'Engaging Anthropology in South West Uganda'

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# Engaging Anthropology in South West Uganda

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## Introduction

There is often discussion amongst experienced researchers and those starting out in research about whether their position in ethnographic investigation should be modelled on the detached scientist or the engaged human being (see for example Bennett 1996; Bryman 2004).[1]   This paper suggests that the perceived dichotomies of detached/engaged, objective/subjective and reason/emotion are not mutually exclusive terms and should not be imposed on the researcher or the social sciences.  Using examples drawn from my 16 month PhD fieldwork I will argue that the question of objectivity is largely irrelevant as researchers are inherently bound within social relations that demand their involvement as engaged human beings whether they choose to be or not.  I suggest it would be much more useful for researchers in the social sciences to acknowledge our social engagement and find productive ways to understand the effects our relationships have on our research and the wider world we are part of.

Since 2001, I have been involved in supporting the heavily discriminated and marginalised Batwa of South West Uganda in roles varying from undergraduate and postgraduate researcher to consultant anthropologist and human rights worker.  Despite being

one of the indigenous people of Uganda, the Batwa are rarely mentioned in any histories of the country and current state policies either fail to include them or actively exclude them. The Batwa have been represented by others in local, national and global contexts in ways divergent from their own perceptions of their identities and situations. These external representations place the Batwa as almost mythical beings, either as 'Pygmies' who represent a past the rest of the world has left behind or as romanticised hunter-gatherers who possess a hidden wisdom on how humanity should interact with its environment. As such the Batwa are not only hidden through their exclusion from the political landscape but hidden from wider settings through multiple layers of imposed and often misplaced identities.

Through trying to understand the agendas and discourses of 'Western' conservation and development initiatives on the lives of these communities, I have become intimately engaged in those same communities' struggle for survival. I have found it difficult to objectively and rationally observe my work at a distance and deny my engagement in the lives of the people I work with. I have found it equally difficult to maintain the analytical distance I have needed to produce robust analysis. In response to the context I work in I have become an active agent in the Batwa's struggle for self-determination. This article attempts to discuss my own effort to negotiate these issues and the effects they have had on myself and those I work amongst during my periods of research and work.

## Locating Anthropology

> At the very time when my studies were most successful, there cut across this plan which I had as a scientist, a red ray which could not be ignored. I remember when it first, as it were, startled me to my feet [...] Sam Hose had

> been lynched, and they said that his knuckles were on exhibition at a grocery store […]I began to turn aside from my work […] one could not be a calm, cool, and detached scientist while Negroes were lynched, murdered, and starved […] (Du Bois 1984, p.67).

In 2002 I undertook my first fieldwork period amongst the Batwa as an undergraduate investigating their situation since their evictions from their ancestral lands. During my four months of research I can remember being torn between my interest in the Batwa's relationship with the forest and their contemporary situation outside the forest.  The following narrative brings together three important strands of my research experience: the methodology, the context, and the position I took within this context, as a researcher, a friend and a colleague to the people I was living amongst.

In the Batwa organisation's office, I interviewed two brothers who lived in the Kisoro area.  They had formerly hunted inside Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP) but had been evicted from this their ancestral home when it became a national park in 1991. They talked at length about the history of their people and after half an hour I asked what I thought at the time was an innocuous question: 'Do you want to go back into the forest and if so, for what reason?'  I expected a response which would illuminate their relationship to their forest.  Instead I was offered a response which illuminated their relationships outside their forest.  One of the brothers explained that he was scared of going back to the forest because only months earlier his son had tried, been caught and was beaten to death by local non–Batwa villagers.  It was said that his neighbours were angry at his continued extraction of firewood from inside the national park.

