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Anthropological Professionalization and the Virginia Indians at the Turn of the Century

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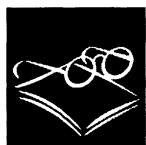
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Anthropological Professionalization and the Virginia Indians at the Turn of the Century

ABSTRACT In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the Indians of Virginia, like marginalized native communities throughout the Southeast, were enmeshed in struggles over their identity, as “one-drop” rules were increasingly applied and formalized. At that time several scholars, including James Mooney, wrote on the Powhatan tribes in *American Anthropologist*, the nascent journal of a professionalizing discipline. Previously, most works on the Virginia Indians had been published locally; after a brief florescence on the national scene (roughly corresponding to the 300th anniversary of English settlement in Powhatan territory), that pattern resumed. The works published on Virginia Indians in this period, and the contrast with their relative invisibility in professional journals over the following decades, cast light on U.S. anthropology’s development as a profession. This article examines the transition from local to national organizations from the standpoint of ethnographic inclusion of such marginalized peoples. [Keywords: Powhatan Indians, ethnic identity, professionalization, localism, *American Anthropologist*]

THE TITLE OF THIS ARTICLE is a centennial conceit: there are two referents for “the Turn of the Century,” one roughly coincident with the founding of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and the other with its centennial, now being celebrated. My intention here is to interweave two stories for the purpose of examining their relationships, roughly bracketed by the century turnings. The first story concerns the professionalization of the discipline. The second is that of the Indians of Virginia, whom I take as an example of groups that were, and were seen as, relevant to the developing proto-profession of anthropology over a century ago but became less so as the century progressed and the discipline professionalized.

I use *professionalization* here in the sense developed by scholars in the history of anthropology, particularly Regna Darnell (e.g., 1969, 1971, 1998). It is not meant to invoke a distinction between amateur and professional individuals but, rather, refers to historical developments in the discipline as a whole. The key developments were institutional: organizations of practitioners, to facilitate ongoing dialogue; regularized training programs, so that practitioners would share some common ground; and fora for dissemination, to share findings within the profession and with others. Crucially, these institutions would also be interconnected through the individuals who were active in them. The AAA became one of the main organizations; anthropology programs and departments were developed for training; and *American Anthropologist* (AA) became a preeminent forum for dissemination.

Prior to this process there were professional anthropologists, and various journals and museums disseminated anthropological knowledge, but the institutionalized bases and interconnections that constitute the professional field were absent. One further component of professionalization is crucial: the establishment of disciplinary boundaries, a consensus regarding what is (and is not) part of and relevant to the discipline. This is inevitably amorphous and subject to contention, but it must be reckoned with.

I should state from the beginning that I am not trying to negate the positive aspects of professionalization: validation and legitimacy as a discipline, quality of training, availability of funding, development of professional networks and venues for the dissemination of research, and sheer numbers of practitioners. Research methods, theories, and findings are also in many cases significantly improved. But as we celebrate the centennial we must also consider the possible consequences of that century of development. What might have been lost along the way? Who benefits from the improvements to our discipline and from our work? And where might we go from here? Others have raised these questions, but they demand regular reconsideration.

THE ERASURE OF INDIANS

“Gee, Beav, there haven’t been any Indians around here for a coupla hundred years. I think they all left when they paved the streets or sumthin’.” This line, spoken by Wally to Beaver in an episode of *Leave It to Beaver*, captures a perception

widely shared among Americans in much of the eastern United States.¹ The erasure of eastern Indians is a phenomenon of many forms and contexts, from warfare, to removal, to social and economic marginalization, taking place from the beginning of the colonial period to the present. One component of this erasure especially active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a consequence of the racialization of difference. People were assigned to racial categories, based simply on their appearance and heritage, which were seen as defining them in some essential way. Popularly these categories were “black,” “white,” “red,” and “yellow.” Although scientists used other terms and developed more complex schemas, these popular categories have long shaped U.S. perceptions and policy.

