articles by Dana Priest and William Arkin before Snowden's disclosures. They reported:**

Nine years after the terrorist attacks of 2001, the United States is assembling a vast domestic intelligence apparatus to collect information about Americans using the FBI, local police, state homeland security offices, and military criminal investigators. The system, by far the largest and most technologically sophisticated in the nation's history, collects, stores, and analyzes information about thousands of U.S. citizens and residents, many of whom have not been accused of any wrongdoing.[55]

The disclosure, entitled "Monitoring America," was turned into a PBS *Frontline* report, "Top Secret America." The Department of Homeland Security, the authors note:

provides local agencies a daily flow of information bulletins. These reports are meant to inform agencies about possible terror threats. But some officials say they deliver a never-ending stream of information that is vague, alarmist, and often useless. "It's like a garage in your house you keep throwing junk into until you can't park your car in it," says Michael Downing, deputy chief of counterterrorism and special operations for the Los Angeles Police Department.[56]

The disclosures by Snowden and Priest/Arkin differ in emphasis. Priest/Arkin focused solely on data collected in the United States while Snowden focused on a global surveillance program. Snowden's disclosures violated national security laws; Priest and Arkin did not, though presumably they made a number of NSA officials uncomfortable. They were suggesting that a vast amount of secret information was being collected that was mostly useless. It might be suggested that Snowden was simply expanding their analysis. The results of these exposés are interesting. Edward Snowden is forced to live in Moscow

since, if he returns to the United States, he will be tried and likely imprisoned. Dana Priest holds the Knight Chair in Public Affairs Journalism at the University of Maryland.

Why the dramatic difference in these two exposés? One key reason is that Priest and Arkin are journalists who played by the accepted rules and did not violate any laws. The agencies involved knew what they were going to announce and apparently did not strenuously object. After a big splash, their report was mostly forgotten. Hence, there was no need for the NSA to react. But as soon as **Snowden made his disclosures, he not only attracted worldwide attention but created a number of international incidents with U.S. allies such as Germany, which accused the United States of violating its citizens' privacy. Leaking secret information as well as the conflicts created with American allies made Snowden an international outlaw forced to live beyond the reach of the U.S. judicial system. Because he did not play by the accepted rules, he garnered more attention and had a much greater impact than Priest and Arkin.**

If you were to speak out as a public anthropologist—speak truth to power—what type of exposé would you try to make? How would you go about doing it? What do you think the personal cost, if any, might be?

(4) Writing narratives with impact. When discussing the first puzzle in the chapter's section, I emphasized that non-anthropologists tend to write the most popular anthropology-oriented books. It is not that anthropologists cannot write for broader audiences. Rather, they operate within academic contexts that discourage such writing. That said, some anthropologists, focusing on books used in course adoptions, do rather well financially. Chagnon's introductory ethnography on the Yanomami, for example, has run through five editions and sold well over a million copies. Part of what makes the book successful is that teachers can use a set of vivid ethnographic videos that make the book's descriptions come alive.

Chagnon also depicts his interactions with the Yanomami in a lively manner, portraying himself as an Indian Jones type figure. To my knowledge, no other anthropologist has ever discussed how particular members of the tribe being studied purposely sought to kill them (with a gun in Chagnon's case). Such incidents might have happened to other anthropologists, but they have never bragged about them as Chagnon has done. Anthropologists generally take pride in displaying tolerance toward people who are different from themselves, showing respect for those with whom they live and work while conducting their research. Chagnon moved in the opposite direction, giving a dramatic, and at times pejorative, flair to his depictions of the Yanomami.

Yet many undergraduates enjoy Chagnon's book. It brings out their prejudices —emphasizing Amazonian Indians as exotic "savages." This was not necessarily Chagnon's intent. He wanted to stress that the Yanomami were just as barbaric as Americans—no more, no less. But that is not what students tend to take away from his book. They take away their superiority to the Yanomami. **What does one do with a popular ethnography such as Chagnon's? While it offers a detailed description of an Amazonian group, it also goes against an anthropological tenet of describing people studied in fairly favorable terms. What would you do?**

Most anthropologists resist the notion that they produce works of fiction. They do not compose their ethnographies out of thin air—as many suspect Carlos Castaneda did in *The Teachings of Don Juan*. Most anthropological ethnographies sell around 2,000 copies—a pittance compared to the millions of books Castaneda has sold. It is not always clear where facts leave off and fiction begins in some colleagues' accounts. Anthropologists claim they are objective; they claim they present accurate accounts. But few visit the field sites of other anthropologists to test this assumption. It makes for better relations with colleagues if they do not.

You have read many books. Some have excited you; others have not. If you were to write a

popular anthropology book that involved a sense of professional scholarship, what topic would you select if you wanted to sell a hundred thousand copies (and gain 10 percent of the selling price)? How would you write to capture students' attention without moving too far into fiction or demeaning those with whom you worked?

