

7

Ethics, Engagement, and Experience

Anthropological Excursions in Culture and the National Security State

Robert A. Rubinstein

In this chapter I reflect on the disciplinary and personal challenges that result from security organizations' recently increased interests in anthropology and anthropologists.¹ Much of that interest is traceable to the assertion that a lack of cultural knowledge is responsible for what went wrong in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result of this framing, branches of the US military, and other security agencies and organizations, are expending considerable efforts and resources to figure out how to fill this knowledge gap and how to bring anthropologists and other social scientists to work with them.²

In response to the challenges for the discipline arising from such engagement, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) established the AAA Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Communities (American Anthropological Association 2007). The response is explicitly complicated by the imperial nature of US actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a variety of other meetings and discussions have taken place within anthropology. Our SAR seminar occurred in this context, of which there are three important elements.

The first is the master narrative of the history of anthropology in which our conversations take place.³ It is an anthropological truism that all knowledge is situated in the particular contexts and histories and experiences from which it derives. It is thus natural that discussions of the benefits and

risks of anthropological engagement with “the military” or with “the security sector” take place in the context of particular understandings of the history and purpose of the discipline. For instance, the framing document for the SAR seminar (Whitehead and McNamara 2008) to which this chapter was a contribution situated our discussions in a narrative about the history of anthropology that asserts:

Anthropologists have historically worked at the margins of state power, not within the apparatus of power. As Malinowski expressed it, this was to “come down from the veranda” of colonialism, and thus to become participant observers among those at the margins, or at the base, of the colonial system.

This framing of anthropology is consistent with many narratives that circulate in conversation and print about our discipline’s history. Yet it is not complete. Of its two claims, the first overgeneralizes the case, is thus empirically wrong, and certainly requires more careful explication. The second claim also requires more careful explication, confusing in its present form a methodological advance for a political program.⁴ I return to this issue below, since it is linked to one of the objections about engaging the security sector: that doing so might lead to anthropologists breaching their obligations to the people among whom they work and study.

Second, current discussions about anthropological engagements with military and security organizations are also placed in the context of the need to balance our responsibilities as anthropologists and as citizens. It is worth noting that this is not the first time that anthropologists have engaged this issue. Indeed, it is a theme that recurs throughout the twentieth century and often in times of war (Rubinstein 2006).⁵

The third context for our discussions is the effort to rule as outside of acceptable anthropological practice a large number of particular kinds of engagements between anthropology, the military, and other institutions of the national security state. This is reflected in efforts to reinstate in the AAA’s code of ethics the prohibition against anthropologists working with secret or proprietary research. As well, such a tendency is reflected in the statements of the Network of Concerned Anthropologists.

Here, I address some of the issues raised by the current context of anthropological engagement with the military and with security organizations. Acknowledging the situated nature of my comments, I begin autobiographically. I write from the perspective of a professional anthropologist who for nearly three decades has worked at the intersection of anthropology and the security sector. During this time, using anthropological

understandings as a basis for critique, I have written against US security policies, conducted ethnographic research with military units, and participated in professional military education programs.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL BEGINNINGS

In many ways my own experiences in this area reflect the tensions, ambivalences, and some of the possibilities that attend to the relationship between anthropology and the military and security communities, to which I will refer collectively throughout this chapter as “The Military.” (Since one of my concerns here is that it is mistaken to treat military and security institutions as homogenous, I rely on this locution reluctantly.)

I began my anthropological career in 1976 when I completed my PhD, which focused on cross-cultural language acquisition and education. In the early 1980s I added to this area of interest a professional concern for culture and international security (Rubinstein 1983, 1986, 1988, 1992; Rubinstein and Tax 1985). I have been working among and with The Military since the mid-1980s (Rubinstein 2008). Despite these decades of work, in contexts like the SAR seminar or in visiting military installations I still feel as though I am a “marginal person,” to update Everett Stonequist’s (1937) phrase, or a “professional stranger,” as Michael Agar (1980) describes the anthropologist in the field.⁶ I don’t mean by this observation something undesirable; indeed, as will become clear later, I think that this kind of liminal status is essential if anthropology is to relate responsibly to the construction of legitimate and useful cultural knowledge for the military and other elements of national power (including our intelligence and diplomatic communities).

I reach this conclusion by examining briefly a number of dimensions of the relationship between anthropology and the intelligence and military communities, including their mutual ethnocentrisms; mutual relevance of strategic, operational, and tactical levels of action; a citizen’s duties and responsibilities; and the risks of cooperation. I link these concerns to traditional anthropological values of reciprocity and responsibility for those whose lives we study, and thus for the safety and development of human society in general (issues raised, for example, by Joan Ablon [1977]). In the course of exploring these concerns I call for the creation of a field of military anthropology in which the range of ways of studying or working with institutions of the national security state would be represented in a manner analogous to the variety of approaches embraced by the subfield of medical anthropology.