But despite the seeming biological nature of these categories, there was always some slippage. From the time of colonization many eastern native communities were open to nonnative people joining them; native identities had a stronger tendency to be defined by cultural behavior rather than biological factors. Non-native and mixed-blood people were thus often accepted as Indians, by Indians. But to others the folk-racial categories held, and the Indian identity of such people had to be qualified. This is particularly evident after the Civil War, when Americans were forced to confront the ramifications of the fact that the United States is a multi-racial nation. The application of race theory had broad consequences, and it became increasingly difficult for “white Indians” and “black Indians” to be recognized as “Indians.” Those who follow modern native identity politics will readily recognize the phenomenon, perhaps most famously in political cartoons and some of the comments by Donald Trump challenging the “nativeness” of certain groups trying to develop casinos in the Northeast. This is not the context to consider the validity of such claims, but we must note the character of the racialization: Eastern Indians who “look black” are even less likely to be recognized as Indians than are those who “look white”—and the category of “Indian” itself remains problematically stereotyped, of course.²

While racial categories seem the main tool for erasing eastern Indians, defining them as mixed-blood, colored, or black, cultural changes were also held against them. Eastern Indian cultures, long in contact with Euro-American settlers, had changed from what they had been at the time of contact, while certain features drawn from various native cultures became memorialized in American culture as “Indian.” Native people who continued to live in their tribal territories, in ways recognized by non-Indians as “traditional,” might be “Indians” in popular perception, but many native people were reduced to the status of “descendants of Indians”—granted the racial attribution but denied the culture. The definition of identities was far more complex than can be addressed here, including such dimensions as full- and mixed-blood, black Indians, descendants of Indians, traditional and progressive, the so-called civilized tribes, and many others, but crucial here is the *de facto* erasure and diminution of Indianness inherent in these multiply qualified, hyphenated sorts of Indians.

One of the consequences of this erasure is a variety of preservation movements. Native communities “revitalize,” “repatriate,” and “reinvent traditions,” in the academic jargon: they find ways to preserve and hand down their identities and ways of life, as always in such processes incorporating both change and continuity. These processes rewrite where erasure has taken place.³ Anthropologists also preserve aspects of nativeness. This is particularly characteristic of “salvage anthropology,” widely associated with the Boasians, but most anthropological work has this preserving quality. For all the criticism salvage anthropology has received, this feature of anthropology is perhaps the one that has been most useful to many native communities, allowing the return of old ways and objects to people whose contemporary existence permits things that were previously discouraged, outlawed, hidden in induced shame, or forgotten through neglect, as well as objects that were simply taken inappropriately.⁴ Anthropology and anthropologists have been sharply criticized by Native American people and others (e.g., Deloria 1969, 1995; Mihesuah 1998; cf. Mihesuah 1996), and I offer here neither an apology for the improprieties of past scholars nor encouragement of continuing abuse of trust. But it is worth noting that anthropology also has sometimes benefited the people we work with.

THE VIRGINIA INDIANS

Virginia was populated by native people for thousands of years before the English settled at Jamestown, in 1607, and now for almost 400 years since that event. There were many distinct polities, speaking languages of at least three different linguistic families, in what is now Virginia. The best-documented groups, however, and also the largest today, are the peoples known as the Powhatan tribes: descendants of the Algonquian-speaking groups that at the time of colonization were united under the chief Powhatan, well known today as the father of Pocahontas (Gleach 1997; Rountree 1990). The Powhatan Confederacy, as it became known, has not existed since the 17th century (although there was recurrent talk of reviving it in the 20th century), but its constituents and the other Indians of Virginia retain their independent identities. In Virginia only the Mattaponi and the Pamunkeys have reservations—recognized by the state but not federal governments—but there are other communities of Powhatans in eastern Virginia and elsewhere,⁵ the largest probably being the Chickahominies (who, as we shall see, were reported to no longer exist over 200 years ago). There are also still communities descended from other native groups, notably the Monacans (see, e.g., Cook 2000; Hantman 1990).

From the earliest time of colonization the Powhatans were fairly open to others who wanted to join them.⁶ The repeated passage in the 17th century of laws prohibiting both Englishmen and slaves from going to live with the Indians attests to the practice, as does the physical appearance of the Powhatans in later times. The mixing was relatively unidirectional, however; even in the 17th century Indians were effectively isolated—spatially, economically, and culturally—

from participating in white society. But in a pattern repeated throughout the continent, the set-aside lands (even before formally treated as “reservations”) were subject to encroachment and alienation by whites through unilateral revision of treaties; this is how only two Virginia groups were left with reservation land in the 20th century. Virginia Indians were thus reduced to de facto dependencies even before there was legal definition of the status (Gleach 1997: 184–198; Rountree 1990).

