

ORDINARY ETHICS AND THE ETHICS CODE OF
THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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Lindsay M. Springer

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UNIVERSITY OF REGINA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Lindsay Marie Springer, candidate for the degree of Special Case Master of Arts in Anthropology, has presented a thesis titled, ***Ordinary Ethics and the Ethics Code of the American Anthropological Association***, in an oral examination held on April 7, 2014. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: Dr. David C. Malloy, VP Research, President's Office

Supervisor: Dr. Carlos Londono Sulkin, Department of Anthropology

Committee Member: Dr. Marcia Calkowski, Department of Anthropology

Committee Member: *Dr. Gediminas Lankauskas, Department of Anthropology

Chair of Defense: Dr. Darlene Juschka, Department of Religious Studies

*Not present at defense

ABSTRACT

The anthropological theory of “ordinary ethics” makes the established case that ethics involves judgements made in specific situations and using criteria acquired through social interaction, but emphasises that ethics are usually relatively implicit, becoming explicit in response to crisis, controversy, and change. One of the questions raised by this theoretical perspective concerns the relationship of implicit ethical judgments to more explicit forms of ethics, such as an ethics code. To address this question, this study applies the theory of ordinary ethics to the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), the largest professional association for anthropologists. This thesis also addresses two additional supporting research questions: First, how has the AAA ethics code changed over time, and why does it change? Second, what is the role and purpose of ethics codes in anthropology, and what are the limitations?

A first, historical component of my research involved comparing different versions of the AAA ethics code, and seeing how these related to contemporary ethical debates and controversies. I then conducted qualitative interviews with eleven anthropologists. Participants described their experiences with and opinions of the AAA ethics code and the debates around it, their broader experience with and understanding of ethical issues and dilemmas in anthropological fieldwork, and their ideas about the usefulness and importance of codes of ethics to ethics education and decision-making in anthropology.

The results of the ethnographic component of the research support the sense that anthropologists constitute a community, with members socialized in such a way that they share a highly explicit concern for the ethics of their own and their discipline’s practices. The historical research reveals that the code is revised in response to crises in the

discipline. For some anthropologists, responding to crises by formulating shared ethical standards may strengthen a feeling of a community, but others who identify as anthropologists may feel excluded by the assumptions in those standards. The revision process inspires debate, and to that extent it serves as a way to have a shared conversation about ethics in the discipline. Anthropological fieldwork is already a case of ethics out of the ordinary, and the debates around the AAA ethics code are an extension of this.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	American Anthropological Association
CEAUSSIC	AAA Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Communities
HTS	Human Terrain System
PPR	Principles of Professional Responsibility
SMC	Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis applies the theory of ordinary ethics to a professional code of ethics. Using the example of the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), it poses questions on the creation and development of ethics codes, the role and purpose of ethics codes as well as their limitations, and the relationship between codified and ordinary ethics. It uses the history of the AAA ethics code and interviews with anthropologists to look for answers to these questions. The history of the code shows that the code is often revised in response to controversies and developments in the discipline, which leads some to call for restating shared ethical principles. While for some the process of formulating and reformulating shared ethical standards may add to the feeling of a community of anthropologists, others who identify as anthropologists may feel excluded by the assumptions in those standards. The process of revising a code can be contentious, but to the extent that it inspires debate it serves as a way to have a shared conversation about ethics in the discipline. Anthropological fieldwork is already a case of ethics out of the ordinary, and the debates around the AAA ethics code are in one sense an extension of this.

In this introductory chapter, I begin by describing the theoretical perspective I will be using in this thesis, and then introduce the case I will be applying this perspective to, the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association. Following that, I introduce my primary research questions, and conclude by outlining the thesis.

1.1 Theoretical Perspective

For this thesis, the main theoretical ideas I will be applying to the code I take from the volume *Ordinary Ethics* (2010). According to Michael Lambek, in his introduction to

this text, the concept of ordinary ethics refers for the contributors to *Ordinary Ethics* to the pervasiveness of ethics in our everyday lives. For human beings, ethical considerations are an intrinsic part of speech, action, interaction, and selfhood; we cannot avoid the ethical entailments of what we say and do. Everything is subject, potentially or actually, to ethical criteria, considerations, and judgment. Therefore, Lambek argues, “it becomes a false problem, a category mistake, to distinguish what is covered by ethics from what is not, that is, to distinguish the ethical as a particular domain of social life or human experience” (2010: 11).

As a dimension of action, Lambek argues, ordinary ethics are often more implicit than explicit, grounded in consensus and practice as opposed to rules and beliefs. Ordinary ethics may also be located “in the dialectical movement between the spoken and the unspoken or, more generally, between objectification and embodiment—between words, rules, and objects and tacit bodily disposition, comportment, affect, and character” (2010: 6). Sometimes we speak and act without consciously employing ethical criteria, while still managing to speak and act in ways that are consistent with those standards. At other times, we are conscious of the need to apply ethical principles or to make decisions between different courses of action, or to judge when others or we have fallen short of those standards.

Earlier writing by Laidlaw (2002) Robbins (2007), and Zigon (2007 and 2008), on new approaches to an anthropology of morality can provide context for the concept of “ordinary ethics.” These authors argue for the importance of renewed anthropological study of ethics and morality, attributing the relative lack of anthropological attention to this topic to Durkheim’s identification of ‘the moral’ with ‘the social,’ in the sense of the

customary and conventional. For Laidlaw, identifying ‘the moral’ with ‘the social,’ in the sense of rule or custom makes morality mean “everything and nothing” (2002: 312-313). Zigon (2008) also argues against conflating ethics and morality with other areas of anthropological interest, such as religion or kinship, and against identifying as moral matters things that locals would not necessarily understand as having moral implications. To avoid the latter, he argues researchers need to have morality as an explicit focus of study from the beginning of their research. To avoid the limitations of identifying the moral with the social, these authors argue for the importance of attending to freedom, choice, and change, to conscious ethical questioning and work on the self, rather than focusing solely on moral rules or actions that reproduce an implicit, unthinking morality (1-20). Robbins (2007) and Zigon (2007) further argue that times of cultural change or “moral breakdown” result in morality becoming more explicit and conscious. At these times, there is the possibility for conscious ethical choices and moral change.

Looking at the concept of ‘ordinary ethics’ in relation to these arguments for new approaches to an anthropology of morality, the question arises: does this concept avoid identifying ethics and morality too closely with socially acceptable behavior? Lambek notes that this may be a risk, but argues that we can avoid some of the limitations these authors associated with that approach if we define ethics in terms of activity and judgement, rather than in terms of rules and customs. From this perspective, influenced by virtue ethicists such as Aristotle, ethics involves judgements made in specific situations about how to speak, act, and present ourselves in ways that are consistent with the virtues and ethical criteria that are important to us. Ethics cannot be defined absolutely without regard for the specific contexts in which judgements are made;

whether an action is cowardly, brave, or foolhardy depends on the circumstances. The concept of ordinary ethics suggests that we can make these judgements without necessarily being consciously aware of it. At other times, we are conscious of the need to make judgements or apply ethical criteria.

Like Robbins and Zigon, Lambek argues ethics normally become explicit in special circumstances, when there is violation, controversy, or change. In moments of crisis, we become aware that our sense of the right thing to do in a situation is unclear or contested. When we become aware of ethics, there is also the potential for change. Related to the continuum between implicit and explicit ethics, Lambek suggests, there is a continuum between the conventional and the possible, new, or transgressive. Although the concept of ordinary ethics sees ethics as inherent to speech, action, and interaction, Lambek argues that based on these points, “the ethical does not simply go without saying” (2010: 28).

Having introduced the concept of ‘ordinary ethics,’ for the rest of this introduction I will be considering what this perspective would mean for something like a professional code of ethics. A professional code of ethics such as the American Anthropological Association’s ethics code is a formal document, a written list of rules and principles. In the continuum between implicit and explicit forms of ethics and morality, between embodiment and objectification, a formal code of ethics would be closer to the objectified pole than to the kinds of implicit ethical considerations that are part of everyday speech and interaction. In an article included in the *Sage Handbook of Social Anthropology* (2012), Lambek addresses the question of how anthropology and codes of ethics relate to ordinary ethics. In this article, he questions the idea of having an isolated chapter on

ethics in a handbook on anthropology, as if ethics were a distinct method or means to an end. He argues the increased focus on codifying professional ethics in anthropology is a symptom of audit culture (2012: 141-142), which is characterized by increasing observation and regulation in educational institutions (Strathern 2000).

Lambek contrasts two meanings of ethics and their application to anthropological fieldwork. First, there is ethics in the sense of what is right, good, or just. Applied to fieldwork, this sense of ethics tends to be presented prescriptively, as in a code of ethics. The second sense is that of ordinary ethics, where ethics refers to the human situation, where we are constantly faced with figuring out what to do and acting on it, and where we depend on available criteria, means, and dispositions to do so. Taken in this sense, Lambek argues an ethics code makes things look too easy. A code cannot replace the need to exercise ethical judgement continuously both in everyday life and in the field (2012: 142-143). Compared to everyday life, Lambek argues, fieldwork is the kind of situation that will tend to move ethical judgement from the tacit to the conscious, as anthropologists are confronted with ethical criteria and assumptions different from their own, never fully committing to any one set of ethical criteria, any one people, and any one way of life. Fieldwork is a case of ethics out of the ordinary, and a code cannot remove its ethical ambiguity (2012: 145-148).

At the same time, in response to the explicit consciousness of ethics and ambiguity associated with fieldwork, some anthropologists may feel a need to try to pin things down to some extent, like in a code of ethics. Lambek notes that codes (as well as chapters on ethics in handbooks) may be attempts to manage anxiety over the ethics of fieldwork, although he argues it is better to recognise the situation in its complexity (2012: 141-

142). For this thesis, I was interested in further exploring why the American Anthropological Association came to have a code of ethics, and why it is something the Association continues to work on.

Shirley Yeung (2010) addresses the relationship between embodiment and objectification of ethics through the example of formal codes of conduct; her work provided a model for my own project on the relationship between ordinary ethics and an ethics code. In this article, Yeung argues etiquette manuals are more than lists of arbitrary rules. Etiquette as presented in nineteenth century American manuals ideally provided a way to do ethical work on the self, with the goal of achieving the kind of character manners conveyed. These manuals contained an apparent contradiction: they instructed readers to speak and act sincerely, while at the same time carefully managing their speech and actions to avoid causing offense. Yeung argues this dilemma is resolved if people achieved the ultimate goal of the etiquette manuals, “to make manners sincere, blurring distinctions between character and outward comportment, authenticity and artifice, virtue and veneer” (2010: 242). The goal was not simply to follow a script, but to have a person’s internal experience and outward expression match.

Etiquette, one aspect of the ordinary ethics of social interaction, is more than a matter of simply following rules. Yeung notes that while the etiquette manuals she studied listed rules of polite behavior, at the same time they cautioned against following these rules rigidly or excessively. Knowing when and how to apply a rule or principle of etiquette in specific situations requires ongoing judgement, although we can never perfectly predict the consequences of what we say and do (2010: 245-247). Acting and speaking ethically and appropriately involves a continuous process of social knowing,

assessing, and strategizing. The need to apply ethical principles in specific situations is something that was addressed by my participants as a limit to the usefulness of formal codes.

We acquire the ethical criteria we use to make practical judgements through social interaction, a process Carlos Londoño Sulkin addresses. Londoño Sulkin (following authors such as philosopher Charles Taylor) argues that through social interactions, we acquire the symbols and associations we need to make sense of the world and ourselves. This includes the qualities we admire or dislike, allowing us to make qualitative distinctions of worth. Our sensitivity to these distinctions allows us, more or less reflectively, to speak and act in ways consistent with the qualities we admire, or to judge when others or we have fallen short. For Londoño Sulkin, morality refers to the “sensitivities and judgements in question” (2012: 30), and encompasses ethical decision about the right thing to do (2010: 275).

Londoño Sulkin argues our shared moral concerns are “bound to the intrinsically temporal and contingent social interactions that make the symbols we use available to us,” the cumulative result of some forms being cited more often within a group at any given time (2010: 275). We will partially share the moral concerns and criteria of the people around us. At the same time, the process of acquiring these criteria through social interactions means that our moral concerns will also have unique aspects, due to our individual histories and circumstances, and the particular people and events that shape us. As a result, he suggests that although we have certain intentions in mind when we speak and act, there are limits to the efficacy of our intentions. We may speak (self-consciously or not) in ways we think are right, good, just, and appropriate, but we can never know for

certain how others will respond to us. Based on their own perspective and ethical criteria (which we will never completely share) and their understanding of the situation, they may judge us to have fallen short (Londoño Sulkin 2010: 290-291).

The history of the AAA ethics code demonstrates the limits to intentions in ethical matters. As we will see, the code's history has been affected by controversies where persons making allegations of unethical conduct by other anthropologists resulted in counter-accusations of unethical behavior against the original accusers. In another case, a draft revision of the ethics code was abandoned due to charges that it had departed so significantly from shared ethical principles that the code of ethics would be unethical. The point that ethical concepts and criteria are partially shared by members of a social group will also be relevant in the interview chapter.

Finally, Anthony Cohen (1985) relates the idea of incompletely shared symbols to the experience of being part of a community. For Cohen, the community, something greater than kinship and the household but closer than society, is where we acquire the symbols we need in order to successfully interact with others. He suggests part of the experience of community involves attachment to shared symbols. Cohen argues that although we acquire symbols as part of a community, the meaning of those symbols is mediated by our unique, idiosyncratic experiences. The symbols we appear to share can at times obscure serious differences in interpretation. Cohen suggests that some important social categories, such as justice and peace, exist mostly in terms of their boundaries; we understand what is just or peaceful by what they are not, by recognising what we consider to be unjust or breaking the peace. As symbols, they can gloss over a range of

meanings where more precise attempts at definition could lead to serious argument (1985: 14-19).

We may acquire symbols within a community, but Cohen further argues that ‘community’ is itself a symbol like ‘justice’ or ‘peace.’ He argues the concept of ‘community’ is used to refer to members of a group who believe they share something, making them different in important ways from other groups. We use ‘community’ to define a boundary when the need arises in interaction with others from whom we want to distinguish ourselves (1985: 12-13). As we make finer and finer distinctions, boundaries become less objectively obvious but more subjectively important, until the point where community refers to “an entity, a reality, invested with all the sentiment attached to kinship, friendship, neighboring, rivalry, familiarity, jealousy as they inform the social processes of everyday life” (1985: 13). A community’s symbols allow for the aggregation of differences so apparent commonality is maintained. Cohen contends community succeeds for its members when apparent agreement and the boundary appear more significant than actual disagreement (1985: 19-21).

Like ‘community,’ ‘justice,’ or ‘peace,’ ‘ethics’ is also a symbol, an important social category, and one that is made up of other symbols. Like a community, ethics is also often most visible in terms of its boundaries, particularly when we perceive that those boundaries may have been crossed. Ethics involves the kind of shared symbols that can help define a community, while at the same time obscuring differences; we may expect fellow community members to act in ways that are ethical, but at the same time we may disagree over how to define ethical concepts and principles, and disagree over which sets of ethical criteria and responsibilities apply most to a given situation. The American

Anthropological Association is a kind of community, but one that is also made up of other communities (for example academic and applied anthropology, different subfields, and specialisations). Members of the AAA may share some things with each other, but they may share more with other communities they belong to, such as their colleagues at work, or members of their speciality or subfield. Ethical principles may be shared symbols for the AAA as a community, but there will also be serious differences of interpretation. These differences become more visible when people try to spell out ethics more clearly, as in a code of ethics.

In summary, the basis for my theoretical perspective is the theory of ordinary ethics. This theory of ethics argues that ethical criteria and considerations are an intrinsic aspect of speech, action, and social interactions. Ordinary ethics suggests ethics are often relatively implicit, but that at other times ethics become explicit, something we are consciously aware of, particularly in situations of crisis, change, and uncertainty. Ethics in this view is more a matter of judgement in specific situations, rather than being a matter of isolated principles or rules. From this perspective, a professional anthropological ethics code, an objectified, prescriptive list of ethical principles, is more a matter of ethics out of the ordinary. At the same time, anthropology as a case of ethics out of the ordinary is already going to shift ethics toward the more explicit end of the spectrum. The criteria and distinctions we use to make ethical judgments are acquired in social interactions, particularly with the people who are members of the different communities with which we identify. While the experience of community involves attachment to shared principles, including ethical ones, as symbols they can also obscure

serious differences in interpretation. Although we may act with intention, we can never fully predict how others will interpret and evaluate our speech and actions.

1.2 The Ethics Code of the American Anthropological Association

Following the example of Michael Lambek (2012), I wanted to explore further how professional and codified ethics relate to the concept of ordinary ethics in the case of anthropology, using anthropological perspectives to look at anthropologists' own practices and discourses on ethics. I focused on the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), and interviewed anthropologists to find out their ideas related to ethics and codes in anthropology. I briefly introduce the AAA and its ethics code and committee here; I describe them in more detail in Chapter Two.

The AAA, founded in 1905, is the largest professional association for anthropologists or those with a professional interest in anthropology. On average, the association has over 12,000 members, and over 5,000 members attend its annual meeting (AAA 2014, "About AAA"). The AAA provides the following definition of anthropology on its website:

Anthropology is the study of humans, past and present. To understand the full sweep and complexity of cultures across all of human history, anthropology draws and builds upon knowledge from the social and biological sciences as well as the humanities and physical sciences. A central concern of anthropologists is the application of knowledge to the solution of human problems. Historically, anthropologists in the United States have been trained in one of four areas: sociocultural anthropology, biological/physical anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics." (AAA 2014, "What is Anthropology?")

The AAA's current membership is diverse, including American and international members (including Canadian anthropologists), students and professionals, and people who practice anthropology within academia and in applied fields. The members include

practitioners of the four sub-fields of anthropology: archaeology, sociocultural anthropology, linguistics, and physical anthropology. Finally, members are required to belong to one of forty different sections within the association representing different areas of ethnographic study, professional interest, and personal identification (AAA 2014, “Bylaws of the AAA,” “Sections and Interest Groups”). This diversity is important for the thesis, because as I will show in Chapter Two, one of the challenges facing those involved with creating the association’s different ethics codes has been how to create a code that reflects the needs and perspectives of all four sub-fields and both academic and applied anthropologists. In addition to the AAA, there are other local and national associations, as well as associations with a narrower focus on one ethnographic area or subfield. These associations in some cases have their own codes of ethics.

