Dr. Fluehr-Lobban,

I cannot thank you enough for your prompt reply. Really, thank you for helping me in reaching my goal for completing my thesis this semester, even while you are extremely busy with your own research and away from campus.

I've made a note to incorporate your suggestions of 1) including my reflections in being in the field in Morocco, and of 2) including the points that I mention in my section on ethics in my conclusion where I hope to discuss what you've nicely called "future models of fieldwork".

Below is my updated chapter on ethics. It includes the sections that I've already emailed you, but now am including it as a whole for context. I feel like I'm crossing my fingers in sending you this, hoping that it continues to be in line with what you (and Dr. Lobban) think as an appropriate progression with my thesis (thus approving it). My next steps: 1) introduce my voice and relate my Morocco experiences in the section on North Africa, 2) incorporate Dr. Mendy's suggestions on shortening the Intro and including the Berbers in my analysis of North Africa, 3) develop my conclusion. I've already incorporated most of the suggestions you made in my previous draft. Please let me know if there is anything else I should plan to work on before submitting a stronger draft version.

Shukran bsef, deimen.
-Edicta
(P.S. The chapter below is currently 16 pages long, double spaced).

**VI. Ethnography and Ethical Concerns**

While the approaches to data gathering and quality of data collected is of great importance to an ethnographer's successful fieldwork, the desire to accomplish such should not be so fixed and narrowly focused that it disregards subjects of greater importance, as are matters of ethical concerns. Matters of ethical concerns within the field of anthropology are of grave significance in that their attention is on the effect anthropology in practice has on the community being studied. Although there is immense value in collecting reliable cultural data, there is superior worth in assuring that data is being gathered through meeting ethical standards. By meeting these ethical standards, the rights of those being studied are guarded while also intending to protect against harm that may result from the information gathered and from the uses of such information.

The anthropologist's primary responsibility is to those being studied. As such, anthropologists
are required by ethical standards to protect their 'human subjects' above all other interests. The intentions with which fieldwork information is gathered, the uses of data collected, the impact made on the host culture by conducting fieldwork, the ethnographer's roles, limitations, and obligations as a fieldworker, and those to whom the anthropologist chooses to be indebted and responsible by means of accepting research funding, are all imperative when considering ethical values important to those being studied. If the ethnographer's ethical responsibilities to those being studied are in focus, the fruit of field research would result in positive data of benefit to those being studied, those doing the studying, and the world at large.

Of beauty to this equation is that in meeting ethical standards, gathering quality research data becomes less of an issue in view of the fact that in placing other's rights above all else encourages a greater trust and probability of sharing uninhibitedly personal life stories. Honorable actions have the tendency of breeding positive results. If as proper ethnographers ethical standards are met, ethnographic fieldwork would result in what it ideologically intended to be: an aim to deepen cross-cultural understandings approached with a selfless attitude and an honest interest in learning about other's believes and values.

The primary responsibility of the ethnographer is to the people studied. As established by the Society of Applied Anthropology (1940s; revised in 1974) his/her main focus should be the subject's safety (Naylor 1996:209). S/he is not to engage in anything that means causing harm to the host community. According to the American Anthropological Associations' Statements on Ethics[1] (Rynkiewich and Spradley 1981) and other similar codes of conduct[2], not only is the anthropologist's main responsibility and obligation to the community and individuals being researched, but also "[t]he anthropologist must do everything within his power to protect their physical, social and psychological welfare and to honor their dignity and privacy" (183). Saddening, it was not until recent (since mid-1950s, and especially since 1965's Project Camelot) that a palpable attention was given to the ethics of conducting ethnographic research, (Akeroyd 1984: 133) and as of yet no final consensus has been reached on what is the proper code of ethics (ibid: 134). However, the ethical guidelines currently in place provides with directions adequate for conducting ethnographic fieldwork.

_Informed Informants_
To the people we study we owe disclosure of our research goals, methods and sponsorship. The participation of people in our research activities shall be only on a voluntary and informed basis (Society for Applied Anthropology; see Fluehr-Lobban 2003a: 174).