I came of age during the Vietnam War. The day I turned eighteen I registered for the draft, as I was required to do by law, and I filed a claim

of conscientious objection. I entered college in 1969 and spent much of the ensuing three years running a draft counseling center and participating in direct action against the war, often in conjunction with the local chapter of the War Resisters League. After majoring in anthropology as an undergraduate, I entered graduate school in 1972. During this period American anthropology was still discussing heatedly how anthropological work had been misused in counterinsurgency programs in Vietnam and Thailand so that the peoples with whom anthropologists had worked were harmed, and how Project Camelot in Latin America harmed collectively the discipline of anthropology (see, for instance, Jorgensen and Wolf 1970; but see for contrast Horowitz 1967; Lucas 2009). Emerging from this intense activity was a socially conscious anthropology that sought to “speak truth to power,” to break ties with colonial and imperial projects (Hymes 1972), and to turn anthropology’s focus toward examining institutions of power through “studying up,” using Laura Nader’s (1972) memorable phrase (see introduction, note 2).

It is perhaps unusual for someone with my personal and professional backgrounds and political commitments to be involved in studying and working with The Military. How I come to be in this position is important for understanding my views, which I think of as flowing from my ethnographic and ethnological experiences.

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITY

Concerned about the increasing militarization of our society and the dire threat of nuclear disaster, in the early 1980s I joined with my University of California–Berkeley colleague and friend Mary LeCron Foster to mobilize anthropologists who could bring anthropological perspectives to the security community. This resulted in four days of coordinated symposia, held at the 11th World Congress of Anthropology and Ethnology, subsequently published as *Peace and War: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Foster and Rubinstein 1986). Although the symposia included not only anthropologists but also some people from the security community, the tone and content of the discussions and of the subsequent book were largely critical of military actions and organizations and of the strategic structures of the United States and others. Assembling those symposia led me to work on the importance of considering culture in international security, even during the cold war and for conventional and nuclear strategy (Rubinstein 1983, 1988). Together with many others we formed a Commission on Peace (later the Commission on Peace and Human Rights) under the auspices of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. I

then spent the next few years promoting the development of the anthropology of peace.

I was interested in starting another major empirical project, and I was introduced to peacekeeping as a possible site for such work. I knew little about this instrument of international action when I started, but the idea that it brought together people from many countries to support "peace" under the auspices of the United Nations was very appealing to me. That much of the work was done by the military was something of which I took note, but it was not a major preoccupation.

By 1986 I had begun to work with the International Peace Academy (now the International Peace Institute [IPA]), then the sole institution concerned with the promotion and development of peacekeeping. I began interviewing diplomats and military officers who had been involved in peacekeeping. I talked a great deal with Gen. Indarjit Rikhye, who was then the IPA president and who had been the military advisor to the UN secretary-general and the force commander for the UN Emergency Force (UNEF).

Through the IPA I got permission from the UN secretariat to conduct a long-term ethnographic study of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in the Middle East. Thinking of this work as a great example of "studying up" and also of transnational ethnography, I began work in Egypt in 1988. It was then that my preconceptions were challenged and my views moderated.

FIELDWORK AND RECIPROCITY

One of the results of following Bronislaw Malinowski's methodological advice was that during their field research, anthropologists developed social relationships with the people among whom they worked in a manner they previously had not. This was true whether the people studied were at the peripheries of power or at its center. Anthropologists have long honored the view that they should have a concern for the people studied and that there should be some kind of reciprocity between the researcher and the people with whom she works. In a brief but perceptive article, Ablon (1977) set out some of the challenges that faced those working in their own society and those who are "studying up." She noted that in such circumstances "the anthropologist must be alert and open to different opportunities for reciprocity in the field situation" (Ablon 1977:71).

As with any fieldwork, mine with UNTSO was a mutually affecting process with lots of opportunities for reciprocities to develop. My wife and I developed deeply personal friendships with some of our "informants,"

many of whom were serving military officers. I have written about this elsewhere (Rubinstein 1998, 2008). Here, I note that in developing these relationships I began to see that The Military was, in fact, like any human group or institution, actually a complex social system that embraced a lot of variation. My first report of my UNTSO research, given at an AAA meeting, concluded with an acknowledgment of how my biases had been challenged and largely shattered.

True, some of the peacekeepers in UNTSO had a very narrow and derivative view of peacekeeping and longed to be “doing manly things in a manly way,” as one of my informants said, and others’ main aspiration was to be shot at so that they would know themselves better. Still others were interested in what they could contribute to the international system and were interested in furthering their understandings as foreign area officers or their equivalents.

My research about cultural aspects of peacekeeping led me to a dual focus on the culture of UNTSO and the importance for UNTSO of understanding the cultures of the people with whom they worked—including the local population and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with which they cooperated.

I had no intentions of engaging in training, or institutional reform efforts, when I began my fieldwork. That changed when the responsibilities of fieldwork reciprocity pushed me to do so. Simply, in the mid-1990s some of my “informants”—from the military, from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO), and from NGOs—asked me to help them think about culture and peace operations in a way that would further the training and actions of senior mission personnel (Rubinstein 2008:67–69).

Almost any request from the community in which an anthropologist is working suggests intervention and raises ethical and moral issues. The requests I was receiving also raised such issues. Some seemed relatively straightforward to decide. For instance, presenting my anthropological findings about culture and peacekeeping to military audiences struck me as unproblematic—I would say nothing to them that I would not present and publish in standard, public anthropological meetings and journals. Others seemed more problematic, as I describe later.