Looking back today at the interview transcript, it is clear I simply continued with my questions as if this death had never been mentioned. I remember being shocked and, not knowing how to engage with this complex topic, I continued with my original line of questioning. I remember feeling helpless. There were no tools in my 'anthropological toolbox' that could help this man in his loss and I felt unable to begin to grasp such a complex situation. I was wholly out of my depth. Later, in an attempt to take some action, I went to the police with representatives of the Batwa's organisation to enquire about the investigation into the death. The police officers insinuated that, since an investigation is not carried out for the death of a dog, why should resources be used to investigate the murder of this Mutwa?[2] Despite this attitude, and due to the persistence of the Batwa organisation, suspects were later identified by the relatives of the deceased and taken into custody. Unfortunately, this led to death threats being directed at these relatives and all charges were later dropped. The suspects were released back into the community in which the Batwa lived.

In 2005, a few months into my PhD fieldwork period, the father of this murdered man, the man I remember interviewing so vividly, was himself murdered. Back in 2002 this man had narrated his son's death and the denial of basic human rights to the Batwa. In 2005 his wife came to the office and told us of his murder, asking us to help her. I remember again feeling incensed by this brutality, and again feeling powerless – my helplessness venting itself in anger and rage. I also felt diminished by my failure to answer the wife as she begged to know why we had not done anything to prevent this death. The police again seemed unconcerned with this death, blaming it on internal fighting among the Batwa. In contrast, I

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[2] Singular of Batwa

believed that − like his son before him − this father had been murdered by his neighbours within a wider context of violent discrimination.  To date, neither death has been successfully investigated nor have any suspects been brought to trial.  The death of this man − who was one of the first Batwa I had interviewed − marked a transition in my research after which I was no longer able to stand aside and understand these deaths as happening to my informants.  These events happened to my friends.

My response to the situation is telling, as I found it unethical to carry out my research without supporting the Batwa.  My methodology became firmly rooted in advocating one position in a complex scenario.  Through supporting the Batwa, their struggle became my struggle and in being seen by other non-Batwa as a supporter of the Batwa, the animosity the Batwa were subjected to by their neighbours also became directed towards me.  Despite this, my analysis has had to remain objective in order to provide robust material which could be used by the Batwa in their struggle.


## Applied Anthropology

My initial doctoral research plan aimed to situate myself within a Batwa community and embed myself in their everyday activities.  The purpose of this research was to try to understand how knowledge was transferred within a community and analyse patterns of conflict resolution among this community.  In order for this plan to succeed, I needed to create a role for myself amongst the Batwa and their neighbours and purchase or rent agricultural land in order to participate in subsistence agricultural activities.

However, when I reached Kisoro my initial plans immediately became unfeasible.  In addition to my earlier undergraduate research in 2002, I had worked in Kisoro for an indigenous rights group in

2003, fostering links between the Batwa's own organisation and larger national and international organisations. When I reached Kisoro in 2005 many people – Batwa and non-Batwa alike – still associated me with this former role. The Batwa assumed I was there to continue supporting their organisation, and the non-Batwa immediately singled me out as a friend and supporter of the Batwa. This had dramatic consequences and I was left questioning whether it was ethical for me to deny the Batwa their request and insist that my research be constituted as a value neutral academic process, or to become engaged in their rights struggle.

I would argue however, as do many feminists, that the concept of a value neutral knowledge and/or methodology is questionable[3]. Myers and Tronto state that 'Value neutrality is often equated with the absence of political partisanship or a "passionate detachment" that then lets the facts/arguments speak for themselves' (1998, p.808). Oakley discarded the value neutral position in her own work,

> [One] reason for departing from [value neutral] interviewing ethics was that I regarded sociological research as an essential way of giving the subjective situation of women greater visibility […] What *was* important was not taken-for-granted sociological assumptions about the role of the interviewer but a new awareness of the interviewer as an instrument for promoting a sociology for women (emphasis in original, 1981, p.48).

Additionally, Oakley acknowledges the effects her research had on the lives of those she researched. In questionnaires, three quarters of her respondents felt her research had affected their own experiences of becoming a mother. Her evidence rejects the belief that the researcher and research can become integrated in the lives of

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[3] See Burton 2001; Gray 1968; Oakley 1981; Myers & Tronto 1998.

respondents but yet still remain 'objective' and she concludes that 'all research is political, from the micropolitics of interpersonal relationships, through the politics of research units, institutions and universities' (Oakley 1981, p.54).