Certainly this was true by the latter part of the 18th century. Indian communities in their isolation may have remained attractive destinations for people fleeing the mainstream society, but that attraction itself depended on their relative invisibility. Thomas Jefferson wrote of the Virginia Indians in the 1780s:

The *Chickahominies* removed, about the year 1661, to Mattaponi river. Their chief, with one from each of the tribes of the Pamunkies and Mattaponies, attended the treaty of Albany in 1685. This seems to have been the last chapter in their history. They retained however their separate name so late as 1705, and were at length blended with the Pamunkies and Mattaponies, and exist at present only under their names. There remain of the *Mattaponies* three or four men only, and they have more negro than Indian blood in them. They have lost their language, have reduced themselves, by voluntary sales, to about fifty acres of land, which lie on the river of their own name, and have, from time to time, been joining the Pamunkies, from whom they are distant but 10 miles. The *Pamunkies* are reduced to about 10 or 12 men, tolerably pure from mixture with other colours. The older ones among them preserve their language in a small degree, which are the last vestiges on earth, as far as we know, of the Powhatan language. They have about 300 acres of very fertile land, on Pamunkey river, so encompassed by water that a gate shuts in the whole. Of the *Nottoways*, not a male is left. A few women constitute the remains of that tribe. [1955:96–97]

Jefferson thus contributed to the erasure of these people, undercounting all groups, dramatically understating the size of the Pamunkey reservation, and generally underestimating the amount of native culture, language, and genetics preserved (Mooney 1907:143; cf. Rountree 1990).⁷ As the romantic image of the disappearing Indian took hold in the eastern United States in the early to mid-19th century, the Powhatans, in the popular conception, faded away to be remembered only in epic poems and plays (Gleach in press a; Tilton 1994).

By the mid-19th century, as North-South tensions rose and alternate nation-founding myths were created that emphasized the Pilgrims on one hand and Captain John Smith on the other, accusations were raised by Boston historian Charles Deane that Smith’s already well known story of being rescued by Pocahontas was a lie (Barbour 1986:lxii–lxiv). The North was as successful in historical hegemony as it was in the Civil War; Americans today are more familiar with the Pilgrims, Plymouth Rock, and the supposed “First Thanksgiving” than with Jamestown,⁸ despite the historical precedence of events in Virginia. By erasing the importance of James-

town, remembrance of the native people who lived there has also been minimized.⁹

In 1907 the tercentennial of the settlement at Jamestown was celebrated with an international exposition (not officially a World’s Fair) at Norfolk, Virginia, where Indians were essentially romanticized as semimythical creatures of the past, with Plains Indians taken as the archetype and eastern Indians almost invisible—an interesting trick, given the centrality of Pocahontas and Powhatan in the founding myth being celebrated there (Gleach in press b). The only recorded presence of living Powhatans was a performance enacted on the midway (which was named at this fair *The Warpath* to “honor” Indians’ part in history). One contemporary account mentions this performance:

A band of these Pamaunkees on the Warpath—the modern, peaceful Warpath—nightly re-enact the historic and legendary deeds of their ancestors. As they have not had the advantage of college training, their war whoops are deficient in animation and abandon, but they have brought with them from their reservation the genuine original stone on which Captain Smith did or did not lay his head when he was or was not rescued by Pocahontas. [Slosson 1907:125]

Although thwarted at every turn, the Powhatans and other Virginia Indians were fighting for visibility, recognition, and a place in society. But the only ones society seemed to want were the descendants of Pocahontas, a proud part of the white aristocracy of Virginia, who were even exempted from the Virginia Racial Integrity Law in 1924.¹⁰

ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND OTHER FRIENDS

At a AAA symposium on anthropology and the American Indian over 30 years ago, convened in part in response to Vine Deloria’s well-known piece “Anthropologists and Other Friends” (1969), Alfonso Ortiz suggested that despite “very real problems and concerns, . . . if all anthropologists working with Indians were lined up and shot one day, very little would change for the better in Indian communities” (1973: 91). Deloria responded that he was “willing to undergo the experiment, hoping for the best” (1973:93). Today, in part because of continued critiques by Deloria and others (e.g., Deloria 1995; Mihesuah 1998), some anthropologists are openly espousing and employing collaborative and even community-driven research techniques, and virtually all Americanists are at least highly conscious of the contexts and consequences of their work. The inherently complex relationship between anthropologists and native peoples has been and continues to be explored in productive ways in the eastern United States; plenary sessions at the Southern Anthropological Society meeting in 1996 and 2000 offered many examples (see Bonney and Paredes 2001; Lefler and Gleach 2002).

