

Anthropological Research Methods in Practice (AHAN7014)

20 credits (at post-graduate level)

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Readings:

You will be provided with a range of relevant readings through Moodle along with a more general reading list for you to consult according to your interests (nb. Some sessions require you to do more readings than others, so please take this into account when planning your time). There will be some items listed in the bibliography which are not provided due to copyright restrictions. These are supplementary readings (so not compulsory) and you are recommended to either purchase these or borrow them from the Lampeter library if you feel you need further information.

The following title (which is available from Amazon), will serve you well as you progress through this module and onto your dissertation if you wish to purchase a 'textbook' for Research Methods.

Davis, C. A. 1999. *Reflexive Ethnography: Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. London: Routledge

And a useful edited volume, which is also readily available on Amazon is:

Amit, V. (ed.) 1999. *Constructing the Field. Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Contemporary World*. London: Routledge

Assessment:

- 1 x 3,000 word review essay (60%)
- 1 x 2,000 word funding proposal (40%)

For the review essay you are required to write a comparative critical review of two ethnographic monographs relating to your area of research – the review should focus on the research methods adopted by the authors. Please try to contextualise these two ethnographies in relation to wider reading and philosophical theory. If in doubt, just ask!

For the funding proposal, you will need to decide which funding body is most relevant for your dissertation research, and prepare a funding proposal in accordance with their criteria (for more details please see the last session).

You are requested to undertake some reflexive non-assessed exercises, which are flagged up in the lectures – there is no need to submit these, they are designed to help you think through the practical and theoretical issues raised.

There are a range of ethnographies which you should endeavour to read and refer to in order to support your own thoughts and observations. The following lists may be of use in this respect. As you read, try to compare the different methodologies and ethnographic styles employed by these authors. You can either buy copies of these ethnographies (e.g. from Amazon) or can request copies of titles we stock from the Lampeter library (if you reside within the EU). These lists are obviously not definitive, and at postgraduate level you are expected to show evidence of wide and thorough reading, so please feel free to source alternative titles:

MA Social Anthropology:

- Kirtsoglou, E. 2005. *For the love of women*. London: Routledge
- Mars, G. 1999. *Cheats at work: An anthropology of workplace crime*. Dartmouth
- Miller, D. 1998. *A theory of shopping*. London: Polity Press
- Okely, J. 1983. *The Traveller Gypsies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Stewart, C. 1991. *Demons and the Devil*. Princeton University Press
- Stoller, P. & Oakes, C. 1987. *In Sorcery's Shadow*. University of Chicago Press
- Sutton, D. 2001. *Remembrance of Repasts: An anthropology of food and memory*. Oxford: Berg
- Whyte, W. F. 1993. *Street Corner Society: The social structure of an Italian slum*. Chicago: Chicago University Press

MA Death Studies:

- Danforth, L. M. 1982. *The death rituals of rural Greece*. Princeton University Press
- Hodkinson, P. 2002. *Goth*. Oxford: Berg
- Panourgia, E. N. 1995. *Fragments of death, fables of identity : an Athenian anthropography*. The University of Wisconsin Press
- Scheper-Hughes, N. 1993. *Death Without Weeping: Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. University of California Press
- Seremtakis, N. 1991. *The last word: Women, death and divination in inner Mani*. University of Chicago Press
- Taussig, M. 2003. *Law in a Lawless Land: Diary of a Limpieza*. The New Press

MA Anthrozoology:

- Cassidy, R. 2002. *The sport of kings: Kinship, class and thoroughbred breeding in Newmarket*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Dransart, P. Z. 2002. *Earth, Water, Fleece and Fabric: A Long-term Ethnography of Camelid Herding in the Andes*. London: Routledge
- Morris, B. 2000. *The power of animals*. Oxford: Berg
- Morris, B. 2000. *Animals and Ancestors*. Oxford: Berg

Vitebsky, P. *Reindeer People. Living with animals and spirits in Siberia*. London: Harper Collins.

Willerslev, R. 2007. *Soul Hunters. Hunting, animism and personhood among the Siberian Yukaghirs*. California: Uni of California Press.

Session 1: Introduction

This module is designed to guide you through some key theoretical and practical issues involved in conducting ethnographic fieldwork by way of a series of short practical exercises combined with lectures and directed readings. You might already have conducted some form of fieldwork for your Independent Project (or other modules such as Medical Anthropology), however the IP in particular was a 'practice run', designed to allow you to learn using your own initiative. In preparation for your Dissertation however, you will need to fine tune your research techniques to enable you to get the most out of the time you have available, and develop an engaged awareness of some of the more complex theoretical issues.

Therefore you should regard your Independent Project research as an initiation ritual which marked the start of your journey towards becoming an experienced anthropologist. Indeed, you could certainly regard your entire MA programme as a rite of passage. At present you inhabit a 'liminal' area – you have conducted some fieldwork, but are still a comparative 'novice' with much to learn before you can make the final transition to a fully fledged anthropologist. This module will help you to achieve that goal.

This module will provide you with straightforward guidelines on how to conduct different types of research (e.g. interviews, participant observation and questionnaires), but the main aim is to introduce you to some additional theoretical debates which have developed as a result of different anthropologists' practical experiences of fieldwork. As you will see, there are differing opinions on the best way to conduct anthropological research, and contemporary (post-modern, reflexive) anthropology is very much concerned with pushing methodological boundaries and ensuring that anthropologists are aware of how their choice of methodology impacts on the data they are able to generate, and any subsequent conclusions they can draw.

Non-assessed Exercise 1:

According to Law "Methods, their rules, and even more methods' practices, not only describe but also help to *produce* the reality that they understand." (2004: 5). Based on your pre-existing knowledge of anthropological research methods, provide a brief discussion of this assertion with reference to any other material which you feel is relevant. OR Critically evaluate Law's assertion that "the 'research methods' passed down to us after a century of social science tend to work on the assumption that the world is properly to be understood as *a set of fairly specific, determinate, and more or less identifiable processes*." (2004: 5). You can access a chapter from Law's book via this link:

http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/reader/0415341752/ref=sib_dp_pt/026-4906553-6060416#reader-link

How did we get to where we're at?

Etymologically, anthropology is the study of man ('anthropos' = 'man' and 'logos' = 'knowledge of'), or at least it was initially, as this apocryphal quote which, depending on where you look, has been attributed to one of the discipline's earliest practitioners, Bronislaw Malinowski, demonstrates:

"Anthropology is the study of Man, embracing women."

Obviously this doesn't mean that anthropologists are exclusively concerned with the conduct of heterosexual relationships, but rather that at the time Malinowski was researching and writing up his ethnographic accounts of life in the field in the 1920s men were thought to be the dominant figures in any given society, and were therefore the primary focus of the anthropologist's attention.

To refresh your memories, Malinowski developed, during his time in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea, the fieldwork methodology which has been the cornerstone of the discipline for the last century. Malinowski argued that the only way to understand other cultures was via extended periods of participant observation

and, as a result of his initial 6 months of fieldwork in New Guinea, he also came to recognise the need to be able to communicate with people in their own language. However, and as the apocryphal quote above reveals to us in no uncertain terms, as a man, his physical body and his own cultural baggage meant that he was only granted access to half of his subjects of study – the Trobriand men.



We will briefly consider the issue of indirect communication in a later session, but even without that benefit, the body language in the above image (of Malinowski and one of his informants) is pretty straightforward for us to read. Malinowski, as a Westerner, is confident of his cultural dominance and 'superiority' over the native who is at one and the same time (as far as Malinowski was concerned) both vulnerable and 'savage' – demonstrated by his defensive body posture and comparative nakedness, which alienate him from the anthropologist and the anthropologist from him. Fortunately anthropologists have become more sensitive to how their physical presence may affect their informants and impact upon the data they are able to obtain, but it is as well to remember the ways in which our predecessors conducted themselves in the not too distant past.

This ethnocentric attitude towards subjects, and inherent gender bias was only really addressed when female anthropologists ventured into the same fields as their male predecessors, and were able to access the other half of the societies under study, who had previously been what Ardner terms a 'muted group' simply because they inhabited female bodies. For example, female anthropologist Annette Weiner's research on the Trobrianders over 50 years after Malinowski's, amply demonstrated how the gender of the ethnographer could engender the ethnography:

"My most significant point of departure from Malinowski's analysis was the attention I gave to women's productive work. In my original research plans, women were not the central focus of study, but on the first day I took up residence in a village I was taken by them to watch a distribution of their own wealth – bundles of banana leaves and banana fibre skirts – which they exchanged with other women in commemoration of someone who had recently died. Watching the event forced me to take women's economic roles more seriously than I would have from reading Malinowski's studies. Although Malinowski noted the high status of Trobriand women, he attributed their importance to the fact that Trobrianders reckon descent through women, thereby giving them genealogical significance in a matrilineal society. Yet he never considered that this significance was underwritten by women's own wealth because he did not systematically investigate the women's productive activities. Although in his field notes he mentions Trobriand women making these seemingly useless banana bundles to be exchanged at a death, his published work only deals with men's wealth.

My taking seriously the importance of women's wealth not only brought women as the neglected half of society clearly into the ethnographic picture but also forced me to revise many of Malinowski's assumptions about Trobriand men."

(Weiner, 1988: 5)

This was a hugely important turning point for the discipline as what Weiner discovered, through her direct interactions with Trobriand

women and her immersion in their lives, was that these women were engaged in the production and distribution of dried and carefully prepared bundles of banana leaves – to Malinowski, these bundles were 'seemingly useless' but thanks to her presence in the sphere of female activity, Weiner was able to recognise the social, economic and political significance of these exchanges, and the symbolic importance of the exchange items – the raw materials required to make female clothing.

Weiner was obviously only able to participate to a limited degree in these exchanges, but records with pride how she too became the recipient of women's wealth in recognition of her supportive role during the mortuary preparations (see Weiner 1988).