The way in which I carried out my research and the role I took during my fieldwork in 2005 was not one in which I consciously positioned myself. On the one hand, that role was already formed through people's association of me with my previous work in 2003. But on the other hand, my role was decided by the relationships I had formed with the Batwa previously and by the relationships I would go on to form over the duration of my fieldwork period. I was a friend to many of my informants; I became a member of their family and a colleague in their organisation. As Hastrup and Elsass write,

> [...] in particular cases advocacy is no option but an implicit requirement of the social relationship established between the anthropologist and the local people (1990, p.301).

To form these bonds and gain their trust but then fail to respond to their needs as people would, in my mind, have been wholly unethical and would have removed my capacity to form these bonds in the first place. My relationships would not have been reciprocal and meaningful, so my 'decision' to support them was one born out of a necessity to engage with people in a way that was meaningful to both them and to me.

As a result of this, and the Batwa's desire for me to continue to support their own organisation, I quickly abandoned my original research aims and focused on two more pressing issues. Firstly, I wanted to investigate the contexts which had located the Batwa in

the discriminated and marginalised position they inhabited in Ugandan society. Secondly, I wanted to investigate why the development interventions directed at the Batwa were failing to help them escape their situation and in many cases were serving only to entrench the processes of discrimination they were caught in. In hindsight, these were the very questions I failed to ask three years earlier, when I had first interviewed the father whose son had been murdered and who would later be murdered himself.

Laura Thompson wrote in the 1970s that,

> [...] an applied anthropologist may help a client group as a consultant by defining the group's practical options in local, regional, national, and global contexts" but that the "choice of a preferred alternative and its enactment, however, should remain the prerogative and responsibility of the client" (Thompson 1976, cited in Bennett 1996, p.S38).

Notwithstanding the appropriateness of Thompson's advice, my research and work did more than just present options to the Batwa. In order to present options I was often involved in using my own skills to open up political, economic and social spaces into which the Batwa themselves could step. According to Rappaport, the defining features of an empowerment research model is,

> [...] identifying, facilitating or creating contexts in which heretofore silent and isolated people, those who are 'outsiders' in various settings, organizations and communities, gain understanding, voice, and influence over decisions that affect their lives (Rappaport 1987, cited in Small 1995, p.945).

In this sense I advocated and negotiated for the Batwa to be included in project designs and implementations, whether by pressuring

existing Development projects to include Batwa members within their management, or facilitating the Batwa to enact their own development and advocacy projects independently.

Acknowledging my position as an applied anthropologist meant accepting more than just the practical and ethical considerations of working with a disadvantaged group like the Batwa. It also meant accepting the influence my position had on the communities I worked with as well as the influence they had on me. As Goodman notes,

> It is not simply that, if they so desire, anthropologists can find ways around the inevitable effects that they have on the societies they study and those which the societies reciprocally have on them, but that such interactions are the very stuff of the anthropological project, providing as they do important information on the way that societies (both that of the anthropologist and the society they study) operate, think about themselves and change. We should embrace, incorporate and 'translate' the effect of these interactions rather than try to avoid them (2000, p.152).

Taking up a voluntary role for the Batwa's organisation, whilst conducting my research, completely changed my intended research focus. This focus moved from the internal dynamics of a Batwa community towards the relationships that such a community might have with external actors and groups. I quickly realised my repositioning now placed me central to a new topic which was crucial to the Batwa and their struggle. My position was part of what Bodley, in a response to an article by Bennett, suggested was a new movement in applied anthropology in which,

> […] its practitioners are working for hundreds of small non-profit organizations around the world that are

dedicated to social justice and sustainable development. They use anthropology's holistic method and deal with cultural systems. I propose that 'action anthropology' shifts its research focus upward to what Bennett calls "the other in the background who call the shots or hold the ultimate power," "the basic power structure," or the "Big Boys who run the show" (Bodley 1996, cited in Bennett 1996, p.S42).