A century ago, the two main institutionalized anthropological traditions were the established Smithsonian-based Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) and the developing university-based model, largely centered at that time in New York, around Franz Boas.¹¹ This rivalry is not my focus, however;

what is relevant here is the emphasis in both, in different ways, on the preservation of native traditions, based on the same romantic nostalgia of disappearing Indians noted above. This emphasis helped shape the field, directing attentions toward “traditional” communities and people—and effectively away from “acculturated” groups and others who could not contribute to this project.

The Virginia Indians, and especially the Mattaponi and Pamunkeys with their reservations, were at least conveniently situated for anthropological investigation, an easy trip from Washington. In 1889 BAE anthropologist James Mooney circulated letters throughout eastern Virginia and Maryland asking for information on full- or mixed-blood Indians, getting a response strikingly similar to Jefferson’s published *Notes*:

There is not now a native full-blood Indian, speaking his own language, from Delaware Bay to Pamlico Sound. The only Indians still recognized as such, living within this area, are two small bands, remnants of the once powerful Powhatans, residing on small reservations in King William county, northeast of Richmond. They have long since lost their language and now have probably as much negro blood as Indian, but still pride themselves upon their descent from the warriors of Powhatan, and have recently applied for a share in the school privileges afforded by the Government Indian school at Hampton. [Mooney 1890:132]

Mooney and fellow BAE anthropologist Albert Gatschet both visited Pamunkey in the early 1890s, and Mooney continued to work intermittently with Virginia Indians for some years. At this time the Indians were fighting to maintain their identities and communities in the face of indifference, at best, and racist opposition, at worst, with “Jim Crow” laws proliferating. Mooney describes the situation in the later 19th century:

In 1859, under the alarm produced by the John Brown raid, [the Virginia Indians] again fell under suspicion, and the Pamunkey, in spite of state recognition as Indians, were temporarily disarmed, while the unorganized bands were subject to worse treatment. In the Civil war a number joined the Union service as soldiers, guides, or seamen, while some fled to Canada to avoid conscription in the Confederate service. Intermarriage with the negro race is now forbidden by Pamunkey law and frowned upon in the other bands. To prevent annoyance when traveling, under recent Virginia legislation, the Pamunkey now carry official certificates of tribal membership; and for similar reasons the unorganized Chickahominy and Nansemond are now making strong effort for state recognition as Indian tribes, such as is accorded the Pamunkey and Mattapony. [1907:145; cf. Rountree 1990:187–218]

It was during this period that the Pamunkeys began public performances, including performing the rescue of Captain John Smith by Pocahontas, to improve their visibility and public opinion (Feest 1990; Gleach in press b).

Reading the publications, notes, and correspondence of anthropologists of the period, one gets the clear impression that many professional anthropologists considered the Virginia Indians, and eastern Indians in general, too far gone culturally and biologically to be useful for their research programs.

If preservation of endangered traditions was a goal, what did these people have left to preserve? Mooney alone seems to have devoted any appreciable time and energy, and he published a major article in *AA* in 1907, to coincide with the tercentennial celebrations. Prior to that the main contribution on Virginia Indians was a small volume written by avocational scholar John Garland Pollard (1894), who had also visited Pamunkey in the early 1890s. Amateur historians were actively researching Virginia Indians throughout the latter 19th century, with results published largely in local history journals such as *Tyler’s Historical Quarterly* and the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*.

Like history, archaeology continued to focus on eastern Indians. The focus of both on the past explains why this work was considered acceptable to scholars interested in native traditions—which were commonly viewed as phenomena of the past, particularly for eastern groups—but it is important to remember that the disciplinary divisions among archaeology, history, and anthropology were not so sharply drawn a century ago as they seem today. Cultural anthropologists routinely studied material culture and worked with historical sources, and archaeological research was integral to other branches of anthropology.¹² The field of “ethnohistory” was not yet defined as something separate but was largely practiced within the broad bounds of anthropology—and two of the people most closely associated with such work, James Mooney and Frank Speck, worked with Virginia Indians.