MUTUAL ETHNOCENTRISMS

Many anthropologists and many in the military have a mutual distrust for one another. Social scientists, including anthropologists, have documented the distorting and destructive effects of US military activities both at home and abroad (for example, Falk and Kim 1980; Lutz 2001; Melman

1986; Stade 1998). For these reasons, and because the military is an instrument often used in the pursuit of strategic ends that are politically repugnant to many anthropologists, a number of stereotypes of the military have been elaborated within anthropology, resulting in a kind of ethnocentrism where the military is concerned.⁷ Reflecting on this, I realized that while anthropologists would never speak of other societies or institutions with a global and homogenizing phrase like, for example, "The Arabs," we all too quickly spoke of the "The Military" (Rubinstein 2003).

For their part, many in the military view anthropology as an arcane and exotic subject given to not particularly useful ideological rants. They can point to many anthropological studies and anthropologists whom they find quaint and amusing, and they deride anthropology as jargon-laden. Often, such claims are made by critics in texts that display a wonderful command of (but little sense of self-perspective about) the dense technical language and acronyms (jargon) used by the military.

Both anthropologists and military members have also engaged with one another in a process in which the negative aspects of the interaction between them are emphasized, and those involved become more closed to new information about the other, a process that Theodore Newcomb (1947) called "autistic hostility."

MILITARY ANTHROPOLOGY: AN EMERGING SPECIALTY

Despite the mutual hostilities, it turns out that anthropologists have studied and worked with the military for a long time, and militaries have also made use of anthropologists and their expertise for an equally long time (Hawkins 2003). Despite this long engagement, there is within anthropology no coherently formed subdiscipline of military anthropology as there is in the related disciplines of history, political science, psychology, and sociology. One result of this is that although the phrases "military anthropology" and "military anthropologists" are used frequently in discussions of engagement, there is no common understanding of what these entail.

In addition to my work on peace and security issues and my ethnographic research on peacekeeping, I am also a medical anthropologist, and I have found my participation in that subdiscipline instructive for thinking about military anthropology. The specialty of medical anthropology embraces a wide variety of approaches ranging from the study of ethnomedical forms of understanding of health and illness through "clinically applied medical anthropology," "applied medical anthropology," and "critical medical anthropology."⁸ These coexist, though with some tension. Critical

medical anthropologists have at times clashed with applied medical anthropologists, accusing them of enabling a hegemonic biomedical system that disadvantages and harms people. In this conversation critical medical anthropologists have even critiqued the categories of analysis used by other medical anthropologists, explaining, for instance, that categories like “infant mortality” are not intrinsically important but rather reflect and reinforce the hegemonic control of the Western medical profession. Despite their theoretical, epistemological, and political differences, many medical anthropologists work to effect change—whether radical re-visioning of health systems, incremental change in public policy, or change in the way health care is practiced.

There is, in fact, a nascent subdiscipline of military anthropology. It has been hard to speak about this subdiscipline in a coherent way because it, like medical anthropology, includes a wide range of research topics and perspectives on action. Yet they all share a focus on the military (in all of its heterogeneous forms) as the main subject of work. Thus they emphasize to a greater or lesser degree the social organization and cultural dimensions of military institutions and societies, as distinct from, for example, the analysis of the causes and consequences of warfare.

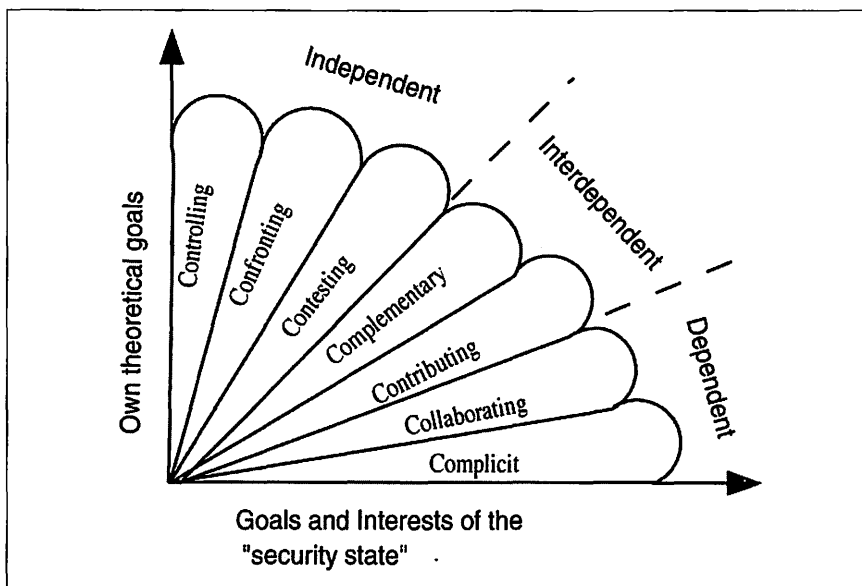
As Margaret Harrell (2003a; see also the useful discussion in Lucas 2009) notes, work in military anthropology runs a similar gamut, from studies of, to support of, to critique and resistance. There are a considerable number of ethnographic studies of military units, some of which include works like Ralph Linton’s (1924) study of totemism in the American Expeditionary Force, Pearl Katz’s (1990) study of emotional metaphors among drill sergeants, my own studies of group formation and dynamics among military peacekeepers (Rubinstein 1993), Anna Simons’s (1997) study of the US Army Special Forces, and Eyal Ben-Ari’s (1998) use of cultural models to examine an Israeli military unit. As well, there are studies of the social and cultural organization of military communities, such as Alexander Randall’s (1986) and John Hawkins’s (2001) analyses of social dislocation in the culture of military enclaves, or Linda Pulliam’s (1988) and Harrell’s (2003b) analyses of gender expectations in the navy and army communities. Catherine Lutz’s (2001) study of the effects of militarization on Fayetteville, North Carolina, Lionel Caplan’s (1995) examination of Gurkhas in Western narratives and the impact of their service at home, and Hugh Gusterson’s (2007) recent review of militarism and anthropology take critical perspectives on military organizations and their representation in society and on anthropologists working with the military. In contrast, several anthropologists have worked in ways designed explicitly to contribute to professional