Indeed, through my research I was able to offer valuable information back to my informants by taking on a role within their organisation which they would have otherwise been unable to pay for. Additionally, my new role allowed me to investigate the interaction between the Batwa organisation and the 'Big Boys' of the Development world. Due to my education and identity as a white European, I was able to enter into a world in which the Batwa were unwelcome and for whom the door was often closed. It was this access which enabled me to open up spaces whilst at the same time documenting the dynamics between the Development world and Batwa communities. I gained immediate access, through friendship and trust, with Batwa communities who saw me as someone working alongside them and therefore with them. And through this role within the Batwa organisation, I also gained access to those organisations working with the Batwa. As a result I inhabited a place never fully positioned on either side of the Developmental binary that differentiates the 'developed' from the 'undeveloped'. I was educated and white, yet I chose to live in a village and support a marginalised people, and this caused most Developmentalists to never fully trust me. On the other hand, although I chose to locate myself amongst the Batwa, as a foreign university graduate I was never able to fully inhabit the social complexity of the situations the Batwa found themselves in.

## A Step Too Far?

In taking on such an engaged position during my fieldwork I was forced to question my intellectual location as a researcher within my research process. One of the alleged risks which have permeated ethnographic fieldwork since its inception is the risk of 'going native'. According to Bryman this process happens,

> [...] when [researchers] lose their sense of being a researcher and become wrapped up in the world view of the people they are studying (2004, p.302).

If we accept this definition for the basis of my argument, then I question whether the act of 'going native' is inherently dangerous to the anthropological endeavour. As Tedlock points out,

> What seems to lie behind the belief that 'going native' poses a serious danger to the fieldworker is the logical construction of the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity, between scientist and native, between Self and Other, as an unbridgeable opposition. The implication is that a subject's way of knowing is incompatible with the scientist's way of knowing and that the domain of objectivity is the sole property of the outsider (1991, p.71).

To think like the 'native' does not inherently suggest the throwing away of rationality. Instead,

> [t]o rule out the possibility of belief in another's reality is to encapsulate that reality and, thus, to impose implicitly the hegemony of one's own view of the world (Ewing 1994, p.572).

'Going native' suggests that the researcher has attempted, as best s/he can, to begin to think about the structures of a society and culture in terms other than the ones s/he has been given by their own society. To fail to 'go native' suggests the researcher has maintained an essentialised notion of both their informants and their own society as separate and unyielding categories which cannot be 'stepped out of'. If culture is created and defined through interactions between those who enact that culture, then it can only be understood by participating with it and not by observing it from afar. 'Going native' was a process where I attempted as best I could to fully embody the relationships I found myself in, to try and understand the world in ways which were different to my own. This did not mean that it became my task to become a Mutwa and nowhere do I try to represent the experiences of the Batwa as my own. In my own conception, 'going native' was an attitude I had which denied an objective separation between myself as a researcher and the Batwa as my subjects and which acknowledged, for the duration of my research, that we both inhabited the same world of relationships.

With this period of doctoral research behind me, I look back on my time in Uganda and can see no other way to have interacted with the Batwa other than 'going native' in the sense outlined above. My fieldwork experience and the process of engaging with the context of my work not only allowed better access to another's worldview or more embedded data, but it was also a response to human interaction. Indeed,

> [...] it is impossible for ethnographers not to become a part of the society in which they spend a significant part of their lives. Ethnographers are drawn, often involuntarily, into the nets of significance cast by the people among whom they conduct research and are

thrust into their discourse and debates (Ewing 1994, p.578).

In order to respond to the Batwa in a meaningful way and be part of their lives, I could only become engaged in their world, invest emotions in that world, and try to understand the position they saw themselves in within that world. My fieldwork was not simply a route to an academic union card, but rather the centre of my intellectual and emotional life at that point in time (Tedlock 1991, p.82). To have done otherwise would have been to separate myself from the people I lived amongst, objectify my endeavour and fail to enter into meaningful relationships.

