

The Social Role(s) of the Researcher

A Field of Ethics

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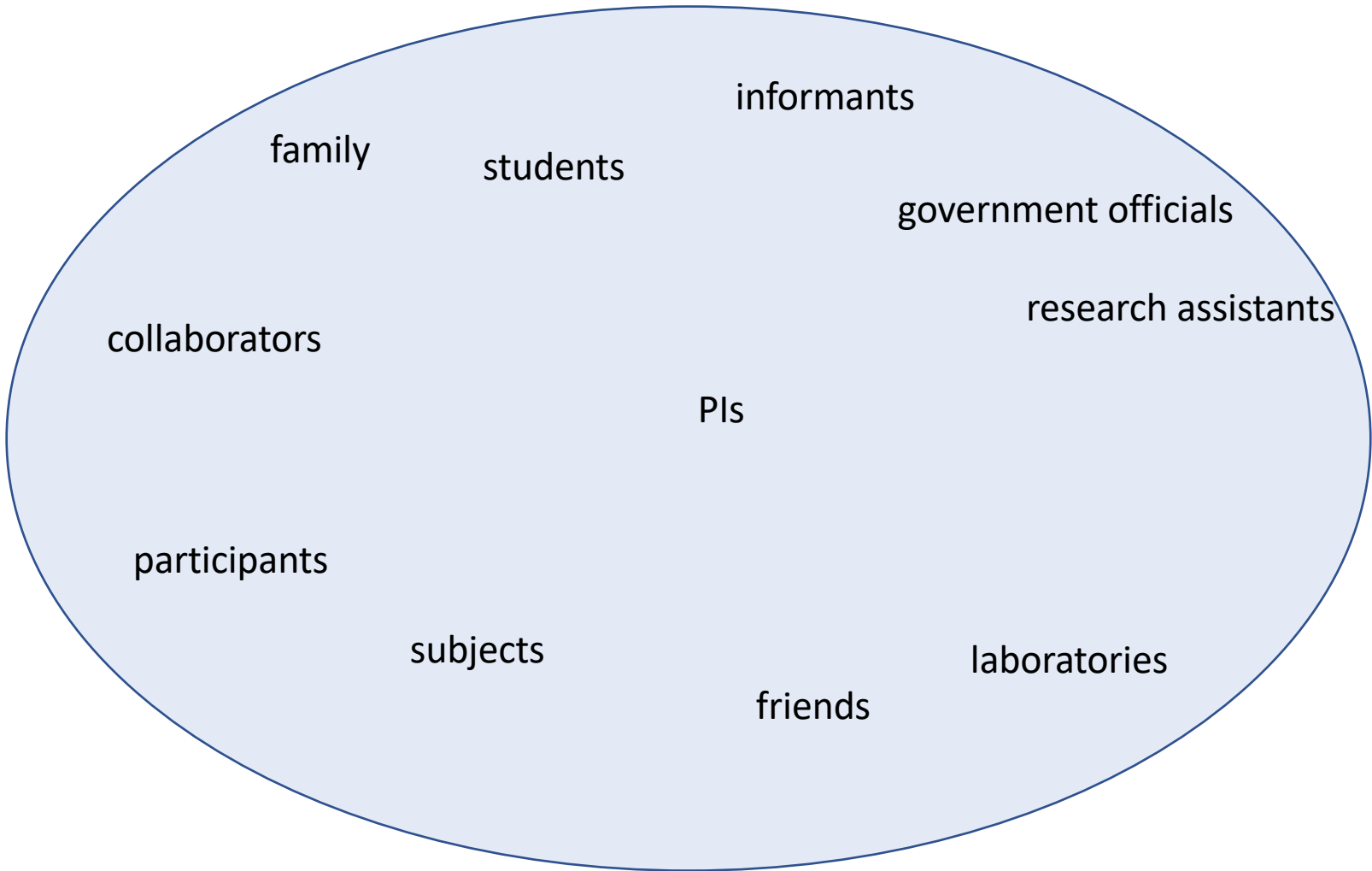


MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

Max Planck Institute
for Evolutionary Anthropology

Research Ethics in
Evolutionary Biological
Sciences
25th-26th November

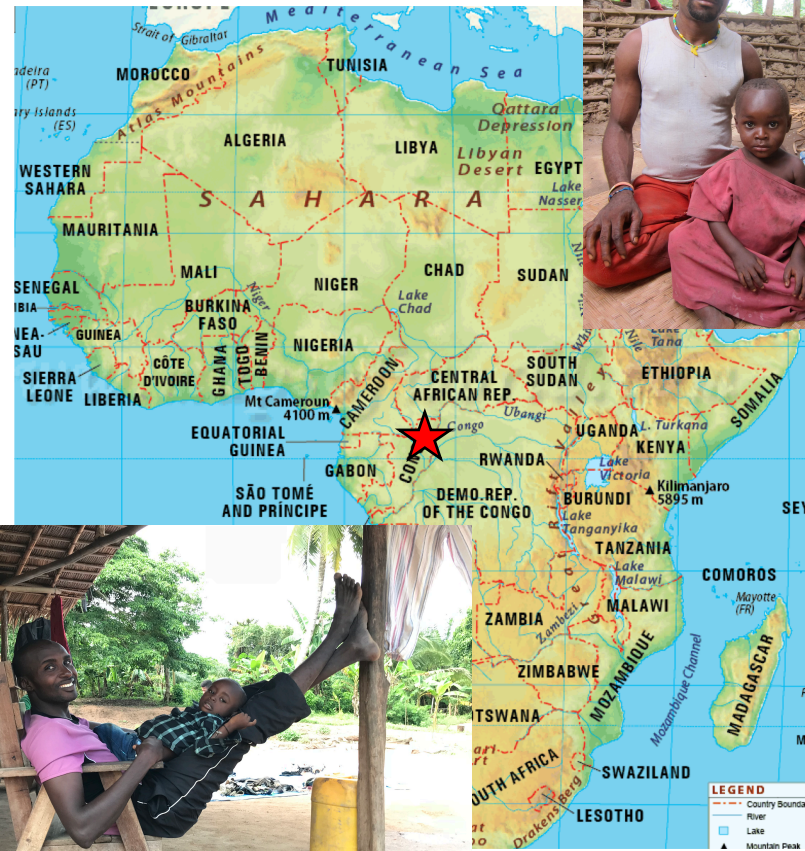
ETHICAL FIELD RESEARCH



Comparative, mixed-methods fieldwork

- Children's education and care (Boyette 2016; In Press; Boyette and Hewlett 2017; Boyette and Lew-Levy In Press)
 - Cognitive anthropology: schemas, values
 - Behavioral ecology: time allocation
- Biology of fatherhood (Gettler 2010; 2014; 2016; Gettler et al. 2011; 2013; 2015)
- Multi-ethnic village
- **BaYaka** (~200 people)
 - Identify as forest foragers
- **Bondongo** (~200 people)
 - Fishers, farmers

BaYaka father with daughter, ROC, 2017

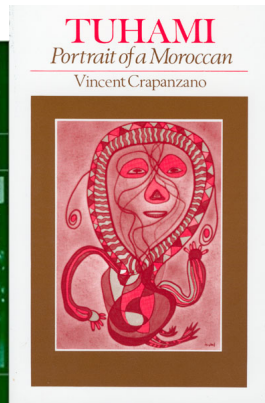
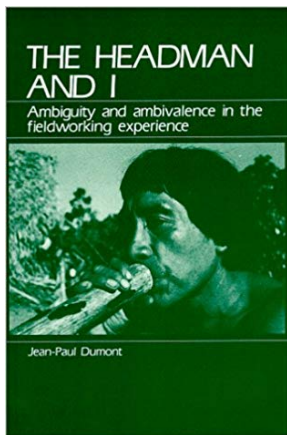


Bondongo father with son, ROC, 2018. Photo by Sarah Pope

Four Types of Relationships

- I. Researcher-Research Participant
- II. Researcher-Research Assistant
- III. Researcher-Student
- IV. Researcher-Scientific Community relationships

I. Researcher-Research Participant



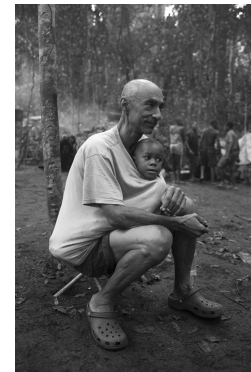
- Human rights
 - [UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
 - [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#)
- Human subjects research
 - Ethics review committees

I. Researcher-Research Participant

1. Obligation to understand what social roles exist within the community
 - what are the local expectations of rights and duties, and appropriate behavior of persons in those roles?
 - acting outside your role can damage your reputation and limit your ability to collect the data you seek.
- What is the “researcher” role? What will you make of it?