Anthropologists may belong to multiple professional associations.

The AAA elected its first ethics committee in 1969, and adopted its first ethics code in 1971. Since then, the association has revised the ethics code several times. In one of the biggest changes, in 1998 the role of the ethics code and committee became educational only, without the possibility of sanctions. The association’s membership adopted the most recent version of the code in 2012.

1.3 Research Questions

For this thesis, I had three research questions. First, how has the AAA ethics code changed over time, and why does it change? In order to look for answers to this question, I examined the history of the AAA ethics code and the debates around it. Second, what is the role and purpose of codes of ethics in anthropology, and what are some of the limitations? Third, what does the example of ethics codes and anthropology show about

the relationship between codified and ordinary ethics? In order to look for answers to the second and third questions, I interviewed anthropologists to find out their opinions on codes and ethics in anthropology. I return to these questions in the conclusion.

1.4 My Relationship to the Topic

I am currently a Master of Arts student in anthropology, and I majored in anthropology for my Bachelor of Arts degree. In my undergraduate education, I recall many discussions of the ethical implications of anthropology. I will never forget walking into my Anthropology 100 class one day and seeing two phrases written on the chalkboard: “Anthropology: Child of the Enlightenment,” and underneath, “Anthropology: Bastard Child of Colonialism.” In my undergraduate and graduate education in anthropology, I kept this duality in mind: the idea that anthropology has ethical goals and possibilities (a Child of the Enlightenment) and that it is potentially ethically suspect (the bastard child of colonialism). When my supervisor suggested I could look into the debates around the revision of the 2009 AAA ethics code, I was interested in further exploring anthropologists’ understanding and practice of ethics.

In writing about my own discipline, I am engaging in a kind of auto-ethnography, an anthropology of academic practices, as described by Meneley and Young (2005). Auto-ethnography allows anthropologists to “consider the ways in which current intellectual practices are produced within various institutional, national, and international constellations of meaning and power” (2005: 1). For Meneley and Young, auto-ethnography grows out of other trends in anthropological writing, including anthropologists writing about their own societies as “insiders,” and greater reflexivity. There are challenges with this kind of ethnographic writing, because “it requires those

who are already embedded in particular cultural and social processes to subject themselves and their most intimate surroundings to the same forms of critical analysis as they would any other” (2005: 2-3).

As with any “insider” anthropology, I think there are both things I may have missed due to being close to the material, and things I may have noticed that someone with more of an outside perspective may not have. I have tried to widen my perspective through the historical research, which included studying the perspectives of members of the AAA who practice different kinds of anthropology than the academic, cultural anthropology with which I am most familiar. The historical research also allowed me to see how ethical ideas have developed over time. I originally planned to interview members of subfields other than cultural anthropology, and to include members who identified as applied anthropologists. In the end, my participants were all cultural, academic anthropologists. I was able to interview participants who had trained in the United States, where it is more common for anthropologists to receive training in all four subfields (archaeology, cultural, linguistics, physical), and they brought in some valuable perspectives. In several cases, I had a previous relationship with my participants. On the one hand, this likely affected the kinds of interpretations I was comfortable in making. On the other hand, I think that this helped make me more accountable (an increasing trend in anthropology, where informants are increasingly reading and commenting on what anthropologists write about them). Finally, I have increased my knowledge of other disciplines and ethics through my participation on two ethics committees, my university’s Research Ethics Board and Committee on Animal Care. Reviewing applications for these committees has

helped me both to take a comparative perspective on anthropological ethics, and to appreciate the complexities involved in attempting to put general principles into practice.

1.5 Thesis Outline

In Chapter One, I introduced my theoretical perspective. I then introduced the case I will be applying this perspective to, the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association, and my research questions. Chapter Two explores the history of the AAA ethics code and committee. This historical overview begins with the association's founding in 1905 and the first ethical censure of an AAA member in 1919, and ends with the adoption of the most recent AAA ethics code in 2012. This chapter demonstrates how the creation and revision of the AAA ethics code has often been a response to ethical controversies, particularly controversies related to allegations that anthropologists are engaging in secret counterinsurgency research. Chapter Three analyses the findings from the interviews I conducted with cultural anthropologists to study their opinions about ethics and codes in anthropology. Chapter Four concludes by summarizing the history and interview chapters, and then showing how these findings shed light on my research questions.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF THE AAA CODE OF ETHICS

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide historical context for important ethical statements, committees, and investigations of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), and show how they have changed over time. I show how these ethical statements and engagements have often responded to particular events, developments, and controversies within both anthropology and its larger social context.

In the research for this chapter, I reviewed both primary and secondary sources on the AAA code of ethics. I compared different versions of the code of ethics, and reviewed important statements, resolutions, and Task Force reports related to the association's response to ethical issues and controversies affecting the discipline. I went through back issues of the association's newsletter, *Anthropology News*, to find contemporary responses by members of the association to ethical controversies and revisions to the code. At the 2011 general meeting of the AAA, I attended sessions by the Task Force that was then in the process of revising the ethics code (the AAA adopted the new code in 2012). The following material is summarized in Table One (page 86).

2.2 Formation of the AAA and First Member Sanctioned

Censure of Franz Boas in 1919

The association was involved in internal controversy before it was officially incorporated in 1905. While a group including Franz Boas favored a more exclusive organization limited to professional anthropologists, another group favored a more inclusive policy for the first national anthropological association. W.J. McGee, the association's first president, first secured the signatures of supporters of the inclusive

policy for the draft constitution, and then incorporated the association in this form, even though Boas had objected to the draft. Boas learned of the incorporation after the fact (Stocking 1960: 1-8).

Controversy arose again in 1919, when Franz Boas, a founding figure in American anthropology, was censured by the association he helped form, for his condemnation of anthropologists who had acted as spies during the First World War while using their anthropological identities as a cover (Boas 1919). This was the earliest ethical crisis publically faced by the AAA (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 2-3; Stocking 1968: 273). It is also significant as the first (as it would turn out, the only) case where a member of the AAA was formally censured by the Association (Hill 1987: 16). The AAA council passed a resolution (20-10) stating that Boas' opinions were unjustified and not representative of the AAA (AAA 1920: 93-94). As a result, Boas lost his position on the AAA council and resigned from the National Research Council, although Stocking notes that by the mid-twenties his power within the AAA and influence on the Council was re-established (Stocking 1968: 273, 296-299).

In the letter, Boas argues for a science defined by the "service of truth," which he distinguishes from what he describes as the more lenient standards of soldiers, politicians, and businessmen, who he thought could be excused for placing patriotism ahead of honesty. Practically, he was concerned that the deception would result in honest researchers being suspected of ulterior motives when working abroad (Boas 1919: 797). Price cautions that "While Boas' criticism and his resulting censure have become well-worn features of American anthropology's political and historical self-understanding, there is perhaps more read into Boas' critique than appeared on that page of the Nation"

(2008: 15-16). Boas did not argue that anthropologists should never work for the military. Lucas asserts that although Boas may have objected to other forms of clandestine research, Boas was specifically arguing in this case against anthropologists making deceptive use of their anthropological identities (Lucas 2009: 55-56). Still, one of the reasons this has become a key moment in anthropology's moral history is that authors have linked it to later controversies over secret research and military work (for example, Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 3, 9). In 2005, 86 years later, members of the Association voted to rescind the censure of Boas (AAA 2005: 26).

WWII and American Anthropology

Compared to the First World War, anthropological involvement was much greater in WWII, with an estimated half of all American anthropologists involved full time in work related to the war (Price 2008: 37). Three weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the AAA adopted a resolution placing "itself and its resources and the specialized skills and knowledge of its members at the disposal of the country for the successful prosecution of the war" (AAA 1941: 289). Anthropologists applied ethnographic expertise in creating field guides for soldiers, conducted fieldwork in Japanese internment camps, helped create propaganda for the Office of War Information, gathered intelligence for the Office of Strategic Services, and much more (Price 2008).

There were no public controversies at the time related to this involvement (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 5). Within anthropology, a few applied anthropologists raised ethical concerns about the use of anthropological methods to help control populations (Price 2008: 34-36). Other anthropologists expressed frustration that they were unable to alter military and government policies (Price 2008: 197-199). Overall, Price suggests that at

the time most of the anthropologists involved in this work were more concerned with fulfilling their patriotic duty and stopping Nazism, which some anthropologists also saw as a professional responsibility (Price 2008: 19-20, 36, 49-50). That many anthropologists had joined the war effort became a source of tension within the AAA after the war, according to Trencher (2000). There was conflict because there was still the belief that “science demanded objectivity, but objectivity, as linked to neutrality, had been largely forfeited during the war” (2000: 106). While some members would argue the AAA should remain politically neutral as a scientific association, others would argue that neutrality was no longer acceptable given events like the Holocaust (Trencher 2000: 105-107).

Following the experiences of applied anthropologists during the war, the Society for Applied Anthropology adopted the first ethics statement for American anthropologists (Chambers 1991: 156-157; Price 2008: 274). The 1948 code does not refer specifically to the war, but does state that anthropologists must take responsibility for the effects of their recommendations, and should try to prevent chains of events that result in loss of health or life (Meat et al. 1949: 20-21; Price 2008: 276-277). The AAA did not adopt its first ethics statement until 1967, following the controversy over Project Camelot (Price 2008: 277).

2.3 Project Camelot and the Creation of the First AAA Ethics Committee

1965 Project Camelot

Camelot was as a social science research project to study and prevent counterinsurgency in specific countries, beginning in Latin America. The U.S. Department of Defense sponsored the project (Horowitz 2007: 277-278). Although few

anthropologists were involved with the project, it was the actions of an anthropologist (not formally connected with the project) in Chile that led to the project becoming a publicized controversy. Although the project was not classified, and the sponsors were not concealed, the project still resulted in accusations that scholars were acting as spies (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 8; Lucas 2009: 56-59). Due to the controversy, the project was cancelled “without a single social scientist having been paid to carry out the research” (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 8).

Within anthropology, there was concern that the controversial project would be harmful to anthropology’s reputation and potential research opportunities. The project’s cancellation was presidentially mandated, and the U.S. government released a statement that future research in foreign areas would not receive government sponsorship without approval by the Department of State. These actions led to fears of potential political censorship of research (Conklin et al. 1965: 2; Horowitz 2007: 280, 289). Research projects in Latin America and other parts of the world came under greater scrutiny (Conklin et al. 1965: 2; Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 8; Trencher 2000: 117-118).

1967 Statement of Problems of Anthropological Research

Responding to the controversy, the Executive Board of the AAA resolved that they would investigate the relationship between anthropologists and sponsoring agencies. The result of this investigation was the report “Background Information on Problems of Anthropological Research and Ethics” (AAA 1965: 1; Beals 1967: 2-13). This report provided the basis for the “Statement on Problems of Anthropological Research and Ethics” adopted by the AAA council in 1967 (AAA 1991a: 243-246). Some authors describe this as the earliest ethics code adopted by the AAA (Berreman 2003: 52; Hill

1987: 12). The statement reaffirms the 1948 resolution on freedom of publication.

Anthropologists should be open about project goals and sponsorship with representatives of host countries and groups studied, and carefully evaluate potential projects and sponsorship to make sure they are consistent with professional standards (AAA 1991a: 243-246). Although Project Camelot was not a classified project, the 1967 statement argued that anthropology's reputation has been harmed by individuals "who have pretended to be engaged in anthropological research while in fact pursuing other ends" (246).

Creation of Ethics Committee and Draft Code of Ethics

After adopting its first ethics statement in 1967, in 1968 the Executive Board of the AAA appointed an ad hoc Ethics Committee to consider further ethical issues faced by anthropologists and the association's response. The Committee's 1969 report included a summary of anthropologists' responsibilities to those they study, the discipline, students, and sponsors, which constituted a draft code of ethics (AAA 1969: 3-6; Hill 1987: 12). Although the Executive Board rejected the report, including its proposal for formal guidelines, it accepted the Committee's recommendation that the membership elect a standing ethics committee. The Board rejected the idea that this committee should be independent from the Executive Board (Berreman 2003: 56; Wakin 1992: 32).

Three members of the first standing committee carried over from the ad hoc Committee, including Eric Wolf and Joseph Jorgenson. The Committee's charge from the Executive Board was to consider the earlier report of the ad hoc committee and other existing ethics statements, and to make recommendations about what the role and function of this committee should be (Aberle and Schneider 1969: 9-10). The Committee

continued the process of developing ethical guidelines begun by the ad hoc Committee (Wakin 1992: 34). In the March, 1970 issue of the *Anthropology Newsletter*, the ethics committee requested case material to help with the creation of an ethics code, noting that the committee could not adjudicate cases (AAA 1970: 9-10).

2.4 The Thailand Controversy and the Adoption of the First AAA Ethics Code

The Thailand Controversy

Soon after the publication of this notice, members of the Committee became involved in controversy after a student activist group sent them copies of documents implicating anthropologists in counterinsurgency research (Wakin 1992: 34-35). The new controversy over anthropologists and social scientists consulting for the military occurred within the context of an “unpopular and politically divisive war” (Lucas 2009: 65), at a time when the anti-war movement was gaining momentum in the United States (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 11). Prior to the Thailand controversy, there had been controversy over the publication of an advertisement for a Vietnam counterinsurgency program in *American Anthropologist* (Price 2011: 24-25). Members of the AAA heavily debated and narrowly passed an Anti-Warfare Resolution (also known as the Vietnam Resolution) (Mills 2003: 42). Trencher (2000) suggests the debate was not for or against the war, but over whether the AAA should make a political resolution about the war.

The documents acquired and distributed by the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (SMC) were taken from the files of anthropologist Michael Moerman. They included minutes of meetings, proposals, and reports from different projects using social science research to support US counterinsurgency efforts in Thailand, during the Vietnam War (Wakin 1992: 1-8). Although four anthropologists

were identified in the documents, the SMC's interest was in connections between academics and the military generally, not specifically anthropology (SMC 1970; Wakin 1992: 156). In addition to publishing an exposé in *The Student Mobiliser*, the SMC sent copies to scholars, including three members of the AAA ethics committee, Eric Wolf, Joseph Jorgenson, and Gerald Berreman, likely contacted due to their anti-war activism rather than their positions in the new committee (Wakin 1992: 156-157).

Wolf and Jorgenson's response would become as controversial within the AAA as the Thailand research. They released a statement identifying themselves as members of the ethics committee and stating that the actions described in the documents contradicted anthropological statements on ethics. Days later, Wolf contacted the accused anthropologists, stating that the ethics committee would judge impartially. Most responded with outrage, and the ensuing controversy would focus both on the issue of counterinsurgency and on the ethics of Wolf and Jorgenson's statement (Wakin 1992: 157-161; Wolf and Jorgenson 1970: 2, 19). Although Berreman also released a statement, he did not identify himself as a member of the ethics committee, and he received much less criticism (Berreman 2003: 57-58).

The controversy became divisive for the Association. The Executive Board criticized the ethics committee, and Wolf and Jorgenson in particular, for going beyond their mandate, and ordered them to refrain from any quasi-investigations or public statements as COE members in the future (AAA 1970b: 1, 10). In response, Wolf and Jorgenson resigned from the ethics committee. Most of the remaining ethics committee members continued to support them and argue for the importance of the issues raised by the Thailand research, but other committee members withdrew their support (AAA

1970c: 9, 16; Ehrich and Werner 1970: 2, 7; Wakin 1992: 184-188; Wolf and Jorgensen 1970: 2, 19).

In an attempt to achieve some resolution, the Executive Board appointed the Ad Hoc Committee to Evaluate the Controversy Concerning Anthropological Activities in Thailand, chaired by Margaret Mead (also known as the Mead Committee). The Executive Board charged the Mead Committee with investigating potential ethical violations by anthropologists conducting research on Thailand and by members of the ethics committee who had made public statements about the controversy (AAA 1971: 1, 7; Wakin 1992: 201-203). The Mead Committee's final report argued that the Thailand anthropologists had not violated ethical standards. The Committee argued the work was not classified, and that the concept of "counterinsurgency" was only used to secure funding (Davenport et al. 1992: 288- 292). The report suggested that some of the anthropologists had become disillusioned with their ability to influence the government; Wakin suggests this was due to their inability to shift the government's clear, explicit focus on counterinsurgency (Davenport et al. 1992: 288; Wakin: 61-62, 69). The report argued the ethics committee *had* acted unethically, in depriving those accused of due process (Davenport et al. 1992: 290-293). When the authors presented the report at the AAA's annual meeting, members voted to reject the report, against the protests of the Mead Committee (Wakin 1992: 206-213). The Executive Board released a statement that the issues raised by the controversy remained essentially unresolved (AAA 1972: 1, 9). Future resolution of the issue was complicated by the Ad Hoc Committee's response to the report's rejection: destroying the documents and correspondence used as evidence for

their report in order to prevent them from being used irresponsibly (Trencher 2000: 136; Wakin 1992: 229-231).

1971 Principles of Professional Responsibility

During the controversy, the remaining ethics committee members continued to work on revising the draft code of ethics. Now titled Principles of Professional Responsibility (PPR), the membership adopted the code in May 1971 (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 12; Hill 1987: 14). With the controversy over counterinsurgency research as part of the background for the code's adoption, the PPR prohibits secret research in five of its six sections (AAA 1991b: 247-252). Although conflict over counterinsurgency research provided its immediate context, the code also reflects broader concerns about the relationships between anthropologists and their informants (Price 2011: 26-27). The code described responsibilities to six groups affected by anthropological research: those anthropologists study, the public, the discipline, students, sponsors, and governments. Although anthropologists have obligations to all these groups, the code states that anthropologists' "paramount responsibility is to those they study. When there is a conflict of interest, these individuals must come first" (AAA 1991b: 248). With informants, anthropologists must communicate the aims and anticipated consequences of the research as well as possible and protect their rights, interests, and anonymity, while recognizing the plurality of values and interests within societies (AAA 1991b: 248-249). Other obligations are to educate the public, to maintain the discipline's reputation, and to avoid undertaking projects that would require violations of ethics (AAA 1991b: 249-252). If ethical violations occur, the code states that the association may inquire into the issue and potentially take measures, but does not suggest what these might be (AAA 1991b: 252).

