

Cotlow Award Application Form 2009

Department of Anthropology

The George Washington University

Washington, DC 20052

1. Personal Information

Applicant's name: Maureen Ryan Moodie

Email: moodiemr@gwmail.gwu.edu

Degree sought: Master's in Anthropology (International Development)

Field of study/major/minor/concentration: Anthropology- International Development

Expected date of graduation: May, 2010

Faculty Advisor(s) (who have served as your mentor or mentors for this proposal): Dr. David Gow, Dr. Eric Ross, Dr. Barbara Miller, Dr. Alex Dent

2. Language Skills

Does the proposed project involve the use of a "field language"? no

3. Title of the Project and Abstract

Project Title: Progressive Self-Fashioning in the Era of Transnational Social Activism: Fair Trade Organizations in San Francisco

Abstract of the Project (provide a summary description of the project's goals, location, methods, and relevance to anthropology) [80 word maximum]:

This project will explore social activist identity and genealogies among fair trade organizations in San Francisco. I will conduct ethnographic research with Global Exchange to analyze how activists are drawn to fair trade, where they came from, what makes them feel like legitimate members of the fair trade movement, and how they understand their current place in the movement. I will examine how activists assess the alternative trade goals of fair trade and the culturally local ways they define "fair". This project contributes to US-based anthropological studies of San Francisco and social activism in political anthropology.

4. Description of the Project (describe your overall research goals, what the project is generally about, and where you will conduct the research and why) [250 word maximum]:

The proposed research project focuses on social activism within the fair trade movement in San Francisco, California. In an effort to understand fair trade as a social movement and how members

define their particular approaches to social activism, I will conduct research within two fair trade groups. I will focus the majority of my efforts on Global Exchange because it is the most active group in its mission to promote social, economic, and environmental justice internationally. For comparative purposes, I will also examine the fair trade labeling organization, Transfair, because this group also orients its activities globally.

Through participant observation and in-depth interviews, I will collect “activist genealogies” to explore how participants in Global Exchange self-identify as members of the fair trade movement, what “fair trade” means to them, and their perceptions of the fair trade movement as an effective instrument of social change. I will interview men and women, across generations, speaking to those who have been members for a short time compared to those who have been with the organization longer. In this way, my interviews may shed light on possible internal differences in member’s motivations and means of identity formation. I will also gather supplementary information on the mission, structure, and dynamics of the two organizations to consider how these different subjects’ positions influence perceptions of organizational structure.

The research will contribute to ethnographic understanding of a neglected topic and locality in anthropology. By focusing on San Francisco as a place in the broader landscape of the anthropology of the United States, I will learn about “fair traders”, their ideas about “fairness” and, perhaps, how the highly localized nature of these ideas may not challenge the capitalist neoliberal agenda, but instead reinforces systems of global exchange using a US-based definition of fair exchange. A guiding question of the project is to what extent, if any, participants in the fair trade movement in San Francisco realize or recognize that they are working within the current market system while maintaining ideals of social change, and if they experience, and articulate to others, a sense of conflict with their activist ideals.

California is the most populous and ethnically diverse state in the country. San Francisco, a major city with rich cultural diversity and long history of social activism, presents a unique and important research site to engage in US-based anthropology. Social movements in San Francisco date back to the Gold Rush and the large influx of Asian immigrants. More recently, it was home to anti-war and free speech protests of the 1960s, and is now a center of the queer and women’s movements. The city itself was founded on a “frontier spirit” and progressive politics. The Bay Area has more recognized social activist and human rights groups than anywhere in the country (Starr 2004), and the mayor, Gavin Newsom, declared San Francisco a “Fair Trade City” on May 7, 2008. For this reason, it is an ideal site in which to investigate the relationship between identity formation and activist ideals.