Let us review what I have discussed and see whether you recall key ideas made in each section. We started this chapter with **(a)** two puzzles stemming from anthropology's interactions with the broader public. I then turned to **(b)** describing public anthropology especially varying perceptions of it and its relation to applied anthropology. Next, I discussed **(c)** four of the field's central strategies for transforming anthropology in order to enhance its credibility with the larger public. Finally, I explored **(d)** suggested ways to facilitate change. In this chapter, I have sought to help you not only understand the problems public anthropology addresses but also consider effective ways for anthropologists to reach out to the public. Did you get these points or did you keel over with boredom? Did some of the points seem relevant to you?

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

First, in an earlier section, I highlighted the Center for a Public Anthropology's work with Altmetric. **Please look over the [website](#) and explore the data it presents. Do you think it will prove effective in broadening the standards for promotion by highlighting faculty publications in the world's media? If so, why? If not, why not?**

Second, below is an account of how introductory students like yourself, working with the Center for a Public Anthropology in coordination with key Brazilian groups facilitated the return of blood samples taken from the Yanomami in the late 1960s. **What strategies highlighted in this chapter do you think proved effective in this effort? I counted four. How many do you find in this account? How would you draw media outlets to this story so it will reach the broader public?**

As an example of public anthropology (following the model of the Kahn Academy), Dr. Borofsky has created short 10-15 minute videos on key topics in anthropology for introductory students. All 28 videos are available from the *[Perspectives: An Open Introduction to Cultural Anthropology website](#)*.

CENTER FOR A PUBLIC ANTHROPOLOGY PROJECT: HOW THE BLOOD CAME BACK TO THE YANOMAMI

More information about this project along with the full set of references can be found on the [Center for Public Anthropology](#) website. Students and instructors are welcome to participate in the [Community Action Project](#).

STAGE ONE: The issue seemed fairly straight-forward – before it became a question of legal liability. Initially, one's perspective on returning the blood to the Yanomami came down to where you stood on a continuum between advocating for science and advocating for indigenous rights. At stake were blood samples collected from the Yanomami during the late 1960s by an American research team that included James Neel, a geneticist, and Napoleon Chagnon, an anthropologist. [S1-a] Unbeknownst to the Yanomami, the blood samples were subsequently stored at a number of American institutions, most prominently Pennsylvania State University. The Yanomami

Figure 1: Yanomami Portrait by Claudia Andujar . All rights reserved.

only discovered this fact following the publication of Patrick Tierney's *Darkness in El Dorado* (2000). Tierney wrote the Yanomami blood samples were stored "in an old refrigerator at Penn State University." [S1-b]

For the Yanomami, this was deeply upsetting. Some Yanomami felt they should be compensated better than they had been since the samples were helping researchers' in their careers. But many more felt it was a religious sacrilege to retain, rather than return, the samples so they could be properly disposed of in accord with Yanomami tradition. [S1-c]

The Yanomami had been promised that their blood samples would be used to learn more about the diseases ravaging them. [S1-d] (They were collected, it should be noted, in the midst of a measles epidemic.) Unfortunately, this did not occur. A few researchers used the samples for their personal research. But judging from the publications produced over the more than forty years the samples were stored at various institutions, they were not widely studied, nor were they ever used in a way that directly benefitted the Yanomami. Hence, what appeared to be a conflict between science and indigenous rights was, for the first few years at least, mostly a conflict between those who wanted to save the samples for some vague, future use (such as the Human Genome Project) and the Yanomami who wanted the blood returned for religious reasons.

But the frame of reference changed significantly when, to help resolve the dispute, lawyers became involved. The focus then turned to a question of legal liability and the fear of being sued.

Figure 2: Davi Kopenawa. Photo by Claudia Andujar. All rights reserved.

STAGE TWO: Davi Kopenawa, a prominent Yanomami leader in Brazil, first learned about his relatives' blood samples being stored in the United States from Bruce Albert during a conversation about Tierney's book. The Pro Yanomami Commission (CCPY), working with Kopenawa, brought the matter to the federal attorneys of the MPF (Federal Public Ministry) residing in Roraima (the state where most Yanomami lived in Brazil) as well as in Brasila, Brazil's capitol. In 2002, Deputy Attorney Ela Wiecko Volkmer de Castilho corresponded with Dr. Kenneth Weiss, who was storing Pennsylvania State University's sam-

ples. [S2-a] Subsequently, Albert wrote Weiss, including a note from Kopenawa. [S2-b] Paralleling this correspondence, key Yanomami wrote letters to the Indian Resource Center in Washington D.C. [S2-c] Little resulted from this correspondence. In 2005, Deputy Attorney of Brazil Mauricio Frabretti, wrote to Weiss [S2-d] as well as Dean Susan Welsh of Penn State [S2-e] and Binghamton University's Vice President for Research, Dr. Gerald Sonnenfeld. [S2-d] Once more, little happened. Welch's response emphasized the considerable problems preventing Penn State from returning the blood. [S2-e]

STAGE THREE: Penn State's response turned more positive in 2006, following the involvement of the Center for a Public Anthropology working in collaboration with students from across North America. Emails from these students to Weiss had little effect.[S3-a] But a formal letter to Pennsylvania State University's President, Dr. Graham Spanier, from the Center combined with student letters supported by scores of other students [S3-b] had a positive impact. One need only contrast Provost Dr. Rodney Erickson's reply to these letters [S3-c] with Welch's reply to Fabretti to see the difference.