military education (Fujimura 2003; Selmeski 2007) or to improve operational effectiveness (for example, Kilcullen 2006; M. McFate 2005b; Salmoni and Holmes-Eber 2009; Varhola and Varhola 2006).

It is evident that the range of things legitimately considered military anthropology is quite broad, and also that this range is analogous in many ways to the range of variation within medical anthropology. The analogy is strengthened by the fact that in both disciplines anthropologists engage matters of life and death, hegemony and resistance. Pushing this analogy a little further, I find approaches in medical anthropology that can also inform work in military anthropology.

HARM REDUCTION: A STRATEGY, NOT A SLOGAN

How should one act in the face of an oppressive system that harms and kills people? The answers to this question are, of course, complex, and they vary depending upon who is answering them and in what contexts. It follows that there would be many responsible actions, and that these actions would differ depending upon the particular perspective from which that action is taken. From a political perspective, one legitimate response might be to act in a way that sharpens the injustice of the system, hoping to advance its collapse. Alternatively, from a disciplinary perspective, one might use the data and perspectives of anthropology to ameliorate the harms done to people as a result of the oppressive system. A third alternative would be to seek to change the system, destabilizing it by introducing concepts of cultural relativism and the legitimacy of diverse ways of living. Each of these alternative courses of action require balancing the long-term and short-term benefits of action with the harms that will result. All of these paths lead to a trade-off between these two sets of harms and benefits. Since creating both long-term and short-term harms for the people we study is proscribed by canons of anthropological responsibility, there is, in my view, no invariably good alternative, no pure path. Deciding which course to take and how to combine anthropological understanding with a citizen's political action thus requires careful individual assessment rather than universal pronouncement. Those assessments should be made in light of the trade-off between an anthropologist's independence and his or her dependence on state structures. For instance, in their discussions of peace building, NGOs, and civil society, Catherine Barnes (2005) and Simon Fisher and Lada Zimina (2008) describe the range of ways in which engagement may take place (see figure 7.1). Moreover, during the course of a career, a person may move among the different forms of engagement depending upon the projects he undertakes.

**FIGURE 7.1.**

Anthropology–Security State Relations. Adapted from Barnes 2005:10 and from Fisher and Zimina 2008:23.

Discussions about anthropology's engagement with the military can be seen as analogous to efforts at "harm reduction" in the area of health policy and practice. Medical anthropologists, among others, have played important roles in identifying and developing ways to reduce the morbidity and mortality experienced by people as a result of harmful health policies (see, for example, Singer and Baer 2007:20). This work has been carried out in a context in which many of these policies "further U.S. geopolitical and geo-economic interests" (Singer 2004:295). Originally developed in the context of drug policies (Inciardi and Harrison 2000; Lenton and Single 1998) and often having the character of insurgent social movements, the strategies involve health workers and others to change standard practice or to reframe the general understanding of a problem (Keefe, Lane, and Swars 2006; Lane et al. 2000). Harm reduction has expanded now to a more general approach. Key to this approach is that while acknowledging that it would be far preferable for the causes of the harm to be eliminated, the primary focus is on reducing the harms that result from misguided policies by using safer interventions to put actual peoples' lives above an abstract principle (Lenton and Single 1998:214–216). Changes to the system would come about as a result of changes in practice.

Robust debates regarding harm reduction strategies have occurred since they were first introduced in the 1960s (for instance, see Hathaway 2001; Inciardi and Harrison 2000; Keane 2003; Lane et al. 2000; Lenton and Single 1998). These debates pivot on the question of whether harm reduction strategies do enough good to offset the reinforcing of the structures of domination and inequality that promote the harm in the first place. This is a major dimension of the debate about harm reduction in drug literature.

This concern also appears in discussions of what to do about slavery in the contemporary world. In the context of slavery there are disagreements regarding slave redemption as a kind of harm reduction activity. On the one hand, those who would engage in slave redemption see it as an important mechanism for immediately improving the situations of individual abductees. On the other hand, those who oppose slave redemption suggest that it simply reinforces the practice of slave taking by creating a market for slavery. The latter group argues that what is needed is a fundamental change in the way slavery is addressed by the international community (see Appiah and Bunzl 2007). The ethnographic reality of slave redemption turns out to be more complicated and varied. For instance, in the Sudan where slavery is used as a war tactic, “from an empirical perspective there is no evidence that slave redemptions have led to increased raiding, or have increased volume of slaves taken since the [redemption] programs began” (Jok 2007:147).

In the context of military anthropology this analogy suggests that it is mistaken to view the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of action as sharply separated from one another.