5. Significance of the Project to Anthropology (in this literature review describe how the proposed research relates to other anthropological research on the topic, and/or region as relevant; use social science style citation--no footnotes) [400 word maximum]:

Introduction

The proposed project contributes to the cultural anthropology of the United States, a recognized understudied area in the anthropological literature (Moffatt 1992) and will add to the small, but growing number of anthropological studies on San Francisco and the Bay Area. Appadurai stresses the power of locality in anthropological theorizing and suggests, “places become showcases for specific issues over time” (cited in di Leonardo 1984:15). More broadly, this project contributes to political anthropology, especially the study of social movements and social activism.

San Francisco Studies in American Anthropology

Most of the anthropological studies located within the San Francisco Bay Area focus on gay culture, ethnicity, identity, and immigration. Several recent studies focus on aspects of gay culture, including Stryker (1996), Peacock et al. (2001) and Howe (2001) who discuss the historical construction of queer culture in the area and how San Francisco fosters and supports the gay community and movement. Other studies address aspects of ethnic diversity in the area, such as di Leonardo's study of kinship and gender among Italian Americans (1984) and Mankekar's (2002) study of Indian grocery stores in the Bay Area as a vehicle for Indian identity construction. Ong's ethnography (2003) describes the experiences of Cambodian refugees living in the housing projects of Oakland. Gowan's work among the city's homeless populations (2002) is an example of research on marginalized groups.

Social Movement Studies in Political Anthropology

While sociology has a long history of involvement with social movement theory (Tarrow 1998), anthropology did not enter the discourse until recently despite the role of anthropologists as active participants in social movements (Sahlins 2001; Graeber 2004; Edelman 2005). Escobar (1992) stresses the importance of social movements in Latin America and contends that today's social movements are not solely political, but also important *cultural* struggles that anthropologists are ideally placed to investigate (Alvarez 1998). Additionally, Edelman (2005) asserts that transnational social activist networks and new protest repertoires force anthropologists to discard the paradigms of the 1960s and engage with the "new social movements". Fox and Starn propose that it is essential to explore the "cultural politics of social protest" and consider the space in which activists exert their resistance and *become* "activists" (1997:3).

Most of the studies of social movements in anthropology are based in developing countries and centered on indigenous communities. Kirsch focuses on Papua New Guinea's indigenous peoples' political and legal campaign against a gold mine threatening their natural resources (2002), while Nash (2004) discusses the indigenous movement in Chiapas, Mexico, and the Maya people's fight for autonomy. Global human rights and women's rights movements are also prevalent.

A few anthropologists have engaged with Western social movements in California, or San Francisco particularly. Sanjek's ethnography on the "gray panthers" of Berkeley and their opposition to California's mandatory retirement law is a prominent example (2009). In addition, Scheper-Hughes discusses violence in Berkeley based around staged protests to torture at Abu Ghraib in Iraq (2008). Beyond this, anthropologists have done little, if any, relevant work on fair trade movements in the United States and the role of activists in the construction of the fair trade movement.

Fair Trade in Anthropology

In contrast, several scholars have discussed fair trade in terms of its social and economic implications for producer-nations, the nature of transnational relationships, and its impact on the developing world (Grimes 2005; Nicholls 2005; Lyons 2006; Reynolds 2007). Through a study among Caribbean banana farmers, Moberg exposes the realities of fair trade for the farmers and their relationship to the anti-globalization movement (2005). Lyon (2007), on the basis of studying Maya fair trade coffee farmers in Guatemala, suggests that the movement is not reaching its potential as a form of alternative trade. Similarly, Fisher looks at the gourmet coffee industry and consumption of fair trade goods globally, viewing fair trade as a marketing claim, a shift towards "ethical eating", and a social movement (2007). Linton et al. (2004) and Lyons (2006) examine how fair trade organizations conduct business in developing countries and discuss how US-based policies and ideas about development affect producers and trade relationships. Grimes (2003) also provides a critical look at how anthropologists can engage with fair trade as a social movement and traces its history from the 1950s. With the overwhelming focus on the producer nations in the academic discourse on fair trade, there is a serious neglect of localized "Western" contexts.