A basic and foundational ethical standard in ethnographic fieldwork involves obtaining informed consent from those the ethnographer is interested in recruiting as facilitators of cultural knowledge. The principal value of an informed consent rests in honoring the informant’s right to privacy. From the onset, the practice of acquiring informed consent for conducting fieldwork sets the stage for and nurtures a positive, open, relationship between the informant and the researcher. This is achieved through the later openly affirming an interest in being allowed entry into the field and in stating the reliance upon the host community for gaining cultural understanding. The information provided in an informed consent should include what subjects are to be studied, for what purposes, how does the research process and result may affect those being studied, what information will be made public, and how participating in the research would benefit the informants. This process allows the ethnographer to show a genuine interest in having the informants fully understand his/her research goals and in obtaining voluntary participation for information that will eventually be entrusted. The process also demonstrates the ethnographer’s willingness to involve the informants in every step of the research process and in respecting their personal choices.

Informed consent is a fairly new concept emerging out of biomedical court cases in the mid 20th century demanding improved ethics in the work with humans (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a). It has been defined as,

[T]he knowing consent of an individual, or a legally authorized representative, able to exercise free power of choice without undue inducement or any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, or other form of constraint or coercion (Protection of Human Subjects; see Fluehr-Lobban 2003a:167).

In practice, the process of obtaining informed consent has faced objections by some anthropologists in that consenting has been thought to be required in writing (as in signing consent forms) from populations that may be illiterate, and that actually obtaining “knowledgeable and voluntary (let alone written) consent from everyone in the field” is difficult to do (Akeroyd 1984). However, written consents or forms are not the only way of getting informed consent from informants, and all
observations (i.e. social versus participant observations) do not require the consenting of every single individual in the field (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a). Literacy is not a requirement for obtaining an informed consent and most ethnographies these days are being practiced among literate societies. Additionally, if informants are deemed to be dependable sources of information, they should also be trusted as having the capability of understanding the informed consent process, and in making the decision of whether or not to become volunteers. Lastly, public social observations (as in people-watching in a café) do not require that each individual being noticed be consented.

Other objections that have been voiced against informed consents include the belief, and the fear, that the process disturbs the "naturalness" of the ethnographer’s principal data collection method, participant observation, and by doing so data captured will be tainted, and different from what would otherwise be collected, by the informant’s knowledge of what is being sought after and observed. However, psychology has shown that there is not much valid ground to this objection (Fluehr-Lobban 2003a). If and when an individual becomes self-aware and changes the way s/he is behaving or responding to the disclosed research goal, the way s/he alters his/her behavior or response also provides insight into the culture or community of interest. Such insight includes observing what is understood and believed to be sought by the ethnographer, as well as what is thought to be a preferred answer. Coe’s (2001) previously mentioned fieldwork experience in Ghana serves as an example of valuable cultural knowledge gained through a similar predicament whereby the way others were responding to her disclosed observations and questions reflected much more about a culture than initially anticipated. Alas, “most often, once access is established people tend to forget the intentions of the observers and let down their guard” (Gans; see Fortier 1998: 53).

In seeking to obtain informed consents for conducting fieldwork the ethnographer must be aware that to inform does not automatically mean to consent. After the ethnographer makes sure that the potential informant fully understands the information being provided on the fieldwork process and goal through allowing questions to be asked and questions to be answered (“informed”), the ethnographer must then ask the potential informant whether or not s/he agrees to participate in the research given the previously disclosed information. If the potential informant agrees to do so (“informed consent”) fieldwork could proceed with the individual. However, if the potential informant does not agree to do
so, informed consent has not been obtained and thus, ethically, the ethnographer should not count this individual as an informant.

Lastly, the ethnographer must abstain from over-imposing a Western perspective on informed consent solely being a matter on an individual basis. While it may be the case that most informed consents will be obtained on a one-to-one basis, such may be the contrary among community members that believe informed consent should be the undertaking by a group (i.e. a tribe or a family) (Fluehr-Lobban 2003b).

Hidden Agendas

Worse than not providing an informed consent is undertaking research under false pretenses. All the more unacceptable is an ethnographer’s undertaking of fieldwork with egocentric intentions that result in the detriment of those being studied. Covert fieldwork and deception is not ethically justified within the field of anthropology.