So, while anthropologists have always sought to participate to some degree in the day to day lives of their subjects of study, traditionally they would remain on the periphery of the society – for example, it would have been inappropriate for Weiner to have taken a more active role in the mortuary rites which her informants were engaged in (or would it?). However, there are various degrees of participant observation which anthropologists employ, according to the situations in which they find themselves, ranging from detached observer right through to total participant. What matters from the perspective of the reflexive ethnographer is that researchers are critically aware of the limitations of research methods, of their own prejudices and cultural background, and of their relationships with their informants. The level of immersion you choose to adopt as a researcher is obviously dependent on the situation you are studying – you would be less likely to become a complete participant if your subjects of study were Malawian prostitutes, for example, than if they were residents at the local Ashram.

However, what is important is that the option to participate as fully as possible brings with it an additional caveat which anthropological training seeks to address – how your presence as an observer impacts upon your subjects of study, on the way they conduct themselves and the way they interact with you. Indeed, this marks another rather significant event in anthropology's history - the

realisation that the anthropologist's body represents an important research tool which, provided it is utilised in a reflexive and informed manner, can facilitate understanding in ways which observation alone, or detached participant observation, cannot. These issues came to the fore in what is referred to as the 'reflexive turn' in anthropology (but it is also a process which has taken place in the other social sciences).

The reflexive turn emerged in response to 3 disciplinary 'crises' in anthropology in the 1960/70s:

1. the recognition that anthropologists were often complicit in the subjugation of indigenous peoples during colonial encounters (hence the dubious title which has been awarded to anthropology by post-colonial scholars 'the handmaiden of colonialism'.

Key texts: Asad (1973), Hymes (1999 [1974]), Scholt (1999 [1974]).

The paradigm shift is illustrated nicely by Scholte (1974: 438);

"Fieldwork and subsequent analysis constitute a unified praxis ... the ethnographic situation is defined not only by the native society in question, but also by the ethnological tradition 'in the head' of the ethnographer. Once he is actually in the field, the native's presuppositions also become operative, and the entire situation turns into complex intercultural mediation and a dynamic interpersonal experience."

Non-assessed exercise: Think about the implications of the realisations expressed by Scholte.

2. The impact of feminism on anthropological theory and method.

Perhaps the most famous example being Weiner's 'critique' and feminist revision of Malinowski's account of Trobriand life as outlined above.

3. The publication of Malinowski's diary which revealed a gulf between the practice of anthropology and the production of ethnographic texts.

Malinowski's diaries were published posthumously and revealed that even the doyen of social anthropology didn't find it so easy to practice what he preached (see Rapport 1990: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3033181?seq=1> and Malinowski 1989: http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Tu5-MtE-SVYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=malinowski+diary&hl=en&ei=y6TFTK6uHtDCswbRx6HaCA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Key texts: Crapanzano (1985) and Rabinow (1977).

We'll now examine a few 'postmodern' ethnographic examples taken from a range of different contexts to give you an idea of how anthropologists have attempted to conduct reflexive ethnography; The first quote comes from Lila Abu-Lughod who conducted fieldwork with the Egyptian Bedouin. Abu-Lughod was in the difficult position of having an American mother and Palestinian father but as a result of her father she was able to benefit from some degree of familiarity with the language and religious beliefs and customs of the Bedouin, and also benefited from him negotiating access on her behalf. Conscious that a young, single woman, travelling alone would raise eyebrows in the very traditional Bedouin community, Abu-Lughod's father accompanied his daughter into the field and 'entrusted' her into the care of the 'Haj' (head of the family with whom she was to stay). As a result she was accepted into the community as an adopted child, and subsequently benefited from a very experiential engagement with the Bedouin way of life which would have otherwise been denied her. However, her American heritage and upbringing had to be downplayed, as she was acutely aware that her hosts would not approve of, or understand, a lifestyle which was totally alien to their own:

"As I participated more fully in the community and loosened my ties to my other life, and as we came to share a common history

and set of experiences on which we could build relationships, I became the person that I was with them... Although there always remained an element of asymmetry in that I was writing about them and was observing perhaps a bit more closely than they were, for the most part I felt that we came together as individuals responding to situations in which we participated equally. This experience may correspond to what some other analysts of the fieldwork experience call the development of intersubjectivity.”

(Abu-Lughod, 1986: 18 – 19)

So, in real terms what anthropologists seek to achieve during their time in the field is the development of ‘intersubjectivity’ –the ability to understand, through subjective experience, another way of life. You would be correct in thinking that traditionally anthropologists following Malinowski have sought to present their informants’ lifestyles in an ‘objective’ fashion (see Okely 1992). However, methodologies and the theoretical ideas behind them are constantly ‘evolving’ as practicing anthropologists challenge and reformulate methodological approaches and disciplinary boundaries in response to their own experiences of the field.

Key reading: Aunger (1992): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2744226>

Session 2: Re-introducing ethnography

During the course of your studies you will have read numerous ethnographic monographs and articles which are the end products of specific periods of anthropological fieldwork. However, how much thought have you given to how the data presented in those ethnographies was actually obtained? I’d hazard a guess that ‘not much’ would be the answer in most cases. And there’s no reason for you to have considered methodology necessarily. Indeed, while some authors describe their methodologies in detail, others merely present their findings without going into the specifics of how they came to be conducting research in one particular area over another, or how they went about doing their actual fieldwork. But this is something which is changing as anthropologists become more reflexive in their

approach to fieldwork, and you may have noticed this difference between the ethnographies you have read depending on when they were written (i.e. pre or post reflexive turn).

Indeed, while Malinowski provided detailed guidelines for prospective anthropologists in the 1920s, there existed, until comparatively recently, the belief that anthropology should be conducted as an empirical 'science', with the subsequent ethnographic monograph presenting 'objective facts' about a particular society or cultural institution. Any talk of method would consequently be limited to a discussion of the logistics of being in the field. However, spurred on by the reflexive turn anthropologists and social theorists from cognate disciplines have sought to counter the 'myth' of objectivity (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1989 and Okely 1992) and consequently anthropologists are increasingly expected to discuss their methodology and their experiences of being in the field (see Davies, 1999). We will return to 'experience' again in a subsequent session, but for the time being you need to focus on how the methodology employed by particular anthropologists might have had an impact on the data they were able to obtain, and therefore any conclusions subsequently generated. A good - if somewhat popularist - account of the problems presented by fieldwork can be found in Nigel Barley's *The Innocent Anthropologist*, and in the following passage he describes how he ended up studying 'his people', the Dowayo of Cameroon:

"...my thesis had been written on Old English material in published and manuscript form. As I put it somewhat pretentiously then, I 'travelled in time, not space'. The phrase mollified my examiners, who nevertheless felt obliged to wag their fingers at me and warn me to work henceforth in more conventional geographic areas. I thus had no loyalties to any particular continent and, not having specialized at the undergraduate level, I was not repelled by any particular locale. Judging personally on the basis of completed work as the reflection of the people studied rather than as the image of those who had studied them, Africa seemed by far the duller continent...

... South America looked fascinating but I knew from colleagues that working there was notoriously difficult politically ... Oceania would be a soft option in terms of conditions of life but somehow all Oceanic studies ended up looking much the same. Aborigines seemed to have the monopoly on fiendishly complex marriage systems. India would be a splendid location but to do anything sensible would require sitting down for five years to learn enough languages to make any contribution at all. The Far East? I would go away and look up what I could...

... I spent the next few months noting stories of government harassment in the Indonesian area interspersed with general news stories of atrocities and destruction all over Asia. In the end, I tended rather towards Portuguese Timor. I knew well enough that I was interested in cultural symbolism and belief systems rather than in politics or urban socialization and Timor seemed to show all sorts of interesting possibilities, with its various kingdoms and prescriptive alliance systems, where marriage with a certain kin-class was required. It seems to be a rule of thumb that neat symbolic systems often turn up most clearly where such phenomena occur. I was about to settle down and work out a project when the newspapers suddenly became full of stories of civil war, genocide and invasion. Whites apparently went in fear of their lives, starvation loomed on the horizon. The trip was off...

....Rapid consultations with contacts in the trade suggested that I would do better to return to Africa where permission for research was less difficult and conditions more stable. I was directed towards the Bubis of Fernando Po. For those who have not come across Fernando Po, let me explain that it is an island off the coast of West Africa, a former Spanish colony and administered as part of Equatorial Guinea. I began to sniff around the literature. Everyone was highly uncomplimentary about Fernando Po and the Bubis... All in all a depressing prospect. Luckily for me, as I thought at the time, the local dictator began a policy of massacring his opponents, using the term in a very loose sense. I could no longer go to Fernando Po.

At this point another of my colleagues helped by pointing my attention to a strangely neglected group of mountain pagans

in North Cameroon. Thus I was introduced to the Dowayos who were to become 'my' people in love and hate from then on. Feeling a little like a ball in a pinball machine, I set off in quest of the Dowayos."

(Barley, N. 1983. *The Innocent Anthropologist*. London: Penguin: 11 - 12)

Non-assessed practical exercise 1:

Visit a place near your work or home for an hour or so (please choose a place which is relevant to your chosen MA programme, e.g. a cemetery, War Memorial or Garden of Remembrance for Death Studies, or a Supermarket or café for Social Anthropology – these are just illustrative examples, you can choose any relevant place you wish). Try to imagine you have never been there before. Think what key questions you might like to have answered by the people who are also using that space. What do you think would be the best way to obtain answers to your questions? Are there any ethical issues you would need to consider if you were to undertake formal research focussing on that particular place? What are your overall impressions (as an 'outsider') of the place? Do you find it difficult to imagine seeing a familiar place for the 'first time'?

These are all questions we will consider in more detail in the next session, but for the time being, please **read Narayan (1993) and Peirano (1998)**.

Key reading:

Narayan (1993): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/679656>

Peirano (1998): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/223365>

Non-assessed exercise 2: Write a short reflexive journal entry which considers the above questions. The journal entry should be written in an informal style (and can include drawings, brainstorming, lists etc), although please try to include references to supporting material wherever possible to demonstrate your awareness of wider issues.