The ethics committee adopted a complicated grievance process to respond to allegations of unethical behavior (AAA 1973: 21-23).

While the adoption of the first ethics code might suggest the beginning of ethical activism in professional anthropology, Trencher (2000) suggests the opposite. For Trencher, the adoption of the PPR marked the peak of ethical activism in the Association, mirroring the peak and decline of the antiwar movement in the United States (187). Trencher argues that in the eighties, the association's attention turned to pragmatic concerns related to employment (2000: 150-152, 181). Concerns that the Association's ethical commitments had waned by the 1980s led to controversy when the association proposed the first major revision to the code in 1984.

2.5 Rejection of the 1984 Draft Code of Ethics

1984 Proposed Revision of the PPR

In 1981, the Executive Board charged a new AAA Committee to Revise Statements on Ethics with revising the code "to guide the conduct of anthropologists in every employment setting" (AAA 1981: 8). The revision was a response to concerns raised about the Principles of Professional Responsibility, including a perceived academic bias (AAA 1984: 2). Anthropologists were increasingly finding employment outside universities, in part due to the shortage of academic jobs available (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 13). Some applied anthropologists felt excluded by the PPR, which they argued did not address the employment situations and ethical concerns of applied anthropologists. There were concerns that prohibitions on secrecy did not distinguish between clandestine military research and legitimate proprietary research for businesses or organizations (Aberle 1985: 24, 28; Chambers 1991: 166; Helm 1985: 1, 13). Applied anthropologists

argued that in practice, academic researchers do not publish all of their research results either. The code also did not explain how conflicts between the need to protect confidentiality and the prohibitions on secrecy could be resolved (Almy 1985: 2-3; Chambers 1991: 167-168; Frankel and Trend 1991: 182). Applied anthropologists also questioned the idea that subjects can and should always have priority over employers (Chambers 1991: 163-165; Frankel and Trend 1991: 188). The PPR was criticized for relating more to concerns raised during the Vietnam War than to the current employment situations of anthropologists (Chambers 1991: 166-168; Hill 1987: 16).

The Committee charged with revising the code published a draft code of ethics in 1984 (AAA 1984: 2). Anthropologists critical of the proposed draft saw the proposed draft as a radical departure from the original Principles of Professional Responsibility, and attributed this change to economic pressures faced by anthropologists (Berreman 2003: 63-64; Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 13-14). The code would have been a much shorter document, addressing only what it identified as specific responsibilities of anthropologists, in a general way, in recognition of the varied contexts where anthropologists work. The statement that anthropologists have a primary responsibility to those studied was changed to “Anthropologists must seriously consider their own moral responsibility for their acts when there is a risk that an individual, group, or organization may be hurt, exploited, or jeopardized physically, legally, in reputation, or in self-esteem as a result of these acts” (AAA 1984: 2). While in my reading that implies that anthropologists have moral responsibility for their acts, authors such as Fluehr-Lobban and Berreman argue this draft would have removed any strong statement of responsibility to those studied (Berreman 2003: 69-70; Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 13-14). The draft also

would have removed the explicit prohibitions on secret research found in the PPR. The draft stated that anthropologists should communicate the aims and consequences of their research as fully as possible to “resource persons,” and report sources of funding when presenting findings, but did not refer specifically to secret research (AAA 1984: 2). For some anthropologists this was a serious omission, given the historical importance of the issue (Berreman 2003: 66-69; Fluehr-Lobban 13-14; Price 2011: 26-27; Wakin 1992: 234-236).

Although the 1980s revision responded to concerns raised by applied anthropologists, Chambers argues against representations of applied anthropology as a recent phenomenon requiring accommodation and ethical compromises. As he notes, the first ethics code in anthropology was developed by the Society for Applied Anthropology in 1948 (Chambers 1991: 155-157). For Chambers, one of the functions of ethics talk is to maintain an imagined moral community. He argues that representations of the ethical concerns raised by applied anthropologists as ethical compromises in response to employment pressures, rather than valid ethical perspectives, excludes them from the imagined moral community of anthropologists (Chambers 1991).

1991 Revised Principles of Professional Responsibility

The proposed code received such a negative response it went no further. Instead, a new committee of academic and applied anthropologists was formed and a more modest revision developed. The association adopted that revision in 1991 (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 14). The revision maintained the statement that anthropologists have a primary responsibility to those they study, but new references to nonacademic work were included. One of the controversial changes was maintained in this version. Although the

code stated that anthropologists must communicate the aims and potential consequences of their research to their informants, the new code did not specifically state that secret research was unethical (AAA 1991c: 274-279; Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 14).

2.6 1998 New Code of Ethics and Changes to the Ethics Committee

1998 New Code of Ethics

Both the Principles of Professional Responsibility and the Ethics Committee received extensive revisions in the 1990s. The association formed a new Commission in 1995 to re-examine the purpose and contents of the different AAA statements on ethics. The biggest change recommended by the Commission was that the ethics code and committee would no longer adjudicate claims of unethical behavior, but would instead focus on ethics education. In its final report, the commission argued that the Ethics Committee's adjudication process was unable to provide due process or meaningful sanctions, lacked any legal standing, and had only weak moral standing, since agreeing to follow the code was not a condition of membership. It was misleading to suggest the AAA could judge ethical claims (AAA 1996: 13-14). By the 1980s, members of the ethics committee were expressing doubts about the effectiveness of the Ethics Committee's grievance procedures (Aberle 1985: 24, 28; Helm 1985: 1, 13). The abandoned 1984 draft stated that its role was to encourage ethical decision-making; it did not mention sanctions (AAA 1984: 2). The 1991 version of the code kept the section referring to the possibility of sanctions (AAA 1991: 279). Ethics committee members familiar with the grievance process argued that because it was so complex and time consuming, cases were dropped before being resolved. The majority of cases involved conflicts between anthropologists (such as charges of plagiarism or disputes over tenure),

not interactions between anthropologists and informants (Hill 1987: 14-18). According to Levy (1994: 5), for many years none of the cases had referred to the first section of the PPR, “Responsibility to people whose lives and cultures anthropologists study” (AAA 1991c: 274-276). Levy also argued that some of the cases were more a matter of scholarly differences than ethical violations. No one had been sanctioned by the AAA since Boas in 1919 (the first and only member ever sanctioned), and that had been decades before the ethics committee was formed (Hill 1987: 16; Levy 1994: 5). Based on the recommendations of the Commission and the Section Assembly, in 1995 the Executive Board unanimously approved that “the AAA no longer adjudicate claims of unethical behavior and focus its efforts and resources on an ethics education program” (AAA 1996: 13).

In addition to recommending this change, the Commission developed a new code of ethics. The AAA adopted the new code in 1998. With this new code, the Commission attempted to increase the code’s representativeness, introduced language on informed consent, and reformulated anthropologists’ responsibilities to people and cultures studied. First, the Commission argued the code of ethics “Should draw an increasingly divided discipline together without sacrificing standards of conduct” (AAA 1996: 13). The 1998 code addresses potential divisions between academic and applied anthropology by stating that the same ethical principles apply to research whatever the purpose or source of funding, whether academic or applied (AAA 2003a: 326-327; Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 18). The Commission also tried to make the code apply to all four subfields of anthropology (AAA 1996: 13). The first section of the Principles of Professional Responsibility described anthropologists’ responsibilities in terms of obligations to human beings, and

therefore seemed to apply more to cultural anthropology and linguistics (AAA 1991c: 274-276; Levy 1994: 1). The authors of the new code extended anthropologists “primary ethical obligations” to include the “people, species, and materials” studied (AAA 2003a: 326), in order to make the code more applicable to archaeologists and physical anthropologists (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 18).

The 1998 code was also the first AAA code to refer to the need for “informed consent.” Although the earlier codes implied the need for something like informed consent with their requirements for openness and disclosure (and in the 1971 code, the repeated admonitions against secrecy), these codes did not phrase this in terms of informed consent. Fluehr-Lobban argues this was partly because federal regulations requiring informed consent were not regularly applied to anthropological research until the late eighties. Anthropologists have also been critical of the application of informed consent requirements to ethnographic fieldwork (Fluehr-Lobban 2003c: 160-169). The 1998 code addresses one of these concerns, the need for a written document, by arguing “It is the quality of the consent, not the format, that is relevant;” a written form is not required by this code (AAA 2003a: 327).

Finally, the Commission argued that the 1998 code should not include an obligation to promote the welfare of the people and cultures anthropologists study in general. The 1990 code stated, “Anthropologists must respect, protect, and promote the rights and welfare of those studied” (AAA 1991c: 274). Both the 1971 and 1991 codes stated, under the section for responsibilities to the public, “Anthropologists bear a positive responsibility to speak out publically” on their areas of professional expertise (AAA 1991b: 249; AAA 1991c: 276). The Commission questioned how it could be

determined what was in a group's best interest. For the anthropologist to decide this would be paternalistic, and there would likely be disagreement within groups. The Commission also noted that anthropologists might study groups whose interests they do not necessarily want to promote. Anthropologists still had obligations to avoid harm, to disclose the goals, funding, and potential consequences of their research, and to try to achieve a working relationship beneficial for all involved (AAA 2003a: 326-327). The section on Responsibility to the public in the 1998 code cautions that while anthropologists should make the results of their research "appropriately available" to non-anthropologists, they must carefully consider the potential "social and political implications," and try to ensure the information is "well understood, properly contextualized, and responsibly utilized" (AAA 2003a: 327-328). While anthropologists may choose to become advocates for the groups they study, this is not an ethical obligation (328).

The ethics committee's shift to education was soon tested by a new crisis.

Test Case: Darkness in El Dorado Controversy

This new controversy preceded the publication of Patrick Tierney's *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Researchers Devastated the Amazon* (2000). In this book, Tierney argued the Yanomami, an indigenous people of Venezuela and Brazil, had been seriously harmed by their contact with researchers, particularly anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon. Before the book's publication, two anthropologists, Leslie Sponsel and Terrence Turner, sent a confidential e-mail to the president of the AAA warning that a scandal was imminent. That e-mail and its references to an "anthropological heart of darkness" and a "Joseph-Mengele like experiment" were soon circulating online (Fluehr-

Lobban 2003b: 86-87). As Fluehr-Lobban notes, “A novel dimension of this crisis was its Internet character,” with the initial debate between critics and supporters of Chagnon and Tierney largely taking place online (2003a: 24). Media sources began to report both on the sensational claims made in the book and e-mail, and on the conflict between anthropologists supporting Chagnon or Tierney, with journalists comparing anthropologists to a warring ‘tribe’ (Lamphere 2003: 155-156; Pels 2005: 69-72).

Tierney’s most controversial allegation was that Chagnon and geneticist James Neal had caused a measles epidemic and then deliberately withheld proper treatment. Supporters of Chagnon and Neal quickly disproved this claim, and Tierney retracted it prior to the book’s release (Fluehr-Lobban 2003b: 87-90; Nugent 2003: 78-83). Other charges that Chagnon had distorted his research to support his socio-biological theories were not new in anthropology (Nugent: 2003: 78-86). The AAA had chosen not to adjudicate earlier claims by the Brazilian Anthropological Association that the Yanomami had been harmed by Chagnon’s representation of them as the ‘fierce people’ (Cunha 1989: 3; Chagnon 1989: 3, 24; Fluehr-Lobban 2003: 86). Fluehr-Lobban suggests some anthropologists may have been wary of joining the debate “due to a problem of sorting out differences between long-standing ideological battles over Chagnon’s interpretation of the Yanomami, on the one hand, and the ethics and conduct of research on the other” (Fluehr-Lobban 2003b: 88). In press accounts, the debate was sometimes simplified as a conflict between empirical ‘scientists’ such as Chagnon and his supporters and ‘postmodernists’ who were driven by moral and ideological agendas (Lamphere 2003: 155-156, n. 3; Pels 2005: 69-72, 78-81).

The Association released a statement early on withholding judgment until more was known (Fluehr-Lobban 2003b: 87; Lamphere 2003: 154-155), but the changes to the ethics committee meant that the case could not be investigated by that committee. Instead, the Executive Board constituted an El Dorado Task Force in 2001. The Executive Board charged the Task Force with inquiring into the allegations made by Tierney, in order to assist the ethics committee with the creation of ethical guidelines (Chernela et al. 2002a: 7). Although the Task Force initially had five members, a sixth member, Ray Hames, was subsequently appointed due to pressure from supporters of Neel and Chagnon. Hames later resigned (Chernela et al. 2002a: 16-18). Chagnon objected to the inquiry and refused to speak to the task force (Chernela et al. 2002a: 31). The Task Force submitted its final report to the Executive Board in 2002. The first volume included background on the Task Force and introductory statements co-authored by all the members, which reflected on the interviews, essays, and case studies collected in the second volume. In interpreting its charge, members of the task force noted this kind of inquiry was unprecedented for the Association. They argued that their work was not an investigation and that they did not see the material they collected as evidence, although they noted cases where they “found that it was possible to suggest something about the truth or falsity of the allegations” (Chernela et al. 2002a: 9).

In evaluating the allegations made by Tierney, the Task Force argued that although the book was “deeply flawed,” it raised important ethical issues for anthropology (Chernela et al. 2002a: 9). The Task Force noted specific criticisms of Tierney’s work in the second volume, agreeing that the allegations about the epidemic were without merit (53), and arguing Tierney sometimes employed selective quotations

and manipulated the material he was drawing on to support his argument (87-88, 125). The preface to the final report states that Tierney's work does not meet the standards of ethical journalism (AAA 2002). In evaluating Chagnon's work, the Task Force stated that it tried to separate ethical and anthropological questions, to the extent that was possible. Based on its work, the Task Force stated that it agreed with two major allegations against Chagnon: that his representations of the Yanomami were harmful to them and he did not do enough to counteract this, and that his work with a questionable organization prioritized his own interests over those of the Yanomami. The Task Force argued the latter would constitute a breach of ethics under both the Principles of Professional Responsibility and the 1998 Code of Ethics (Chernela et al. 2002a: 31-44).

Although the El Dorado Task Force Report was accepted by the Association in 2002, this acceptance was challenged in 2005. As a result of a 2003 referendum, the AAA had adopted a statement rejecting Tierney's claims about the epidemic and their potential harm to immunization campaigns. Thomas Gregor and Daniel Gross proposed that statement (AAA 2003b; Gregor et al. 2003; Watkins 2003). Following this success, in a 2004 article, Gregor and Gross argued the AAA had violated its own ethics procedures by carrying out an "inquiry" that was really a poorly conducted, one sided ethics investigation. According to Gregor and Gross, this was the result of a self-critical, postmodern, politicized anthropology and a culture of accusation, which had blinded everyone involved to the inappropriateness of their actions. Gregor and Gross proposed a new referendum, to rescind the report's acceptance (Gregor and Gross 2005a; Irons et al. 2005). Task Force members argued the task force was legally constituted, and that even if flawed, the report had contributed to ethical discussions (Hill et al. 2005; Watkins 2005).

In the 2005 referendum, AAA members voted to rescind the report's acceptance. The resolution included a long list of criticisms of the report and the Association taken from the 2004 article. Although Gregor and Gross had stated Association members were free to debate the issue amongst themselves, the resolution criticized the Association for allowing "serious but unevaluated charges to be posted on its website and expressed in its newsletter and at annual meetings" (AAA 2005a; Gregor and Gross 2005). The AAA's Executive Board stated that it should not have let a referendum require the Executive Board take specific action, but agreed to withdraw the report, which is no longer available on its website (AAA 2005b). As in the earlier Thailand controversy, the rejection of the task force report leaves the El Dorado controversy essentially unresolved.

2.7 The Human Terrain System Controversy and the Newest AAA Ethics Code

The Human Terrain System

The beginning of the twenty-first century saw renewed controversy over anthropological involvement in counterinsurgency research. Problems faced by U.S. forces in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq resulted in increased military interest in counterinsurgency and the potential contributions of anthropology and other social sciences (Goldstein 2010: 128-130; Gusterson 2010). In a 2005 article, anthropologist Montgomery McFate argued that since successful counterinsurgency required accurate cultural knowledge, anthropology should reconsider its historical role advising colonial and military powers. McFate co-authored a chapter for the new U.S. Counterinsurgency Manual introducing basic anthropological concepts (González 2007: 14-15; McFate 2007). McFate also helped develop the Human Terrain System, which became the most controversial application of anthropology to the current counterinsurgency effort

(Gusterson 2010: 284-287). The Human Terrain system embedded anthropologists and other social scientists with troops overseas as part of Human Terrain teams, in order to conduct research that would assist officers and soldiers with understanding the local cultural context. Supporters of the program argued the program would reduce violence and threats and help both soldiers and civilians, while reducing support for insurgents and increasing support for coalition forces (Griffin 2010; King 2009; McFate 2007; McFate and Fondacaro 2008). The first Human Terrain teams were deployed in 2007.

Some anthropologists opposed this new program and other applications of anthropology to counterinsurgency, including members of the newly formed Network of Concerned Anthropologists and those who signed their pledge not to participate in counterinsurgency research in Iraq, including Price, Gusterson, and González (Besteman et al. 2007). Although supporters of the program stated research data would not be used for intelligence or targeting (McFate and Fondacaro 2007), critics argued that other sources indicated this was a serious risk (González 2008; Gusterson 2010: 288; Price 2011: 104-109). The use of anthropological methods to help gain support for the coalition was seen as manipulating people to consent to a military occupation and comparable to anthropology's past role in colonialism (González 2010: 236-243; Price 2010). Critics also noted that the program's designers described it differently for different audiences, stressing reducing violence to soldiers and civilians to the media and other anthropologists, and strategic value to the military (Gusterson 2010: 287). For example, McFate's responses to critics in *Anthropology Today* stress the program's potential to save lives of soldiers and civilians (McFate 2007; McFate and Fondacaro 2008). Her 2005 article in *Military Review*, on the other hand, emphasised the need for cultural

knowledge of the adversary in combatting an insurgency. Critics also argued the concept of “culture” promoted in the Counterinsurgency Manual or the Human Terrain program was an overly simplified and outdated one, and that anthropology was seen as useful only to the extent that it could provide knowledge of “enemy cultures,” which were seen as a threat to security (González 2007; Gusterson 2010: 289; Price 2010: 258).

