



Mutuality: Anthropology's Changing Terms of Engagement

From University of Pennsylvania Press



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Why do people do social-cultural anthropology? Beyond professional career motivations, what values underpin anthropologists' commitments to lengthy training, fieldwork, writing, and publication? *Mutuality* explores the values that anthropologists bring from their wider social worlds, including the value placed on relationships with the people they study, work with, write about and for, and communicate with more broadly.

In this volume, seventeen distinguished anthropologists draw on personal and professional histories to describe avenues to mutuality through collaborative fieldwork, community-based projects and consultations, advocacy, and museum exhibits, including the American Anthropological Association's largest public outreach ever—the *RACE: Are We So Different?* project. Looking critically at obstacles to reciprocally beneficial engagement, the contributors trace the discipline's past and current relations with Native Americans, indigenous peoples exhibited in early twentieth-century world's fairs, and racialized populations. The chapters range widely—across the Punjabi craft caste, Filipino Igorot, and Somali Bantu global diasporas; to the Darfur crisis and conciliation efforts in Sudan and Qatar; to applied work in Panama, Micronesia, China, and Peru. In the United States, contributors discuss their work as academic, practicing, and public anthropologists in such diverse contexts as Alaskan Yup'ik communities, multiethnic New Mexico, San Francisco's Japan Town, Oakland's Intertribal Friendship House, Southern California's produce markets, a children's ward in a Los Angeles hospital, a New England nursing home, and Washington D.C.'s National Mall. Deeply personal as well as professionally astute, *Mutuality* sheds new light on the issues closest to the present and future of contemporary anthropology.

Contributors: Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, Robert R. Alvarez, Garrick Bailey, Catherine Besteman, Parminder Bhachu, Ann Fienup-Riordan, Zibin Guo, Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, Lanita Jacobs, Susan Lobo, Yolanda T. Moses, Sylvia Rodríguez, Roger Sanjek, Renée R. Shield, Alaka Wali, Deana L. Weibel, Brett Williams.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A terrific collection of essays that combines personal commentary with theoretical analysis focused on the heart of cultural anthropology. Rather than examine the more conventional concepts of 'collaboration' and 'engagement,' this collection goes deeper and examines not just the relationships that the anthropologist establishes with subjects/collaborators but also the impact of these relationships and experiences on the anthropologist's research, writing, career, values, and, most important, sense of self."—Louise Lamphere, University of New Mexico

About the Author

Roger Sanjek is a J. I. Staley Prize winner, a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellow, and author and editor of many books, including *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology, Race, and The Future of Us All: Race and Neighborhood Politics in New York City*. He is also author of *Gray Panthers* and *Ethnography in Today's World*, both of which are available from the University of Pennsylvania Press.

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Introduction

Deep Grooves

Anthropology and Mutuality

Roger Sanjek

We can begin this volume's collective examination of mutuality by asking: Why do we do anthropology at all? What values underpin anthropologists' commitments to lengthy academic training, to fieldwork, to writing and publication, and to communication with various audiences? Why do we do what we do?

Anthropology, I propose in response, has two contending value systems that motivate our work. One I will term the *academic-career complex*, and the other I call *mutuality*, which is the collective focus of this book.

The academic-career values that motivate us as professionals include the satisfactions of discovering and deepening an expansive anthropological worldview; our advancement along career paths to initial employment, work and research opportunities, and promotion; and approval and esteem from colleagues. These last may be evidenced in requests to speak and in invitations to participate in meeting panels, conferences, and essay volumes; in publication acceptances, peer citations, and favorable book reviews; and in professional honors and prizes. As we are thus "disciplined" by the discipline, these values and rewards define us as individuals within a professional world, aspects of which we become aware of only after we enter it.

For many anthropologists, however, there are, in addition, other values, brought from the wider social worlds in which we have grown up and in which we live as persons, actors, and citizens, which include the value we place upon mutually positive relations with the people we study, work with, write about and for, and communicate with more broadly as anthropologists. These values too may bring welcomed, even career-long satisfactions and may complement or even outweigh professional goals and achievements. The essays in this book explore how these values of mutuality and the efforts they inspire operate in the relationships between

anthropologists and the communities and wider social orders within which they work and live.

Sometimes the two value sets pull an anthropologist in opposite directions—either inwardly, toward the world of other professional anthropologists, or outwardly, toward the larger social worlds that produce and reproduce us. At still other times, the two value sets may be compatible, even "in synch," motivating anthropologists both to pursue professional academic goals and, at the same time, to adhere to and advance values of the people and communities they study, work with, live in, and may originate from (see Ames 1986; Jacobs-Huey 2002; Lippert 2007; Sanjek 1987).