In considering questions of professional inclusion and visibility in the discipline of anthropology, I consider publications in the major professional journals, and particularly in *AA*, to be most critical. Books, articles in books, and articles in local-interest journals are important for spreading information, but they tend to be read by people with an established interest in a particular subject. In a different context, for other questions, these might be more critical data. *AA* is possibly more widely read by anthropologists, regardless of subdiscipline, than any other professional journal, and its position as the flagship publication of the AAA lends further significance. *Current Anthropology* and other more generalized journals also reach a broad professional audience, and there are many more specialized journals that are also important, but the stature of *AA*, its prominent place in the discipline for over a century, makes it a useful analytical unit for the issues at hand.

Until 1899 *AA* was the publication of the Anthropological Society of Washington (ASW), which included both professional anthropologists (mostly from the BAE) and other people with an interest in the subject. Regna Darnell (1998:15) has noted “localism” at this time, not just in the ASW, but in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. Local societies were less formal than national scientific professional organizations, and the local context tolerated a broader range of content, including more historical and philological articles. In the old series *AA* one can find several pieces dealing with Virginia Indians as examples of the broader pattern identified here.¹³

For example, in the first issue is an article on “Algonkin metal-smiths” (Reynolds 1888). This article is a contribution to the refutation of the “Mound Builders” theory, an argument that the great works of North America are the product of “an unknown people distinct from and superior to the historic Indian” (Reynolds 1888:341; cf. Silverberg 1968; Thomas 1887, 1894); the underlying assumption is that Indians could not have built the great mound complexes of North America. French ethnologist Paul du Chatelier (cited in Reynolds 1888:341) had suggested that native metallurgy (cold-hammered copper working, largely centered around the Great Lakes and known from mine sites and prehistoric artifacts) was also the work of those “Mound Builders.” Reynolds surveyed early accounts of eastern Indians for mentions of the use of wrought copper, including the accounts of Thomas Hariot and Ralph Lane from North Carolina (considered part of Virginia in the late 16th and early 17th centuries) and those of Captain Christopher Newport, Samuel Purchas, and William Strachey from Virginia.

In 1891 Mooney published a short note in volume 4, “The Growth of a Myth,” on the perennial story of Welsh Indians, descendants of a colony founded by Prince Madoc around C.E. 1170, noting an 18th-century account from Virginia of Indians understanding Welsh. Over the period 1893–98, William Wallace Tooker (1893, 1894, 1895, 1898) published four articles dealing with names in Virginia Indian languages. The history, language, and culture of Virginia Indians are reasonably well represented in the early years of *AA*.

Archaeological work is very well represented; I identify 12 articles and notes on the archaeology of Virginia Indians in the old series *AA*, including several important works. Pieces can be found in volumes 1, 2, 3, and 6, including two important articles by William Henry Holmes: “Pottery of the Potomac Tide-Water Region” (1889), which describes the fabrics used to impress the ceramic surface, and “A Quarry Workshop of the Flaked-Stone Implement Makers in the District of Columbia” (1890), part of his developing argument against the presence of “Paleolithic man” in the New World. Both articles were later expanded into publications of the BAE (Holmes 1903 and 1897, respectively), demonstrating the use of *AA* as a place for advance publication of interesting work in progress. Volume 2 includes “The Aborigines of the District of Columbia and the Lower Potomac” (Mason 1889), an archaeological symposium with articles by W J McGee, Thomas Wilson, S. V. Proudfit, Holmes, Elmer Reynolds, and Mooney. The closing discussion is by Frederic Ward Putnam, who notes that “there is certainly no other place in the country where there are so many anthropologists actively engaged in research as here in Washington, and I must congratulate this Society upon its success, and particularly that its members have taken such an interest in local archaeology” (1889:266).

