

## **'Ethics in the field: contemporary challenges within anthropology, broadly speaking'**

**ACCEND, Dept of Anthropology,  
Oxford Brookes University**

**24—25 April 2009**

### **Rationale and aims:**

We live in an ever-more litigious society, in which social scientists are increasingly obliged to recognize, respect and maintain the moral integrity of the peoples they study. But creation and implementation of ethical procedures in social scientific research practice have proved deeply problematic and divisive: therefore the need for this conference, the first to compare ethical approaches across the anthropological disciplines.

-- A primary aim of this conference is to investigate contemporary ethical dimensions of fieldwork carried out by social anthropologists, biological anthropologists and primatologists, e.g. cyber-ethics; fieldworking wars; anthropology's relations with the military; the moral issues within an anthropology of development; the nature of informed consent when working cross-culturally; the ethical value of establishing community projects in protected primate areas though it is estimated they will most likely fail; under what conditions can genetic material today be collected for research; why ethics review panels find it difficult to assess, and to approve qualitative research proposals, etc.

-- A second aim is to explore, by comparison of the examples presented, the extent to which anthropologists from different sub-disciplines experience common ethical problems in the course of their fieldwork, and in what ways those similarities (or differences) are tellingly significant.

-- A third aim is to examine the transatlantic differences between US and European ethics panels, and the possible reasons for these differences and their consequences.

-- A fourth aim is to discuss the formulation of ways in which ethics review panels might evolve so as to accommodate the intellectual benefits of qualitative research, as well as the ways qualitative research may have to evolve to accommodate contemporary ethical concerns.

-- A fifth aim is to further the ACCEND (Anthropological Centre for Conservation, the Environment, and Development, Oxford Brookes University) project of fomenting a genuinely cross-disciplinary anthropology, not at the level of theory, but at the level of research methods. To our knowledge, this conference will be the first-ever comparative investigation of the ethical dimensions of biological anthropology, social anthropology, and primatology. Two years ago, as Director of ACCEND, I organized an international, cross-disciplinary conference on 'Centralizing Fieldwork: critical perspectives from social anthropology, biological anthropology and primatology', whose selected proceedings are in press with Berghahn Publishers, Oxford. The conference proposed here builds on the success of the 2007 one and on a small, international workshop run by ACCEND in April 2008, on 'Research ethics', whose success and popularity demonstrated to us the need and value of organizing a larger gathering, which would lead to publication. The proposed conference strives to further these efforts, and to extend our building of this cross-disciplinary space, via the study of research methods. It is our intention to publish the selected proceedings as a book with Berghahn.

## Provisional list of speakers

### *Social Anthropologists:*

Dr Susie Kilshaw, Lecturer in Medical Anthropology, University College London *The ethics of studying 'Gulf War syndrome'*

Dr Paul Collinson, DSTL, Ministry of Defence, UK *Anthropologists in the MoD*

Dr Anne de Sales, CNRS, Paris *From Nepalese peasants to Maoist guerillas: fieldworking war by default*

Dr Serge Elie, Research Associate, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex *A fieldwork ethics of reciprocity*

Professor Jeremy MacClancy, Dept of Anthropology, Oxford Brookes University *An ethnography of ethics review boards*

Dr Tina Miller, Dept of Sociology, Oxford Brookes University *Messy Ethics: Negotiating the terrain between ethics approval and ethical practice*

Em Rundall, Doctoral Candidate, School of Social Sciences and Law, Oxford Brookes University *Sensitive Topics: Online Research Tools and Their Associated Ethical and Research Implications*

(Dr David Napier, Dept of Anthropology, University College London, who spoke at the 2008 Workshop on '*Indigenous rights and advocacy*', will be acting as discussant.)

### *Primatologists:*

Professor Agustin Fuentes, Dept of Anthropology, University of Notre Dame, USA *Sexy Bonobos, Machiavellian macaques and nearly-extinct orangutans: the ethical and practical considerations of a public primatology*

Professor Karen Strier, Dept of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA *Are observational field studies really noninvasive?*

Dr Nobuyuki Kutsukake, Dept of Evolutionary Studies, Graduate University for Advanced Studies, Kanagawa, Japan *How the concept of nature interacts with field ethics: the case of Japanese primatology*

Professor Juichi Yamagiwa, Graduate School of Science, Kyoto University, Japan; President, International Primatological Society *Ethical problems and solutions in primatological fieldwork*

Matt McLennan, Doctoral Candidate, Dept of Anthropology, Oxford Brookes University *Ethical issues in the study and conservation of an African great ape in non-protected human-dominated habitat*

Dr Anna Nekaris, Dept of Anthropology, Oxford Brookes University, *How can primatologists do ethical fieldwork?*

(Professor Simon Bearder, Dept of Anthropology, Oxford Brookes University, will be attending as discussant.)

### *Biological Anthropologists:*

Dr Melissa Parker, Dept of Anthropology, Brunel University, *Constructing success and controlling information: the place of ethical clearance in international health*

Professor Catherine Panter-Brick, Dept of Anthropology, University of Durham *Hope and suffering in Afghanistan: some ethical issues*

Dr Lyliane Rosetta, CNRS, Paris *Biological anthropologists working with the EU: possibilities and constraints*

Dr Evelyn Heyer, CNRS, Paris *The ethics of collecting genetic material in Central Asia*

(Professor Larry Schell, SUNY, Albany, will be attending as discussant. In the 2008 workshop he spoke on *Collaborative biological anthropology with First Nations peoples, New York State*)