STRATEGIC SCAFFOLDING

Especially in the current debate about Human Terrain Teams, it is often asserted that opposing the teams is wrong because they deal with soldiers on the ground who do not make strategic policy. From my work with peacekeeping I have concluded that this is a false argument. Rather, what takes place on the ground has an effect on strategic policy, just as strategic policy affects what is done in the field. I call this essential relationship “strategic scaffolding” (Rubinstein 2008:51–52).

For example, despite the broad scope of peacekeeping, individual actions play an important part in the success or failure of each mission. Because there is a reciprocal and contingent relationship among the levels of organization expressed in peacekeeping, the overarching structure of peacekeeping helps to shape and direct individual actions. At the same

time, individual actions are important to maintaining the overarching structure of peacekeeping.⁹

Peacekeeping routinely addresses matters of life and death. These matters are not addressed simply by the abstract corporate entities that comprise the mission. Rather, these matters of life and death are faced every day by individual peacekeepers—whether military, humanitarian, or civil servant—in real contexts. How these individuals respond to the challenges they meet determines not only the outcome of the specific encounter, but also contributes to maintaining the social capital of the particular mission and of peacekeeping generally. In this sense peacekeeping is an emergent process because what individuals do is shaped by the social structural constraints within which they work, while at the same time their actions alter those social structural constraints in a pattern of repetitive, reciprocal structural coupling (Maturana and Varela 1988:193).

It follows as well from a variety of social theories that changing practices can create culture change (Rubinstein 2008:45–48). It has long seemed to me that engagement with the military that promotes a respect for others; lauds the value of diversity; uses an anthropological perspective to call into question the value of unilateral, militarized foreign engagements; and supports those within the military who share such views is both a harm reduction strategy and an effort at culture change. The military—and the security sector more broadly—is an important institution in American society. As an anthropologist who advocates that part of US foreign policy ought to involve a willingness to engage with and talk to our adversaries (especially since such engagement could lead to the reframing of that relationship), I do not think it anthropologically responsible to eschew speaking to the military. Like all culture change interventions, this requires engaging one's interlocutor "where they are." Even so, the results are not always as quick or in the direction desired.

WOULD YOU SPEAK TO THE CIA?

In 1999 I received an invitation to participate in a conference on the "Nature of Modern Conflict." The conference was motivated by the observation that despite increasing globalization, especially economically and in communication technology, the conference conveners were genuinely puzzled by the emergence of communal and other conflicts taking place within states. They said they wanted an anthropological perspective on this issue to help them come to terms with something they didn't understand. The first day of the conference at which I was being invited to speak was to be open to the public and thus not classified in any way, but the main

audience would be people from the intelligence and defense communities. The person inviting me added, almost as an afterthought, that the conference was being convened on behalf of the CIA's Strategic Assessments Group.

This last bit of information gave me pause. I made a series of calls to my anthropological colleagues, especially those with whom I had worked in establishing the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences Commission on Peace and Human Rights. Uniformly, the response was that if we really believed that anthropologists ought to be heard by the international security community, the only way to do this was to talk with them. As long as the conference was not covert in any way, they agreed it would be a good thing to do. I thought so too.

So I went to the conference. I was the first presenter of the day, speaking to about seventy-five people from a variety of agencies and services. I presented a paper that explored the role of identity in contemporary conflicts, and I focused especially on the ways in which women and children bore disproportionate harms in these conflicts. I discussed issues concerning rape during conflict as well as the use of other coercive means of controlling women's reproductive lives and how these issues linked to communal conflicts (see Rubinstein and Lane 2002).

The immediate, almost instantaneous, response to my paper was an objection: "Western armies don't rape. In the entire history of the Civil War, there are only two recorded instances of rapes of white women!"¹⁰

This remark left me momentarily speechless. One might have expected at least one objection from the audience, but instead there were merely murmurs of agreement. I shortly responded that like other social phenomena, the official reporting of the Civil War was contingent and contextual; what was recorded and how it was reported are matters of power, interest, and perspective. I found it all the more stunning that the quality of US war historical reporting was viewed as straightforwardly accurate and unproblematic since my paper was given on the morning that the front page of the *New York Times* carried news that the long-denied killings of civilians at the Bridge of No Gun Ri, Korea, had in fact taken place, as confirmed by Pentagon records that had only lately, and under pressure, been discovered (Becker 1999; Choe, Hanley, and Mendoza 1999; Dobbs and Suro 1999).

Following this exchange, the audience and I had a good discussion of the issues raised in my paper, especially about the need to focus on conflict issues "below the level of the state." Observing the interaction patterns in the room, it became clear that I was the only speaker during the day who

was not already known to the organizers. Following me was a series of speakers, each of whose presentations focused in some way on interstate conflict and did so in ethnocentric ways. Several of the subsequent speakers invoked the “well, I’m not a tenured professor, so...” formula. This served the double purpose of cleaving them to the “in group” and exempting them from having to critically test their assumptions.

But some people in the room did engage my presentation honestly and openly. I was reconfirmed in my belief that to break the cycle of autistic hostility between anthropologists and institutions of the national security state one had to engage with them in open conversation. This seemed especially so when, during our coffee and lunch breaks, a number of people thanked me for my talk and told me they shared these professional views, had been pushing them as minority voices, and appreciated the support that my talk offered to their cause.