THE FAMILIARITY OF THE LOCAL AND THE EXOTIC OTHER

That flurry of work in Virginia was probably spurred partly by the publication in 1884 of Edward Arber’s authoritative

and popular edition of the complete works of Captain John Smith, much as the 1907 tercentennial celebrations spurred works on the Powhatans; these events raised local Virginia history to international prominence, at least temporarily. But despite Putnam’s remark above, the local is too often dismissively associated with avocational “local historians” and “amateur archaeologists” and left to them by professionals who prefer work with exotic “others.” And “local” connections, of one sort or another, have typified virtually all anthropological work with Virginia Indians. The BAE and ASW people were based in the Washington area, and Pollard was a Virginia politician. Frank Speck, who a few decades later was responsible for the greatest body of ethnographic work on the Powhatan Indians (e.g., 1928), defined himself through personal connections to erased eastern Indians and spent large parts of his life working with such groups (see Blankenship 1991). Even most of the recent anthropologists who have published on the Virginia Indians, myself included, have been from Virginia or have lived and worked in Virginia for some time.¹⁴ Virginia Indians are just not seen as sufficiently exotic to be professionally interesting to many anthropologists—and all too often they are simply just not seen.

The same could be said about most eastern Indians and in recent years, to some extent, about Native Americans in general. Contemporary Americanists regularly see evidence of their invisibility to other anthropologists in the form of work that could have been stronger if the author or reviewers had known the Americanist literature. Americanist studies contribute effectively in such areas as issues of identity, sovereignty, indigenous property, and historiography, providing potentially different visions of subaltern statuses and colonialism. Yet many anthropologists seem to justify the invisibility of Indians in the professional literature on the grounds that Americanists are “atheoretical” and, thus, the work is of interest only to specialists in the area. The fallacy of this position is demonstrated by the contributions in Valentine and Darnell (1999; see also 2001), but the position remains widespread.

Anthropologists are effectively defined, by others and by many even within the field, as working with exotic peoples (see, e.g., Darnell 2001: ch. 9). Even within the discipline there often are hierarchies of exotic difference at play in our professional rivalries and jockeying for relative position. Many anthropologists base personal claims on the difficulty of field conditions, languages required for competency, and perhaps even physical distance and difficulty of travel. Those who work in native North America quickly become inured to being taken less seriously by our peers; we are expected to appreciate and keep up with past and current research in other parts of the world, but the reverse seldom holds. And those who work in “mainstream” America feel even lower in the professional hierarchy. Lip service is sometimes made to such kinds of work, and there may be occasional exceptions in the form of a particular work that becomes more widely known, but the professional boundaries are nevertheless clear for these blurrings. Local work in familiar sorts of settings—

judged from the perspective of the U.S. university department of anthropology—is sharply devalued in the discipline, in favor of the more clearly exotic.

A cynic might note another dimension of the local, as John Szwed did almost 30 years ago (1972:153–154): the people you study are always looking over your shoulder, and they let you know in no uncertain terms when you do something wrong. Vine Deloria is far from alone in publicly raising objections to the ways some anthropologists have worked with (some would say, worked over) native communities. But if one works in a far-flung corner of the world where no native people are likely to read one's words and few others have been there to challenge one's interpretations, who is going to do that? Anthropology and anthropologists can provide an important service—to the academic disciplines and to the world—by working in places that otherwise would not be factored into our understandings of humanity and social and cultural processes. But with that potential comes a huge responsibility—and one that is not always met.

And those places where anthropology can make significant contributions are not just the recognizably exotic ones. Like regular folk and other academics, many anthropologists seem to assume that we already know everything we need to know about familiar, local people who just are not very "other." Lacking professional value in the market of difference, Virginia Indians, and eastern Indians in general, are highly marginal to the modern discipline of anthropology. Although a number of books on Virginia Indians have been published in the past decade and occasional articles appear in other journals, the modern *AA* has carried only one article, over ten years ago (Hantman 1990). Most of the other major anthropology journals would be hard-pressed to match even that.¹⁵

Ironically, at the same time, anthropology has become potentially relevant to many eastern Indian groups. As native communities that had been politically and socially isolated, marginalized, or defined out of existence have begun to reawaken in recent decades, there has arisen a need for professional experts to work in legal claims, in the courts and the legislature. Communities also seek help in working on a variety of problems that the tools of anthropology can be usefully applied to, from health, to injustice, to poverty, to invisibility. Academic anthropology, too, often turns its back on this kind of work.