The purposes for conducting anthropological research and ethnographies in other countries (or what was otherwise referred to as ‘people studies’) have varied from its onset. However, these seem to have been overwhelmingly propelled by ulterior motives for political reasons. Because social scientists, such as ethnographers, dedicate their lives to studying people and seek to understand the intricacies that define them, there is a clear connection between those who wish to influence people, such as governments, and the knowledge derived from cultural studies (Rose 1976). Nevertheless, given that this is not the role of anthropology, ethnographers wishing to undertake fieldwork for political purposes must change their titles to politicians or agents of espionage in order to do so (ibid).

As represented by the ‘Orientalist’ tradition, the compilation of cultural knowledge has served to support expansion of colonial rule and dominion, as well as the manipulation of people. While not as prevalent as in the past, and certainly not as obvious as it had once been (Walsh 1998), cultural studies have continued to be propelled by a similar desire to gain and maintain control over others. Indeed, many pioneering anthropologists started out by receiving funding for research (usually for their doctorate dissertations) by governments intending to use the information for maintaining political advantage over other countries.
The U.S. government serves as an example of one who has funded cultural studies for political reasons, via institutions such as the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) (Price 2003), and educational programs as the National Security Education Program (NSEP). In the case of the United State’s Project Camelot (1964) anthropologists were involved in contracts for secret research useful to the U.S. military in reacting to what was deemed as radical revolutions in other countries (Horowitz; see Rynkiewich and Spradley 1981: v-vi). Secret research of this kind in Latin America, initiated in response to General Fidel Castro’s regime, and to then current political situation in South East Asia (Akeroyd 1984), including the Vietnam War, serves as examples of anthropologist dispatched solely for the purpose of gathering information for the use of a political aim.

... the enthusiasm of the social scientist involved is easily understood. The opportunity existed for a massive, richly supported, highly detailed study into the conditions for social change in general as well as into the more specific subject of revolution. The study of modernization as well as of comparative societies has become of increasing academic concern in the past decade; indeed, there is probably more solid theorizing and competent fieldwork going into these problem areas than into any others in the social sciences (Silvert 1967: 83-84).

Such involvements between the U.S. Government and anthropologists led Franz Boas, one of the pioneers of American Anthropology, to write a letter to The Nation protesting its use of anthropology as a cover for espionage (Stocking; The Nation, 1919, vol.109; see Rynkiewich 1981: v). Fortunately, his letter has served as an igniting force for reevaluating and establishing the ethical role of anthropology in the face of political interests.

Funding Source

The funding source used to perform anthropological fieldwork also begs reflection on its ethical implications. In accepting the research funding provided by a source, the ethnographer establishes an affiliation with the source thereby becoming a representative of the source, as well as becoming indebted to its terms and conditions. The ethnographer assumes certain responsibilities to the source that is granting the research opportunity and the information collected, once shared with the sponsor, is made accessible to be freely used by the sponsor. The most important ethical implication emerging from the relationship between the ethnographer and the sponsor entails the purpose for which the collected data will be used, and how this may result in negatively impacting the culture studied.
As previously noted, anthropologists have accepted funds from sources that have been considered ethically questionable due to its political associations. However, funding provided by a particular source could be considered both ethically appropriate and not, depending on what is the focus. Such has been the case with particular governmental funding used to support African Studies.

In a study carried out among faculty members from various U.S. colleges and universities on their view of what is considered acceptable sources of language training and research funding for African Studies, Bowman and Cohen (2002) report a contrasting support of government funding dependent on the agency involved. While the majority (76 percent) of faculty members sampled in Bowman and Cohen's study agreed with the idea of African studies scholars working in collaboration with the U.S. State Department or the Agency for International Development, a majority also (57 percent) disagreed on working with the U.S. Department of Defense or U.S. intelligence agencies (Bowman and Cohen 2002).

Regarding the National Security Education Program (NSEP), through whom, since 1958, the U.S. government has been actively involved in funding African language and cultural studies they report,

Because the money for the NSEP comes from the Department of Defense, whether or not to support and accept student fellowships or institutional grants has been highly controversial within African studies. Both the ASA [African Studies Association] and the AASP [Association of African Studies Programs] are formally on record as opposing the acceptance of such grants (Bowman and Cohen 2002: 7).