In 2006, the AAA appointed an ad hoc Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the U.S. Security and Intelligence Communities (CEAUSSIC), prompted in part by the question of whether the AAA should publish ads from intelligence agencies (Peacock 2007). The Executive Board charged the Commission with providing recommendations on the roles anthropologists have in intelligence and security agencies and the key ethical and practical issues involved (Nutti 2006). In its 2007 report, members of the Commission stated they were not recommending for or against engagement in general, given the diverse kinds of engagement in which anthropologists were involved. Instead, the Commission advised “careful analysis of specific roles, activities, and institutional contexts of engagement in order to ascertain ethical consequences,” beginning with principles of doing no harm and of honesty and transparency (CEAUSSIC 2007: 4). The Commission did not initially focus on the Human Terrain System, but the Executive Board subsequently asked them to examine it specifically (CEAUSSIC 2009: 7-8). The Executive Board had released a statement in 2007, which argued the program was likely to put anthropologists in violation of the code of ethics, and would put anthropologists and those they study in danger (AAA 2007). The Commission published a new report on the Human Terrain System in 2009, describing the program and its ethical implications for anthropology. The Commission argued there

was no clear, consistent distinction between Human Terrain research and intelligence or rules for protecting data that could put informants at risk (CEAUSSIC 2009: 32-40). Commission members also suggested that any fieldwork conducted was likely to be shaped by the military context in which the social scientists were embedded (2009: 22-29). The Commission found that differences in the way the program was presented to different audiences, and in how the program was enacted in the field, resulted in ambiguity about the project's identity and goals, which included serving a "research function," a "tactical support function," and providing "a source of cultural data" for the Department of Defense (2009: 40-41). The Commission argued the program's "potentially irreconcilable goals" would make it difficult for an anthropologist to determine whether the program was consistent with disciplinary ethics. The Commission concluded that a program such as HTS where "ethnographic investigation is determined by military missions, not subject to external review, where data collection occurs in the context of war, integrated into the goals of counterinsurgency, and in a potentially coercive environment" was not "a legitimate professional exercise of anthropology" (2009: 3). In contrast to the Project Camelot and Thailand controversies, AAA members have not rescinded the reports, and there do not appear to have been calls to do so (as of February 2014).

2009 Proposed Revision: Restoring Language on Secrecy

In 2009, the association revised the ethics code again in response to concerns raised by anthropologists working for military and intelligence agencies. At the November 2007 general meeting of the AAA, Terrence Turner (discussed above in relationship to the El Dorado controversy) introduced a motion to have the Executive Board restore language

from the 1971 PPR prohibiting secret research. Members passed this resolution. In January 2007, the Executive Board created a task force to draft a revision that “incorporates the principles of the Turner motion while stipulating principles...that identify when the ethical conduct of anthropology does and does not require specific forms of the public circulation of knowledge,” as reported by Dozier (2008: 16).

The revised version of the Code of Ethics, adopted in 2009, states that results of research should not normally be withheld from participants when given to others, but that there are specific circumstances where this could be ethical, particularly when it would protect persons, cultural heritage, or intellectual property (AAA 2009: 6). Although there may be cases where limited distribution is justified, the code argues that “Deliberately misrepresenting one’s research goals and impact to research subjects is a clear violation of research ethics, as is conducting clandestine research” (2009: 3-4). In another change, the statement that anthropologists must “do all in their power” to ensure they cause no harm was made more emphatic; the 2009 code states that anthropologists “must ensure” they cause no harm (AAA 2009: 2).

2012 New Principles of Professional Responsibility

Following this smaller revision, the Executive Board created a Task Force charged with a more extensive review and revision of the code. In a 2009 article members of the Task Force argued “To be effective, ethics codes need to be living documents, developed and updated as matters of course (rather than crisis), and periodically reviewed and revised to ensure that they speak directly to the ever-evolving needs and character of the discipline” (Barker and Plemmons 2009: 29). Barker and Plemmons note that no single committee could represent all of the association’s diversity, and so the revision process

involved seeking members' opinions on what the code can and should do, and how it can be useful.

As part of my research, I was able to attend the 2011 general meeting of the AAA, which included two sessions by members of the Task Force revising the code of ethics (as noted in Chapter Three, I was also able to interview two Task Force members). At that time, the Task Force had just submitted a draft code of ethics to the Executive Board. As part of the revision process, the Task Force conducted a member survey, focus groups, and interviews, and met with different sections of the AAA. The questions posed to the members participating in this research were similar to the questions I posed to my participants. When members were asked in a survey about what a code should ideally provide, guiding principles came first; enforceable standards was fourth. When asked how they used the code (or should use it), most members said they used it for teaching, or as references for employers and IRBs. In focus groups and interviews, many members said they felt excluded by the implicit model of anthropology in the code. While some members said the code had helped shape their thinking, none said they had used it when making ethical decisions (Barker et al. 2011b). The Task Force also sought comments about the draft ethical principles on their blog. While the first principle received a large response, the later principles received progressively fewer comments. The Task Force strongly recommended to the Executive Board that the Association find ways to get anthropologists more engaged in ethical discussions, and to maintain that engagement in the absence of political controversies (Barker et al. 2011a). At both sessions, members of the Task Force noted the turnout was much lower than the attendance at sessions during

the controversy over the Human Terrain System, which was the crisis that inspired the latest revision.

AAA members adopted the new code in 2012. This was the most extensive revision since 1998. The new code includes a return to an earlier title; it is now titled “Statement on Ethics: Principles of Professional Responsibility.” While earlier codes were organized around anthropologists’ responsibilities to different groups, the new code lists seven main ethical principles, with supporting arguments (AAA 2012). The format of the code has also changed. The new code is meant to be read online. Within the text of the code, there are links to further explanations, supporting materials, and case studies (AAA 2012; Barker et al. 2011a). The new code again reformulates anthropologists’ “primary responsibility,” stating that “a primary ethical obligation shared by anthropologists is to do no harm” (AAA 2012: 4).

2.8 Conclusion

The history of the AAA ethics code shows how the process of revising the code is linked to controversies and changes affecting the discipline. For Fluehr-Lobban, “Ethics in anthropology is like race in America: dialogue takes place during times of crisis” (2003a: 1). Price suggests that it is debates over anthropology and the military that have given American anthropology its ethics (2011: 11-31). Trencher argues that by juxtaposing political events in American and the American Anthropological Association, we can better see the “American content of American anthropology (Trencher 2000: 105). Mills discusses many of the same events identified as significant by the other authors, in arguing that this history shows different ideas about the relationship between ethics and politics (2003). As a history of ethical engagements by the American

Anthropological Association, the events discussed here are often ones with specific ties to American anthropology, but they also have an impact beyond this, affecting other anthropologists and the places where anthropologists conduct fieldwork.

In this history of the code, I largely focused on events identified as significant by other anthropologists who have studied the history of the AAA ethics statements, including the authors listed above. From philosopher George Lucas's perspective, the description these authors offer of anthropology's moral history or "litany of shame" is surprisingly uniform for a discipline; he questions why there is so much agreement among authors (2009: 51-72). Partly this is because, as he notes, this kind of narrative is more characteristic of the narrative of a profession "enshrined in the preambles of their own codes of conduct" (72). This is the history of some of the important influences on the AAA ethics code. It is not necessarily of the ethical debates other anthropologists would see as most significant. Lucas also questions the ethical significance of events like Project Camelot or the Thailand controversy compared to other ethical dilemmas in anthropology, or the kinds of considerations that went into the Nuremberg code (Lucas 2009: 71-74). Lucas also notes that the idea that ethical debates tend to take place during times of crisis is not unique to the discipline of anthropology (2009: 26). Still, as Lucas notes, the significance of moments of crisis such as Project Camelot and the Thailand controversy "is that both incidents occasioned profound reflection and deliberation, resulting in key formulations of important ethical standards for the profession" (2009: 68).

CHAPTER 3: INTERVIEWS

3.1 Methodology

Participants

In order to look for answers to my questions on the role and purpose of codes of ethics for anthropology and the relationship of professional, codified ethics to ordinary, everyday ethics, I interviewed eleven anthropologists. After conducting eleven interviews, I felt I had reached data saturation for this qualitative study. I will address the number of participants again shortly, under limitations.

The participants (who will be identified by pseudonyms) all had graduate degrees in anthropology; ten participants had a PhD, and one participant had a Master of Arts degree. The participants were all primarily academic, cultural anthropologists. The AAA provides the following definition of sociocultural anthropology:

Sociocultural anthropologists examine social patterns and practices across cultures, with a special interest in how people live in particular places and how they organize, govern, and create meaning. A hallmark of sociocultural anthropology is its concern with similarities and differences, both within and among societies, and its attention to race, sexuality, class, gender, and nationality. Research in sociocultural anthropology is distinguished by its emphasis on participant observation, which involves placing oneself in the research context for extended periods of time to gain a first-hand sense of how local knowledge is put to work in grappling with practical problems of everyday life and with basic philosophical problems of knowledge, truth, power, and justice. (AAA 2014, "What is Anthropology?")

At the time of the interviews, they were all working as professors at North American universities. Eight of the participants worked at the same Canadian university. The other three participants were each at different universities in the United States. The interviews with the anthropologists from American universities took place at the 2011 general meeting of the AAA, in Montreal. Two of the participants I interviewed there

were part of the Task Force that was at that time in the process of revising the code of ethics. With the exception of the latter two participants, in choosing the majority of the participants I was not looking specifically for expertise on the ethics code itself. Instead, I wanted to see whether a small sample of the AAA's membership had experience with the code, and to see how their ideas and experiences of anthropological ethics related to the code.

Limitations

Originally, I had also planned to include the perspectives of anthropologists working in applied settings (e.g., business or government), as well as anthropologists working in sub-fields other than cultural anthropology (i.e., linguistics, archaeology, physical anthropology). In the end, I was not successful in making contact with members of other subfields, and an interview with an applied anthropologist fell through. With eleven interviews, I felt I had started to reach data saturation. Still, it is a limitation of this study that the participants were all primarily practitioners of academic, applied anthropology. As another limitation, I did not interview an equal number of participants from American and Canadian universities, and the two Task Force members with expertise related to the code were both from American universities. In the following analysis, I will not be using Canada and the United States as a comparison. Finally, as noted in the introduction, the AAA often has in excess of 10,000 registered members, and so my participants do not form a representative sample.

Interview Questions

The interviews were semi-structured, with ten questions related to codes and ethics in anthropology (Appendix B). My theoretical perspective and reading of the

history of the code and the debates around the revision process provided the basis for the questions I posed to my participants. I began by establishing whether my participants had prior experience with the AAA code in particular, while the following question asked for participants ideas about important ethical issues in anthropology generally. Questions three to five asked for participants' opinions about developments related to the code and the controversies surrounding it. Questions six to eight focused on participant's experiences with learning about ethics and with making ethical decisions in the field. The interviews led up to question nine, which asked whether participants thought that, given everything they had discussed up to that point, it was important or useful for the AAA to have a code of ethics. By that point, I often assumed I had a good idea of how participants would answer that question. As we will see though, I was often surprised. The final question asked for participants' opinions about a potential theoretical slant, the comparison of ordinary ethics and etiquette.

Analysis

The interviews were all recorded and transcribed. Once the transcripts were prepared, I performed a thematic analysis (Bernard and Ryan 2003). In the following analysis, I have followed the questions I asked in the interviews, in order to show how the interviews progressed in some interesting and unexpected ways after the initial question: are you familiar with the AAA ethics code? In some cases, I have edited the quotations in minor ways for grammar (for example, removing repeated words).

3.2 Familiarity with the AAA Ethics Code

“Are you familiar with the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association?”

I will begin my discussion of these interviews with the same question I posed at the beginning of each interview. I chose this question as a starting point for the interviews because before asking more specific questions related to the code, I first wanted to establish whether participants considered themselves familiar with the code, and if so how well they knew it. Later questions further explored participants' knowledge of the code, along with related debates and controversies, and their opinions about the code's usefulness or relevance for anthropology, as I will discuss in later sections.

A majority of the anthropologists I interviewed said they were familiar with the ethics code only to a limited extent. Of the eleven participants, three described themselves as being familiar with the code; this included the two participants who were members of the current task force charged with revising the AAA code of ethics. I then asked these three participants what they thought were some of the important issues addressed by the code. For Dr. Hale, the code tries to address the issues of secrecy and of how anthropologists position themselves with the people they work with; for Dr. Carson, the largest issues are the concept of "do no harm," voluntary informed consent, and transparency. Dr. Kent suggested that recently, what has been important "has been the debate about revising the code. And actually reminding people that we do have a code of ethics."

Although the other participants were aware there was a code, they described their familiarity with the code as being relatively limited. Some of these participants had read the code before, or were familiar with some of the issues it addressed, but still qualified their level of familiarity. For example, Dr. Barr had read the code "a few times," but said he had not studied it enough to say he was familiar with it, and that he mostly recalled

“discussions around it rather than the actual ethics code itself.” Dr. Ellis described her familiarity with the code as minimal; she was aware of ethical issues that have affected the code and that have historically been important in anthropology, “but not absolute specifics” of the code. Similarly, Dr. Alford was aware of a range of ethical issues and controversies in anthropology, but had “not studied the American Anthropological Association’s current ethics code in any detail.” Finally, Dr. Kent recalled that the code addressed anthropologists’ accountability to those they study, but later suggested he was only “vaguely aware of some of its contents, I’m sort of vaguely aware of some of its controversies.” Other participants described their familiarity with the code as being limited largely to knowing that there is one. For example, Dr. Grant said, “I’m familiar with the fact that there is an ethics code, but I haven’t actually read it.”

Without additional prompting, participants often offered reasons for their degree of familiarity with the code. There were three main explanations for participants having acquired some knowledge of the code. First, several participants had gained some familiarity with the code through taking courses as students or preparing courses as professors. Dr. Barr remembered “reading bits and pieces while preparing a class, where we addressed debates about the ethics code.” Dr. Ellis was aware of some of the history of ethical issues in anthropology through her earlier education, as well as “different things specific to what I look at in class.” Second, two of the participants had increased their level of familiarity with the code through work on the AAA Task Force to revise the code, while a third had participated in ethical discussions at AAA meetings. Finally, two participants noted they had become more familiar with the ethics code through my work on this project.

There were also three main explanations for why participants were unfamiliar with the code of ethics. First, some participants suggested they lacked familiarity because they had never studied the code for a specific reason. Dr. Barr had read the code before, but never “with a pointed interest in answering particular questions or for research. So when you read like that it doesn’t really stick”; Dr. Kent said that so far in his career, he had “never really been pushed to look at it very strongly.” Second, several participants attributed their lack of familiarity to the fact that this was the code of the *American Anthropological Association*, and they had been trained and worked in other countries. Dr. Carson noted she had only recently joined the AAA, since she trained in another country. Dr. Johnston argued the AAA ethics code was not relevant in the countries where she trained and works as an anthropologist. A third explanation for not being more familiar with the code was that the participant had learned about ethics from other sources; I will address this in section 3.7.

3.3 Important Ethical Issues in Anthropology

“What do you think are some important ethical issues in anthropology, either historically or currently, that may or may not be addressed by the code of ethics?”

After beginning the interviews by asking participants if they were familiar with the AAA ethics code, I then asked if they were familiar with significant ethical issues in anthropology generally. These issues could have been important to the discipline historically or currently, and might or might not have been addressed by the ethics code. In contrast with the first question, all of the participants were familiar with ethical concepts they considered relevant to anthropology. I have grouped the ethical issues discussed by my participants into five categories: a) anthropologists working for

governments or militaries; b) secrecy; c) balancing power and perspectives; d) racism and ethnocentrism; e) doing no harm and responsibility for research. One ethical issue often blends into another, so it can be difficult trying to categorize them; by grouping them this way, I hope to show some of the similarities and differences in how participants approach related ethical issues. I will focus here on the answers to this particular question, but all of the participants discussed additional ethical concerns throughout the entire interview (since all of the questions related to the ethics of anthropology).

Working for the Government or Military

Participants suggested one enduring issue concerned anthropologists working for the government or military. For example, Dr. Levy argued that one important issue for anthropology would be protecting informants from broader political forces, by not abetting “a particular political interest or maybe a government interest in what people are doing.” According to Dr. Levy, “that certainly would have been true during the time of anthropologists working in colonial situations, but it's certainly very much the situation today as well.” Other participants referred explicitly to ethical issues raised by anthropologists working with the Human Terrain System, which Dr. Ellis described as “anthropologists embedded in units going out on the ground, they're dressed as soldiers, they're trained as soldiers, but they're supposed to be these liaisons with the community there.” For Dr. Ellis, whether anthropologists should participate in programs like HTS is a difficult question. If the programs will continue either way, “do we not involve ourselves and make these conflicts potentially more tense and more damaging to people, or can we step in and try and make it a little bit more beneficial?” Dr. Hale linked the

issue of anthropologists working for the military to concerns about anthropologists participating in secret research.

Secrecy

This includes both secret research and issues related to levels of disclosure. Dr. Hale suggested that both practicing anthropologists signing non-disclosure agreements and anthropologists working for the military have led to conversations about secrecy in the discipline. For example, is a non-disclosure agreement “secret research?” With programs such as HTS, and earlier anthropological involvement in the military, she suggests, “it's a question of whether or not that's truly research, and if it is research is that an ethical application of our research methodology.” For Dr. Carson, issues of power and disclosure are fundamental issues addressed by the code of ethics: anthropologists need to be open with their informants, “including being open in ways that might restrict the sort of information we get.” Even if, methodologically, spying is a good way to get information, it is still unethical. Dr. Grant was critical of an anthropologist who casually admitted to secretly photographing informants during fieldwork, knowing they would have objected if they had known. For Dr. Grant, this lack of concern for what the informants thought failed to show respect for their perspectives.