THE "INHUMANITIES" AND "INACTION" RESEARCH

In recent years the pages of *Anthropology News* have included considerable discussion of "practicing" or "applied" anthropology, along with some resistance—to the labels if not to the practice itself.¹⁶ This is not new but, rather, reflects ongoing concerns. Forty years ago people were talking about "action anthropology" (e.g., Gearing 1970; Gearing et al. 1960; Tax 1958), and a variety of objections were raised then, too. Some objections to specific projects may have been legitimate, but many people seem to object on principle to the "political" dimensions of such work, the danger that a

scholar may be drawn into community disputes. The objection seems contrived: most anthropologists will be involved in community disputes at some point, and all scholarly work is political, but we continue to do anthropology. The critical question is, What are the politics about? As Davydd Greenwood (1999) suggests, the politics of anthropology, and the politics of the academy within which anthropology is professionalized, are largely relevant only within that context (see also Bailey 1977). A century ago the discipline may have largely ignored the social and political needs of many of the people being studied, but the common existence of avocational groups like the ASW and the community involvement of professional anthropologists like James Mooney (and later Frank Speck) suggest that some recognition of relevance beyond the bounds of the profession was present. Like many others, I would argue that the *professional discipline* of anthropology today is failing both the people we study and the larger society that could be interested in what we learn. But I also believe that the *practice* of anthropology does at least offer the potential for relevance, that we can participate responsibly in social action with sensitivity to humanity.

A century ago Mooney worked with Pamunkey William Terrill Bradby to encourage the Chickahominies to organize themselves (Rountree 1990:213). In the middle of the 20th century Speck encouraged the Virginia tribes to seek federal recognition and fought the state registrar who was trying to define them out of existence (Rountree 1990:219–237). One could argue that Mooney and Speck both were making the same argument I am: that local research and involvement should be an important dimension of anthropology. In 2000 legislation was introduced to recognize federally the state-recognized Virginia Indians, although it faces staunch opposition from groups in Virginia that oppose any possibility of Indian gaming (Hardin 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Hinkle 2000); the anthropologists working with Virginia Indians today have also been actively working with them on this and other issues.

I am not arguing that more anthropologists should work with Virginia Indians, or eastern Indians, or Indians in general. Indeed, the native people themselves would undoubtedly object. But the ongoing contributions of Americanist research, and other modes that are less prominent in the professional discourse, need to become more generally known.

CONCLUSION

Situations in which anthropology could be useful surround us in the local communities wherever we live and work, both "in the field" and "at home." Indeed, one of the great strengths of anthropology would seem to be its potential to bridge "field" and "home" communities so that we work with the same sensitivities and concerns in both. Few would argue that anthropologists should abandon the distant, exotic, or nonlocal. But we should also recognize our responsibilities as a profession to our local communities (which may not be as familiar as we think they are). We should make

every effort to be aware of, and value, the contributions of those who do choose to work locally.

Gupta and Ferguson (1997) and others have presented arguments for rethinking our relationship to fieldwork, which has become fetishized into a ritualistic exercise, driven as much by the demands of the academic marketplace as by research needs. The arguments in *Reinventing Anthropology* (Hymes 1972) also remain cogent and in many cases as radical today as they were three decades ago. The process of professionalization has effectively defined boundaries for anthropology and institutions to maintain and teach those boundaries. Traditional and exotic communities have been emphasized, and disciplinary specializations have emphasized fieldwork in such settings over other sources of data. But the institutions that convey our discipline from one generation to the next have a tendency to codify the decisions of the past, and that can be dangerously restrictive if a discipline is to retain relevance and vigor.

Anthropology is a way of working, and studying, and living—a set of strategies and tools for working with communities; it is much more than just participant-observation research in exotic field sites. We must remain open to all ways and places of doing anthropology and be wary of arbitrarily dismissive attitudes toward certain areas or modes of working. As Hymes writes,

In the early formation of departmental anthropology, the watchword, "That's not anthropology" may have been useful, somewhat like the union label; even though it violated the openness and expansiveness one associates with the early period, the academy had become the source of employment, departments the form of the academy, and one had to protect one's niche. Today one should react to the utterance of "That's not anthropology" as one would to an omen of intellectual death. For that is what it is. [1972:45]

I take the case of Virginia Indians just as an example; many valuable kinds of anthropological research have become marginalized, effectively declared "not anthropology"—or at least not anthropology that most professional anthropologists care about. If the professionalization of anthropology includes the abandonment or reduction to second-class status of certain kinds of research, then truly we have lost more than we have gained in the process.