Session 3: Conducting an anthropology of the 'familiar'

Many of you conducted research for your Independent Project and/or will conduct research for your dissertation in places which are considerably different to the areas which have traditionally be the focus of anthropological fieldwork. Indeed, there is no longer the impetus for anthropologists to go to 'exotic' locations, or to focus on remote small scale societies. Partly responsible for this change in focus is the fact that many anthropologists such as yourselves have other commitments – work, family or financial pressures restrict the amount of time we are able to spend in the field. However, there are also historical factors which have led to the study of the 'familiar' being an acceptable pursuit for anthropologists.

The discipline as we know it today, where ethnographic data is generated via extended periods of fieldwork based on participant observation, emerged largely as a reaction against armchair anthropologists such as Frazer and Tylor who theorised about exotic 'others' from the safety of their academic offices or colonial 'verandas' – they never ventured into the field, and consequently, their theories were based on the reports of missionaries, colonial officials, and on their own inherently ethnocentric preconceptions. These preconceptions were essentially products of the historical circumstances in which early anthropologists worked, and their theories were based on the tenets of social evolutionism, and the perceived cultural supremacy of the British (or European) Empire, in contrast to the 'primitive savages' who inhabited the colonies and beyond (see Pieterse, 1992 and Kuper, 1983 and 1988 for further background reading if necessary). So anthropology's fascination with the exotic other was based on the desire of Westerners, and mainly Europeans, to explain cultural difference, and promote Western cultural 'supremacy'.

These traditional subjects of anthropological study remained the discipline's primary focus until the 1940s, when post-war Europe started to take an interest in its internal affairs, and the services of anthropologists were called upon to monitor what Goddard, Llobera

and Shore (1994) refer to as the “vulnerable underbelly” of Europe. Elsewhere however, anthropological subjects remained ‘exotic’.

Now **read the article by Miner**

(<https://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/miner.html>), written in 1956, which demonstrates how anthropologists viewed the study of the very familiar ‘Nacirema’ tribe.

Indeed it wasn’t really until the 1960s/70s that, as part of the reflexive turn (remember the impetus of post-colonialism) Euro-America became a regular focus of anthropological enquiry. However there remained a reluctance amongst anthropologists to actually study familiar territory. Indeed the assumptions that anthropology was only proper anthropology if it was conducted abroad, in an unfamiliar context, combined with the belief that the ethnographer had to ‘suffer’, like his/her forefathers persisted amongst older generations of scholars and those with a more traditional outlook until comparatively recently. For example, according to Bloch in the late 1980s “If the study of Europe ... gets a toehold in anthropology departments it tends to rapidly push out studies of other societies because, frankly, such studies appear easier.” (Bloch, 1988: 19 – 20)

In terms of an anthropology of the ‘familiar’ the most important point to draw from an evaluation of the history of anthropology as a discipline, is that the majority of its practitioners have been educated Europeans or Americans, and, especially in the early days, men (obviously with regard to the latter, things have changed significantly in the last 50 years or so). However, the discipline remains inherently ethnocentric in the sense that its practitioners are still predominately westerners who seek an exotic ‘other’, but this, as people are coming to realise, is an unsatisfactory position:

“The avowed aim of anthropology to study all of humanity is spoiled if it excludes the Western “I” while remaining on the Western eye/gaze upon “others”.” (Okely 1996: 5)

Okely’s point is important, but the Western gaze could only be re-directed inwards once anthropologists had distanced themselves

from, or at least come to terms with, their preoccupation with an exotic other which Carrier discusses. **Now please read the articles by Carrier (1992: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/645033>) and Nader (1999: <http://www.aaas.org/spp/secretory/Presents/nader.htm> and if you can get hold of it, her paper in Hymes [1974] 1999.).**

The issues Carrier raises are fundamental because by searching out the 'exotic', anthropologists promote cultural difference, and present societies in an ahistorical way. Indeed, the history of the discipline can shed light on this fixation with difference, which didn't end when the West became the focus of attention. Instead, as we have already noted, anthropologists turned to peripheral, rural populations (the 'vulnerable underbelly'), especially in the Mediterranean and on what's known as the Celtic fringe – but why?

By focusing on the differences between rural, traditional communities and the rapidly expanding urban societies which were the true 'homes' of the anthropologists it was possible to maintain the discipline's exotic focus. Further the subsequent analyses rested on existing assumptions concerning the 'backwardness' of rural communities.

However, the importance of reflexivity to anthropological enquiry became increasingly prominent when studying closer to home. On the one hand, researchers sought cultural diversity, acknowledging that 'Europe' or 'America' or 'the West' is not a heterogeneous construct which can be essentialised as the likes of Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard had tried to do with 'the Trobrianders', and 'the Nuer', but they also sought to avoid the orientalising tendencies to which Carrier refers (see for example Sarah Green's study of a Lesbian community in London). Green was "warned about these 'Amazons' and [had] read numerous attacks against them, both in the popular media and in academic literature" (1997: 12 – see also Rapport 2002). The ultimate aim therefore was to attempt to ascertain common themes expressed in terms of what it means to be European, or American whilst celebrating the cultural diversity found within these continents.

So, we've ascertained that Europe and America or indeed anywhere else are now accepted foci of anthropological enquiry, and briefly considered the reasons for the discipline's reluctance to look inwards, but is that all we mean by an anthropology of the familiar or 'anthropology at home'? – that Europe or America or the West is the focus of anthropological enquiry? This definition is obviously problematic as it rests on the assumption that all anthropologists are Westerners, and fails to consider varying degrees of familiarity between researchers and their subjects of study.

For discussion purposes we can identify 5 types of ethnographic endeavour which fall under the rubric of 'anthropology at home', but in varying degrees:

1. 'Western' anthropologists studying in 'the West'
2. Anthropologists studying in their country of birth
3. Anthropologists studying in their country of birth, but amongst a sub-culture with which they have no meaningful previous association
4. Anthropologists studying in their country of birth amongst a sub-culture with which they are familiar
5. Anthropologists studying in the community in which they reside, before, during and after fieldwork.

Non-assessed exercise:

Write an ethnographic overview of a hobby or activity you do regularly. As this activity will be familiar to you, you will be an 'insider' and therefore you will need to consider the implications of this status (use Hodkinson or any other appropriate example as a comparative for your account).

Conducting anthropology 'at home':

Please read the article by Barry (2002):

[http://www.anthropologymatters.com/index.php?journal=anth_matte rs&page=article&op=view&path\[\]=131](http://www.anthropologymatters.com/index.php?journal=anth_matte rs&page=article&op=view&path[]=131)

Before proceeding any further with this discussion we really need to engage with the term 'home', to ascertain exactly what we mean by it, and therefore what constitutes anthropology at home. Rather surprisingly, it is one of the discipline's traditional 'exoticists' to whom we will now turn: Without realising it, Evans-Pritchard made some relevant connections before the term 'anthropology at home' had ever been coined, when discussing what 'home' is for the Nuer:

"What does a Nuer mean when he says, 'I am a man of such-and-such a *cieng*'? *Cieng* means 'home', but its precise significance varies with the situation in which it is spoken. If one meets an Englishman in Germany and asks him where his home is, he may reply that it is England. If one meets the same man in London and asks him the same question he will tell one that his home is in Oxfordshire, whereas if one meets him in that county he will tell one the name of the town or village in which he lives. If questioned in his town or village he will mention his particular street, and if questioned in his street he will indicate his house. So it is with the Nuer. A Nuer met outside Nuerland says that his home is *cieng Nath*, Nuerland... If one asks him in his tribe what is his *cieng*, he will name his village or tribal section according to the context... If asked in his village he will mention the name of his hamlet or indicate his homestead or the end of the village in which his homestead is situated... The variations in the meaning of the word *cieng* are not due to the inconsistencies of language, but to the relativity of the group-values to which it refers." (Evans-Pritchard, 1940: 136)

What, then, constitutes anthropology 'at home'? Do any of the aforementioned categories stand up to scrutiny? Are there other terms which are potentially more meaningful? (e.g. 'native anthropology' or 'insider anthropology').

Session 4: 'Native' ethnography:

Before proceeding, **please read Albera (1988: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2803259>) and Ohnuki-Tierney (1984: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/644634>).**

I am only too aware that many of the students taking this module will not be European or American. This is obviously a very positive development, yet the discipline is only just starting to address the issues raised when individuals whose ancestors were formerly the subjects of anthropological enquiry become anthropologists themselves. How (if at all) does the experience of the 'native' anthropologist differ to that of the Western anthropologist conducting fieldwork 'at home'? I would venture that it doesn't in methodological terms. What is important to note is that anthropology of the 'familiar', regardless of the researcher's cultural background, can, as Albera notes, yield a greater insight into the society under study, provided the researcher is aware of the inherent problems which can occur when the 'familiar' is taken for granted.

Therefore, as Cassidy asserts (see below), we, as anthropologists, have to be aware of our preconceptions and how they impact on our research – in other words, reflexivity becomes even more relevant when conducting an anthropology of the familiar. As Hastrup notes of her own research 'among friends' "Knowledge blindfolded me, I took 'evidence' for granted" (Hastrup, 1987: 104).