Reciprocity and Balancing Perspectives

For Dr. Grant, secretly photographing informants conflicted with the respect for their perspectives otherwise apparent in that anthropologist's work: “He's not the kind of anthropologist who dismisses what local people tell him in favor of some grand theory. On the contrary, he cares very deeply about people's perspectives, or he makes it seem that way. And yet he was admitting to just not caring at all when it came to taking

photographs, and using them in his work.” For Dr. Ellis, balancing power and perspectives between researchers and informants was the key ethical issue that should be emphasized in anthropology both historically and currently: “it’s really important to give our informants a voice, and to give them some say in what we do. In other words, it’s important to empower them in the process of research. It’s important that we let our informants shape and guide what we do.” Dr. Barr was affected by informants’ protests about a lack of reciprocity on the part of anthropologists: “that anthropologists come in, acquire knowledge, and leave, and then go away and become multi-millionaires, on the basis of their work with indigenous people, while the poor Indians remain impoverished back there. Now I think they overestimate what outsiders get from them, but there’s still the sense that we’re not playing by the rules.”

Racism and Ethnocentrism

One way anthropologists show respect for others’ perspectives is by exposing racism and stereotypes, and by using anthropology to educate others to have less ethnocentric viewpoints. For Dr. Alford, anthropology’s telos (ultimate end) is “to counter ethnocentrism, and that means to caution people to be slow to judge little-known others,” and “to do the hard work that’s necessary to help people enter into local contexts, see the native point of view, and make the other better known before any judgments are made.” Dr. Johnston made a similar point in relation to the Chagnon controversy, criticizing his representation of the Yanomami as “fierce, disgusting people who are always killing each other.” Dr. Johnston argued, “We should really work on the other side of the project, not to show how weird the others are, but to show how very much like us the others are.” Dr. Kent suggested that while there may be less racism in anthropology

now compared to its early days, “there’s always the opportunity and the potential that some of our materials could be turned in that way.”

Doing No Harm and Responsibility for Research

As Dr. Kent asked, “How much responsibility are we assigned for what is done with our research?” Even if the researcher tries to guard against their work being misused, research may be distorted or taken out of context. Even if a researcher does not want to cause harm, they lack ultimate control over what others do with their research. Other participants also referred to this problem. Dr. Ellis said that although the goal of research may appear to be harmless, “you never know what’s going to happen with any knowledge that you generate at any point.” For Dr. Levy, this was one of the potential complications to anthropologists sharing their research with informants: “how they interpret what you're writing is something that you cannot control.” Informants reading what anthropologists write, while a positive development, could also potentially lead to confidentiality being compromised. She argued “The anonymity of subjects is in many ways perhaps much more difficult these days to accomplish, to ensure, just because, if people who are in the locale where you are working read what you are writing, no matter how well you disguise it, they are going to be able to determine, probably, whom you are writing about.”

3.4 Anthropologists’ Primary Responsibilities

“Do you think anthropologists have a primary obligation toward any group, and should that be reflected in the code?”

Many of the significant ethical issues identified by the participants relate to anthropologists’ responsibilities toward their informants and other stakeholders. As

discussed in the history chapter, both the original 1971 AAA code of ethics and the recently adopted revision are titled the Principles of Professional Responsibility. Over the course of the code's development, one source of contention has been whether the code should state that anthropologists have a primary obligation to their informants. In light of this, I asked the participants whether they thought anthropologists have a primary obligation to any group, and if so, if that responsibility should be reflected in a code of ethics. The question may have been a leading one, since informants stand out as the most likely group to which anthropologists would be primarily responsible. Still, while some participants affirmed that anthropologists have a primary obligation to informants, others noted anthropologists need to balance competing obligations in practice.

Several participants emphasized that anthropologists' obligations to their participants are of primary importance, while also explaining what they believe that responsibility involves. Dr. Franklin responded, "Well, that's an easy one I think. Our primary responsibility is to our informants, for sure." For Dr. Franklin, fulfilling that responsibility involves dividing power and voices among anthropologists and informants. Dr. Johnston argued that anthropologists have a primary responsibility to "the people who open their houses and their minds, and their feelings to you. And who accept you in spite of being different and weird and complicated and causing so much trouble." They deserve respect, and to know what anthropologists are writing about them. For Dr. Daniels, anthropologists are responsible to those they work with "first and foremost." Even when anthropologists are working with people they do not agree with, they have a responsibility to "take seriously their life worlds and their experiences and figure out how to capture those in a way that is meaningful, in a way that's as contextualized as we can."

Dr. Carson was familiar with how the different versions of the code have addressed this issue, and was concerned that the code has moved away from “what's always been the prime directive, having a statement in there that says our primary loyalty is to the populations we work with,” not to employers. Even if it is complicated to figure out in practice.

While the other participants did not argue against the idea that anthropologists have important responsibilities to their informants, they argued this is significantly complicated by the fact that anthropologists could have multiple, conflicting obligations. Dr. Hale suggested that the question of to whom anthropologists are obligated would be answered in different ways by different anthropologists, with different kinds of practice. She said, “I think you have a primary responsibility not to intend harm to anybody with whom you are working. I don't know that I would say that you have a primary responsibility to somebody. I think that often times that's a very difficult thing to figure out, because you could have primary responsibility for several different somebodies. Some of those somebodies could be in competition with each other.” Dr. Barr argued that while anthropologists need to have the interests of those they work with in mind, “You can't assume that they're a clearly bounded, homogenous culture, with a single intent or a single overarching value.” Similarly, Dr. Alford argued that anthropologists have a deep obligation to informants, beginning with “establishing relationships of trust and keeping the faith with the people with whom you have that relationship,” but “as soon as you even say that you're into the complexities that arise,” because communities are not homogenous. Finally, Dr. Ellis suggested anthropologists' need to confront ethnocentrism in the field also provided a potential complication to stating that anthropologists have an

obligation to a certain group of individuals. Anthropologists going into the field are supposed to be objective to some extent; although there may be circumstances that challenge that, “For the most part you have to question is this just me being ethnocentric.” Dr. Ellis illustrated this point with the case of a student who had gone into the field and ended up calling the police whenever (relatively minor) instances of the illegal activity the student was there to study took place. She asked, “to be aware of it, and to have that be what you’re researching, when do you and don’t you step in, and who are you responsible to? Are you responsible to pure knowledge, pure research, or the people on the ground, and if you’re responsible for the people on the ground, are you being too subjective?”

3.5 Enforcing the Ethics Code

“Since 1998, the ethics committee serves only an educational role and no longer investigates cases. What do you think about that change? Are there other ways to resolve ethical disputes in anthropology?”

Like the debate over whether the code should state that anthropologists have a primary responsibility to informants, whether the code should be enforceable or not has also been a source of controversy. Since 1998, the AAA ethics committee no longer investigates cases, and the code does not include the possibility of sanctions for violations. When I first learned of the change, it surprised me that the association would have an ethics code and committee, but without the possibility of investigation or enforcement (I discussed the reasons for the change in Chapter Two). I wanted to see what my participants thought about this shift in the purpose of the ethics code and

committee, as well as what they saw as alternative ways to resolve ethical disputes in anthropology.

While the three participants who were familiar with the ethics code knew about the change in the ethics committee's role from the possibility of enforcement to education, this was a surprise to some of the other participants. Dr. Franklin responded, "You see how ignorant I am of what they really do!" Dr. Ellis joked that this suggested, "They're not educating well then." Several participants said they did not know that the ethics committee had investigated cases in the past, and did not know what that process would have involved. For example, Dr. Kent said, "I was not aware of that change, but then, I don't know what they could have done, what their executive power would have been." Participants also had questions about the ethics committee's current role, asking if people could still go to the ethics committee with cases or for advice.

Although they may have been previously unaware of the change, most of my participants thought it was a positive development, arguing that having the ethics committee enforce the ethics code is not really possible or desirable. First, participants argued that trying to enforce the ethics code is not a productive way to address anthropological ethics. Participants who were familiar with the history behind the change noted that the cases addressed by the ethics committee in the past mostly involved disputes between people within academia, which Dr. Daniels suggested were better dealt with at the institutional level, rather than cases involving anthropologists and their informants. Dr. Hale served on the ethics committee when it was still receiving cases, and stated "most of the complaints that would come to us weren't really about ethical violations, but about professional behavior and consideration. The things that might be

called professional ethics rather than anthropological ethics. And you can't really make somebody publish a paper that you want to have published, and so having a sanctioning process for that makes no sense.” Dr. Kent questioned what the association could really do in these cases, since anthropologists have no accreditation to withdraw and membership in the association is voluntary. Dr. Franklin also questioned the logistics of having ethical investigations, suggesting that providing advice and guidance was a more productive stance. At the same time, Dr. Franklin suggested the committee could be more vocal about its role, as they have not yet reached people like himself in any meaningful way. Dr. Ellis suggested that although the focus on education was not a bad idea, it would have more bite to it if the committee had the ability to discuss current cases in order to bring in “real lived experiences.”

Participants also supported the move away from enforcement by arguing the association should not attempt to “police” the discipline through the ethics committee. Dr. Hale thought “as an association we are not yet philosophically committed to the idea of policing our borders in such a way that it means judging someone else.” Dr. Daniels also thought it was problematic to see the code as a way to police the discipline, questioning whether giving someone a degree gives anthropologists the right to dictate what kind of career they are allowed to choose: “A lot of people are going into corporate anthropology. If you have issues with that, do we want to write a code that says you're not allowed to use anthropological tools in the name of capitalism?” Dr. Franklin raised the issue of who would be designated as having the most important ethical knowledge, in order to investigate anthropologists and punish them. For Dr. Alford, while the association “legitimately can raise educational issues and promote debate about these

issues,” it should try to follow the principle of institutional neutrality, rather than taking stances on particular social and political issues. He argued, “I certainly don't think that we want to expand the power of the Association to investigate things like ethics issues, especially things that are freighted with political and social judgments and a great deal of discretion.”

Two participants argued against the committee's shift to a purely educational role. Dr. Carson was also familiar with the history behind the change, and believed that “having a code with sanctions would strengthen the code, would make people pay attention more.” He argues that the change would be possible if agreeing to follow the code was a condition of membership in the association, and if the association revised the code to remove the references to professional and professorial conduct, in order to avoid the committee again focusing on professional complaints. For Dr. Grant, one of the major ethical issues facing anthropology is a lack of oversight and accountability. Dr. Grant argues, “There has to be some kind of ability I think for informants to talk back to anthropology. Even if we disagree with them, even if they say things that we don't like. And if you don't have any committee or anything, any professional body that can handle complaints, then there's no accountability whatsoever.”

When I asked participants about alternative ways to resolve ethical disputes in anthropology, the most common response was that ethical issues could be engaged, if not resolved, through discussion and debate. For example, Dr. Barr responded, “I don't think that they can be resolved in any ultimate fashion, but they can be resolved in a social fashion, through negotiation and talk, discussion, publication, debate.” Other participants argued there is a need for more ongoing conversations about ethics within the association.

Dr. Hale thought it would help if the association “made a more concerted effort to have specific and ongoing and consistently held roundtables and conversations about ethics,” so that people can discuss ethical issues with their peers, as well as the ethics committee. Dr. Daniels also argued the association should have more roundtables both at conferences and online, so that there could be more proactive engagement with ethical issues.

3.6 Responding to Controversy

“Do you think ethical controversies are handled well within anthropology? Are there ways that could be improved?”

This question builds on the previous one, where the responses showed that most of my participants supported the AAA’s shift away from the idea of having an ethics committee with investigatory powers and the ability to apply sanctions, instead favoring promoting discussion over enforcement as a way to respond to ethical disputes in anthropology. As discussed in Chapter Two, controversies over allegations of unethical behavior by anthropologists led to the creation of the first AAA ethics code and the since abandoned enforcement model for the ethics committee, and have also provided the impetus for later revisions. I wanted to find out what participants thought about how anthropologists or anthropology as a discipline responds when controversies involving anthropologists arise. None of the participants thought that controversies had been simply handled well, for an obvious reason: as Dr. Alford pointed out, “The general answer is no, of course not, to the extent that they are ethical controversies because there's something inherently difficult about them.”

For some of the participants, anthropology’s record of responding to controversies was mostly mixed, with both positives and room for improvement. For example, while

Dr. Barr did “like the way they’re dealt with, which is with lots of revisiting, and going into the nitty-gritty of it, and putting it through the mill a few hundred times,” he also thought that “there’s a risk that we do too much mea culpa chest beating.” For Dr. Carson, although the answer to whether controversies had been handled well was “mostly no,” these controversies have led anthropologists to create codes of ethics: “it shouldn’t be that we just react to warfare and crisis to change the code. Yet certainly historically war has been one, and the conflicts that arise, been one of the forces that make us as an association look at these issues.” Dr. Daniels questioned the ability of the code to intervene in these cases: “ultimately we want anthropology to be able to kind of have a cleaner reputation right now. And I think that we rely on the code as one thing to do that, but it’s very symbolic. And maybe what’s more effective is actually having different conversations within the discipline.” Dr. Daniels argued for the importance of teaching students the controversies in context as part of their introduction to anthropology. Dr. Hale also called for a more proactive approach, suggesting that “instituting a regular consistent kind of every day structure for having conversations about ethical practice keeps us from saving all of our ideas about ethical practice until the next big eruption.”

Other participants questioned the implications of “handling” an ethical controversy, as I phrased it in the question. Dr. Franklin asked, “What is handling well, and who is the handler, who has the power to say what is ethically appropriate and what is not?” Dr. Alford noted that these cases are controversial because they are difficult, and so “what would handling be in that case? I mean, managing the publicity about them? Solving them? You know, if they’re genuine conflicts then they’re not solvable.” If there are factual errors or misrepresentations involved, then these can be addressed with critical

reason and discussion. If critical reason cannot resolve the issue, we could accept the disagreement if we are pluralists; “The other way to manage it of course is to give someone the power to impose an answer on everyone, and I don't think that would be a desirable way to manage things, I think it would produce resentment and kickback and resistance.” For Dr. Johnston, debates on ethics can be part of academic power struggles, and “We cannot totally take that away and say, okay we are just having a neutral debate on how to be more ethical.” She also noted that in these debates, not everyone has the position and opportunity to contribute, particularly our informants.

Finally, in order to make the question more specific, I began referring to controversies that had “become public” and some of my participants responded to this aspect. Dr. Grant argued that there was a delicate balance involved when anthropologists become involved in political issues, because “on the one hand, we may feel an ethical obligation to disclose, to make public, abuses and crises that are occurring in the present. On the other hand, obviously we should have a very high degree of concern for our informants, but some people have made the decision at some moments that the ethical obligation to alert the world to events is greater than the ethical obligation to protect informants.” Dr. Kent noted that once things become public, they are out of the association’s control; for example, while the association may have handled the embedded anthropologist controversy fairly well, “What the media did is a different story perhaps.” Another complicating factor is that there is a lack of public understanding of what sociocultural anthropologists do, according to Dr. Levy. In light of this lack of public understanding, Dr. Franklin suggested, “an ethical thing to do and a necessary thing to do

is to make anthropology more accessible to others. And the media is one possible channel for that.”

3.7 Learning about Ethics

“How do you think anthropologists learn to make ethical decisions? How did you learn to make ethical decisions as an anthropologist?”

For this question, I wanted to explore how participants understood the process of learning about ethics in anthropology. As the previous answers show, most of the participants did not identify the code as a significant part of their ethics education. So how do they think they learned about ethics as anthropologists? In roughly chronological order, participants suggested that anthropologists bring some of their ethical ideas when they begin studying anthropology, and then continue learning about ethics as part of their education in anthropology, during fieldwork, and beyond. As part of their responses, participants also often addressed whether they thought codes of ethics could play a role in ethics education based on their understanding and experience of this learning process.

First, Dr. Barr noted anthropologists “bring a lot of their ethical values with them from home” when they begin studying anthropology. Dr. Grant emphasized the importance of pre-existing ethical beliefs, arguing, “I’m a human being first and an anthropologist second. So I have my own strongly held ethical beliefs, and I try to apply those in my life. And I had certain ideas going into the field that I tried to stick to. So they relate to both my own personal philosophy and personal moral guidelines as well as what I saw others doing well or doing badly.” Similarly, in Dr. Alford’s view, “anthropologists try to make ethical decisions, guided by some core notions they have of what are moral goods, and by exercising their own intelligence in thinking about means-

ends connections between what they're doing and those goods.” While Dr. Levy also agreed that ethics were partly part of your personal formation, she noted, “that it could be incorporated in some people's personal formation and not in others, so therefore they want to have this code of ethics so that everybody will be aware of it.”

Participants continued learning about ethics as part of their education in anthropology. Dr. Ellis learned about ethics “through narratives from the professors themselves, talking about situations that had happened to them in the field,” and by reading the narratives of other anthropologists who had encountered difficult situations in the field, such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes. Dr. Levy learned about some of the realities of fieldwork through a professor discussing his experiences in the field. Dr. Levy also recalled ethical discussions with other graduate students that were not part of the classroom setting: “I always felt that I was quite aware of what the implications could be for doing research, but of course at the time in terms of my early training, it wasn't anything that was formal.”

Like Dr. Levy, several participants suggested that although they learned about ethics during their education in anthropology, they did not receive formal training in ethics. For Dr. Kent, while he considered learning to be ethical to be part of studying anthropology, in his own experience there was never a seminar or any direct instruction in how to behave in the field: “So I went to the field without ever being told what to do and what not to do. Sort of a hands off approach.” In terms of ethical considerations specific to anthropology, Dr. Grant stated, “Those ethical guidelines I developed I suppose by reading about anthropology and by attending anthropology lectures and by being told various things. But I can't say I received very much formal training in

anthropology and certainly not very much, not any formal training in ethics per se.” In contrast, one participant had received formal training in ethics, including the AAA ethics code. Dr. Carson had a research class that included ethics, and had an advisor who required students to learn the ethics code.