Controversy with the NSEP stems from the awardees’ agreement to use the skills and information acquired to teach members of the Department of Defense, consequently the social scientist functioning as a member of the Department instead of an anthropologist (or the respective field). This information may not have been disclosed to the community being studied during fieldwork, hence not included in the informed consent process prior to collecting cultural data. Additionally, with history teaching potential informants that the Department’s application of the data collected can have grave consequences to those being studied, the decision to disclose this information may be restricted by the knowledge that permission to conduct research would be more likely denied.

Those in favor of accepting financial support from the government through agencies in the likes of the Agency of International Development, as exemplified by the above study, do so in the spirit of
gathering cultural knowledge and learning to speak the local language for the benefit of those being
studied. Those who do so, also, feel the need to bridge the divide between academics and U.S.
policymakers and its hindrance in making headway in addressing African needs through “informed” and
improved public policies siding with African developmental needs (Morrison and Cooke; see Bowman
and Cohen 2002).

In general, the sources of funding an anthropologist accepts for conducting fieldwork must be
carefully considered and questioned in various ethical and methodological levels. It should be
considered in terms of what accepting it may mean in pursuing work that is ethical, how the association
with the funding source would affect the identity an ethnographer brings into the field, the limitations
that s/he may face in accessing particular cultural information, the effects that such an association would
have on the quality of data gathered, and most importantly, how the information collected may be used
by the funding source and what consequences may the studied culture suffer as a result of the reported
data.

Affecting the ‘Other’

The cross-pressures of modern fieldwork are severe, and they can easily induce an
investigator to treat the host people as "subjects," rather than as fellow human beings
whose autonomy must be respected... we may neglect to consider other factors in the
situation or the consequences our actions will have for others (Cassell and Jacobs)

The level of influence the anthropologist has on the culture studied by virtue of being in the
field, by the questions s/he asks, and by the publication of the information collected, all have ethical
implications that must be considered when conducting fieldwork.

Submitting to a culture’s right to cultural privacy is important, even if researchers and academia
at large believe that the current global trends signify that even ‘isolated’ cultures will eventually be
‘discovered’ and affected. If it were not so, informed consent and voluntary participation would not be
imperative to conducting ethical fieldwork. Given that cultural knowledge is a source of “power,
resource and property” (Akeroyd 1984:136-7) that can both “harm and ...benefit those studied” (134),
communities being studied understandably should have the right to a say on their preferences of whether
to be studied or not (ibid). For instance, in his fieldwork experience, Duvignaud (1970) found that to the
native population “to look” was “to steal”, thus clearly expressing a sense of violation of privacy (228).
Duvignaud’s research experience also exemplifies an equally important ethical concern in conducting fieldwork: the extent to which an ethnographer exerts influence in the field. His research experience demonstrates how his presence and questions affected locals with whom he worked, “now we talk”, said young Ali [a local assistant], ‘we talk, among ourselves, about everything. Your questions shook us up…” (Ibid: 250). ‘Change at Shebika’ …reveals its full capacity not merely to study men, but also to change them. Under the probings of Duvignaud’s group the villagers of Shebika slowly awoke to a new perception of their own values, and of their need for a reassertion of their collective life within the framework of the new Tunisia (Hourani; see Duvignaud 1970: xi).

In addition to being aware of how his/her mere presence and the questions asked may affect the culture studied, the ethnographer must also be careful to consider what type of information is being made public and how it may affect those being written about, especially given that most negative effects are bound to arise after the data is published (Akeroyd 1984). The ethnographer ought to be aware that his/her words “can have real and grave consequences for the people they study” (Dudwick 2000: 23) and as such, it is the anthropologist’s duty to evaluate the risk of exposing information about a culture especially when it involves going into war (De Soto and Dudwick 2000). As a whole, the impact of ethnography on a society and risk of appropriation and manipulation by factions inside and out of the community must be considered, and even consider withholding information in situations were populations may get hurt given their political contexts. In other instances, ethnographers should refrain from studying populations altogether, given that even if pseudonyms and other ways of disguising informants are used, these could still be recognized (Brettell 1993).