"If 'anthropology at home' refers to a purely geographical notion of 'inside Britain, Europe, or North America', then it is merely uninformative. However, if it implies something more profound, such as a sharing of concepts significant to the conduct of anthropology in that area, then I believe that it is misleading. It is not necessary to leave the society in which one feels 'at home' in order to question the founding principles of that society, whilst, as McDonald has argued, it is possible to go to any distant society, only to return with fulfilled and unquestioned expectations. ('We now realise, I think, that some anthropology never left home, or never really returned with its home categories and values seriously challenged in any way other than that in which we expected them to be disturbed. We expected the natives to have lots of ritual, religion, kinship, metaphor, myth and meaning, and that is what we found' (McDonald 1987: 123).") (Cassidy, 2002: ix)

Anthropology of the familiar therefore is inextricably linked to reflexivity, as when studying 'at home' or as 'natives' anthropologists are required to put into practice the central tenets of a reflexive paradigm, and in both there is the potential for greater understanding, but also greater mystification as the following quote from Strathern suggests:

"Two sets of commonly made assumptions are:

1. That, as ethnographers, anthropologists on familiar terrain will achieve a greater understanding than elsewhere, because they do not have to surmount linguistic and cultural barriers. Greater understanding may appear as immeasurably enriching, or as immeasurably trivializing, but in either case the amount of information to be gained by an insider augments what people know about themselves, or what can be learned about the total society in aggregate.
2. That the systematizing anthropological enterprise will be exposed for the contrivance it is everywhere. It makes the commonplace complex, its systematizations not revealing anything more than everyone knew anyway and amounting to a set of unnecessary mystifications." (Strathern, M. 1987: 17)

Read the selection of articles on the Anthropology Matters website (relating to Vol. 6) – especially (Hovland 2004):

http://www.anthropologymatters.com/index.php?journal=anth_matters&page=issue&op=view&path%5B%5D=21

So there are problems with studying at home or as a 'native': Firstly, anthropological training by and large teaches students to do exactly what Carrier warns against – to search for the 'other', and to look for cultural difference. But also problematic is the fact that conventional training assumes fieldwork will occur where the anthropologist is removed from home, and so can concentrate efforts exclusively on his/her subjects of study. If anthropologists are literally conducting research 'at home', or near to where they live, then they often have to leave the field to attend to family, work etc. which raises issues of continuity, levels of participation etc.

As we have already noted, the danger of studying the familiar is that we overlook important features of the culture because of an over familiarity; we take for granted certain aspects. Hastrup also argues that the gender of the anthropologist becomes more of a signifier of difference when conducting anthropology in a familiar environment, because in an 'alien' context, there is more to differentiate the anthropologist, to mark him or her out as an outsider, and consequently he/she is able to move between the male and female spheres with greater ease.

But are these considerations necessarily 'problems' and if so, how can they be overcome?

This is where reflexivity comes in – a reflexive approach enables the researcher to shed their cultural baggage on entering the field, and view the situation with fresh eyes. Reflexivity is also concerned with confronting preconceptions, as often the anthropologist in question will be studying a society which although could be geographically regarded as home, is ideologically totally alien (e.g. Obeyesekere).

In a familiar setting, anthropologists have greater opportunity to participate, rather than simply observe, and in a 'home' context, it is more probable that informants will contribute to the analysis and interpretation of the data, more so perhaps than the traditional subjects of anthropological study who were disempowered because they lacked the necessary linguistic, literary and technological skills or tools to engage with the anthropologist and the ethnographic text. We will return to this in a later session.

The round trip:

In theory, anthropologists go on a circular journey when conducting fieldwork – they start at home, enter the field, then return home, so the fieldwork destination should be irrelevant. As Cassidy notes of her own study of the horse racing industry in the UK:

"I chose not to describe this thesis as an example of 'anthropology at home'. In Newmarket, I was 'at home' in relation to my nationality,

skin colour, upbringing and affinity with horses. I was also, of course, not 'at home' because I was always a member of a community of anthropologists, that membership being the purpose of my presence in Newmarket." (2002: ix)

Therefore as Cassidy's quote suggests, the anthropologist is always an anthropologist and so should be able to turn his or her hand to study whatever situation they are presented with. As a final thought, consider the following point presented by Cohen: "any mind beyond the ethnographer's own is Other and, therefore, requires to have interpretive work done on it." (Cohen, 1990: 205)

Non-assessed exercise:

Do you agree with Cohen's statement? What issues does this position raise?

Now read the article by Moore (2004):

http://promusica.se/Library/Electronic%20texts/Moore_2004.pdf and
'Constructing the field' by Amit by following this link:
http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/reader/0415198305/ref=sib_dp_pt/026-4906553-6060416#reader-page

Session 5: Fieldwork realities: Politics, power and subjectivity

As we have already noted, while Carrier (1992) argues that anthropologists 'construct' an 'orientalised' other, it is also reasonable to suggest that the subjects of ethnographic research are just as guilty of ascribing an identity to the researcher (see for example Pina-Cabral, 1992). This is certainly the case in research situations where the subjects of study have some preconceived (and usually outdated) ideas relating to what anthropology is all about (cf. McKechnie, 1997 and Hendry, 1992), or where the researcher is obviously 'different' and therefore a total 'outsider' as was the case with traditional ethnographic studies, such as Evans-Pritchard's work in the Sudan. As Hastrup observes (1987), this can hinder the effectiveness of the research process, and have a distorting effect on the resulting data obtained during fieldwork. As we have already established, the adoption of a reflexive approach to fieldwork is one way to counter this tendency, but another which is particularly suited to short term fieldwork is to join in with fieldwork activities as an **embodied participant**. In other words, to become an informant yourself. Some anthropologists have adopted this approach by accident. For example, during her research on witchcraft amongst the Bocage in rural France, Favret-Saada (1980: 22) found that "To understand the meaning of this discourse there is no other solution but to practice it oneself, to become one's own informant, to penetrate one's own amnesia, and to try and make explicit what one finds unstateable in oneself."

Another example is that of Stoller (1984: 110) who became a sorcerer's apprentice whilst studying the Songhay in Nigeria. Stoller became a 'victim' of sorcery which made him seriously reconsider his ideas relating to Songhay culture and belief; "Once the anthropological writer has experienced "the inside" or "the place where logic bites its own tail," the discourse of ethnographic realism is no longer completely adequate... Having crossed the threshold into the Songhay world of magic, and having felt the texture of fear and the exaltation of repelling the force of a sorcerer, my view of Songhay culture could no longer be one of structuralist, a symbolist, or a Marxist. Given my intense experience ... I will need in future

works to seek a different mode of expression, a mode in which the event becomes the author of the text and the writer becomes the interpreter of the event who serves as an intermediary between the event (author) and the readers... Anthropological writers should allow the events of the field – be they extraordinary or mundane – to penetrate them. In this way the world of the field cries out silently for description and ... the anthropological writer, using evocative language, brings life to the field and beckons the reader to discover something new.”

Therefore subjective, embodied participation goes hand in hand with an autobiographical approach to writing ethnography.

Now read the article by Bowman (1998:

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/sac/departments/staff/bowman/Radical%20Empiricism.pdf>).

Researchers are increasingly recognising that ethnographic fieldwork is inherently subjective, and that the experiences of the fieldworker should therefore be part and parcel of the research process. This is not a new idea per se, as Turner (1992), taking her lead from Burhoe’s (1974) discussion of objectivity, states in her study of Ndembu healing rituals, that it was through subjective emersion, or radical empiricism, that she attempted to “portray the objective world built up from the private “plane of perceptual experiences” (Burhoe, 1974: 25 – 26, in Turner, E. 1992: 161) which resulted in the sharing of ‘a common perception.’ (ibid.). This approach has been frowned on by traditionalists and is only now really coming to the fore. However, the role of ‘insider’ is obviously not without its problems. Not, necessarily because “However much one moves in the direction of participation, it is always the case that one is still both an outsider and an observer...” (Rabinow, 1977: 79 – 80), but because, as Hodkinson ((2002: 4) following Song and Parker, 1995: 243) notes “the complexity and instability of contemporary identities and groupings makes the idea that a researcher can occupy the position of ‘insider’ a little hazardous.” Hodkinson makes the valuable observation that experience of any ‘scene’ (or indeed, sub-culture) “is liable to [be] experienced in different ways by different people” (ibid)

which makes ethnography focused on subjective experience a more realistic and meaningful endeavour. Indeed, it could be argued that we are only ever really capable of translating our own experiences, and so it could then be argued that we are not really qualified to speak for our informants (cf. the essentialist attempts by early anthropologists to capture what it meant to be 'a Trobriand Islander' or 'an Azande' or 'a Nuer'). Hence the post-modernist move towards autobiographical anthropology, – reflexive ethnography or auto-ethnography (see Reed-Danahay, 1997 and Ellis, 2004).

As the sociologist Max Weber noted, somewhat ahead of his time, sociology "concern[s] itself with the interpretive understanding of social action [and] empathetic or appreciative accuracy is attained when, through sympathetic participation, we can adequately grasp the emotional context in which the action took place." (1978: 4-5). Anthropologists we are also concerned with being able to 'adequately grasp' social action. Therefore in the pursuit of 'verstehen' (the term used by Weber to refer to this interpretative understanding) ethnographers can feel justified in abandoning detached, scientific objectivity and embracing subjective interpretation resulting from individual experience that is symbolically mediated through interactional exchanges with informants, therefore broaching the 'emic and etic' divide. This sentiment, and that of Turner's radical empiricism, is echoed more recently by Okely:

"Long-term immersion through fieldwork is generally a total experience, demanding all of the anthropologist's resources; intellectual, physical, emotional, political and intuitive. The experience involves so much of the self that it is impossible to reflect upon it fully by extracting that self. Under pressure to be 'scientifically objective', anthropologists have traditionally compartmentalised that fieldwork experience." (Okely, 1992: 8)

Therefore experience and embodied participation are also inextricably linked: "there is one specific kind of natural resemblance among men [and women] that all human beings recognise, and which permits effective comparison across the divides of culture and language. The locus of this resemblance is provided by the human body, the one

thing in nature that is internally experienced, the only object of which we have subjective knowledge." (Needham, 1972: 139), or, as Merleau-Ponty (1962: 186) recognized "it is through my body that I understand other people, just as it is through my body that I perceive things" and for Ferrell and Hamm a methodological approach which allows such embodied participation "frees field researchers to embrace the situated meanings generated by their subjects and themselves; to value the insights and understandings gained from shared emotion; to explore the lived politics of pleasure and pain, fear and excitement; to "think with the body" as well as the mind." (1998: 14)

Non-assessed practical exercise:

Try something new! Either a new food, drink or do something you've never done before (e.g. diving off the high board at the swimming pool).

Non-assessed exercise: Now write a reflexive journal entry which describes your 'new experience' in detail.

