

programs and prestige programs require ethics training, there is a heavy reliance on non-systematic ethics training (based on instructor discretion and interests) and a majority of programs do not require or provide any formal ethics courses.

These results reveal that although anthropological public dialog and debate often focus on research ethics and the discussion of moral and ethical decisions made by anthropologists, the discipline is not yet wholly committed to formal training that would substantively improve that dialog. Instead, there is a heavy reliance among anthropology programs on a non-systematic approach to ethics training, leaving the content

up to individual faculty, teaching individual courses, rather than relying on programmatic heuristics that assure coverage of certain basic issues in ethical research practice. This is in stark contrast to many of the other human research-oriented disciplines, where systematic formal ethics training is more commonplace, and where students have greater opportunities to engage in ethics discussions early on in their careers. Further developing and promoting standalone formal ethics coursework is a clear area where both prestige and applied anthropology programs can lead the way to the future of anthropology.

*Robert T Trotter II is Regent's Professor and chair of anthropology at Northern Arizona University. In addition to his medical anthropology research and applied corporate anthropology work, he also explores ethnographic research methods, design, ethics and education.*



*Shirley Fiske and Niel Tashima, of the AAA Committee on Practicing, Applied and Public Interest Anthropology (CoPAPIA), are contributing editors Anthropology Works. They can be contacted at sjfiske@yahoo.com and partners@ltagassociates.com.*

## Teaching Fieldwork Ethics through Instructor Experience

MARK MORITZ  
OHIO STATE U

Unless anthropologists are involved in particularly controversial work—such as the Human



Terrain System project—it is unlikely that our ethical behavior in the field will be scrutinized closely. Anthropologists, like other researchers working with human subjects, have to get Institutional Review Board approval or exemp-

tion before conducting research, and the AAA Code of Ethics provides us with guidelines for making ethical choices in our respective research contexts, but from that point onward we are basically on our own. When we return from the field there is little or no post hoc evaluation of our ethical conduct save a short final report to the IRB. This makes undergraduate ethics education all the more important, to instill in junior scholars a respect and appreciation for ethical guidelines and discourse.

In my basic cultural anthropology course, I introduce a discussion on ethics using multifaceted analyses of previous ethics controversies in anthropology to encourage students to read more critically. The uncritical reading of ethnography is in part due to the nature of the genre, including the way anthropologists present their data and themselves to establish their ethnographic authority. Moreover, anthropologists generally do not write about the ethics of their conduct, and when they do discuss minor transgressions or situations of conflict or uncertainty they often serve to establish the “ethical sense” of the ethnographer. I also use case studies (such as the Tuskegee Experiment) to discuss the IRB review process and why it is so essential to anthropological research. This is part of an effort to preempt the critical complaints one hears frequently in the hallways of anthropology departments about IRBs as unneces-

sary obstacles to research. In comparison to others, undergraduates are not yet invested in the discipline and are often more critical of anthropologists' ethical conduct in the field.

### Evaluating the Instructor's Ethical Conduct

I have used this “ethical sense” of undergraduates in a teaching experiment in which I asked students to evaluate my own ethical conduct in the field. In preparation students wrote about one key ethics issue in anthropology, such as informed consent or just compensation, and formulated three questions that they would ask anthropologists returning from the field in order to evaluate their ethical conduct. On the day the assignment was due I briefly discussed my dissertation research and then submitted myself to students' questions. It was the first time I was ever asked critical questions about my ethical conduct in the field, and

explained my research project and activities, but many people in my research community never grasped what I was doing or why. This is no surprise; only a handful of men and women had a few years of primary school. Moreover, the idea of somebody traveling all the way from the United States to their village to study and live with them was fundamentally inexplicable. People accepted me and generally thought my activities and interviews were innocuous. However, towards the end of my research I heard that many feared I would use my data to take their land and round up all their cattle. When I heard about these fears, I realized how limited the informed consent that I had obtained over the course of my research truly was. Despite repeated explanations of my research project and the informed consent process over the course of the year, my informants did not fully understand what it meant to provide consent or trust my motives as a researcher.

My students asked compelling questions about the ethics of my fieldwork experience, and most found our discussion to be quite engaging. For them this teaching experiment

### TEACHING STRATEGIES

I answered all the questions candidly and to the best of my knowledge. The interview quickly became a confessional in which I admitted to a number of transgressions in the field and was made aware of others that I had previously not contemplated.

One example involves anonymity. During my dissertation research I was once eating with one of my FulBe informants when I tried to show off my Fulfulde skills by discussing the eating arrangements of another household. This was a serious *faux pas* since these arrangements are reflections of internal household social organization and not considered public knowledge. I was quickly reprimanded by my research assistant Saïdou Kari, with whom I had discussed ethical research conduct at the beginning of the project. In many ways, I was fortunate that Saïdou was continuously monitoring my conduct closely and critically, otherwise I probably would have made more errors.

Informed consent emerged as another key issue. Over the course of my study I frequently

brought home the fact that all fieldworkers face real and complex ethical issues, some smaller than others. For me the experiment was a key reminder that face-to-face evaluations of ethical conduct are powerful tools. The confrontation heightened my ethical sense in an entirely new way. I had discussed ethical issues in my dissertation's methods chapter, but being publicly interviewed by undergraduates was much more challenging and uncomfortable than writing alone in my study. These face-to-face engagements are not only useful for teaching fieldwork ethics to undergraduate and especially graduate students, they are essential for the continuing ethics education of all fieldworkers.

*Mark Moritz is assistant professor in the department of anthropology at the Ohio State University. He has contributed to the third, fourth and sixth editions of Strategies in Teaching Anthropology, edited by Patricia Rice and David McCurdy.*