MULTIPLE ENCOUNTERS, MULTIPLE VOICES

One lesson I take from my relative lack of success in engaging the audience at the “Nature of Modern Conflict” conference is that institutional and culture change is a complicated and long-term process. Clearly, many in the room would not give a second thought to the considerations that I raised in my talk. Yet a few would. It seems to me that institutional change requires persistence and multiple encounters. I mentioned this lesson at our SAR seminar, where the resulting conversation focused on whether institutional change is possible at all. I was asked, “Have you ever seen your work, or work you are familiar with, make a difference in institutional practice?”

In response to this query, I made the following two brief observations. Throughout the 1990s, and continuing today, there was a considerable amount of work directed at bringing the concerns of women affected by conflict into planning peacekeeping missions and peace-building efforts. These analyses argued that the organization of peacekeeping operations and peace-building efforts often took place absent an understanding of the experiences and concerns of women in conflict and postconflict settings (see, for example, Withworth 2004). The results of these efforts have been incremental, but very real, changes in the way that the international community addresses gender issues in conflict (Rehn and Sirleaf 2002), including efforts to “mainstream” gender. Developments on this front are moving in the “right” direction, although the destination has not been reached.

The second brief observation I made in response to the query was from my own work. When I first began studying peacekeeping, my suggestion

that culture matters for peace operations was met with a kind of bemused response. Yet, as I described earlier, cultural issues, especially those involving the organizational cultures of military and NGO organizations, was salient enough in the community that I was asked to help design a handbook for the administration of peace operations. Several years later the UNDPKO invited me to submit a white paper on cultural considerations in designing the UN mission in Sudan. While I do not know how fully the materials in that white paper contributed to the mission design, I do know that the importance of cultural knowledge for mission planning had spread throughout UNDPKO. Some years after I had submitted the white paper a class of mine was being briefed at the UNDPKO Situation Center. An anthropologist colleague, Catherine Lutz, was with us. In a conversation with the center coordinator, Catherine asked whether any cultural information was used in mission planning and was told that an anthropologist had consulted on the planning of the Sudan mission. It shortly emerged that the coordinator was referring to the work I had done with her UNDPKO colleagues—again, evidence of incremental change in the “right” direction.

A second lesson from the “Nature of Modern Conflict” conference is that language matters. As we all know, and as Carol Cohn (1987) demonstrated in her now classic paper, “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals,” language helps us to construct our worlds. In doing so it allows us to leave unchallenged fundamental assumptions. In many conversations about culture and military training there is a struggle over how we ought best to talk about culture in military training. I will return to this issue below, when I speak about the nature of partnership and the tensions between servicing and serving, but here I want to note only that avoiding each other’s language simply reinforces mutual ethnocentrisms. I will follow up on this, but first, a brief excursion into the third topic of the SAR seminar, citizenship.

CITIZENSHIP’S RESPONSIBILITIES

Dealing as an anthropologist with subjects that are part of the contemporary experience of citizens means that there is a “diminution of cultural barriers [that] leads to increased personal visibility of the anthropologist” (Ablon 1977:70). When this happens, one must balance one’s responsibilities as an anthropologist with one’s responsibilities as a citizen. It turns out that the obligations of citizenship are as contested as are disciplinary ethics.

In the citizenship literature there is general agreement that a citizen “is a member of a political community who enjoys the rights and assumes the duties of membership.”¹¹ Yet the specifics of what this general view entails

and how the rights and duties should be enacted are the subject of considerable debate. In addition to rights and obligations, membership in a political community also affects identity at some level (Pinxten, Cornelis, and Rubinstein 2007). Thus I am not just an anthropologist, I am an American anthropologist. This is so no matter what I may feel about the importance of good global governance and the value of multilateral institutions, or how much I seek to distance myself from the geo-strategic policies of the US government.

As an American anthropologist I am still old-fashioned enough to believe that at some level I am responsible for the actions of my government. Comfortable though it is to separate the people from the government or administration, at some basic level this is a false distinction. So I have a responsibility to try to change that policy. As I've indicated before, there are many ways of seeking that influence. Whether through public denunciation of those policies based on anthropological analysis, reasoned engagements, or other actions, when we speak qua anthropologists, we are fulfilling a citizen's responsibilities for giving service to our community.

SERVICE, NOT SERVICING

Service is a citizen's responsibility, but it is not an end in itself or an absolute good. Rather, it requires thoughtful action. Acting as anthropologists engaging the military we must, following Ablon (1977:70), "anticipate and manage potential areas of value conflict between the anthropologist and his informants." In relation to engaging with the military, one area of potential conflict is over the reason that the interaction is taking place.

During the past few years I have had occasion to discuss with my military interlocutors the form and purpose of anthropological engagement. Too often I have heard some variant of the following claim:

Now is an opportunity for anthropologists to make a difference, but it is a brief window of opportunity. You anthropologists should take advantage of this and the way to do that is to give us what we want in the form in which we want it. So, yeah, culture is important, but we need you to tell us how to prepare culturally sensitive soldiers in the ninety minutes we can set aside for this briefing. And, oh yeah, leave out the anthropological jargon.

While it is important to listen to such exhortations as ethnographic data—reports from the field about what the natives (or at least some of them) are thinking—anthropologists must not simply comply with them.