The contributors to this book have constructed anthropological careers incorporating mutuality in many ways. Here they provide examples from past, longer-term, and recent work in which mutuality has been paramount. Some from the start have defined their research and professional objectives by issues, concerns, and values originating in their own communities; others have done so later in their careers. Still others have discovered avenues to mutuality through fieldwork and community-based projects, consultations, and advocacy. Many have emphasized mutuality in publications involving and reaching nonanthropological collaborators and audiences. Several also have done so via various old and new media, in museums and public programs, and in healthcare settings.

Mutuality is not something new or recent in anthropology, but neither is it intrinsic to it. Many anthropologists past and present, like the coauthors of this volume, have valued and practiced mutuality in their choices of where and what to study, how they conduct fieldwork, and with what audiences and publics, and in what forms, they share and disseminate anthropological findings and knowledge. The voices in this book are not unique, and experiences and perspectives similar to theirs could be and have been related by many colleagues (see, for example, Aiyappan 1944, 1965; Bennett and Whiteford 2013; Blakey 1998; Bond 1988, 1990; Chavez 1992; Checker 2009, 2011; Cohen 1976; Deloria 1944; Drake 1980; Fiske 2011, 2012; Harris 1958; Hopper 2003; Howell 2010; Kiste 1976; Koff 2004; Lamphere 2004a, 2004b; Leacock 1969; Mafeje 1971, 1975, 1978; Medicine 2001; Mullings 1997; Nader 1976; Obbo 1980; Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and van Willigen 2006; Sacks 1988; Spradley 1976; Stull and Broadway 2004; Zavella 2011; Zentella 1997).

When mutuality is aimed for and achieved, more than individual career goals or interpersonal relationships may be enhanced. Just as greater mutuality between archaeologists and "descendant communities" has been a salutary result of the 1990 Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (Killion 2007; Thomas 2000; Townsend 2004), so also will growing awareness and practice of mutuality in social-cultural anthropology boost our "brand" among the greater public and among our current and future students. Moreover, the much discussed "crisis of representation," to which postmodernists have alerted us, may in significant part recede as values mutually shared by anthropologists and those we study, learn from, work with, and write for displace the inwardly focused concerns of academia and its arbiters.

Plan of the Book

Mutuality: Anthropology's Changing Terms of Engagement results from an invitation to contribute chapters that I sent to sixteen colleagues whose work within the deep grooves of fieldwork and collaboration I admired. Ten were able to attend a session at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in Montreal in 2011 to present and discuss early versions of their chapters. The volume is organized into four sections, *Orientations*, *Roots*, *Journeys*, and *Publics*, which are followed by a concluding chapter.

Orientations

The first section, "Orientations," establishes the broad terrain and themes of *Mutuality*. Garrick Bailey, in "Anthropology and the American Indian" (Chapter 1), traces the relationship between Native Americans and anthropologists from the late nineteenth century to the present, a tale of declining mutuality. He includes

reflections on his own role, working on behalf of the Osage and other Indian peoples, in recent struggles over museum exhibit representations. In "The American Anthropological Association *RACE: Are We So Different?* Project" (Chapter 2), Yolanda T. Moses tells the story of the leading professional association's largest public program ever, which has brought up-to-date anthropological thinking about what "race" is and is not to nationwide audiences in museums and science centers and to users of its *RACE* website. These two chapters address major impediments to mutuality in anthropology's past and present—its objectification of indigenous (and other studied) peoples and rejection of their "native point of view" and the historical development of "scientific racism" to classify and rank culturally generated segments of the human population, with tragic consequences and costs. These two chapters also describe what anthropologists are doing to rectify these impediments and increase mutuality, work in which the authors have been directly involved.

The next two chapters address mutuality in ethnographic fieldwork and collaboration. In "Mutuality and the Field at Home" (Chapter 3) Sylvia Rodríguez recounts her career transition from early "extractive research" abroad to collaborative fieldwork and public anthropology in her New Mexico home community of Taos. Then in "If You Want to Go Fast, Go Alone. If You Want to Go Far, Go Together': Yup'ik Elders Working Together with One Mind" (Chapter 4), Ann Fienup-Riordan explains how her collaboration with Yup'ik elders in Alaska has evolved, using recent work on weather and the environment to illustrate what she has learned over four decades.

Roots

The second section, "Roots," concerns the values and experiences that anthropologists bring to their work from their family and community backgrounds, which may include histories of migration, travel, mass incarceration, political movements, and conflict. "The Invisibility of Diasporic Capital and Multiply Migrant Creativity" (Chapter 5), by Parminder Bhachu, explores the past and present Punjabi craft caste global diaspora, of which her family is a part, and conveys the impact that familial experiences and stories play in the topics she has chosen to study and write about. She illustrates the importance of mutuality in both her anthropological tracing of historical trajectories and in connecting contemporary generations with the histories and sensibilities that produce them. Deana L. Weibel, in "A Savage at the Wedding and the Skeletons in My Closet: My Great-Grandfather, 'Igorotte Villages,' and the Ethnological Expositions of the 1900s" (Chapter 6), interrogates her ancestor's display of Bontoc Igorot men, women, and children at U.S. world's fairs a century ago—a form of counter-mutuality that also involved several professional anthropologists of the day. She then describes her ongoing collaborations with Filipina Igorot anthropologist Patricia Afable and with the now globalized Igorot descendant community.

Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, in "Thinking About and Experiencing Mutuality: Notes on a Son's Formation" (Chapter 7), reflects upon his community-based research in the 1970s with his father, anthropologist and ethnic studies activist James Hirabayashi. He specifies the values and methods he learned then and continued to use in later work, including book projects about Japanese Americans and Japanese migrants that involved both Hirabayashis and other Nikkei scholars. Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, in "Cartographies of Mutuality: Lessons from Darfur" (Chapter 8), describes how she was inspired by her socially conscious father and family members while she was growing up in Khartoum. She focuses on how incidents and memories from that time, and also mutualities from her student days, have affected her research among Sudanese migrants abroad and at home and, more recently, in her multisited fieldwork on the Darfur crisis.

Journeys

In "Journeys," the third section, the contributors address mutuality in their various career pathways, which include working in an applied research organization, a museum, independent practice, a nursing home, a

statewide health-care reform project, and a medical school, as well as in academic departments. "On the Fault Lines of the Discipline: Personal Practice and the Canon" (Chapter 9), by Robert R. Alvarez, considers several facets of mutuality: among colleagues, in conducting fieldwork and contract research, with the people we study, and between each anthropologist and his or her professional heritage and identity. In "Listening With Passion: A Journey Through Engagement and Exchange" (Chapter 10), Alaka Wali links her emerging appreciations of mutuality and aesthetics in, first, research in Harlem and, later, field projects and collections work in Chicago and Peru for the Field Museum of Natural History.

Susan Lobo, in "Why? And How? An Essay on Doing Anthropology and Life" (Chapter 11), describes strategies and accomplishments during Lobo's career as a practicing anthropologist, including her long-term collaboration at Intertribal Friendship House in Oakland, California. She closes with wise observations about writing across a range of formats and for various audiences. "Embedded in Time, Work, Family, and Age: A Reverie About Mutuality" (Chapter 12), by Renée R. Shield, situates her research and work career within the fabric of the mutualities and negotiations one weaves as family member, ethnographer, colleague, citizen, and life-course navigator. Her personal and anthropological experiences reinforce for her Martin Luther King, Jr.'s observation: "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality."

Publics

"Publics," the final section, focuses on mutuality in relation to anthropology's many nonacademic publics—the people we learn from and about, collaborate with, live among, communicate with, and seek to affect as audiences for our writings and collaborative efforts. These publics range in scale from the macro, even national, level (as in the AAA *RACE* project discussed by Moses) to the micro, often deeply interpersonal, level of fieldwork partners and subjects. These publics include museum goers, fellow community members, general readers, and policy makers, among others, and they also embrace, as the chapters in this section attest, persons who may be disabled, racialized, economically vulnerable, and locally and internationally displaced.

In "Dancing in the Chair: A Collaborative Effort of Developing and Implementing Wheelchair Taijiquan" (Chapter 13), Zibin Guo tells the heartening story of the adaptation of a traditional Chinese healing art for wheelchair users and its subsequent introduction nationwide in China, as well as promising applications in the United States. Brett Williams, in "Fragments of a Limited Mutuality" (Chapter 14), reminds us of the contingent, uneven, and frustrating course mutuality can take as the community ethnographers and friends she portrays struggle at the short end of an unequal income distribution while resources, invisibly and deviously, flow daily from poor to rich.

Lanita Jacobs, in "On 'Making Good' in a Study of African American Children with Acquired and Traumatic Brain Injuries" (Chapter 15), relates how empathy, love, and grief arose in her relationship with a young boy whose hospitalization she followed as ethnographer for two years preceding his death from a brain tumor. She identifies the obligation she bears to "make good" in writing for audiences of which she and her subject's family are a part. "On Ethnographic Love" (Chapter 16), by Catherine Besteman, offers a close reading of recent anthropological thinking related to mutuality, including that of critics and resisters. She then considers models for mutuality that she embraced in fieldwork in postapartheid Cape Town, South Africa, and that she later employed and extended in bridge building between Somali Bantu refugees and white Americans in Maine.

Conclusion

My *Mutuality* coauthors have vitalized and expanded the concept of mutuality along many dimensions. In the Conclusion, "Mutuality and Anthropology: Terms and Modes of Engagement," I reflect on how my own

appreciation of mutuality developed within the deep grooves of an anthropological career—as outsider and insider, fieldworker and citizen—over five decades. I ask how the kinds of writing we do, from theory-driven journal articles and books for academic peers to modes accessible to diverse readerships, including policy and public opinion audiences, impede or enhance mutuality. I consider, as well, past and present anthropological engagement with mutuality in old and new media, museums and public programs, and health-care settings.

The volume closes with brief exploration of how anthropology's two value systems might be brought more fully into mutual balance.

Users Review

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