The learning process continues when anthropologists begin their fieldwork. For Dr. Daniels, the more “nuts and bolts” conversations about ethics begin in graduate school when you are preparing to do fieldwork: “Suddenly ethics becomes something much different, it becomes a review board document. Your individual ethics kind of get put over in one category and then your requirements for a bureaucratized understanding of ethics is something quite different.” Once in the field, anthropologists continue learning about ethics from both colleagues and informants. Thinking of ethical issues he faced in the field, Dr. Barr suggested, “it’s our everyday engagement in social life, in the field but also with colleagues that shapes our moral take on these matters.” Additionally, Dr. Barr learned a lot about ethics by teaching about it. Dr. Alford compared anthropology to other crafts, suggesting, “one hopes that you have the opportunity to participate in fieldwork in some kind of apprenticeship relationship, and along with, and in the context of projects in which people themselves have histories of having to deal with difficult field situations, and think about what’s right and what’s wrong.” Dr. Franklin emphasized the importance of fieldwork as the place where anthropologists find out how about to be ethical in a particular field site and in the eyes of their informants. He used the example of how using a consent form seemed to be highly ethical, but informants found it intrusive and wanted a more personal approach. Dr. Franklin argued, “You can’t teach ethics, I don’t think so. You can’t learn ethics. You can get sort of a

conceptual arsenal, you can get your ideas, you can get broad frameworks of how good fieldwork should be done, ethically good fieldwork should be done, but nothing is going to teach you ethics better than the field experience itself.”

Based on their understanding of how anthropologists learn about ethics, participants also addressed the relationship codes of ethics could have to this process. As noted above, for one participant, Dr. Carson, the ethics code was actually part of his training in anthropology. Dr. Hale was not sure how anthropologists are learning about ethics, given the differences in how ethics are addressed at different schools, but hoped the ethics code could be of help in this process.

Other participants questioned the usefulness of codes here, based on their experiences. Dr. Ellis said she had been socialized into ethics by other anthropologists, which is why she had never felt the need to read the code of ethics to see how to do things. Other participants emphasised that ethics needs to be appropriate to the context. For Dr. Franklin, although you can read codes, in the field ethics boils down to the researcher’s ethical intelligence and ability to judge the situation. Dr. Johnston argued that ethics is “always a matter of negotiation” and changes based on your perspective; the reality is more complex than a code suggests. Dr. Alford also thought that anthropologists do not necessarily learn about ethics by reading manuals or setting out principles. He said, “The problem is the application of them leads people to make very different judgments about what’s right and wrong, and the meaning that they take on tends to vary by, and even their relevance tends to vary by the kind of work you do.” Anthropologists have intuitions about principles like justice and harm, and “probably are close to cases in

which they have to figure out how to resolve complex moral dilemmas.” The last point leads in to the next question.

3.8 Cases Providing Ethical Insights and Questions

“Do you recall a case from your own work or that of others that provided ethical insights or questions? Do you think a code could have been useful?”

As the responses to the previous question showed, participants often learned about ethics through both their own experiences in the field, and through the stories told by other anthropologists. For this question, I asked participants to describe a time when they were faced with ethical questions in their own work, or a thought provoking case from the work of another anthropologist. The cases provide examples of participants applying ethical principles to concrete situations in the field, and some of the difficult questions those cases raise. By this point in the interview, participants had often already provided several examples of cases that they felt raised ethical questions to support their responses to the earlier questions; here I will focus on their responses to this question. I grouped the kinds of cases cited in response to this question under the following broad themes: cases involving the ethics review process, access to field sites, reciprocity, and protecting information. After they described the cases and the decisions they made, participants were then asked if they thought a code of ethics could have been useful in that situation.

Ethics Review

Several participants described cases where their experiences with the institutional ethical review process itself raised questions about ethics. Dr. Hale suggested that ethics, morals, and compliance are related but distinct conversations. For her research, she had to pay attention to the ethical dimensions of working with a vulnerable population, make

ethical decisions within the context of “the larger moral conversations that go on outside the practice about what it is to be innocent or guilty, or what it is to be sick or well.” She then had to “figure out how to work all of that into the regulatory environment of IRB’s.” In some cases, the researcher’s ethics conflict with the assumptions made by multi-disciplinary boards in charge of regulation. Dr. Levy was critical of the assumptions about the power of researchers over participants made by ethics boards and embedded in federal policies. In the case of anthropological fieldwork, they forget that “people can decide whether they want to talk to you or not, and they talk to each other;” they can figure out if you are trying to fool them, and then you are not going to get anywhere. The ethics review board initially told Dr. Ellis they might not approve her research because it involved responses to a topic the board assumed would cause participants distress. Dr. Ellis thought they had an ethnocentric view of the subject, and one that conflicted with her own experience, which was that people were often “overly eager to tell me stories, and to just have someone listen to them, so they don’t feel like they’re on the fringes of society, that they are a member here. And that it’s not a bad thing to talk about” (this was shown, ironically, when the committee member who said the research might not be approved because people did not like to discuss the subject, began relating a personal story about that topic).

Access to Field Sites

Receiving ethics approval from a university is one step in beginning fieldwork, but questions continued to arise as participants sought permission to do research in specific field sites. Dr. Alford had to get approval from multiple organizations, in both his country of origin and the country of study, who believed “they had the authority to decide

whether or not I could talk and live with people who I already knew and who wanted me to live with them." For Dr. Alford, these intermediaries "assumed a paternalistic or protective role towards the people I was studying, and that raised immediate questions about autonomy and paternalism." Other participants also questioned the role of intermediaries in approving research. Dr. Johnston stressed that when working with small populations, they need to be asked for permission at the community level, not just at the level of national governments and village leaders: "in general ethics need to be discussed on a very grassroots level with the people who have never heard the word." When Dr. Barr went directly to the groups he wanted to work with for approval, rather than going to a political organization that was seeking the right to authorize research in the region, he faced some criticism from that organization. In going directly to the people he wanted to work with, he said, "I felt their authorization was what really mattered. But, in a way, I was weakening, if you will, the power of an organization that was supposed to defend the interests of everybody." As that example shows, the process of seeking permission for research is complicated by the fact that communities are not homogenous and not everyone will share the same opinion about the research. In the community where Dr. Alford works, there is a religious site where access is illegally denied to certain classes of people, and to non-believers. While some members of the community have offered to let him in, knowing his dedication to the community, others would find it disrespectful. In that case, he says, "does my duty to document the inner structure of the [religious site] firsthand as an anthropologist, in the pursuit of truth, lead me to conclude, great, I'll try to sneak in and go undetected and get this, even though I know it would be seen as enormously disrespectful by lots of members of the community? Yet I know others

would think it's just fine? Or is my duty to respect the local norms, even though those local norms are against the law of the land?"

Reciprocity

Once in the field, participants faced questions about how to give back to the informants who make fieldwork possible, and how to create a more even balance of power in those relationships. For example, before going into the field, Dr. Kent had not really thought about or heard discussed the practicalities of showing the people you live with that you appreciate having a place to stay while in the field. He asked, "At what point does it become perhaps a commercial interaction or an economic one, where I'm basically paying for room and board and information? Which might have implications to do with the kind of information I'm getting and the ethics involved in that. But at what point does it become abusive of me to be there and not reciprocate in certain kinds of ways that might involve money or other economic transactions?" Dr. Johnston described another case showing the difficulty of achieving balanced power relations in the field: deciding whether to take traditional medicine for illness, which would involve her in local conflicts and beliefs. While she had the option to choose to play the role of Westerner, "The locals don't. You know they are there, the locals live in their place, and they cannot go anywhere else pretty much. So if we by saying something silly at the wrong moment or by privileging some by giving them extra gifts or a nice wristwatch, or whatever privileges, we endanger them" Dr. Johnston argued anthropology can be beneficial, but only if it is more of a partnership. In her case, she did this partly by correcting the inaccuracies of other authors in her work and sharing the results with her informants, and by sharing pictures of her informants with their family members. For Dr.

Franklin, trying to create more of a power balance and to empower informants in the research process was crucial. He applied this principle by introducing himself and his project in a way informants could understand, including introducing himself as a sociologist because most of them did not know what a cultural anthropologist did: “That makes for a confusing and potentially disempowering moment for the informant, because they’re put in a position of not knowing. When I tell them that I’m a sociologist, most people kind of have an idea what sociologists do.” While that might not be one hundred percent ethical, it put the informant in more of a position of knowledge and power, which he considered an ethical thing to do. He also allowed his interview subjects to talk as long as they wanted, because they found it rewarding to realize they knew much more about the topic than they initially thought.

Confidentiality

Finally, several participants described cases involving ethical questions related to balancing publishing the results of research with the need to protect informants and the information they provide. In her research, Dr. Grant debated whether to use a pseudonym for the community she studied, knowing she was asking about things that could potentially get informants in trouble with the government. In the end, she chose to publish the name of the community in order to add to the historical record and to avoid distorting information. In another case, she chose not to refer to the illegal actions of informants in her research, because the potential risks to her informants were too great. Other participants cited similar cases where they came across activities that were either illegal or would draw negative government attention if publicised. In Dr. Carson’s case, to avoid making informants vulnerable he chose not to interview participants about the

illegal activities they engaged in, even though these activities directly related to his research topic, but he did use observations of activities taking place out in the open. These ethical considerations are complicated by the fact that social life is not static. Dr. Levy described a case where a new political situation created risks to informants that were not present when the data was originally collected; her decision was not to use that data in future publications, in order to protect the people involved. Dr. Johnston described a case where because of an earlier anthropologist who had secretly recorded and published their stories, the people in her field site were willing to talk to her but also said she could never publish what they told her. In the end, she chose to use only secondary sources in the published research, while making choices based on what she learned during fieldwork.

After the participants described these cases, I asked if they thought something like a code of ethics could have been useful to them when they faced those situations. In one case, a participant had referred to the code when making a decision in the field. Dr. Carson used the code when he decided not to interview participants about illegal activities. Other participants suggested the code would not have been helpful to them in the cases they discussed. In deciding not to use older data when the political situation changed, Dr. Levy said that decision did not come from the AAA ethics code or the Tri-Council policy: “my decision came from the fact that I know these people and when I interviewed these people I did so in good faith.” In the cases discussed by Dr. Barr, what was useful was reading about the experiences of other ethnographers, “rather than abstract ethical codes.”

Other participants argued for the importance of understanding the cases they described within their specific contexts. When figuring out the ethics of asking people about a potentially difficult topic, Dr. Ellis argued you should “Take the holistic approach, look at as many possibilities as possible, understand your research topic within the context of that society, and common reactions.” For Dr. Grant, one of the limitations of ethics codes was that in her experience, they did not reflect the way the ethical rules change when you are doing research in different contexts, such as a democratic government compared with a totalitarian one. Instead, “they go forth as if ethics were the same everywhere at all times, or as if the same rules could deal with all eventualities, which they can’t.” Dr. Franklin suggested that ethnographic fieldwork and anthropology as a discipline are in a sense fundamentally unethical, “capitalizing on other people’s lives, ideas, practices.” At the same time, he suggested that anthropologists can become more ethical by doing fieldwork and respecting their informants, concluding, “That’s why I kind of never looked at the code, because your fieldwork is your code,” and informants “will guide you in how to be ethical, when to pull out that camera, when to put that away.”

Participants questioned the possible role of the AAA ethics committee in these kinds of cases. After describing a complex case involving whether to enter a religious site where access is illegally restricted, Dr. Alford asked, “if I chose to go in, would they investigate me, would they think they had the authority to somehow sanction me for going in? Or should they sanction me for not going in?” Dr. Franklin thought that although it might not be a hundred percent ethical to introduce himself as a sociologist, he did not need to contact the tribunal; he made that decision for ethical reasons. For Dr.

Daniels, one experience that provided ethical insights was watching students learning about the Human Terrain System; students questioned whether the program was unethical, and whether an anthropological association could tell people what to do with their degree. Rather than having sanctions or policing the discipline, Dr. Daniels suggests the purpose of the ethics code and committee is to have shared conversations about ethics in the discipline.

3.9 Consciousness of Ethical Issues during Research

“How central and explicit were questions about ethics in your work? Did your consciousness of ethical issues vary?”

The interview responses so far show that the participants were all aware of ethical issues related to anthropology and of ethical implications of their own fieldwork. For this question, I was drawing on theories suggesting ethics is often relatively implicit and taken for granted, becoming more explicit and conscious when the right thing to do is not clear, or there is a case of “moral breakdown” (Robbins 2007; Zigon 2007; Lambek 2010). In some cases, I mentioned the idea of moral breakdown to participants when explaining this question. I wanted to see if in the opinion of the participants, ethics was something they were aware of during research constantly, or if they thought their consciousness of ethics in the field varied.

When asked if questions about ethics were something that was often in their mind, or if there were times when it came more to the forefront, participants described themselves as more or less conscious of ethical issues, relating this to their areas of research and their particular field sites. In Dr. Kent’s case, although he needs to be aware of it to some extent, the major ethical and legal issue affecting his area of study is not

currently really an issue in the place where he did fieldwork. Dr. Levy said she was not aware of times when ethics came to the forefront in terms of her specific research, during the initial fieldwork, but “you are aware of what is going on,” and need to be aware of things that happen down the road and have implications for that research.

Some of the other participants thought they were more often explicitly aware of ethical considerations. Dr. Grant thought a lot about social transgressions, such as the ethics of sharing food while making sure she still had enough to eat, the ethics of whom she should live with in the field, or whether to record interviews. She attributed this to her personality: “I’m very concerned about ethics in my own life and I do think about ethics a lot.” In Dr. Johnston’s case, she thought about ethics a lot in her early fieldwork, where she was coming from a background where there was much discussion of racism, wanting to better the world, and then trying to avoid causing damage to the conflict-ridden family she was living with. In her later work, she was dealing with informants hurt by anthropologists in the past, who said she could not share any of the data they provided. For both Dr. Carson and Dr. Alford, ethics is central to their work; Dr. Carson conducts historical research on ethics, and Dr. Alford’s research is in comparative ethics. Dr. Alford also prepares students to conduct research in the community he works in, and he stated that ethical issues arise immediately because the ethics taken for granted by anthropologists are not the ethics of most of the communities they study. After asking what I meant by moral breakdown (a case where the ethical thing to do is suddenly in doubt and ethics is brought to conscious awareness) Dr. Alford said that in that case “anthropology is moral breakdown. I mean, if you're going to go anywhere that is different in any substantial way in its norms and practices then you're going to have what

you're calling moral breakdown. That's exactly what the history of anthropology is about, it's about the astonishment that comes from realizing that people don't converge in their notion of norms or even in their notions of which values are the ones that should be privileged and pursued.”

Finally, Dr. Franklin and Dr. Hale argued for the importance of being aware there is an ethical dimension to everything we do. Dr. Franklin, in response to the previous question about cases providing insights, stated, “Everything is ethics. Let’s face it. And everything we do, everything we say.” He argued this is also true in the field, and it is important to be conscious of that fact. Dr. Hale argued there are “dimensions to everything that we do in our work, but it’s bringing that to the level of consciousness, so it's not just that you think about it when there's a breach, but that you're always aware of those ethical implications to the questions you're asking, the peoples with whom you're working.”

3.10 Importance of the AAA Ethics Code

“Is it important for the AAA to have an ethics code? Are codes useful for making ethical decisions or for ethics education?”

This is the question that most of the interview had been leading up to. So far, the responses showed most of the participants did not consider themselves familiar with the AAA ethics code. At the same time, they were all familiar with important ethical issues in anthropology generally, and with ethical questions raised by aspects of their own research. While anthropologists have important responsibilities to their informants, participants also noted anthropologists could experience multiple conflicting obligations in practice. Most participants agreed with the shift in the purpose of the association’s

ethics code and committee away from potential enforcement, towards education and discussion. Most agreed anthropology's response to controversy has been mixed, but did not favor a return to the enforcement model. When thinking about their own experiences, many participants questioned the relevance of codes to learning about ethics in anthropology. They also questioned the helpfulness of codes when thinking about cases where they had faced specific ethical dilemmas in the field. There were exceptions: some participants did consider themselves relatively familiar with the code, had concerns about the loss of the possibility of sanctions, or thought codes could be helpful when learning about ethics or facing ethical dilemmas. Based on the responses overall, I was expecting most participants to respond that ethics codes were not important. Instead, I found that most participants thought the code did have some importance and potential usefulness in anthropology, although the general nature of codes was a limitation on their usefulness in the field. In the following section, I will look at both what participants thought the code might be good for, as well as what they saw as its limitations.

The code has importance as a statement of ethical values in anthropology according to some participants, although they also noted the difficulty of applying general principles to specific dilemmas in the field. Dr. Carson thought the ethics code was vital as a statement about normative values in anthropology. He also argued that it was useful when making ethical decisions; in his PhD department, when people went to do fieldwork they took copies of the code with them, since you never know what you are going to encounter. Dr. Franklin thought the code was important in providing a frame of reference for students and practitioners, and so was a resource that should be kept and revisited. In terms of its usefulness in ethical decision-making, though, he thought that while it might

be useful as a general guide, “then again no two fieldwork situations are alike. No code of ethics is going to tell you exactly what you should do. I think in most cases it all boils down to how you make your ethical decisions, how quickly you make them, how appropriate they are to your specific context.” Similarly, Dr. Kent thought the code might be something to refer to as a starting point when faced with a problematic case, but he also thought it might be too vague to help in specific cases. Dr. Ellis questioned whether when faced with an ethical situation in the field, you would think in that moment to refer to the code, but did think the code was important as a statement that anthropologists could use to present the discipline to others and to defend what they do. It was less important for anthropologists who should have been socialized into the discipline and developed some degree of ethical behavior. Although the general nature of codes is one limitation on their potential usefulness in specific cases, participants noted making them more specific would be limiting in other ways. Dr. Alford thought, “The more the code tries to be detailed and concrete, the less authority it's going to have, because it's going to not seem sufficiently capable of dealing with situations that arise in context in your field situation.” Making the code more detailed would also fail to reflect a major finding of anthropological research in comparative ethics, which is that there is not convergence among different groups when it comes to detailed norms for behavior. He argues “the more concrete you write an ethics code, the less it's going to seem to honor the kind of diversity that's out there, or else it's going to become a standard by which a group is trying to impose its vision at that level of completeness on people who disagree, with the judgment. So, I prefer a code to say here are the kinds of goods you should try to

maximize when you're doing research, and think about the connection of any behavior to those goods.”