Thinking outside the box:

As Law (2004) asserts, traditional research methodologies are simply not equipped to deal with certain epistemologies. In other words, some social phenomena exist just beyond the reach of the conventional ethnographic method (2004: 2). We can therefore question the feasibility of providing a true and valid 'essence' of a society or cultural phenomena. Consequently, as Crick suggests, "the most important kind of ethnographic data is what is going on *inside* the researcher." (1992: 175), because that is all we can be *sure* of;

"The importance of the 'self' in the process of fieldwork and interpretation should be obvious to anyone who takes the semantic discussion of anthropology half seriously. If the 'self' is the research instrument, any piece of research is suitable for an exercise in the sociology of knowledge (Gould 1975: 64 – 65): why *this* research problem, why *this* interpretative frame, why *this* chief informant? If

participant observation is ultimately grounded in human-inter-subjectivity (Alder & Alder 1987: 31), we clearly need to understand our ethnographic products in terms of the producers and the production process, that is to say in terms of ourselves, our informants and the specific contexts in which encounters have taken place (Dumont 1978: 96, 199). If much that we call 'method' has characteristics of a 'reaction formation' designed to protect the investigator from anxiety in the face of social phenomena (Devereux 1967), then clearly a most important kind of ethnographic data is what is going on *inside* the researcher. If anthropology is about 'otherness', any definition of our subject matter necessarily involves a corresponding self-definition. The fact that anthropology has always been implicitly about 'ourselves' is now clear; what is required is that the implicit become explicit (Crick 1976: 153, 1982: 228, 307 – 8). We require that our 'selves' become objects for scrutiny in the same way that our research has rendered 'objects' those other selves with whom we have interacted in the field." (Crick, 1992: 175)

Non-assessed exercise: Produce a reflexive journal entry which recounts a formative event or experience in your life. Include in it a discussion of how you experienced the event – emotionally and physically – and how that embodied experience contributed to your understanding of what was going on.

Session 6: Culturally determined knowledge and sensory perception

Aside from individual interpretations of the same event, which we noted in the previous session, it is also of fundamental import to note that perception and experience will be, to a large extent, culturally determined. This is where anthropological training can prove to be invaluable in creating awareness of the different ways in which events or cultural phenomena are perceived in other cultures, as well as providing the necessary models to enable you to theoretically ground your own experiences. For example, as Herzfeld notes "sensory perception is a cultural as well as a physical act: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell are not only means of apprehending physical phenomena but are also avenues for the transmission of

cultural values... smell, for example, creates social boundaries not because some smells are naturally bad, but because they are culturally constructed as such.” (2001: 241) A good example of this would be the Dorian fruit, which has an extremely pungent aroma. In Westerners this smell induces reactions of disgust and revulsion, but for people in Southeast Asia where the fruit grows, it is greeted with enthusiasm – demonstrating that smell, along with “aesthetic judgement”, and even individual perception, is culturally relative (ibid).

Non-assessed exercise: Ask 5 people (friends, family members, work colleagues or even people on the street) which of their senses they rely on most heavily in their day to day lives. Then ask them to explain why they chose this sense over their other senses. Write up the responses you have generated. Can you form any conclusions?

As reflexive anthropologists we are constantly reminded of how our own cultural baggage impacts on our understanding or perception of other cultures. We may not perceive things in the same way as other people, yet one thing which we are able to do is empathize with our fellow human beings, right? Not necessarily, for as Milton points out, we cannot observe what people are really feeling (and this brings us back to Cohen’s point, raised above, that “any mind beyond the ethnographer’s own is ‘Other’.”): “When we think someone looks frightened, what we observe are the physical signs that make up the emotion that produces a feeling of fear. We assume, on the basis of what we observe, that the person feels fear, but we cannot observe that feeling directly.” (Milton, 2005)

Indeed, the wealth of recent work on the senses and emotions reveals that “different societies, groups and individuals have different ways of displaying their feelings. In some cultures and contexts anger is expected to be expressed through shouting and physical violence; in others a tight-lipped silence is considered more appropriate. In some cultures, grief is expressed in apparently uncontrolled and potentially dangerous behaviour towards self and others; elsewhere it might be expressed through a withdrawal from the world, refusal to eat, reluctance to be with others.” (ibid.)

Milton uses the example of different attitudes towards the environment to illustrate how emotions and feelings are shaped by personal experience, asking why do some people care about the world around them, and seek to protect it, while others seem intent on destroying precious natural resources? However, another good (if at first glance seemingly unlikely) example comes from Rosaldo's (2004) ethnographic discussion of the Ilongot interplay between rage and grief. For the Ilongot, grief, following the death of a kinsman/woman, could only traditionally be allayed by the act of headhunting. Rosaldo found the Ilongot's position incomprehensible, because, as a Westerner, he had been culturally conditioned to experience grief in a particular way, and his suggestion that the act of headhunting had its basis in exchange - as a retributive act, was met with total resistance by his Ilongot informants. It was not until Rosaldo experienced the loss of someone very close to him whilst conducting research among a neighboring group in the Philippines that he was able to appreciate the emotional state that Ilongot grief induced.

Now read the article by Rosaldo

(<http://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=YVyFcM6akOUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA150&dq=rosaldo+grief+and+a+headhunter%27s+rage&ots=3O0HmemOW-&sig=tfZF6uysTFytwBEORW2lZdAqTjA#v=onepage&q=rosaldo%20grief%20and%20a%20headhunter's%20rage&f=false>) for yourself.

This article is also useful as it reinforces the idea that experience is the most valuable tool when it comes to understanding the world view of other people, especially people whose behavior or beliefs might seem to exist, as in the case of headhunting, in direct opposition to the anthropologist's own. However, what this article also clearly demonstrates is how to combine traditional anthropological methodologies with personal experience. THIS IS IMPORTANT!

Cultural classification in the field:

This leads us into an important thematic area in anthropology – the way that different cultures classify the world around them, and how these systems of classification are translated through a range of cultural symbols. Mary Douglas' seminal work on symbolic classification is useful when it comes to understanding how our informants perceive the world through their bodies as well as their minds:

"The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious. The body is a complex structure. The functions of its different parts and their relation afford a source of symbols for other complex structures. We cannot possibly interpret rituals concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body." (Douglas, 1976: 115)

In her work on body symbolism, Douglas has demonstrated how purity rules surrounding the body can be connected to social structure or cultural expectations. Take, for example, the caste structure in India. Traditionally, Hindus are expected to interact within and between their social group or caste according to a strict and carefully regulated (via social sanctions) hierarchical structure, which places Brahmins (the priestly caste) at the top, and 'untouchables' at the bottom (or actually outside of the caste system altogether). Untouchables, or *achuta* are classified according to their occupations, which deal with death (such as leatherworking) and bodily functions, and are therefore regarded as both polluted and polluting;

"The strength of the danger of pollution is evident in the existence of a caste of untouchable people who are employed specifically to protect others. They sweep, clear sewage, deal with dead animals, and make leather goods, all tasks which are thought to be polluting for those of other castes. Brahmins, for example, must have nothing

to do with excrement, an idea so firmly engrained that a Brahmin girl in England who was working in a nursery preferred to alienate all her workmates rather than break the taboo and agree to change the nappies of her charges." (Hendry, 1999: 40).

As this anecdote from Hendry nicely illustrates, the interactions between members of different castes are governed according to very strict symbolic rules relating to culturally accepted ideas of purity and pollution:

"Precise regulations give the kinds of indirect contact which may carry pollution. A Havik [Brahmin], working with his untouchable servant in his garden may become severely defiled by touching a rope or bamboo at the same time as his servant. It is simultaneous contact with the bamboo or rope which defiles. A Havik cannot receive fruit or money directly from an Untouchable. But some objects stay impure and can be conductors of impurity even after contact. Pollution lingers in cotton cloth, metal cooking vessels, cooked food. Luckily for collaboration between the castes, ground does not act as a conductor. But straw which covers it does." (Douglas, 1976: 34)

Both of these examples reveal that culture is often grounded in symbolic systems, which are culturally relevant (and which may not be immediately obvious to the anthropologist). When considering the differences between Hindu ideas relating to purity and pollution and that of Westerners, Douglas asks "Are our ideas [i.e. Western ideas, grounded in science] hygienic while theirs are symbolic?" Her answer is an emphatic "No!" (Bowie, 2000: 47)

Our ideas as anthropologists, even our ideas of 'dirt' are also symbolic – all that is different is the way in which the symbolic boundaries are drawn in relation to the constituent components. As Bowie (2000: 47) notes, Western "ideas of dirt have been transformed in the past one hundred years or so by a knowledge of *pathogenicity* – the existence of germs and their role in the transmission of disease – hence ... our perception of dirt as a matter of hygiene. This is, however, only part of the story. It does not

account for much of our behavior and systems of classification of dirt and pollution. Nor did these notions of dirt and pollution only come into existence with knowledge of germ theory. " This observation led Douglas to conclude that "If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notions of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place" (Douglas, 1976: 35) where things become polluting (or socially unacceptable) when they are at odds with an ordered set of culturally constructed social relations.

This observation becomes particularly important when we, as anthropologists venture into the field to study another culture, and demonstrates why anthropological training is useful for anyone intending to study other cultures - while we are all capable of experiencing, experience is individualistic in the sense that no two people will experience an event in the same way, and many of our inherent markers of experience are the result of cultural conditioning.

Please read the article by Vitebsky

(<http://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ic23MtpABKIC&oi=fnd&pg=PA100&dq=vitebsky+is+death+the+same+everywhere&ots=xWmGWSXy8F&sig=TUI0i8gANFFTGNsIaAxsVoOaUng#v=onepage&q=vitebsky%20is%20death%20the%20same%20everywhere&f=false>)

So, to return to the example of Dorian fruit, the simultaneous revulsion or delight an encounter with this object induces "... is an extension ... of Mary Douglas's ... insight that "dirt" is a matter of cultural categories rather than of biological fact (Douglas 1996), as is indeed suggested by the association of the less recordable senses with concepts of pollution and cleanliness – a bad smell, a disgusting sound, a slimy touch. Like the notion of order that defines dirt, the experience of the senses is calibrated to the 'common sense' – to the accepted range of what is self-evident' (Douglas, 1975) – in any given society." (Hertzfeld, 2001: 241), hence the underlying importance of anthropological training and reflexive awareness when it comes to decoding cultural meaning.