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NOTES

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1. Those interested in scholarly treatment of the images of Indians might start with Robert Berkhofer's classic *The White Man's Indian* (1978). David Hurst Thomas takes up some of the modern consequences of such representations in *Skull Wars* (2000), a wonderfully provocative survey from an archaeologist's perspective.

2. I have explored this set of issues elsewhere (Gleach 2002). Rountree (1990) gives a detailed history of the Powhatan Indians and their interactions with non-Powhatan Americans from the 17th through the late 20th centuries. McMullen (1996a, 1996b) has done extensive work on similar processes in southern New England.

3. This elegant phrase is from Ann McMullen (personal communication, September 4, 2001).

4. For a particularly fine discussion of the ways that historical and political changes can be implicated in repatriation, see Ridington and Hastings 1997.

5. The term *Powhatans* is commonly used to refer to those groups descended from the former constituents of the Powhatan Confederacy. Native people generally prefer to be named by their individual tribal affiliations (and scholars should generally follow suit, of course). But just as certain kinds of analysis require a general term such as *Indian*, the arguments I make here are best made at the intermediate level of *Powhatans* or occasionally *Virginia Indians*. The latter is the more inclusive term; I use the former more often here, as my references are generally to those groups of central/eastern Virginia.

6. The reverse case of Pocahontas's marriage to tobacco planter John Rolfe, producing their son Thomas and hundreds of thousands of descendants, is much better known, particularly through its mythic versions (Feest 1990; Gleach in press a; Green 1975; Tilton 1994). But, although poorly documented, it was undoubtedly far more common for white settlers and black slaves to run off and live with the Indians than the reverse.

7. Many, myself included, like to remember Jefferson for his positive contributions, but it is important to also remember that his attitude toward Indians in general was not positive and at times verged on racist (see Wallace 1999).

8. Siskind (1992) discusses the invention of Thanksgiving as an American holiday. Growing up in Virginia I learned of the earlier "Thanksgiving" at Berkeley Hundred (in Virginia) at a fairly young age, but even there the dominant symbolism of the holiday has remained that of the Pilgrims at Plymouth.

9. Disney's *Pocahontas* (1995) brought the Powhatans back to popular consciousness but only as highly mythologized cartoon characters (Gleach in press a)—hardly a desirable condition. The northern emphasis in American history also helped erase decades of Spanish presence in the Southeast—including in Virginia—prior to the settlement at Jamestown. This is not only a significant part of American history but an important factor—and concern—in English colonization.

10. Rountree (1990:219–242) provides a good account of the Racial Integrity Law and the efforts of State Registrar Walter Plecker to reclassify all Virginia Indians as "colored" (cf. Cook 2000:104–113). Few if any Virginia Indians ever wanted to "pass" as white; they wanted to be recognized as Indians and not be restricted to the inferior facilities for "colored" people. Frank Speck worked with the Virginia Indians through this period and trained several students in fieldwork there; he also fought against Plecker and other anti-Indian racism.

11. The BAE had been founded in 1879 as the Bureau of Ethnology; the *American* was added in 1897 (Darnell 1998:11). There was also a third center at Harvard; like New York, this had an academic focus, but there were also differences. This period in the history of anthropology is relatively well studied; see, for example, Darnell 1998; Hinsley 1985, 1994; and Stocking 1960.

12. In recent years there has been some reconnection between anthropology and history. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that for many anthropologists today historical anthropology is not considered "real" anthropology.

13. In discussing these articles I do not imply that they are correct on all points. In fact, some of their assertions have been demonstrated to be false. But their publication at the time—and the fact

that they have been tested, whether found true or not—attests to the fact that these people and subjects were seen as relevant and interesting by anthropologists at that time.

14. The principal exception is Christian Feest, who has published on Virginia Indians and other topics since the 1960s. As a European scholar he is clearly not “local,” but his long-standing interest and his body of work do not negate my argument here about U.S. anthropology.

15. Recent books include Cook 2000; Gleach 1997; Potter 1993; Rountree 1989, 1990; and Waugaman and Moretti-Langholtz 2000. Rountree 1993 collects several essays on relations between the Powhatans and others in Virginia. Recent journal articles include Williamson 1992 as well as Hantman 1990.

16. The phrase “‘inhumanities’ and ‘inaction’ research” is from Greenwood 1999.

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