“objective”



“going native”
 (“subjective”)

Louis Sarno,
ethnomusicologist,
1954-2017

I. Researcher-Research Participant

2. Consent does not stop at the consent form

“Anthropological researchers working with living human communities must obtain the voluntary and informed consent of research participants. Ordinarily such consent is given prior to the research, but it may also be obtained retroactively if so warranted by the research context, process, and relations. **The consent process should be a part of project design and continue through implementation as an ongoing dialogue and negotiation with research participants...**”

Anthropologists have an obligation to ensure that research participants have freely granted consent, and must avoid conducting research in circumstances in which consent may not be truly voluntary or informed. In the event that the research changes in ways that will directly affect the participants, anthropologists must revisit and renegotiate consent. **The informed consent process is necessarily dynamic, continuous and reflexive.** Informed consent does not necessarily imply or require a particular written or signed form. It is the quality of the consent, not its format, which is relevant.”

[AAA Ethics Statement](#)

I. Researcher-Research Participant

- back to one's social identity and roles.
- An ethical stance demands the field researcher persistently question:
 - How is my personal and status-based power shaping my encounters with my research participants?

II. Researcher-Research Assistant

- Field assistants are those who serve critical instrumental roles
 - Logistics
 - Translation
 - data collection.
- They are often from the community or region of study, and therefore serve as critical cultural liaisons to the field worker.
- The ethical issues surrounding their work are under appreciated

II. Researcher-Research Assistant

III. Researcher-Student/Mentee

- The chance to work in “the field” is exciting and can jumpstart a career, but it is also a time of immense vulnerability.
- The role of teacher and mentor in the field has the same ethical obligations as it would at the home institution or office.

III. Researcher-Student/Mentee

“Anthropologists must not obstruct the scholarly efforts of others when such efforts are carried out responsibly. In their role as teachers and mentors, anthropologists are obligated to provide instruction on the ethical responsibilities associated with every aspect of anthropological work. They should facilitate, and encourage their students and research staff to engage in dialogue on ethical issues, and discourage their participation in ethically questionable projects. **Anthropologists should appropriately acknowledge all contributions to their research, writing, and other related activities, and compensate contributors justly for any assistance they provide. They are obligated to give students and employees appropriate credit for the authorship of their ideas, and encourage the publication of worthy student and employee work.”**

[AAA Ethics Statement](#)

III. Researcher-Student/Mentee

- Sexual harassment and assault in the field: the SAFE studies (Clancy et al. 2014, Nelson et al. 2017)
 - Fieldsites as workplaces: How do you behave at work?