The concern of the resulting effects of information publicized entails data landing in the ‘wrong hands’ and being used for purposes that would negatively affect the community presented. Examples of information landing in the ‘wrong hands’ include the C.I.A.’s political involvement in Latin America[4], Orientalism portrayals of the Middle East, and government-sided economic developments in Brazil’s Amazon[5]. Chagnon’s controversial ethnography of the Yanomami in Brazil serves as a further example of ethnographic work affecting people negatively-and even lethally, as in the massacre of 1993-via its flayed representation of the people studied. Chagnon’s published fieldwork information and negative views of the Yanomami as one possessing a “violent and homicidal nature” pejoratively
affected those studied through its media circulation among neighboring Brazilians and Venezuelans, and at large internationally. Chagnon's fieldwork also had a negative effect on the Yanomami who now see foreigners precariously as an entity that "destroys their way of way" as a result of their contracted measles epidemic (Albert 2001; Fluehr-Lobban 2003b: 103; Martins 2001; Ferguson 1995).

There are certain cultural information that are myths but as such have served an important sustaining function. Dismantling such 'myths' and exposing the 'truths' of these can potentially affect a community, and is thus a risk for the culture and a cause for ethical concern. If the 'myth' functioned as the glue keeping a family together, for instance, disclosing the truth about that may be a problem. When asking, for instance, questions regarding a particular myth that exists in a society and is integral to their culture, if the 'truth' that dismantles such myth is revealed, all that was based on that myth (and depending on the influence it had on the culture) might affect a culture. As an example, if a family really believes that the father passed away in a far away place, but in reality the father had left for unscrupulous reasons, the extended family may be unglued.

When we deconstruct deeply held beliefs about ethnic or national superiority that are an essential part of how people think about their community, or when we question the sacred narratives of historical suffering used to justify aggression, our informants may perceive us as betraying them by rejecting their vision of the world after accepting the benefits of the Faustian bargain (De Soto and Dudwick 2000: 15).

In addition to being careful about the influences s/he may have by way of conducting fieldwork, and the impact the data collected will have on those studied, the ethnographer also faces the challenge of guarding against taking sides. Sounding like s/he is supporting or opposing issues in the field could serve to fuel tension among informants, but it could also present moral and physical dangers. Because of the degree to which ethnography is politically charged, there is the very present problem of what the state (or host community) expects the anthropologist to write and the added care that that adds to the topic the ethnographer chooses to research and its write up. (De Soto and Dudwick 2000).

The confidences I have received thus raise acute issues of friendship, trust and betrayal. If I use this information in my work, am I violating my part of the research bargain from the viewpoint of those I studies, who depend on me to guard this dangerous private knowledge from potentially hostile audiences (Dudwick 2000: 25).

Do ethnographers have the right to influence a culture in such a way? Even if changes were
bound to occur on the studied community, do we have the right to be the ones to initiate the change? At what point does fieldwork resemble imperialism by the degree to which influence is exerted? None of these questions have a final answer, but the ethnographer needs to be conscientious of them, realizing that there are some serious impacts that can take place by merely conducting fieldwork, and that need to be factored into the equation when we attempt to be ethnographers authentically interested in meeting ethical standards.

Cultural Relativism and the Ethnographer

Making judgments about values, norms, and practices of a society goes against the principle of relativism most anthropologists defend (Naylor 1996:211)... The fact that anthropologists have refrained from making judgments about the correctness of values, behaviors, and ideas, has been one of anthropology’s major strengths (Naylor 1996:211).

While in the field, attempting to make sense of another culture through the explanations provided by members of the community and the confirmation of what is observed, the ethnographer will normally need to accept in a detached manner what is witnessed as being culturally valid, or culturally relativistic. There are other questionable instances, however, where the ethnographer should decide if what is witnessed should be simply accepted as culturally relative, or if it meets the criteria for requiring the ethnographer’s or international community’s involvement. These instances, often matters that are felt to be moral violations of basic human rights to different degrees, are difficult to resolve. Depending on the degree of the violation, questions that may arise are: Who decides what are violations requiring outside involvement? Does an outside entity have the right to dictate the conduct of another culture? Being present in the field, what is the ethnographer’s responsibility? Is s/he to flee from the field at the onset of such a perception, or continue pursuing research to both record and validate what is suspected?