Session 7: Reading between the lines: Indirect communication in fieldwork

Something else which anthropologists need to consider when in the field, and which ties in with both the central premise of reflexivity and a sensory and experiential research methodology is the issue of indirect communication. Indeed, it is often only when anthropologists enter the field and commence their fieldwork that they realise the immense significance of unspoken rules and the expectations of informants (such as the purity and pollution rules in India discussed in the previous session). They may also find themselves placed in difficult or compromising situations, or be struck by the realisation that their informants are only telling them partial truths. But how are we, as researchers, to deal with such occurrences? Can we ever hope to successfully 'second guess' our informants and interpret the various forms of indirect communication which we encounter in the course of our research? As the following example demonstrates, it is important that we, as anthropologists are aware of these cultural subtleties; "Consider a wink and an involuntary eye twitch. As physical events, they may be identical – measuring them will not distinguish the two. One is a signal, in a code of meanings Americans [amongst others] share (but which presumably would be unintelligible to Inuits or Australian Aborigines); the other is not. Only in a universe of shared meanings do physical [actions] and events become intelligible and convey information." (Keesing & Strathern, 1998: 18).

We certainly need to be able to come to some understanding, and anthropologists conduct ethnographic fieldwork to help them get a clearer understanding of their subjects of study, following Malinowski's espousal of the benefits of long-term immersion in the field, of communicating in the native language, participating, observing, engaging in in-depth conversations, or even direct questioning. As Hendry and Watson rather cynically put it, we are "given the task of finding out important, often secret, information" and to do so we "employ a variety of techniques and methods, the primary one being to work [ourselves] into the confidence of significant individuals who have the required information and elicit it

from them.” (2001: 1). This is all well and good, provided the methods employed are ethically sound (**see the ASA guidelines: <http://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.htm>**), but what guarantee does the anthropologist have that he or she is being told the truth? And do our informants necessarily have all the answers anyway?

Indeed, it is an established fact that people don't always want others to know the intricacies of their private lives, as Punch notes “some dissimulation is intrinsic to social life and, therefore, also to fieldwork” (1998: 172). There are, however, methodologies which can be employed to help researchers read between the lines. In fact, anthropologists by necessity have to become as proficient in deciphering what goes unsaid as what is said, because in essence when we analyse our experience of another culture we are frequently reading meaning where participants take their actions for granted.

It is also true that certain symbols, objects, behaviours or actions can be consciously imbued with meaning, and therefore communicate unspoken messages to those ‘in the know’. For example, the presentation of gifts in Japanese society is highly ritualised and governed by rules which may not initially be easily discerned by outsiders. While the act of giving may appear to be altruistic, there are social expectations which compel people to give and receive gifts which carry other, often implicit meanings. Another example, also from Japan, is that of tattooing; “Tattoos in Japan are also extremely elaborate, and although covering much of the body, they may be entirely concealed by clothes. This situation, along with a strong association of tattoos with the gang world, allows for a very powerful shock if they are suddenly revealed” (Hendry & Watson, 2001: 7 – 8). The indirection associated with this example is clear – tattoos in Japan have strong negative associations, and therefore people hide them from others to protect themselves from these associations. But not every example is so clear cut, and so Hendry and Watson ask why people consciously engage in indirection? (i.e. why not explicitly state the intention and forsake the charade of the indirect exchange?)

Some of the following explanations, based on those proposed by Hendry and Watson could account for much of our indirect communication. We (or our informants) engage in indirection:

- to avoid offending
- to offend
- to avoid embarrassment
- to embarrass
- to entertain
- to keep the peace
- to provoke
- to get the upper hand
- to exclude
- to include
- to strengthen group cohesion

I'm sure you can personally think of examples where you have been indirect (or have been conscious that others are being indirect) in a social situation because of one (or more) of the reasons listed above. But this still doesn't really answer the question of why humans the world over find it so hard to be direct in their dealings with each other. As anthropologists we seek to contextualise behaviour in the social situation in which it presents itself, so for us, understanding indirection is heavily contingent on the context in which it occurs. Through our engagement in fieldwork we are in a good position to be able to observe in what specific situations indirection occurs, between which individuals, and therefore formulate some explanations as to why. As Cormaroff and Cormaroff (1992: 10 – 11) note; "In order to construe the gestures of others, their words and winks and more besides, we have to situate them within the systems of signs and relations, of power and meaning, that animate them. Our concern ultimately is with the interplay of such systems – often relatively open systems – with the persons and events they spawn; a process that need privilege neither the sovereign self nor stifling structures."

Non-assessed exercise:

Write a short reflexive account of an occasion (or more than one occasion) where you have experienced indirect communication (either as a communicator, recipient, or both).

Reading: (Bourque 2001).

This is one example of indirect communication which you may well come across during your own fieldwork, and it clearly demonstrates the importance of anthropology when it comes to deciphering behaviours or expectations which could otherwise cause offence. However, it could certainly be argued that ritual and ceremonial events or performances also constitute indirect, non-verbal communication which we, as anthropologists, are charged with unravelling. As Geertz asserted (1973: 448), with reference to Balinese cockfights, performances are stories people “tell themselves about themselves.” However, understanding the story is contingent on sharing the same points of reference as the storyteller.

Public events and communicating indirectly:

According to Handleman (1998: 9) there are numerous reasons for studying public [ritualised] events or performances. However, for our current purpose, it is the perspectives of Turner and Geertz which are most relevant. For example, Turner emphasises “the necessity for cognitive and emotional experience that can be known to a people only through the doing, the enactment, of dramatic performance”, whilst Geertz stresses the narrative quality of such events, the “meaning that events provide or make accessible to their participants.” As Handleman notes; “events are important phenomena because they constitute dense concentrations of symbols and their associations, that are of relevance to a particular people. It is in various public occasions that cultural codes – usually diffused, attenuated, and submerged in the mundane order of things – lie closest to the behavioural surface. Here they are most graspable in various sensory and cognitive modalities, not only by natives but also by ethnographers. To put this otherwise: cultural information makes sense best when imparted through occasions that are set up to do this kind of coded, communicative work. The analyst mines these rich

veins of cultural intricacy for insights into the very premises of a people – of their cosmologies, world views, and values. For the ethnographer, public events are privileged points of penetration into other social and cultural universes.” (ibid.)

However, such a position fails to consider, as we have, the individuality of experience, and therefore almost unlimited versions of events. In response Handleman suggests “this multitude of possibilities points up the need for ethnographic strategies that will compare events intra-culturally, and so too their versions of order.” (ibid.) Think about how you might compare your own individual experience of an event with that of other participants (or spectators) when you go on to conduct the research for your dissertation, or for the practical exercise outlined below.

Non-assessed practical exercise:

Visit a public event or performance (e.g. football match or other sporting event, festival, concert etc) and observe/participate as much as you are able or feel comfortable. Think about how you could interpret what is going on around you – for example, who are the other people attending, participating? What might be their motivations for doing so? How is the ritual/event important to them as individuals? How does the ritual/event serve to reaffirm community or group identity/solidarity? Do you think there are underlying meanings which the participants may not be consciously aware of? How legitimate is it for anthropologists to intellectualise such events?

Please now read the article by Morphy (1994):

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2803513>

One case study example of a public event is the practice of fox hunting in the UK. Anthropologist Garry Marvin (2000) has observed this highly ritualised activity and presents an analysis of the unconscious structure of the hunt which goes beyond what the participants themselves perceive to be the underlying motivations for their actions. He argues, based on his reading of the indirect

meanings communicated in hunting ceremonial, that the fox is hunted because it is 'anomalous' or 'subversive'.

Now read the chapter by Marvin (2000:

http://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=99hD6OzfbCYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA189&dq=marvin+fox+hunting&ots=pz_uVRsVL&sig=Chxq2fIXPtT_sdhAvPEzpM8hSw#v=onepage&q=marvin%20fox%20hunting&f=false) and think about how Marvin's findings might differ to

those held by people for whom hunting is a way of life, and who participate in the hunt either on horse back, or on foot, or in a vehicle. How might their experience of the event be understood? What if they don't keep livestock themselves? Are Marvin's conclusions really applicable to all participants?

What you need to aim for then, when conducting your own field research, is to ground your own experience in relation to that of your fellow participants, through the collection of 'intra-cultural narratives' against which you can measure your own embodied experience and even in relation to external commentators via an engagement with appropriate literature. The next session is concerned with how to collect these comparative narratives from your informants.

Session 8: The practicalities of questioning and learning from mistakes

The main point you should take from this session is that you shouldn't be afraid of asking the wrong questions in the field (so long as no-one gets hurt, obviously!) You need to embrace a frequently under-utilised (and seldom acknowledged) resource: the highly illuminating process of learning from our mistakes. The observation that we learn more from our mistakes than from our successes is also integral to the adoption of a reflexive approach to fieldwork. However, before we consider getting it wrong, let's first remind ourselves how we go about constructing and utilising questions in an ideal world!

Questionnaires need to be designed according to the data you are hoping to collect – this may sound obvious but it is surprisingly easy

to get side-tracked and ask too many irrelevant questions. People lose interest very quickly so to ensure a high response rate it is advisable to limit the number of questions you ask (to a maximum of 20), and ideally stick to one sheet (or even one side) of A4 paper. Rather than leaving questionnaires with people to fill in and return to you, it is always advisable to arrange a convenient time to return to collect them, and depending on the resources you have available, you could offer some sort of incentive to those who complete the questionnaire, such as entry into a free prize draw!

Questionnaires also need to be designed to avoid the tendency to force answers. They should never push respondents towards an answer or category they may not have thought of unprompted, nor should they make value judgements which may make respondents feel uncomfortable or unhappy (these are called leading questions), for example, 'It's more ethical to eat free-range eggs, therefore why do you choose to buy eggs from caged hens?' The questions should be sensitively worded to encourage respondents to be as forthcoming as possible, and should be value-neutral.