## Understanding Emotions

Rosaldo notes that the general rule of anthropological studies,

> [...] seems to be that one should tidy things up as much as possible by wiping away the tears and ignoring the tantrums (1984, p.189).

To remove such emotions would however, 'distort their descriptions and remove potentially key variables from their explanations' (Rosaldo 1984, p.188). This next section will recount some of the emotions and conflicts present in my research, not as a way to validate or invalidate my research but to show that as a key component of my lived experience, my emotions and responses are variables in my data and need to be acknowledged.

In becoming entangled in the struggles of the Batwa, events I saw or experienced became relevant to me. This made me more able to understand the complex problems the Batwa faced but it also opened me up to the emotional anguish of being witness to their

situation. I became so emotionally involved with the Batwa that I often responded to situations outside of the implied objectivity a researcher is assumed to have. In most situations I knew no other way to respond. When a policeman told me that he did not have the time to investigate the murder of a friend, I knew no other reaction than to become enraged. These kinds of incidents moved beyond the abstract field of social investigation and tumbled into personal relationships and the lives of the people I knew. Despite my commitment to these relationships and the responses these relationships exposed, I often felt guilty as I perceived I was failing as a researcher. It was one thing to feel sad at the loss of a friend whilst in the field, but it was another thing entirely when I became angered by the response of the policeman. I felt I had abandoned my ability to see the structural forces which shape the actions of individuals. I felt I had lost, what I thought at the time was, the very essence of my anthropological identity.

For the duration of my PhD fieldwork I also felt anger, resentment or dislike for many of the local and international NGO staff who were supposed to be my informants[4]. In taking on the role of support staff with the Batwa, I gained immediate trust and friendship with the many Batwa spread throughout the region. However, this research focus – the interaction between the Batwa

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[4] These NGOs have backgrounds in development, conservation, evangelism, or human rights approaches. From within a paradigm of progress these groups almost universally view the Batwa as 'undeveloped' and blame their hunting and gathering culture for their inability to develop like others. Most projects therefore focus on helping the Batwa develop sustainable livelihoods outside the forest and increase their living standards through the provision of health care, land, homes, education etc. At the management level, most NGO staff were based in the capital and tended to be of European or North American background. At the field level, NGO staff were almost universally from the neighbouring local ethnic groups. As a member of support staff to the Batwa's own NGO, I facilitated dialogue between State and civil society actors and the Batwa communities, and supported the Batwa to participate in the design and management of projects implemented by NGOs.

and external Development agencies – meant that the majority of my time was spent with non-Batwa informants. These were the very people I was witnessing discriminate against the Batwa. Sometimes this discrimination was explicit in actions and comments that were directed towards the Batwa. Other times this discrimination and marginalisation was more passive and found within the design and implementation of projects where the Batwa were reserved to positions of passive recipients of external aid, devoid of capacity to transform their own lives.

I found it difficult to socialise with some informants despite knowing that this interaction was vital to my research. I often came home from a meeting ready to explode after listening to how the Batwa were to blame for their situation and how everyone would be better off if they just slowly died out. Ultimately, this resentment hampered my ability to form bonds with certain individuals and reduced my field of research as I avoided speaking to some individuals who may have had important information.

This situation is noted by Lee-Treweek who discusses her feelings towards auxiliary staff in the care home where she was carrying out her research. She explains that, 'it would be fair to say that dislike was the predominant feeling I had towards the auxiliary care staff' (2000, p.177). She interpreted these emotions,

> [...] as a sign of personal inadequacy. After all, I had not
> read many accounts where dislike and attempts to create
> distance were key components of a researcher's response
> to their participants (Lee-Treweek 2000, p.122).

It was not until she began the writing-up process that she realised that these emotions, rather than being at best a section of her research she should keep unspoken, were actually crucial to her

understanding of the context of which she was an integral part. They mirrored many of the emotions the care staff felt towards their patients and helped her understand why they responded to their patients in the way they did. My own emotions brought me closer to the Batwa by understanding their situation much more acutely, and as I learned to use these emotions as a tool to analyse my interactions, I was better able to analyse the actions of those who discriminated against the Batwa.