The United Nations has established a list of what its constituents have considered to be international human rights violations. While several nations are involved representing its people, the topic of selection made by the few (the respective representatives) may not necessarily reflect the democratic view of those s/he is representing. Such universal agreement and representation has not been reached, yet, as exemplified by the number of human rights violations continuing to occur today (Naydor 1996:211). Important to mention is the United Nation’s support for international human rights, yet while maintaining affiliation with a monetary fund (The World Bank) who has been known to fund
“large-scale development programs” such as “hydroelectric development in India and the Philippines, transmigration in Indonesia, and agricultural development, colonization, and highway construction in Brazil” which have pushed indigenous populations away from their territories resulting in what would be considered human rights violations through predicaments that have led to many deaths of said population (Bodley 1999:179).

Degree of perceived violation is clearly very important. Actions, such as murder and certain physical abuses, may be considered easier to tag as a clear-cut human rights violation. Yet, there is a wide range of behaviors witnessed in cultures around the world that are more difficult to identify as violations, and on which the international community is allowed to interfere. Cultural values, to a great extent, define what is or is not acceptable conduct. Although as trained anthropologists the field researcher understands and accepts that s/he will experience cultural beliefs different from his/her own, this sense will be challenged when facing personally morally challenging behaviors in another culture. Examples of such include: keeping an individual from leaving their own home, and not permitting another person to become educated. It also includes: female genital mutilation, scarification of a child’s body to indicate belonging tribe, burning a wife for committing adultery, severing an individual’s body part as penalty for violating a law, burying a person alive alongside deceased mate, physical pain used to punish a disobedient child, et cetera.

Is the ethnographer simply to let such things happen and do nothing about it? Or does s/he have the obligation to advocate for the innocent and the often-oppressed women and child? Concerns of this type are very real and the ethnographer needs to be prepared with the knowledge of what is considered ethically appropriate within the field of anthropology, and whether or not s/he is able to live within its limitations. S/he must reflect on whether or not s/he prefers to take a more active role than what the field allows, addressing through social activism, social commentaries, governmental policies, and the likes, what is considered a societal concern. Fortunately, the international community, including ethnographers, have guidelines in place that although lacking in breadth provide with guidance for our conduct in matters that are deemed ethically improper in the field and on which we have the responsibility and right to act.

[2] Other organizations who have created codes of conduct for fieldwork include The Society for Applied Anthropology (1963, 1974), British Sociological Association (1973) and the Canadian Sociological and Anthropological Association (1979); see Akeroyd 1984 for other sources.
[3] See author’s appendix for a discussion on the ‘awareness’ and ‘westernization’ his local research assistants underwent by being part of Duvignaud’s fieldwork.
[4] See Paul Farmer’s The Uses of Haiti (1994) for excellent examples. See also literature on the
political involvement of U.S. in Dominican Republic and Chile.
[5] See Brazilian government's campaigning for building roads and the likes in Amazon region.

"Fluehr, Carolyn" <CFluehr@ric.edu> wrote:

Dear Edicta,
First of all thank you very much for helping with my mother on Tuesday in transporting her to the Cranston Senior Center. That was a big help to Dr. Lobban and to me. Secondly, thank you for including what you have written on ethics in the body of the email so that I can read it; otherwise I cannot open attachments. What you have written is fine; I would like a little of yourself in the the discussion in terms of how you related to people when you were in the "filed" although not doing fieldwork. Some reflections upon your experiences in Morocco might be relevant. When you get to the part of the thesis about future models of fieldwork, you should come back to the points raised here, that good ethics = good research and that collaborative research is the best current model. Lastly, my travel plans bring me home the night of May 14th. May 15th I will be jetlagged, but May 16 and 17 look good on my calendar, except for a 4:30 PM doctor's appointment on the 16th. Friday the 18th would be good after 1-2 PM as I have dental appointments in the late AM. Dr. Richard can coordinate this all as chair of your committee; it is good that we all have read and critiques a strong earlier draft of your thesis. Keep up the pace and you'll get there! Love and warmest regards--it was 46C yesterday in Khartoum, so bad that even the Sudanese are complaining. Dr. c.

"Let all that you do be done in love" 1 Cor. 16:14

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