Other participants suggested the code is important as a way to have shared conversations about ethics in the discipline. Dr. Grant thought that a code should explicitly state what anthropologists can and cannot do, and should address grey areas. At the same time, she argued that anthropology has a big problem with defining itself as a discipline, and in that case how are anthropologists going to agree on an ethics code? When people make generalized statements about anthropologists, “those statements very often assume a very particular locally defined vision of anthropology that is not shared by everyone by any means whatsoever.” For Dr. Daniels, the code was important because it brings anthropologists together to have “different conversations about what we think constitutes a shared ethics and practice,” and to help us recognize when there are problems translating ethical ideas across the different subfields of anthropology. While academic anthropologists might want to ban “secrecy” in research, for example, secrecy might be necessary for archaeologists in order to protect the sites they study. Although the code could be a conversation starter, she also thought, “every time ethics gets codified it loses a little bit of its potential. So I think we always have to be thinking about ethics but not thinking about it within those specific bureaucratic constraints that are already there, so we can push the conversation.” Dr. Hale was part of the Task Force revising the AAA ethics code; while “every professional association has stated their expectations for ethical practice,” she suggested calling it a “code” went further than she would like. In terms of the code’s usefulness for ethics education and decision-making, she thought, “it would be useful for people to learn basic ethical decision-making skills first, and you can

do that without necessarily needing a code of ethics.” Then you can look at the code and see how it fits with what you learned, before “drilling down still further to what your particular ethical questions might be.” According to Dr. Hale, goals for the new code (adopted in 2012) included organizing the existing material into clearer principles more easily remembered in the moment, while showing both that there is substance to the principles being discussed, and that a different group might have come up with something different. The new code is meant to be read online, so that as you are reading you can click on a link and “you go to a case study, you go to an article, you go to a code of the different organization that maybe handled that particular issue differently. So you're not reading the code in isolation from a lot of other stuff that both supports what we're saying, and contradicts what we're saying. So that you understand this is not meant to be the last word on ethical practice in anthropology.”

Some participants were more critical of the ethics code's importance. Dr. Levy noted that there were contradictions between the 2009 AAA ethics code and the Federal Register for IRBs in the United States. There were also contradictions within the 2009 version of the AAA ethics code, which states that anthropologists are responsible for ensuring their research is properly contextualized and understood; at the same time, the ethics code states that the results of anthropological research are complex, subject to multiple interpretations, and susceptible to differing and unintended uses. Dr. Levy thought that while a code might have some usefulness in ethics education in providing a certain structure, “it's only going to have any efficacy though if people read it, take it in, and stand up for it in certain occasions, and where is that going to happen?” The only context might be if you were in a position to review someone's work, and you noticed an

ethical violation. Dr. Johnston suggested that rather than trying to better the world, ethics codes might be exposing unpleasant realities, including hierarchy in fieldwork, with academics thinking they are superior to the people they study. Instead, Dr. Johnston thought that ethics “needs to be talked about a lot. And it should be in a larger discourse on race being completely crazy as a concept.” They both pointed out that not all anthropologists are necessarily ethical.

3.11 Ethics and Etiquette

Shirley Yeung has argued that etiquette manuals are more than lists of rules, because ideally they related to the development of desired social and moral virtues and dispositions, with the goal of embodying principles of etiquette until they became sincere reflections of moral character. Furthermore, knowing how to apply a rule of etiquette properly always requires making judgments in specific situations. Do you think that argument could apply to codes of ethics in anthropology?

This was clearly a complexly worded question, but I was curious about what the participants would think about this argument. Some participants thought it would probably not apply. For example, Dr. Carson thought that while there is “an element about having a normative code where we are making declarations that I am from this caliber of person who will do these sorts of things,” the code’s lineage from things like the concepts of ‘do no harm’ coming out of Nuremberg was more clear. Dr. Levy thought it sounded like a functionalist argument.

The question’s main significance here is that in their responses, participants sometimes further discussed their opinions about the usefulness and importance of codes of ethics in anthropology. Some participants connected the idea of etiquette manuals as a

way to become a certain kind of person, to the idea of ethics as a way to present the discipline and ourselves. For Dr. Daniels, if what “we’re desiring is a certain type of etiquette in anthropological practice,” that would be something different from ethics, although ethics, morality, and etiquette are related in some ways. For example, when students are sent into the field, there is a presumption that they will present themselves in a certain way, because they represent the discipline and their school; “you presume they’re going to show up and represent themselves correctly and behave nicely in the community, and do less harm than benefit. And that is also a certain presumption about etiquette too, right, that you’re going to be culturally aware, try to be culturally sensitive and engage in the communities that you’re working with, with a certain amount of respect.” She also noted the idea of etiquette is potentially class marked. Dr. Grant made a comparison to a study of dating profiles, which showed that while white middle class people often said it did not matter what ethnicity they dated, they gravitated toward other white middle-class people. The argument was that “the reason people click any race, any ethnicity is not because it’s true; it’s because of who they want to project themselves to be in a social way. They want to attract other white middle-class people who, like them, adopt libertarian values as their stance, as their social persona. And I think that argument is very convincing. And I think that a lot of ethics codes and a lot of other things in our professional lives are not necessarily about our actual behavior. They’re about the kinds of people that we aesthetically want to represent ourselves to be.”

Other participants responded to the idea that principles of etiquette and ethics need to be applied in specific situations. Dr. Kent found that with many codes, “they have to square the circle in many ways. They have to be broad and vague enough to not restrict

people, and restrict research and restrict situations. At the same time, they have to be specific enough to tell people what they can and cannot do. How they should or should not behave perhaps, in certain contexts.” A code cannot cover all the possible kinds of cases, and “even if you did you can’t make a decision without the context in which they have to be made.” In that case, one way to look at the code might be as being about how to be a good citizen in the discipline. Dr. Franklin suggested that ethics overlaps with etiquette, and in both cases, no manual will tell us how to be ethical or polite in a specific situation: “we have general kind of fundamentals of what an ethical interaction is. And then we take them into our social experiences and encounters, and we improvise so to speak with those fundamentals.” While it is good to have manuals or codes, “no set of rules will tell you how to be an ethical person. Experiences will.” In her experience on the Task Force revising the ethics code, Dr. Hale found that “that some people want to be able to say here's how you ought to act as an anthropologist, and place that answer over everybody who calls themselves an anthropologist. And I think that that's a moral response, as opposed to a response that looks that all of the pieces in a context, and demands that you navigate between possibly two wonderful values that happen to be in competition at the same moment, and you have to figure out which one of those you would honor.” While principles from outside can help provide guidance, the answer needs to be generated within the context in order to make the best decision for everyone involved.

Finally, some participants responded to the idea of internalizing principles of ethics or etiquette. For Dr. Alford, anthropology’s telos is “to caution people against making rapid judgments about little-known others and doing the work that's necessary to

make others known so that accurate and proper judgments about their way of life are made.” Behaviors that work towards this end “should be viewed as right and good, and to the extent that those actions and behaviors are habitual, and seem natural and authentic to the anthropologist, so much the better.” For Dr. Johnston, the idea of connecting etiquette manuals and codes of ethics reminded her of Norbert Elias’s argument (2000), “that as soon as no one breaks a certain rule, we don’t need ethical reminders anymore,” and so “[a]s long as there's a rule telling you how not to do it, it implies that that's how it's done. And that there are forces out there who are trying to change it. And it's always interesting to know why, and who wants to change what.” To Dr. Johnston, ethics codes suggest, “There is a lot still to be coded, because there's a lot of rules that we have not internalized properly.”

CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

4.1 History Summary

The history of the American Anthropological Association's ethics statements and projects shows that statements of ethics have usually been created in response to controversies affecting the discipline, particularly public controversies over the involvement of anthropologists in military and intelligence work. The table on the following page provides a summary of the AAA and its ethical engagements, and their relationship to ethical controversies. The association elected the first ethics committee following the controversy over Project Camelot; the first ethics code followed the Thailand controversy. The AAA has also revised the code in response to internal controversies. The 1984 draft code and the 1998 code were designed to be more inclusive of all four subfields of anthropology, and both academic and applied anthropologists. As the different fates of the 1984 draft and the 1998 code show, the history of ethics statements and Task Forces in the AAA has been marked by both acceptance and rejection. The AAA adopted the 1971 code after the rejection of the Thailand Task Force report. The association adopted the 1991 and 1998 codes following the rejection of the 1984 code at the draft stage. More recently, the El Dorado Task Force report was accepted initially, but rejected by referendum three years later. The AAA revised the code in 2009 after the Human Terrain System (HTS) controversy, although the motion to completely restore the references to secrecy from the first code was rejected. The HTS controversy also resulted in the creation of two Task Force reports, not rejected at the time of writing, and to the most recent code adopted by the Association in 2012.

Table 1. Timeline: Ethics and the American Anthropological Association

1902	American Anthropological Association founded
1919	Boas censured by the AAA for the “Scientists as Spies” letter
1941	AAA passes resolution to join the war effort
1965	Beginning of controversy over Project Camelot
1967	Statement of Problems of Anthropological Research adopted by AAA
1969	Standing AAA Committee on Ethics elected
1970	Beginning of Thailand controversy
1971	Ad Hoc Committee Report on Thailand rejected Principles of Professional Responsibility adopted
1984	Draft for new code of ethics published and later rejected
1991	Principles of Professional Responsibility revised
1998	New AAA Code of Ethics adopted
2000	Beginning of <i>Darkness in El Dorado</i> controversy
2002	Publication of El Dorado Task Force Report
2005	Acceptance of El Dorado Task Force Report and censure of Boas in 1919 rescinded by referendum
2007	AAA Statement on the Human Terrain System Final Report of AAA Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Communities (CEAUSSIC)
2009	CEAUSSIC Final Report on The Army’s Human Terrain System Proof of Concept Program Code of Ethics Revised
2012	New AAA Statement on Ethics: Principles of Professional Responsibility adopted

The three biggest shifts in the code's purpose and design occurred in 1971, 1998, and 2012. The Association adopted its first ethics code in 1971, *The Principles of Professional Responsibility*. Along with the code, the Association adopted a set of grievance procedures that would allow the Ethics Committee to investigate allegations of unethical behavior, and the code referred to the possibility of sanctions. The 1998 revision removed that possibility, and the stated purpose of the ethics code and Committee shifted to being educational only. This revision was also intended to be more inclusive, including references to subfields and specializations other than academic cultural anthropology. The code was extensively revised again in 2012. For the first time, it is organized around ethical principles rather than responsibilities; the name has been changed back to *The Principles of Professional Responsibility*. This version of is intended to be read online, with links in the text to contrasting opinions and cases.

4.2 Interviews Summary

Familiarity with the Ethics Code

Most of the participants appeared to be hesitant to describe themselves as 'familiar' with the code of ethics. The exception was the two participants who had spent years revising the code, and another participant who had participated in ethical discussions at the AAA. This raises the question of what would constitute familiarity with the code of ethics, since some of these participants had read the code before and were familiar with some of its content. Participants may have been hesitant partly because they did not know what kind of detailed questions about the code might be forthcoming in the interview. The participants most familiar with the code were part of the Task Force revising the code or had participated in ethical discussions at the association. In some cases,

participants had acquired some degree of familiarity with the code through anthropology courses, or through their knowledge of my research. Other participants attributed their relative unfamiliarity with the code to never studying it specifically, to working and being educated outside the United States, and to learning about ethics from other sources.

Important Ethical Issues in Anthropology

Although most of the informants did not describe themselves as familiar with the ethics code, this did not indicate a lack of familiarity with ethical issues in anthropology generally. All of the participants readily identified ethical issues they considered significant to the discipline. There were some similarities in the kinds of ethical issues deemed important by participants: anthropologists working for the government and military, secrecy, reciprocity and balancing perspectives, racism and ethnocentrism, doing no harm and responsibility for research. While there were some shared ethical concerns, at the same time, participants often had different approaches to these issues, and made different connections between them. Although most participants said they were not familiar with the code, there was some overlap in the issues found important by participants and addressed by the code of ethics. Secrecy and doing no harm were among the issues cited by participants, and these are also issues the two Task force members familiar with the code of ethics identified as important ones dealt with by the code. Anthropologists working with the government or military was one of the most commonly cited issues for this question; as discussed in the history chapter, the controversy over the Human Terrain System helped spur the most recent round of revisions to the code, while earlier controversies over anthropologists' military work helped inspire earlier revisions.

At the same time, the code does not strongly emphasise some of the concerns raised by participants, such as reciprocity (although they may be implied).

Anthropologists' Primary Responsibilities

Whether the code should state anthropologists have a primary obligation to informants has been a source of controversy over the course of the code's revisions. While some participants emphasized a primary responsibility to informants, others noted the difficulties involved in translating this obligation in the field, where an anthropologist could have multiple, competing obligations. These participants might agree with the most recent code revision, where the general statement that anthropologists have a primary responsibility to informants is replaced with a more specific statement that anthropologists have a primary responsibility not to cause harm.

Enforcing the Code and Responding to Controversy

Although my participants were not all previously aware of the change in the stated purpose of the code from being potentially enforceable to being solely educational, most thought it was a positive development. They argued it would probably not be possible to enforce the code effectively, and even if it was possible, most thought it was preferable for the ethics committee not to have the ability to investigate members and impose sanctions. When asked about alternative ways to resolve ethical disputes and controversies in anthropology, participants often favored discussion and debate on ethical issues, which was something some participants thought the association could do a better job of promoting. A minority of the participants were more critical of the change, arguing the possibility of the sanctions would help make anthropologists more accountable for their actions. I also asked participants about the way anthropology as a discipline had

handled ethical controversies in the past. For some the discipline's response was mixed, while others questioned the implications of "handling" ethical cases that are difficult by definition. In the latter view, the idea of handling controversy had implications of the association attempting to impose one perspective on complex issues. Other participants questioned anthropology's influence once controversies become public.

Learning about Ethics, Cases Providing Insights, and Consciousness of Ethical Issues

Participants argued anthropologists learn about ethics from each other and from their informants, and by putting ethical ideas into practice when they are faced with ethical dilemmas in specific contexts. As anthropologists, they brought ethical values with them when they began their education in anthropology, and then further developed their ethical ideas through interactions with professors and students. Some participants contrasted learning about ethics through the narratives of professors or discussions with other students, to more formal ethics training, which they had not received. Their ethical ideas were further developed and put to the test when they went into the field to do ethnographic fieldwork, and faced cases providing ethical questions and insights.

As with the question on important ethical issues in anthropology, all participants could quickly identify difficult cases from both their own work and that of other anthropologists, and often related several examples throughout the interview to support responses to different questions. There were again some shared themes in the responses, including cases related to ethics review, access to field sites, reciprocity with informants, and confidentiality. In some cases, these themes relate to ethical issues identified in question two: reciprocity relates to balancing power and perspectives; confidentiality relates to secrecy and responsibility for research. With few exceptions, when thinking

about their own ethics education or ethical choices they faced in the field, participants questioned the relevance of codes of ethics to those processes. Several participants again restated their resistance to the idea of the association having an investigatory ethics committee.

Although all the participants were aware of cases providing questions in their work, it was not necessarily something they thought was always in their minds. Some participants suggested they were aware of ethical issues in their work, without it being at the forefront. Others suggested they were more continuously consciously aware of ethical considerations in their work, attributing this in part to personality, background, and their theoretical and ethnographic areas of interest, with some emphasizing the importance of being aware there are ethical dimensions to everything we do.

Usefulness and Importance of Ethics Codes

Based on the responses to the previous questions, I was often expecting participants to say the code was not important, and not useful for ethical education or decision-making. In contrast, most of my participants thought it was important in some ways and was at least potentially useful. Participants suggested the code was important as a statement of shared values, or as a way to have shared conversations about ethics in the discipline. In ethics education and decision-making, it was useful as a general guide. At the same time, participants argued that the code had limitations that it might not be possible to avoid. A code needs to be general to apply to a wide variety of cases. That means it cannot offer specific guidance in unique cases and contexts. It would also be impossible to cover all the potential situations and contexts anthropologists might be confronted with in their research. Although the Association has moved away from a code

with sanctions, participants suggested it still had limitations as a fixed text, and that a code still has connotations of sanctions, even if it has a different name. Other participants were more critical of the code's importance, suggesting it was inconsistent and unlikely to be used, or that it might fail to address inequalities between researchers and informants. The final question on ethics and etiquette provided further discussion of the usefulness and importance of formal codes of conduct, with participants discussing this in terms of self-representation, the need for application, and internalizing ethical principles.

4.3 Responding to the Research Questions

How has the AAA ethics code changed over time, and why does it change?

The code has often been revised in response to crises and changes affecting the association and its members. This is consistent with the concept of ordinary ethics discussed in Chapter One. The particular controversies inspiring the creation and revision of the code have often involved allegations of anthropologists having unethical working relationships with the American government and military, related to allegations that anthropologists are engaging in "secret" research where informants do not know the true nature and audience of the research. Examples include the Thailand controversy, which led to adoption of the first ethics code, as well as the most revision of the code in response to the controversy over the Human Terrain System.

These cases became controversial partly because anthropologists and others saw them as being inconsistent with shared ethical standards in the discipline. They were cases threatening both how the public sees anthropology and how anthropologists understand themselves. Seeing the cases as inconsistent with shared standards then raises the question of what precisely those shared standards are. In addition to the formal and

informal discussions of the cases by anthropologists, stakeholders, the press, and the public, the association has responded to crises like these by creating task forces to investigate the cases, and by formulating and reformulating shared ethical standards attributed to members and the discipline.