Unlike the illusionary fieldwork experience I thought I was entering into, where the researcher is loved and loves in equal measure the people s/he is researching, there were times in my own fieldwork where I was disliked as much as I disliked the people I was with. In walking into the role of a support worker I immediately stepped into a social setting I was unprepared for. I remember initially, full of excitement at the months ahead, explaining to people that I was there to work with the Batwa and support their struggle. I equally remember what felt like a physical blow when those same people turned to me to laugh and ridicule my endeavour. I had entered into this period confident about my work and proud of my role in supporting a marginalised people. I had not given any thought to how non-Batwa would perceive me, and if I did, I naively assumed it would not matter to me as long as my work was supported by the Batwa.

I was of course wrong. The local population was composed of 99% non-Batwa, most of whom discriminated against the Batwa, and I spent some very dark months feeling ostracised and alienated. I awoke feeling distress about the day ahead and had to force myself out of the house to face the people who disliked both me and the work that I was doing. In the end however, my situation is best

described by Berreman who, in writing of his own research within a heavily segregated village in India, explains,

> Although I remained an alien and was never made to feel that my presence in the village was actively desired by most of its members, I was thereafter tolerated with considerable indulgence. I became established as a resident of Sirkanda, albeit a peculiar one, and no one tried to get me to leave (2007, p.143).

I spent the first twelve months feeling alone and alienated. I was not visiting the Batwa communities because my research required that most of my contact and relationships were with non–Batwa people. I had friends I could have visited in the capital and there were plenty of tourists intermittently travelling through the area that I could have sought out for friendship, but I felt determined not to rely on people external to the situation. I believe this tactic eventually worked and after the first year I felt a noticeable difference in the way I was regarded by the wider community. Munck (1998) describes three stages of 'hanging out' when on fieldwork. The first is the *stranger* stage where the researcher tries to become familiar with the community (or group) and they with you. The *acquaintance* stage comes as the researcher and participants begin to see each other as individuals, which then leads on to the *intimate* stage where the researcher and participants share a mutual history and range of experiences (Munck 1998, pp.41–42).

I was never able to reach the intimate stage with all the people I lived with in Kisoro. Many relationships did not get past the stranger stage as some people failed to see me as anyone more than a supporter of the Batwa, an identity which bore many similarities to the way 'kaffir lovers' were viewed in apartheid South Africa. Yet others knew me by the end of my sixteen months as an

acquaintance, saw beyond this stigma and regarded me as an individual. As more NGOs understood my work they began to ask for my support and I became a valuable tool for the Batwa through my ability to work within external organisations as an 'expert', helping to shape project designs and management to favour the goals of the Batwa. It was the Batwa and a few non-Batwa who allowed me to finally enter into intimate stages of 'hanging out', where our lives became one of respect and acknowledgement. However, as my informants were largely non-Batwa these intimate relationships were always in the minority.

## Negotiating Ethics

It is also important to discuss some ethical considerations I have grappled with during my involvement with the Batwa. Despite ethics being defined by the contexts in which they arise, I will consider some general issues which reoccurred throughout my periods of research. A fundamental issue has been: to what extent can the researcher always refrain from active intervention in the lives of the people s/he has to live with? I decided to actively intervene in the lives of the Batwa through my day-to-day work, supporting their organisation and through the advocacy work I continue to this day. From the sections above it is clear I was faced with an extreme situation where my interventions had immediate and often life changing effects on the Batwa.