The idea that the military is the client and that anthropologists must "give the client what it wants" is also a native ethnographic report, but it is one that the engaged anthropologist must parse carefully and respond to appropriately. If the goals of bringing anthropology to the military table include developing harm reduction strategies and promoting culture change by introducing concepts that alter the way the military conducts business, then it is essential that anthropologists not debase what they have to offer by prostituting their contributions.

Anthropological perspectives properly understood, and as described earlier, inevitably attenuate and make less effective the mechanisms necessary for the promotion of militarism (for example, those described by Goldschmidt 1988).¹² Nevertheless, there certainly are great pressures—economic, political, and social—for using anthropological understanding in ways that anthropologists would find abhorrent. Some anthropologists are even concerned that articles and books published in scholarly literature will be used by the military for nefarious purposes. It follows, for me, that anthropologists' obligations extend to trying to influence how nonanthropological audiences use their work. In relation to institutions of the national security state this urges our engagement with them, rather than our rejection of such engagement.

Engaging institutions of the national security state in anthropological dialogue is arguably the most challenging venue where the "anthropologist must effectively deal with being the insider and outsider in his own culture" (Ablon 1977:71). Not only must military anthropologists resist the pressures to deliver caricatured and partial accounts of their work to the military, they must also navigate disciplinary efforts to enforce a disengagement from the military.

One of the concerns raised about military anthropology is that it will negatively affect anthropology's reputation among the people with whom we work. The argument is that if some of us work with (perhaps even study?) the military or with security organizations, then all anthropologists will be made suspect as a result. I think this argument is something of a red herring. All American anthropologists with whom I have spoken about their fieldwork experience have reported that at some time their informants let them know that their actions and motives were suspect, and that some in the community thought the anthropologist a spy or CIA dupe. This seems to be true no matter where or when the fieldwork took place—including in the early or mid-1970s when the AAA was passionate and vocal in its anti-Vietnam War stance. This means that independent of what other anthropologists are or are not doing, all anthropologists doing fieldwork

must demonstrate to those with whom they work their sincerity and trustworthiness.

A variant of this objection, also a red herring in my view, rests on the claim that the business of anthropology is working with people at the margins of power and those who are disenfranchised, and that allowing anthropological work with the military and other national security institutions would make it impossible for us to work with those aforementioned people, again because all anthropologists would be tarred by the affiliations of a (rotten?) few. While it is true that the preponderance of anthropological work has been done with remote peoples, it has never been the program of the discipline of anthropology as a whole to work only with those groups. Indeed, anthropologists have always to some degree studied and worked with people in powerful institutions and sectors of society. For this latter group, the disciplinary eschewing of work with the military and national security institutions would have devastating effects on their access to their research field.

As John Williams (2008) notes, pressures from within social science disciplines, our own included, to absolutely eschew working with the military create a very dangerous climate for the conduct of careful scholarship and application in this area. Anthropologists who engage with the military risk being pilloried by their colleagues, some of whom substitute their political program for empirical investigation.¹³ This is another set of pressures that must be resisted if we are to fulfill our responsibilities as citizens and as anthropologists.

I close by returning to the image of the marginal person. In order to fulfill their anthropological responsibilities of reciprocity with the people they study, and to help them exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens, it is important that military anthropologists maintain a liminal status, shuttling back and forth between the anthropological and the military worlds. Maintaining this status will also help us avoid either opting out or “going native.”

Notes

1. The invitation to the SAR seminar asked that participants reflect on their own experiences as anthropologists studying, working with, or studying the consequences of interactions with the national security state. Hence this chapter is explicitly autobiographical, reporting my experiences and relating these to larger conversations within the discipline. This chapter benefited from comments made by participants at the SAR seminar. I also thank Robert Albrow, Sandra D. Lane, George Lucas, and Barbara Rylko-Bauer for their helpful comments. An earlier version of this chapter was

presented at the Watson Institute for International Affairs. For comments at that time, I thank Keith Brown, Hugh Gusterson, and Catherine Lutz.

2. As Danny Hoffman (this volume) points out, military institutions are also seeking to develop their own independent capacities for using “open source” anthropological literature and data. This further complicates anthropology’s relations with those institutions, as does the development of professional anthropological capabilities within these organizations themselves (see, for example, Salmoni and Holmes-Eber 2009).

3. What I identify as “master narratives” are accounts of anthropology’s development as offered in synthetic history of anthropology monographs and in introductory textbooks. These narratives bear a family resemblance to the idealized accounts of what science is and how it works that dominated discussions of the history and philosophy of science in the 1950s and 1960s and led to what was called the “received view of science” (Suppe 1977). These “master narratives” of anthropology’s development homogenize important distinctions and differences in practice in the same way that the received view of science gave a partial and inaccurate picture of scientific theory, method, and practice.

4. Anthropologists have worked within and for institutions of power in the United States and elsewhere. Especially prior to the boom in university employment in the 1950s and 1960s, anthropologists in the United States were often employed by, or led, government institutions such as the Smithsonian Institution, the Department of State, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. David Price (2008b), for example, describes many of these roles, though from a critical perspective.