However, members of the association and others involved in these debates are often divided about how to understand and describe these controversial cases, including whether the actions of those on different sides of a conflict were ethical or unethical. If there was only one dominant perspective, after all, there would not be a controversy. Our ethical ideas are only imperfectly shared with the members of our social group, and so we cannot control or perfectly predict how others will respond to our speech and actions (Londoño Sulkin 2010). For example, in the Thailand and El Dorado cases, the actions of those publicizing allegations of unethical conduct by anthropologists became as contested as the actions of those originally accused, and helped constitute the controversy. Further back in the association's past, Franz Boas was the first (and only) member sanctioned by the association, for publicizing allegations against other anthropologists (that censure was overturned decades later). The ethical narratives created in response to controversy can in turn become controversial. In both the Thailand and El Dorado controversies, members rejected the reports and conclusions of the AAA Task Forces that investigated those cases. In the first case, the report was rejected for clearing the accused of engaging in counterinsurgency research; in the second case, the report was rejected by referendum for finding the accused had violated the AAA ethics code. In contrast, the Task Force reports created in response to the recent controversy over the Human Terrain System have not been rejected (CEAUSSIC 2007; 2009). One difference is that these reports did not focus

so much on the conduct of individual members of the association, focusing instead on the Human Terrain System as a project and on intelligence work generally.

In response to certain kinds of crisis, the code of ethics and Task Force reports allow the association to restate shared ethical principles publically. As discussed in the introduction, for Cohen (1985) communities are defined in part through attachment to shared symbols. In this case, the relevant symbols make up ethical principles attributed to the discipline and members of the association, or accounts trying to clarify ethically complex situations. The process of coming up with a list of shared standards, or an account demonstrating a shared understanding, is complicated by the fact that symbols and ideas are never fully shared, even among members of a community. In restating the ethical principles or understanding shared by insiders, the association may appear to redefine some who consider themselves anthropologists and members of the association as outsiders to the community of professional, ethical anthropology. Statements of ethics involve assumptions about anthropology, ethical principles, and controversial events that are not shared by all members of the association. These standards may appear to some to redraw the boundaries of ethical anthropology too exclusively, while others may see the boundaries as too inclusive, failing to exclude what they see as unethical applications of anthropology.

As well as public controversies related to allegations of secret military research, the code has been revised in response to internal conflicts over its representativeness, when the code is seen no longer to reflect a sufficient degree of shared understanding and practice in the association. In addition to the risk to the association's reputation and standing when members are publically accused of acting unethically, another risk to the

future of the association is that the community could break apart. This may be a risk if members no longer have sufficient attachment to its shared symbols and understanding, including shared standards of ethical behavior.

One source of conflict has been a perceived divide between members who work in academic institutions and those who apply anthropology in other contexts. Ethics tend to become explicit in situations marked by change as well as crisis. Although applied anthropology has a long history, one of the changes for anthropology during the association's history has been the growth in "applied" forms of anthropology relative to "academic" anthropology. The original ethics code, with its repeated references to secrecy and the statement that the first responsibility is to informants, appeared to exclude anthropologists who do proprietary work for employers. The association first attempted to revise the code in the 1980s to make it less specific to academic anthropology, but the change was seen as too drastic by some members who argued the standards would be widened too far. That draft went no further. The code was revised again in the 1990s, and the Task Force charged with its revision stated their intent to make the code more representative of all forms of anthropology, including all four subfields and both academic and applied work. The new version aimed for inclusiveness by arguing that "research is research" and similar principles could apply in different fields. In this case, the revision was successfully adopted.

What is the role and purpose of codes of ethics in anthropology, and what are some of the limitations?

The stated role and purpose of the code has also changed over time. It was originally drafted and adopted in response to the Project Camelot and Thailand

controversies. In its original form, the code had the potential to be enforced, although the ethics committee never imposed any sanctions while the grievance procedure was in place (Boas was censured decades before the ethics committee was enacted). In response to the perceived failures of the enforcement model, the code of ethics adopted in 1998 was intended to be used for educational purposes only. The ethics committee would no longer be able to investigate cases. As with the controversy over the draft code in the 1980s, some members saw this as weakening the association's commitment to shared standards. For my participants, a majority agreed with the change, arguing enforcing the code would not be possible or desirable, but a minority argued a code with sanctions would help make anthropologists more accountable.

The most recent versions of the 'code' adopted by the association have continued to promote a more educational approach. The most recent version of the AAA ethics statement includes a return to its original title, *The Principles of Professional Responsibility*. In this case, the name is meant to take away some of the connotations of a code of ethics, according to a participant who was a member of the Task Force revising the code (although she noted people would continue to refer to it as the code, as I have done for convenience). The new version is meant to be read online, with links to further explanations, contrasting arguments, and case studies. The goal was to have something that could continue to be updated, although the code's history suggests this will not occur until the next big controversy. As a more interactive document, the format of the text supports a view of the ethics statement as more of a starting point than the final word on ethics. The code links to case studies, but does not offer an attempted resolution of those cases. The new ethics statement is still organized around prescriptively phrased

principles, although they are phrased very broadly, e.g. “do no harm” and “be open and honest regarding your work” (AAA 2012).

Why does the association continue to have a code of ethics? What is its role and purpose? For some of my participants, the code did not really have any significant role to play in anthropological ethics. For these participants, the code was an inconsistent text unlikely to be used, or something that failed to address serious ethical issues such as the inequality between researchers and informants. Even participants who thought the code had some potential significance noted it was also limited. Agreeing to read and follow the code is not required to be a member of the AAA, and being a member of the AAA is not required to practice anthropology. When thinking of their own ethics education, and decisions they were confronted with while doing fieldwork, they questioned the relevance of a code of ethics to those processes. The code needs to be general to apply widely, but that limits its ability to give detailed, concrete guidance in specific situations.

Similar concerns are also reflected in the literature. Lambek (2012) has criticized prescriptive codes for making ethics look too easy, when it is impossible to avoid all the potential ethical ambiguities of fieldwork. The code has been criticized by others for failing to recognize the ethical dilemmas of fieldwork (Nugent 2003), including the need to negotiate ethical principles and responsibilities in the field (Frankel and Trend 2003; Graves and Shields 1991; Meneley and Young 2005; Meskell and Pels 2005; Sylvain 2005). Authors have argued that in practice, acting ethically in the field may conflict with the requirements of codified ethics (Bourgois 2007; Sylvain 2005). Authors including Lambek (2012) and several of the contributors to *Audit Cultures* (Amit 2000; Pels 2000) have identified anthropological ethics codes with the requirements of an audit culture

(attempts to regulate and measure performance and accountability in educational institutions) imposed on anthropology, rather than representing any kind of meaningful engagement with ethics. The code's history also shows that it is difficult to remove the connotations of sanctions from a code of ethics. The El Dorado Task Force Report became controversial largely because it appeared the association was conducting an ethics investigation after the shift to education. The Task Force was separate from the ethics committee, but Task Force report did note that in some respects Chagnon, the anthropologist accused of unethical conduct, had violated the ethics code.

Participants who thought the code did have a role to play in anthropological ethics thought it had value as a statement of shared ethical principles. As a normative value statement or statement of anthropology's telos, the code could be potentially useful for anthropologists as a tool for ethics education, and as a general guide or starting point when faced with ethical dilemmas. As noted above, they also argued any written list of ethical principles would need to be applied with judgment in specific situations (similar to the etiquette manuals Yeung describes in her 2010 article). Other participants argued the process of creating and revising a code was a way to have shared conversations about ethics in the discipline, bringing together people who practice different kinds of anthropology in different contexts. Returning to Cohen's argument about community and attachment to shared symbols, the process of revising an ethics code can reveal serious differences in interpretation of important symbols among members of a community like the AAA. At the same time, that process can provide opportunities for dialogue, and if not consensus, at least the recognition that the differing interpretations of community members are valid points of view. The importance of the code as a basis for debate is also

reflected in the literature on the code. Caplan argues the code and the debates around it are contentious, but “good to think with” (2003: 3-4). For Fluehr-Lobban, ethics codes “represent the standards of conduct that professionals agree are vital to the legitimacy, integrity, and continuing viability of a field of study or discipline. They are thus powerful educational tools. It might also be argued that professional codes of ethics provide a basis for common dialogue within a profession and, thus, solidarity among professionals” (Fluehr-Lobban 2003d: 237). For some authors, the process of revising and debating the code is as important as the final product (Frankel and Trend 1991; Cassell and Jacobs 1987). In the cases of the rejected 1984 draft ethics code, and the rejected Thailand and El Dorado Task Force reports, these texts provided an opportunity for (heated) debate. They continue to fill that role, even after the association formally rejected them.

What does the example of ethics codes and anthropology show about the relationship between codified and ordinary ethics?

My starting point for this question is that anthropologists make up a kind of community, one they are socialized into, and which is significant to individual anthropologists to the extent that they have valued social relationships, interactions, and identifications with that community. Any anthropologist will also belong to many other communities, based on their personal background, where they live, where they work, and so on. Within the broader professional community of anthropologists, the American Anthropological Association is another community. Anthropologists who are part of these communities will tend to share some important symbols with each other, including sets of ethical criteria, ethical narratives, and sensibilities. At the same time, there will

also be important differences, based on their individual histories, and the range of communities to which they belong beyond “anthropology” and the “AAA.”

Focusing on the anthropologists I interviewed, there were both significant similarities and differences in the kinds of ethical concerns and narratives they cited in response to my questions. For example, the work of anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes was cited in four different interviews, but in each case my participants cited a different aspect of her work. Different participants referred to her research in rural Ireland (Scheper-Hughes 1982), her research on maternal neglect in Brazilian shantytowns (Scheper-Hughes 1992), her idea of “good enough” ethnography (Scheper-Hughes: 1992: 28), and her investigation of organ trafficking (Scheper-Hughes 2009). One thing my participants shared was being explicitly concerned and articulate about ethical matters related to anthropology. They were all able to readily provide examples of ethical issues and cases related to anthropology, both from their own work and the work of other anthropologists they had read and interacted with. In this case, they were of course responding to questions as part of an interview about ethics. In my years as an anthropology major in both my undergraduate and graduate education, I believe this level of explicit consciousness of ethical issues was often characteristic of both the courses I took, as well as informal discussions with students and other professors. If anthropologists can be deemed to constitute something akin to a community, then a cultural feature of that community is its ongoing, explicit concern with the ethics of its own practice. That was partly why I chose to study anthropological ethics for this thesis.

Following Lambek (2012), I will now look at why anthropology and anthropological fieldwork in particular might be a case of ethics out of the ordinary (my

focus is on anthropology here, but some of the following points would also apply to other groups and professions that tend to have more explicit awareness of ethics).

In Chapter One, I introduced the concept of ordinary ethics, including the idea that ethics tend to become explicit in situations of crisis, change, and uncertainty. Robbins (2007) argues that situations of cultural change where there are multiple competing systems of values lead to moralities characterized more by freedom and choice than simple reproduction. Robbins' example is the Urapmin and their experience of cultural change. For the Urapmin described by Robbins, conversion to Pentecostal Christianity has resulted in conflict between systems of values focused on the individual and on relationships. Members of this group need to continually negotiate conflicting values, resulting in intense, conscious awareness of the need to make moral decisions in all areas of their lives. Nearly everything they do in their lives is a candidate for worried consideration about whether it is sinful or not. Zigon (2007) refers to cases like this where ethics become explicit in response to crisis and change as "moral breakdown."

When I defined "moral breakdown" for one of my participants, he argued that in that case, "anthropology *is* moral breakdown. I mean, if you're going to go anywhere that is different in any substantial way in its norms and practices then you're going to have what you're calling moral breakdown. That's exactly what the history of anthropology is about, it's about the astonishment that comes from realizing that people don't converge in their notion of norms or even in their notions of which values are the ones that should be privileged and pursued." Lambek (2012) makes a similar point in arguing that anthropology is a case of ethics out of the ordinary. While ordinary ethics are often relatively implicit, Lambek states that anthropological "fieldwork, insofar as it is an

explicitly initiated project and insofar as it truly takes us out of our comfort zone, will move ethical judgment from the tacit towards the reflected upon" (143). Anthropologists in the field must deal with situations where the right thing to do is ambiguous, and where they must negotiate multiple sets of ethical standards, including their own and those of the social group they are studying. Anthropologists are constantly looking at other ways of evaluating actions, subjects, and social life, which may make them more prone to relativizing and questioning their own. At the same time, Lambek notes this consciousness of ethical matters does not necessarily make all anthropologists completely virtuous; they commit mistakes like everyone else (2012: 148-149). Most of my participants at different times brought up cases where they thought an anthropologist had acted unethically, or cases where the right thing to do was unclear or contested.

One reason Lambek offers for fieldwork's ethical ambiguity is that anthropologists at times may appear to share the opinions and perspectives of their informants when that really is not the case, and sometimes fail to correct the mistaken assumptions of informants who assume the anthropologist holds views similar to their own. Lambek notes there are good reasons for this: anthropologists are there as critical social scientists, and it is also impossible to share everyone's point of view. In everyday life we do not continually make clear our perspectives and differences from the people we interact with. At the same time, that does not make it less ethically ambiguous, or easier to come up with a rule for these situations (2012: 146-147). In the interviews, one of the shared ethical concerns cited by participants involved cases related to secrecy, disclosure, and confidentiality. Consciousness of this dilemma may help explain why one of the recurring ethical conflicts in American anthropology has involved controversy over allegations that

anthropologists are engaging in ‘secret’ research, in which researchers have hidden motives and audiences. In the case of the controversies that have inspired revision of the code, the hidden motive has often been seen as counterinsurgency, with the hidden audience the U.S. government.

The ethical concern with military applications of anthropology is related to another aspect of anthropology’s ethical ambiguity: its historical ties to colonialism. In the 1970s, moving into the postcolonial era, the colonial context of British social anthropology began to receive critical attention (Asad 1973: 12-13; Pels and Salemink 1999: 5-6). Writing in 1973, Asad argued that while it would be a mistake to “view social anthropology in the colonial era as primarily an aid to colonial administration, or as the simple reflection of colonial ideology” (18), it was a fact that “the basic reality which made pre-war social anthropology a feasible and effective enterprise was the power relationship between dominating (European) and dominated (non-European) cultures” (1973: 17). Whether or not these anthropologists had much practical significance or had individual critical views, as other anthropologists emphasised, Asad felt this context needed to be understood. Like British social anthropology, North American cultural anthropology had its beginnings in studying recently conquered populations. Like Asad, Price has argued that while early ethnographers may not have seen their work as part of a system of conquest, the early history of anthropology cannot be separated from that history of conquest (Price 2011: 15). A concern with anthropology’s relationship to the forces governing the lives of informants is reflected in the history of the code, with the repeated controversies over allegations that anthropologists are secretly engaging in

counterinsurgency research, deceiving informants and putting them at risk. This was also a commonly cited issue in the interviews.

In addition to ambiguities connected to multiple sets of ethical standards, levels of disclosure, and anthropologist's relationship to the forces governing the lives of informants, Lambek (2012) refers to another significant dilemma. Anthropologists go beyond ordinary ethical commitments to one group and way of life, spending long periods living with the group they are studying, only to eventually leave and write critically about those experiences (Lambek 2012: 143-149). That act of leaving and writing has been the source of much ethical debate and tension in anthropology, particularly since the publication of Clifford and Marcus' *Writing Culture* (1986). The contributors to that text addressed the colonial setting of much anthropological work, and the power of ethnographers whose texts privilege their own voices at the expense of the voices of their informants. Its publication led to both a great deal of self-criticism in the discipline, as well as a backlash in reactions from anthropologists who found the self-criticism excessive and misplaced (Kumoll and Zenker 2010: 4-13). This ethical concern was also voiced in the interviews, with participants discussing the importance of balancing the perspectives of anthropologists and their informants. Participants also expressed concern that even after leaving the field, what they chose to write could still have negative consequences.

Returning to the question of what the example of ethics codes and anthropology shows about the relationship between codified and ordinary ethics, anthropological ethics is already a case of ethics out of the ordinary, as Lambek argues. I argue that the process of creating the different ethics codes and Task Force reports, as well as the debates

around these processes, are another manifestation of this increased ethical consciousness. In response to times of crisis and change affecting the community of anthropology and the AAA, there are calls to further spell out ethics, to restore a sense that there are some shared standards in the community. In the case of anthropology though, ethics are already relatively explicit. Anthropologists may also have a sense that their ethics are relative and in some ways ambiguous. When confronted with an ethics code or Task Force report that conflicts with some anthropologists' explicit understanding of ethical principles and controversies, the result can be contentious. At the same time, the fact that anthropologists are arguing with each other about shared principles and interpretations can help reinforce the idea that there are shared principles, and a community worth defending. The latter point is a self-fulfilling prophecy, for the discussions that take place serve to socialize anthropologists into a community with a shared, keen interest in ethical concerns.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES
MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 31, 2011
TO: Lindsay Springer
Anthropology
FROM: Dr. Bruce Plouffe
Chair, Research Ethics Board
Re: **Secrecy and Ethics in Anthropological Research (File #83S1011)**

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

- 1. **APPROVED AS SUBMITTED.** Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F), **ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS.** Approvals will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.
- 2. **ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED).** Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. **** Do not submit a new application.** Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.
- 3. **ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED).** Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. **** Do not submit a new application.** Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.
- 4. **UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED.** The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.


Dr. Bruce Plouffe

cc: Dr. Londaño Sulkin – Anthropology

** supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 109) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone: (306) 585-4775
Fax: (306) 585-4893
www.uregina.ca/research

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Are you familiar with the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association?
2. What do you think are some important ethical issues in anthropology, either historically or currently, that may or may not be addressed by the code of ethics?
3. Do you think anthropologists have a primary obligation toward any group, and should that be reflected in the code?
4. Since 1998, the ethics committee serves only an educational role and no longer investigates cases. What do you think about that change? Are there other ways to resolve ethical disputes in anthropology?
5. Do you think ethical controversies are handled well within anthropology? Are there ways that could be improved?
6. How do you think anthropologists learn to make ethical decisions? How did you learn to make ethical decisions as an anthropologist?
7. Do you recall a case from your own work or that of others that provided ethical insights or questions? Do you think a code could have been useful?
8. How central and explicit were questions about ethics in your work? Did your consciousness of ethical issues vary?
9. Is it important for the AAA to have an ethics code? Are codes useful for making ethical decisions or for ethics education?
10. Shirley Yeung has argued that etiquette manuals are more than lists of rules, because ideally they related to the development of desired social and moral virtues and dispositions, with the goal of embodying principles of etiquette until they became

sincere reflections of moral character. Furthermore, knowing how to properly apply a rule of etiquette always requires making judgments in specific situations. Do you think that argument could apply to codes of ethics in anthropology?