There are two main formats to questionnaire questions - closed questions and open questions. Closed questions require the respondent to provide either a yes/no answer, or to tick a box or circle the outcome which they feel most appropriate to them. Some examples include:

1. Name?
2. Male/Female
3. Are you allergic to penicillin? Yes/No
4. Which of the following age brackets are you in?
 - ☐ 17 years or under
 - ☐ 18 – 24
 - ☐ 25 – 40
 - ☐ 41 – 64
 - ☐ 65+
5. How would you describe your personality (please circle the one which is most applicable)?

Shy and retiring	moderately sociable	confident
and outgoing		

Open-ended questions, also referred to as non-directive, are questions which demand a long and considered answer. For example:

1. How often do you eat meat?

This is a more open-ended example, but still only necessitates a short answer, which lacks any meaningful detail e.g. 'three or four times a week'

An example of a question which would prompt a more detailed response might be

2. How important do you think meat is in your diet?

However, this question too is directive and to some extent is leading, as it suggests that meat consumption should be accorded some level of importance.

Now think about how this question could be worded so as to be non-directive without being leading.

This is an important consideration as questions you might think are non-directive could be seen as leading in some contexts. So, what might be the problems with asking leading questions? The main concern for anthropologists is that during fieldwork we aim to be value neutral, however, in practice it is difficult to stop your own personal or cultural thoughts and feelings from encroaching on your research. Leading questions might sneak in when we let our reflexive guard down. However, this should be avoided at all costs as leading questions result in misleading data, and serve to fulfil pre-existing expectations, making the whole process a meaningless exercise. Therefore in addition to reading the indirection of our informants' responses, we also need to be aware of our own hidden agendas or personal biases.

Although questionnaires can contain open-ended questions, to provide more detailed responses to certain key or complicated questions, they are not always the best way to collect detail per se, as individuals seldom provide the sort of answers you'd expect and

formal questionnaires do not allow for the researcher to follow up unusual or particularly interesting responses, or to explore inconsistencies and contradictions, which are found in every social situation. For example, in my own research, I often asked my informants about their attitudes to meat eating – the vast majority of them were farmers, and consequently, most were avid meat eaters. However, all expressed disgust at the prospect of eating horse or dog, and it was only possible to get at the individual motivations for this disgust by more detailed, spontaneous questioning, which could not have been predicted or standardised on a questionnaire.

Interviews should ideally take the form of a conversation – therefore questions need to be open-ended. Although in interviews, and to a lesser extent, open-ended questionnaires, the interviewer appears to adopt a passive role, being directed by the flow of the respondents' answers as opposed to directing the flow themselves, this is not an entirely accurate reading. Rather, the interviewer needs to be an active listener, and then direct questions according to how relevant the conversation is to his/her research focus – this is referred to as 'steering'

All in all a successful interview technique depends on the interviewer having a clear idea of what he/she hopes to achieve from the interview, as well as on the interviewer being well prepared (i.e. having done some background research), and most importantly on the interviewer's patience. Often the most valuable data is obtained unexpectedly and so the interviewer must be sufficiently flexible to allow informants to talk about things which might not necessarily be on their pre-prepared list of questions. However, the converse of this is that the interviewer needs to also have the tact and diplomacy necessary to get informants who digress back on track. These skills take time and practice to master, and even the most eminent of anthropologists have difficulties as the following excerpt from Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer* (1940: 12 – 13) demonstrates:

"I [Evans-Pritchard]: Who are you?

Cuot: A man.

I: What is your name?

Cuol: Do you want to know my *name*?

I: Yes

Cuol: You want to know *my* name?

I: Yes, you have come to visit me in my tent and I would like to know who you are.

Cuol: All right. I am Cuol. What is your name?

I: My name is Pritchard.

Cuol: What is your father's name?

I: My father's name is also Pritchard.

Cuol: No, that cannot be true. You cannot have the same name as your father.

I: It is the name of my lineage. What is the name of your lineage?

Cuol: Do you want to know the name of my lineage?

I: Yes.

Cuol: What will you do with it if I tell you? Will you take it to your country?

I: I don't want to do anything with it. I just want to know it since I am living at your camp.

Cuol: Oh well, we are Lou.

I: I did not ask you the name of your tribe. I know that. I am asking you the name of your lineage.

Cuol: Why do you want to know the name of my lineage?

I: I don't want to know it.

Cuol: Then why do you ask me for it? Give me some tobacco."

In his own analysis of this conversation Evans-Pritchard emphasises the difficulty of dealing with what he terms 'Nuerosis' – the Nuer's ability to deflect questions and thwart the anthropologist's questioning. Instead of learning from the conversation the information he had initially hoped for, that is, personal information about the individual who came to visit him, what Evans-Pritchard eventually thought he had uncovered was the way the Nuer behave when faced with strangers asking questions. Therefore on the one hand, this example illustrates the problems of using direct questioning in certain situations, but it also shows how flexible researchers need to be, as well as demonstrating Evans-Pritchard's own failings as an interviewer, which were inevitably due to his lack of reflexivity...

What else do you notice about this conversation between Evans-Pritchard and Cuol? What changes would you have made had you been in Evans-Pritchard's shoes?

Now consider the following passage from Barley's 'Innocent Anthropologist':

"... the man who carried the skulls at the [mortuary] dance was not just anyone, he had to be in a *douse* relationship with the dead man. To understand what this word implied, I had to sort out all the kinship terms. Trying to do this even roughly with French equivalents is quite impossible, but the mistakes Dowayos make when speaking French are very helpful. For example, they cannot distinguish between nephew and uncle, or between grandfather and grandson. This suggested that the same term would be used for them in Dowayo, and indeed this proved to be the case. The terminology is strongly reciprocal. If I call a man by one term, he calls me by the same term. But it took me a long time to work it all out. In the end, I collected together my last three bottles of beer ... and borrowed the schoolhouse with its blackboard. The men lounging at the crossroads were only too glad to come and talk to this benevolent madman in return for the beer. They rapidly picked up the principles of kinship charts and we had a most informative session. Much has been written about [tribal] peoples' ability or inability to deal with hypothetical questions... 'If you had a sister' I would start, 'and she married a man, what would you call ...'

'I haven't got a sister.'

'No, but if you had a sister ...'

'But I haven't got a sister. I have four brothers.'

After a number of frustrated attempts at this, Matthieu intervened. 'No, no *patron*. Like this. A man has a sister. Another man takes her. She is his wife. The man calls her husband, how?' He would get an answer. I adopted this style and had no more trouble – until we got to the term *douse*. 'Who is your *douse*?' I tried.

'We joke with him.'

'How do you know he is your *douse*?'

'As children we are told. We joke with him.'

'Where does he live?'

'He can live anywhere.'

'If he is your *douse*, what does your father call him?'

Pause. 'He will call him grandfather.'

'What does your son call him?'

'My son calls him grandfather.'

Light began to dawn.

'Do you call him grandfather?'

'Yes.'

In Dowayoland all old men are called grandfather by young men.

The usage meant nothing but an age difference. I had spent most of an afternoon sorting that one out the previous day. I tried another line. 'Is your *douse* one of your own family or a relative through marriage?' 'Own family' said one. 'Through marriage,' said another. 'He is like a grandfather.'

I tried another tack. 'How many *douse* do you have?'

'I cannot know.'

It occurred to me that the word might refer to other aspects of the world than biological kinship, that it might be a term of an entirely different type. I tried everything, residence, skull-house affiliation, exchange relationships, and still did not feel I knew what the term meant. I adopted another ploy of getting people to introduce me to their *douse* and we would sit down and painfully trace the relationship between them. Finally, I built up a picture of what it was. A *douse* was someone to whom I was linked by a common relative of great-grandfather generation or beyond with at least one female linkage in between. In other words, it was someone such as my mother's grandfather, for whom no other term existed, who belonged to a different skull-house than myself and was on the very fringes where it was impossible to trace clear kinship links. This explained why, even when I got two *douse* together, they would often give me different accounts of the links between them. A man, then, would have a great number of potential *douse* out of which he

would select a small group with whom to joke and engage in ritual activity.” (Barley, 1983: 91 – 93)

Non-assessed practical exercise:

Think back to practical exercise 1. Make a list of 10 questions (5 closed questions and 5 open-ended questions) which would have enabled you to understand how other people used that space. Answer these questions yourself (or if feasible return to the original site and ask someone else – however, please use your discretion. If you have visited a cemetery or other place where your questioning may be inappropriate please limit yourself to introspective questioning).

Due to the nature of dissertation research which brings with it considerable constraints of time, you will need to conduct your fieldwork over a relatively short period of time (remember that Malinowski advocated spending at least a year in the field). Therefore you will need to take time into account when devising your research methodology. It takes a considerable amount of time to become an accepted ‘member’ of a social group (which then leads to more relaxed and equal exchanges), or to become sufficiently familiar with everyday practice that ‘indirection’ can be understood in any given context. There are several ways to overcome this dilemma, as we have already established, and interviewing and direct questioning can provide much of your primary data if time is limited. However, reflexive awareness needs to be at the forefront of any approach, be it experiential participant observation, interviewing, questioning or interpreting the actions of others, and can allow us as anthropologists to overcome many of the biases that might otherwise cloud our judgement. In this vein, it is an important final consideration is to remember to be reflexive on your informants’ behalf when constructing questions (as the above example from Barley clearly illustrates!); to word questions as clearly and unambiguously as possible, and let them also guide the direction of conversation wherever possible, but also be aware of any possible indirection, and how your presence might encourage the presentation of a biased or manipulated viewpoint.