Bronislaw Malinowski’s advance was a methodological one. It put anthropologists “on the ground” among the “natives,” thus defining anthropology’s standard view of fieldwork for most of the twentieth century (Rubinstein 2002). Malinowski (1954:146–147) writes:

As regards anthropological fieldwork, we are obviously demanding a new method of collecting evidence. The anthropologist must relinquish his comfortable position in the long chair on the veranda of the missionary compound, Government station, or planter’s bungalow, where, armed with pencil and notebook and at times with a whisky and soda, he has been accustomed to collect statements from informants.... He must go out into the villages, and see the natives at work in the gardens, on the beach, in the jungle.

That many of the people studied were and are at the peripheries of power derived from practical and disciplinary boundary considerations rather than from a discipline-wide political program. The abhorrence of colonialism found in the anthropological literature follows from anthropologists’ exposure to the damage

done by colonial exploitations, not the methodological turn. This was true as well for Malinowski (Michael Young, personal communication, June 24, 2008).

Converting feelings of support and solidarity that derive from the situated description of experiences of suffering into an axiom about disciplinary political loyalties commits a category mistake (see Ryle 1949:16–22). The shift in methods advocated by Malinowski was intended to bring anthropologists into firsthand relationships with those being studied so that they would experience as fully as possible the lifeworlds of their informants, whoever might be the community studied. Converting the abhorrence of the consequences of colonialism and other forms of abusive power developed by anthropologists in many fieldwork settings into a defining political feature of all of anthropology restricts what are the proper objects and subjects of anthropological study. It is this category mistake that Laura Nader (1972) wrote against when she urged anthropologists to “study up.”

Gilbert Ryle (1949:17) observed that “the theoretically interesting category-mistakes are those that are made by people who are perfectly competent to apply concepts, at least in the situations with which they are familiar, but are still liable in their abstract thinking to allocate those concepts to logical types to which they do not belong.” Tracing the reification of a private category mistake into a discipline-wide principle would repay the effort involved but is beyond the scope of this chapter.

5. The work of Gerald Hickey during the Vietnam War, discussed by Price (this volume), is an example of one anthropologist’s efforts to manage these tensions.

6. Stonequist attributes the phrase “marginal man” to Robert E. Park, to whom Stonequist dedicated his book, and for which book Park contributed an introduction. In that introduction Park says, “The marginal man...is one whom fate has condemned to live in two, not merely different, but antagonistic cultures” (Stonequist 1937:xv).

7. Like all stereotypes, those about The Military found in anthropological literature and discussions homogenize, globalize, and essentialize and are offered in an unselfconscious manner (Rubinstein 2003). Broad assertions stand in for ethnographically informed understandings of the different cultural practices and diversity among military communities. For instance, the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies at Fort Leavenworth runs a regular “Red Team” program that is intended to raise critiques of “operations, concepts, organizations, and capabilities in the context of the operational environment” (Fontenot 2007:1). Yet a recent anthropological article asserts “the issue is not working for the military *but rather the military itself*—that they require secrecy of findings, *reject internal criticism*, lack commitment to human rights issues and ethical values” (Sluka 2010; emphasis added).

8. “Applied” and “critical” medical anthropology are somewhat arbitrary labels and need not in fact be mutually exclusive but perhaps represent end points of a

continuum. Thus some work might appropriately be called “applied critical” medical anthropology or “critical applied” medical anthropology, as for example in Arachu Castro and Merrill Singer 2004 or Sandra Lane 2008. The continuous nature of engagement is discussed later.

9. Critics of anthropological involvement with some military programs often point out, as did the anonymous reviewer of this volume, that their opposition is to work that is tactical rather than strategic. The logic is that tactical programs “are controversial because they entail risk to informants.” The linkages between the tactical and strategic levels that I demonstrated through empirical work on peacekeeping suggest that both levels pose direct risks to informants. Thus this easy distinction between levels should provide cold comfort for anthropologists. The anonymous reviewer of this volume found the blurring of the tactical and strategic to be “interesting” but rejected it because the distinction is “very important in the context of anthropological ethics.” This intellectual move reminds me of episodes in the history of astronomy in which those comforted by the geocentric theory of planetary alignment resisted the Copernican revolution by recommitting themselves to astronomical theory that elaborated crystalline celestial spheres and epicycles to “save the phenomenon” (Kuhn 1957).

10. I subsequently learned that the objection was raised by Ralph Peters, a retired colonel and favorite analyst among military and security agencies.

11. Dominique Leydet, “Citizenship,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2006/entries/citizenship/>, accessed June 1, 2008).

12. One of the anonymous reviews of this volume suggested that this claim is undercut by the collaboration between the anthropological community and the Nazi state, as described by Tomforde (this volume). To the contrary, what Tomforde’s case study describes are the dangers of substituting political preferences for rigorous methodological, theoretical, and empirical analysis.

13. It is worth recalling that those anthropologists who participated on the poorly titled panel “The Empire Speaks Back” at the 2007 annual meeting of the AAA were called war criminals who should be barred from the association during the association’s business meeting. This is a serious allegation and was made without empirical basis. Yet neither the chair, nor any speaker from the floor, urged less inflammatory or more careful examination of that claim. Similarly, several articles reviewing military anthropology and anthropological cooperation with the military have painted with a very broad brush, engaging in a kind of guilt by association rhetoric (see, for example, Gusterson 2007; Keenan 2009; Sluka 2010). On military anthropology as a source of ritual pollution, see Keith Brown 2009 and Rubinstein 2009.