Conclusion

While many cultural anthropologists have done fieldwork and published on aspects of San Francisco culture and social activism, attention to fair trade social movements in the area is limited. Furthermore, while many anthropologists are engaging in studies of social movements, most of these studies are rooted among indigenous, oppressed social groups. My research has located no specific anthropological study of fair trade social movements in San Francisco. Thus, my proposed project fills an important gap by pursuing understanding of fair trade activists and the movement in San Francisco, contributing to both San Francisco and social movement studies, while contributing to understandings of how “global” visions of social change are locally focused.

6. Methods (clearly outline or list your research questions; describe the data you will collect and how you will collect it; discuss your analytical methods; and show how the data will address the research questions) [300 word maximum]:

My overarching goal is to study the motives for participation in the fair trade movement in San Francisco and understand the local dynamics of a global movement.

Study of Participants:

I will collect “activist genealogies”, or focused life narratives about why selected members joined the organization, their background, and lifestyle. Areas of focus are: How do the members identify themselves, their roles in the fair trade movement; how do they define “fair”; their motives for participation; and their time allocation to movement activities.

An objective, more subtle and difficult to assess is: Do members in San Francisco express conflicts or concerns about their idealist hopes, the work of the organizations, and their position within the current trade system? I will attempt to access this information by asking about perceptions of the “impact” of fair trade work.

Study of Organizations:

How did the two organizations begin in San Francisco and what are their current goals?

As an alternative to free trade working within the confines of a capitalist market, how does the organization see fair trade as a “workable alternative”?

How does each organization define membership criterion? What are the demographics of members?

What is the leadership structure? How are leaders chosen and what are their responsibilities?

Another large objective that will be inferred from my collected data is: How do the demographics and makeup of the organization contribute to the definitions of the movement’s goals and methods?

Participant Observation: To address these research questions I will conduct participant observation for 10-15 hours per week within the fair trade organization of Global Exchange, and less time in Transfair. During my participant observation research I will conduct informal conversations with leaders, employees and leaders. I will pay attention to interpersonal interactions, conversations, friendships, decision-making, and expressions of “identity” as part of the Fair Trade movement. Participant observation will provide qualitative data about membership demographics and organizational functioning.

In-depth interviews: Through participation in public events, volunteer opportunities, and intern training sessions, I will identify 20 members (optimally) in Global Exchange for in-depth interviews. I seek to recruit an equal sample of women and men who represent younger and older age categories and shorter and longer membership length, as feasible given the size constraints of the group. The sample will be

non-scientific and opportunistic as it must necessarily be based on the connections I have with contacts in San Francisco and those I will make during the early weeks of my participant observation. The interviews will be about one hour in length, with a possible follow-up. I will conduct the interviews at the Global Exchange offices or local cafes. I will seek oral informed consent from all interviewees and will tape the interviews with permission. I will take notes during all interviews or directly following conversations to provide substantial qualitative data and write fieldnotes daily. I will be especially attuned to discourse about identity and any expressions of conflicting feelings about their idealism and fair trade.

Supplementary participant observation: I will obtain supplementary data from Transfair specifically focused on their labeling process and how they deem goods “fairly traded”. This information will contribute to my understanding of the national criteria for fairly traded goods and will allow me to assess if the criteria differ from member’s views. By participation in rallies, fairs, and film festivals hosted by fair trade organizations I will gather inductive, qualitative data (see timetable attached for already scheduled events) that could also lead to scheduled formal interviews at a later time.

Document collection: I will use literature produced by Global Exchange and Transfair and their websites to gather information concerning the history, structure and written mission statements of the organizations, following Edelman’s (2005) contention that the most important analyses of social movements are not in the academic literature, but in the resources provided by those who control the movements. I will analyze the “public face” of each group on the internet and conduct archival research to address how the mission and identity has changed over time.