Session 9: Committing your experiences to text

Writing-up:

Once you have conducted your fieldwork, the next most pressing concern is to collate the data you have collected, and present it in a clear and compelling format, which communicates your findings effectively. This process is referred to as 'textualization' which is defined by Davies (1999: 215) as the expression of "experience, observation, reflection [and] analysis in written form." Textualization therefore, is just as important as the practical element of your research (the 'fieldwork'), but, perhaps rather surprisingly, is also the phase which creates the most difficulties for inexperienced researchers (and the experienced ones come to think of it!) Fieldwork is, as Okely demonstrates (below), an 'all encompassing' activity; "Long-term immersion through fieldwork is generally a total experience, demanding all of the anthropologist's resources; intellectual, physical, emotional, political and intuitive. The experience involves so much of the self that it is impossible to reflect upon it fully by extracting that self. Under pressure to be 'scientifically objective', anthropologists have traditionally compartmentalised that fieldwork experience." (Okely, 1992: 8)

It consumes us as we worry about the logistics beforehand, and then the reality takes over once we are in the field proper. Little thought tends to be given to the practice of writing up – it seems to be taken for granted that once you've done your research, the words will flow forth onto the paper with ease. Unfortunately that is seldom the case, however, it is certainly much easier if you have prepared for the fact that you will have to write about your experiences while you are in the field.

Fieldnotes:

The recording of detailed fieldnotes is an integral part of life in the field. You experience so many sights, sounds, tastes, feelings and emotions that it can all get rather overwhelming. This is where the

fieldwork diary becomes an invaluable tool, and I really can't emphasise this enough:

KEEP A DETAILED DIARY WHILST YOU ARE IN THE FIELD

See the following website for an example of an online fieldwork diary (or 'weblog'):

http://www.era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era_Resources/Era/Kingdom_Bum/emcdiary.html

You may wish to keep two diaries – one for personal reflections (you will be surprised how cathartic it can be to write down all the frustrations, upsets and miscommunications you encounter on a daily basis – along with all the positive stuff, naturally!) and another for brain-storming ideas, and more formal observations, linking experiences to relevant theoretical ideas/sources. These documents will become your life line when you leave the field and come to write up your research. At the start you may find it easy to think about what you are experiencing in a clear and detailed manner. However, rest assured that as you become more deeply involved in the day to day life in the field, this clarity will be replaced by questions and doubt, and the distance between you as researcher, and your subjects of study will diminish. You will certainly also find that your ideas and experiences change rather dramatically with increasing familiarity with your subject matter (even if conducting anthropology 'at home'). The fieldwork diary (or diaries) is therefore an excellent vehicle for charting this change in attitude and understanding over time. You will be able to refer back to the different stages of your research and will undoubtedly be confronted with important 'facts' which may well have seemed meaningless at the time you first encountered them and recorded them in your diary (remember that Malinowski thought the bundles of dried banana leaves that Trobriand women collected and distributed were unimportant!)

Jackson (1990) refers to fieldnotes as 'liminal texts' because they have yet to be transformed (or 'textualized') into a meaningful ethnography. Your ethnography will grow directly from what you have written in your field diary.

Tales of the field and post-modern ethnographic writing:

As we have already noted, ethnographic field research is inextricably linked to subjective experience. Consequently one significant challenge faced by anthropologists during their 'writing up' phase is how to write about personal experience without becoming solipsistic?

In previous sessions we have been concerned with how the anthropologist, as a subjective individual, can attempt to engage with, and understand, the culture of the people he or she is studying. Reflexivity and personal experience are two approaches which can assist the ethnographer in the pursuit of cultural meaning, but it is also eminently possible and desirable to include the research subjects in the research process. Obviously the collection of intra-cultural narratives, as discussed in the previous session, is one way to add another dimension to your ethnographic account, making it 'polyphonic' but it is also perfectly feasible for your subjects to get more involved in the research project.

Reading: Appadurai (1988): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/656305>

One particularly good example of an anthropologist 'colluding' with her subjects of study to produce a polyphonic discussion of how different groups and individuals interact with, and experience the landscape can be found in Bender's book 'Stonehenge' (1998).

Now please read Clifford:

http://www.uky.edu/~tmute2/political_economy/PolEcon_readings/clifford.pdf

According to Clifford (1986), a prominent voice within the post-modern critiques of ethnographic writing, 'polyvocality' or 'polyphony' (the acknowledgement and communication of numerous different interpretations of social phenomena – the production of a dialogue and discourse rather than an authoritative 'text') within ethnographic texts suggests it is not possible for anthropologists themselves to uncover any ultimate truth. We are only capable of generating partial

truths. This position therefore rejects the essentialist and generalizing tendencies of our predecessors which we encountered (via Carrier) in our earlier sessions. This deconstruction of anthropological authority could be worrying but, as we have established, this 'problem' can be countered by recourse to reflexive and 'autobiographical' (or 'auto-') ethnography, combined with the intra-cultural narratives of our informants.

Session 10: Disseminating results and the ongoing research process

The final issue I want you to consider is where do you go from here? In the course of this module we have considered a range of topical theoretical and practical debates regarding anthropological research methodology. This final session will be different in that it will offer a few suggestions for how to progress once you have completed your dissertation. Indeed, in this session we will briefly consider the reality of life in the academic community and the practical applications for your research data.

Indeed, the research process does not finish once research has been conducted and written up. If your research is valuable (and all post-graduate research should make some valuable contribution to academic and popular understanding of the 'human condition') then you should disseminate your findings more widely. Accordingly, an equally important part of the research process is the ongoing dialogue between researchers, between researchers and their subjects of study, and between researchers and policy makers. For example, consider the research you are planning on conducting for your dissertation. How do you think you will disseminate your data? Who might be interested in what you have to say? How will your research benefit the academic community, and the general public as well as the people you have studied?

At the end of your MA you will produce a thesis which will be bound and placed in the library, and you might be perfectly content to leave it at that. However, you may also wish to make your findings more widely available. Indeed, it is increasingly common for post-graduate students to present at academic conferences, or publish papers

arising from their dissertation research (remember you have already had a 'practice' run at this when you wrote your independent project in the style of a recognised academic journal). The recently established graduate journal Anthropology Matters was set up to provide graduate students with such a forum for publishing their research and engaging with other graduate students and academic anthropologists. This is an important resource for post-graduates in Anthropology, as it is more difficult than you might think to disseminate your research to the wider academic community (unless you have your own website).

Non-assessed practical exercise:

Visit the Anthropology Matters website at www.anthropologymatters.com

Imagine you are reviewing the site. Do you think it is fulfilling its aims and objectives? How could the site or the journal be improved? How would your research fit into the journal's previous issues?

Non-assessed exercise:

Write a 250 word abstract (this can be on a purely hypothetical piece of research or could be pre-emptive of your proposed dissertation topic) which complies with the stylistic format of existing articles in the journal.

Now read article the article by Miller:

http://www.anthropologymatters.com/index.php?journal=anth_matters&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=81&path%5B%5D=158

One issue which arises when research is 'published' (i.e. made public formally in either written or spoken form), is that of how it will be perceived and interpreted by its subjects. It could well be that, in line with the ASA Ethical Guidelines, you provided your informants with pseudonyms and disguised your exact research location. However, you must still be prepared for repercussions and to discuss your research openly with your informants should they wish you to do so.

Please read the article by van der Geest:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-8322.00159/abstract>

Another good way for graduate students to disseminate their research to the academic community is via poster displays at academic conferences, or within their home department. This is a relatively stress free way of getting your ideas 'out there' and potentially obtaining some valuable feedback (or constructive criticism!). See the example produced by Dr. Paul Rainbird, who is the Head of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Wales, Lampeter. You can also see more examples by following this link:

<http://www.grad.ucl.ac.uk/comp/2005-2006/poster/index.html>

It is easier than you might think to design a good poster which summarises your research...

Non-assessed exercise:

Design a poster display which introduces your proposed dissertation research.

How to design a good poster:

A good poster needs to be eye-catching and able to convey (to fellow anthropologists and other interested parties) the essence of your research. You want to attract the attention of passers-by, engage them with what you have to say, and encourage them to contact you to discuss your ideas or for further information.

Your poster should include:

A catchy (but meaningful!) title, an overview of your methodology, a brief summary of your findings (make this pretty general and try not to over-complicate what you have to say), a list of key references, and appropriate visual prompts (figures, diagrams, maps, photographs etc.)

The layout of the poster is important – you don't have to be a graphic designer, just make sure that the layout is easy to follow. Try to make the poster colourful, but not too colourful, which could confuse the reader. It is also helpful to demonstrate how your research is meaningful in a wider context – this is particularly relevant in terms of communicating your ideas to a lay audience.

What then?

You may well have your academic and/or professional career all mapped out. Many students come to study anthropology at post-graduate level as part of their professional career development plan, as they (and their employers) recognise the benefits of anthropological training and understanding in a wealth of different workplaces. Indeed, your dissertation research may well be devised to focus on an area which will benefit you in your paid employment.

Your successful completion of a taught post-graduate qualification is also a clear indicator to future employers that you are capable of structuring your time effectively, and able to conduct your own independent research. However, if you have enjoyed this aspect of the course it is also worth considering progressing on to further study, and your dissertation could be used as a launch pad for MPhil/PhD research, and one key skill which you will need to develop is the writing of grant applications.

So, please read the following article:

Silverman, S. 1991. 'Writing Grant Proposals for Anthropological Research' *Current Anthropology*. 32 (4): 485-489. Available from JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2743827>

And then visit the websites of the various funding bodies (e.g. the [AHCR](#), [ESRC](#), [British Academy](#), [Leverhulme](#), [Wellcome Trust](#), [Wenner Gren](#)) and look at the funding opportunities that exist. The application form for a Wenner Gren dissertation fieldwork grant is provided for you to use as a template, but please note this is

intended for doctoral dissertations, so you may need to adapt some of the sections to fit with an MA dissertation (and leave blank anything which is completely irrelevant). If you would prefer to follow the requirements of another funding body/call then please check with the module tutor first. If you find that the 2000 word limit is not enough to enable you to complete all the sections, then prioritise those sections which are most relevant.

NB. You are NOT to submit this form to the Wenner Gren!

If you need any help completing this assignment, please do not hesitate to ask: s.hurn@tsd.ac.uk

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Useful web resources:

<http://www.practicinganthropology.org/>

http://www.era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era_Resources/Era/Stirling/index.html

<http://www.csuchico.edu/anth/EthnoLab/archives/archives.htm>

<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/toc.htm>

<http://www.sfaa.net/sfaaethic.html>

http://www.anthropologymatters.com/journal/2005-2/harper_marsland_2005_politics.pdf