As a result I also had to negotiate the safety of my participants in my interventions in their lives. In 2002 on a routine community visit with other colleagues from the Batwa organisation, halfway through the visit we were confronted by an angry man who claimed that we had no right to talk to his Batwa. He was the local chairperson of the village and allowed the Batwa to live on his land

as long as they worked the land for him. Looking back I realise that he must have been scared we were in the process of 'liberating' the Batwa he considered to be his own property; in many ways we were. He responded to his fear by lashing out violently – physically as well as verbally – and for a brief moment I asked my colleagues if I should defend not only us but the Batwa he was abusing. We agreed that this would only make things worse for the Batwa and we left. I was only then aware of the danger we had brought to this community by our visit and felt responsible for the abuse they suffered. I felt troubled and wanted to get away from this scene of guilt as quickly as possible. However, after fleeing their 'patron' the Batwa came running after us and demanded that we continue talking on some communal land ahead where their 'patron' had no authority over them. The Batwa wanted to be 'liberated'; they wanted to discuss their human rights situation with us, so we continued the meeting despite the dangers.

My intention in telling this anecdote is to suggest that despite the mistake we made in visiting the community, in this situation the ultimate decision as to whether the meeting should continue rested with the Batwa. Since this experience I have attempted to allow the Batwa to negotiate many of the ethical dilemmas we have faced as our work together has progressed. In many of these issues they are more aware of the risks than I am and I have learned to trust their decisions and accept them.

In a much more recent experience the lines between detached/engaged, objective/subjective, and reason/emotion dissolved into a situation where no amount of reason or emotion could provide satisfactory comprehension. Today I work for the same indigenous rights group I worked for back in 2003. As part of my work I was a member of a team who visited one Batwa

community to discuss their situation. Throughout the dialogue one woman sat at a distance from the rest of the community. I asked about her and the community responded that she recently had a miscarriage and had tried to end her life. She was sitting away from the community, partly because she was still bleeding heavily from her miscarriage, and partly because she had been ostracised by the community. This had not been her first miscarriage and doctors had told her she was losing her children because of complications from the sexual transmitted diseases she carried. Despite her own attempts to seek treatment her husband refused and continued to re-infect her.

We spoke to the husband and urged him to visit the hospital for treatment with his wife but he again refused. He instead blamed his wife for being insane and possessed, despite both states being created by the loss of her unborn children. As we left, unsure of how we could intervene, the husband retreated to his house only to return with a machete to harm his wife. In this instance we could only intervene to prevent the harm to the wife whilst we were present, but it was unimaginable that we could keep her from harm indefinitely. The husband demanded she leave, but she was part of a context that she didn't want to be removed from. Her family and community were close by and she chose to remain. We talked to the community and pleaded with them to intervene. We also went to the local district officials and the hospital asking that they also show an interest in the life of this woman.

On this day I entered into the lives of the Batwa hoping to elicit information from the community that I could use to support their land rights struggle but was instead absorbed into their personal and social milieux. I was thrown into a situation I was unprepared for and unable to act upon. Despite not choosing to become

engaged in the lives of this husband and wife prior to our meeting, I was uncontrollably involved in this situation by my presence on that day. In spite of doing all I could to help this woman, I am today left troubled by my personal inabilities to resolve this situation, regardless of whether such a resolution was ever possible, and uncomfortable by my exit from her life to my own life of relative security. As individuals present in the lives of others, researchers are often uncontrollably entangled in those lives, often in ways we have not foreseen. It is therefore important to acknowledge the effect we have on others and the emotional effects those lives can have on us.

## Conclusion

Although the events in this article are extreme in comparison to the majority of my experiences with the Batwa, they do serve to highlight social science researchers' inability to disengage from a world we are intimately part of. I have resolved to understand my role as an engaged anthropologist intimately bound within the contexts I work in. This does not suggest I see myself involved in a subdivision of anthropology, a new approach, or a remodelling of an old technique. It is not to suggest that anthropologists should lay down their methods and adopt engaged anthropology as a new technique. Instead my suggestion is to change nothing in our practice other than to acknowledge and value the social engagement that social science researchers have always been part of. Engaged anthropology is the only approach we can make as individuals in an interconnected world. It is important to acknowledge the spaces we step into in our research and to acknowledge the transformation those spaces have on us and those we share those spaces with. The only decision to be made is whether to accept the contexts we are part of and engage with them, or to deny them and hopelessly

attempt to disengage from a world of social relations we are intimately bound to.

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