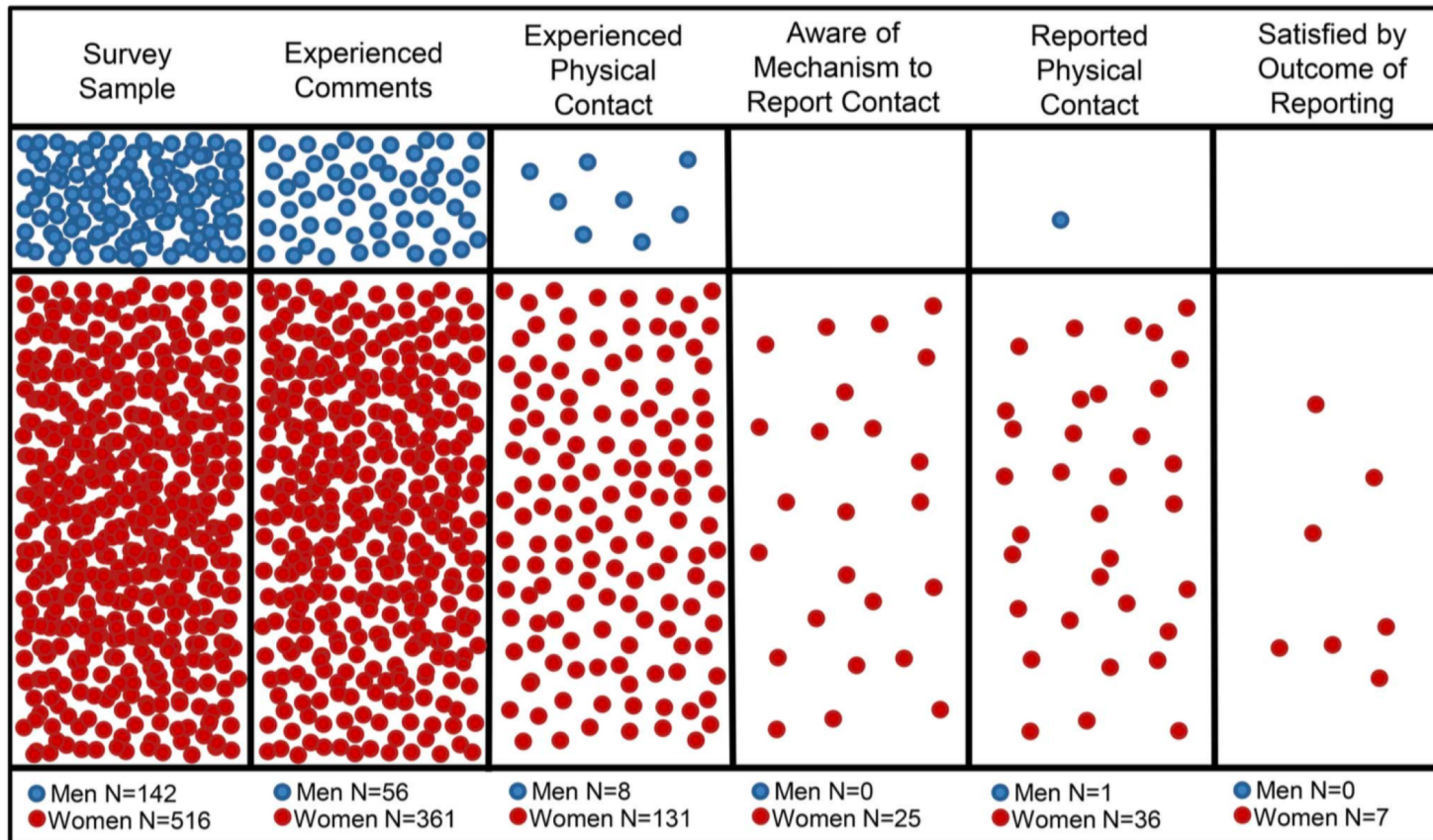


Figure 3. Visual representation of respondents to the survey, their experiences, and who were aware of, made use of, and were satisfied by mechanisms to report unwanted physical contact. Each circle represents one survey respondent. Area for men and women is representative of their relative proportion of survey respondents. Eight respondents declined to provide a dichotomous gender designation and are not represented on this graph.
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0102172.g003

III. Researcher-Student/Mentee

- In their follow-up analysis of interview data from a subset of their survey respondents (Nelson et al. 2017), found these incidents:
 - tended to have far-reaching negative effects on the victims' careers
 - tended to be avoided by explicit policies concerning appropriate behavior at the field sites and clear mechanisms for reporting improper conduct, as well as consequences for violations.

IV. Researcher-Scientific Community

IV. Researcher-Scientific Community

- Fieldwork is physical, intellectual, and emotional labor
- What happens in the field should not stay in the field: The scientific community should hold unethical fieldworkers accountable, and support whistleblowers

Conclusions: Proposed Principles

- Do no harm
- Build social roles with clear expectations, duties, and obligations; with your participants as well as with your students, postdocs, and employees
- Get consent: People should know what you will do with the work they do for you, and you should know what you will get for the work you do for them.
- Write memorandums of understanding with collaborators to formalize how data from the field will be used
- Write or ask that formal ethical guidelines be written for your field site; including formal sexual violence reporting procedures.
- Care for yourself and your team – socioemotional health as well as physical health
- Treat your fieldsite as a workplace (Clancy et al 2014)

Thank you