At roughly this same time, Dr. Joseph Fraumeni, a director within the National Cancer Institute (NCI), in correspondence with Deputy Attorney Fabretti, indicated that the Institute was "willing to return the [blood] specimens to Yanomami representatives." [S3-d] Knowing this, Provost Erickson suggested that Pennsylvania State University's transfer of the blood "could ideally take place at the same time and under the same circumstances" as the NCI's. [S3-c]

But what seemed reasonable at first, became problematic. While Dr. Fraumenini's assistant, Dr. Karen Pitt, made a significant effort to facilitate the return of the samples, others – at NCI, at Pennsylvania State University, and in Brazil – obstructed the process, at times spreading false rumors.

Figure 3: Photo by Victor Englebert. All rights reserved.

STAGE FOUR: It remained unclear for several years who or what was delaying the return of the blood samples. American lawyers insisted on a formal legal agreement waiving all liability and warranties on their part related to the blood. The Brazilians, puzzled by this insistence and not sure what they were consenting to, hesitated to sign such an agreement. The Deputy Attorney of Brazil, Mr. Antonio Morimoto, suggested that the blood samples simply be turned over to the Brazilian Embassy in Washington, D.C. [S4-a] But Pennsylvania State University and the National Cancer Institute refused. The fact that the blood samples were going to be ritually disposed of soon after being returned to the Yanomami, [Globo video S5-c3] and this was part of the final agreement [S5-b1a 2.4] was irrelevant to the NCI's lawyer. She insisted an agreement waiving liability be signed before the samples could be returned. The final transfer agreement held NCI "harmless with respect to any action arising from the use of Samples prior . . . to [the] transfer." [S5-b1a, 2.3]

For several years, there was a standoff. On one side, Pennsylvania State University and NCI insisted they wanted to return the blood and, on the other, the Brazilian government insisted it wanted the blood returned. But they could never agree on how it would be done.

Given this situation, those wanting the blood returned had only one option – to pressure the parties involved to come to some agreement. In the United States, the Center for a Public Anthropology repeatedly contacted key figures involved, assisted Deputy Attorney Morimoto [S4-b] (as well as Bruce Albert) in their efforts when possible, and sought to attract media attention. [S4-c1, S4-c2,S4-c3, S4-c4, S4-c5, S4-c6, S4-c7, S4-c8, S4-c9] On the Brazilian side, returning the blood samples became a priority for the Hutukara Yanomami Association (HAY), a Yanomami NGO (non-governmental organization) created in 2004 with CCPY assistance, and partner organizations, especially the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), which absorbed CCPY in 2007. Davi Kopenawa, HAY's president, played a key role in keeping the issue alive, encouraging articles in Brazilian, French, and British media. [S4-c1, S4-c2, S4-c3, S4-c4, S4-c5, S4-c6, S4-c7, S4-c8, S4-c9]

STAGE FIVE: Ultimately, the Brazilian pressure was key. Through multiple meetings with the Federal Public Ministry's (MPF's) attorneys, ISA learned, quoting ISA's skilled lawyer, Ana Paula Caldeira Souto Maior: that "new Brazilian government agencies were brought to the case due to the requirements made by the contacted American institutions . . . [relating to] a Biological Material Transfer Agreement. Besides the Foreign Ministry, ANVISA [Brazil's FDA equivalent], and the AGU [the Attorney General of Brazil] were also involved [because of American concerns over] . . . the safety conditions and the final destination of the samples." Finally, "MPF was able to solve the bureaucratic obstacles on the Brazilian side and, through clarifying conversations with the American Institutions, felt able to sign the Agreement for the return the samples insisted upon by the Americans."

In April 2015, Pennsylvania State University returned their blood samples: 2693 vials. These samples included those that had been stored at Binghamton University. In September 2015, the National Cancer Institute returned their samples: 474 vials. Readers can peruse, if they wish, the formal transfer agreements. [S5-a, S5-b1, S5-b1a, S5-b2]

The transfer of the samples back to the Yanomami was highlighted in the Brazilian

media [S5-c1, S5-c2, S5-c3, S5-c4, S5-c5, S5-c6, S5-c7], Brazilian government reports [S5-d1, S5-d2, S5-d3] and British media. [S5-e]

It should be noted that none of the rumored dangers emphasized by the transfer's opponents – which

made the transfers into such a complicated legal matter – ever came to pass, either in terms of spreading disease or the Yanomami suing the American institutions. Instead, the return of the blood samples was a deeply moving moment for many Yanomami. One can listen to Davi Kopenawa's comments regarding the return of the samples in a video. [S5-c4]

The return of the blood samples also represents an important moment for American anthropology. Countering various criticisms lodged against the discipline in print [S5-f] and in film [S5-g], the return of the blood constitutes a clear case of American anthropologists helping the Yanomami – on Yanomami terms, not on their own. It portrays American anthropology in a much more positive light vis-à-vis the Yanomami than has been the case in recent years.

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