7. Research Ethics (describe how you will ensure that your research project is conducted in accordance with anthropology guidelines and the guidelines of your particular field within anthropology, and in the case of “Human Subjects Research,” according to the criteria of GW’s Institutional Review Board). [150 word maximum]:

In accordance with the American Anthropological Association’s code of ethics, I will carry out my research with full knowledge of all participants as to my objectives, how I will use my data, and protection of anonymity. I will seek oral informed consent from the heads of the two organizations and “blanket” consent for my participant observation and informal conversations. For the in-depth interviews I will receive oral informed consent from participants. I will do my utmost to avoid causing harm to participants. I will use pseudonyms for all participants who wish to remain anonymous, and maintain security of all research materials (interviews, transcripts, etc.) at all times. If I take any photos or video footage where there are identifiable people, I will obtain written consent to use the imagery in accordance with the rules set forth by AAA and obtain contact information for participants in case such material is published. Other than the possibility of photographs, this project fits within GW’s Institutional Review Board’s “excluded” as it proceeds with informed consent, will avoid causing harm to the participants, will not identify particular individuals and does not involve medical topics. If I decide to take photographs, I will submit the project to GW’s IRB in the “expedited” category.

8. Research Product (discuss how you will use and present your findings including, for example, a presentation at a professional meeting, a film, a museum exhibit, a publishable paper, a thesis) [150 words maximum]:

I will produce a presentation for the 2009 annual Cotlow Award conference in which I will use a power point presentation summarizing my findings and new questions that arise from the research. I will submit my project in paper or poster form to the American Anthropological Association for possible acceptance in the 2010 anthropology meeting. I hope to use the research as the basis for papers to be submitted to the NAPA Student Achievement Award and the SFAA Peter K. New student paper competition. This project will form the basis for my doctoral program applications related to research on social activists and the fair trade movement and, specifically, how fair trade organizations at the micro level in San Francisco are implicated with macro/global definitions and practices.

9. Timetable (provide a brief description of the schedule of your research activities week-by-week or as appropriate):

Week 1: Fly to San Francisco (May 13) and settle in. Participant observation in National Fair Trade Day activities in Golden Gate Park (week of May 12-17) being hosted by Global Exchange. Focus on Global Exchange's role and presence at the fair.

Week 2: 4th Annual Anti-Corporate film festival sponsored by Global Exchange (May 14-16). Begin participant observation at Global Exchange through help in volunteer activities. Begin archival and Internet research.

Weeks 3, 4, and 5: Participant observation as volunteer at Global Exchange. Schedule and conduct 10-12 in-depth interviews.

Week 6: Participant Observation at Transfair USA for one or two days to gather information about the labeling process and how this SF based central labeling company defines the criteria of "fair". Continue participant observation at Global Exchange for remainder of week.

Week 7-8: Participant observation at Global Exchange. Schedule and conduct 6-8 in-depth interviews. Volunteer at Global Exchange booth at the Green Fair in Cow Palace, CA (June 25-27)

Week 9: Continue participant observation at Global Exchange. Finish in-depth interviews and follow-up interviews with participants.

Week 10-11: Follow-up with both Global Exchange and Transfair. Archival and library research for background information and current fair trade scholarship. Participate in Bay Area Fair Trade Coalition Coffee Day to see how Global Exchange member's interaction with the community.

Week 12: Wrap up, give my thanks to Global Exchange and Transfair leaders and members, and pack up.

Note: Throughout the project I will conduct archival research and online website research when time allows.

10. Budget Amount and Projected Expenditures

Total Amount Requested: \$1000.00

Projected Expenditures (list the expenditure categories for your project, for example, transportation--international, domestic, local; room and board; and research supplies). Funds from a Cotlow award cannot be used for tuition, academic fees, or for purchasing equipments such as a laptop or camera [awards range from a few hundred dollars to \$1800]

Local Transportation (BART subway, round trips, around 50 days): \$160

Coffee/Snacks for 20 in-depth interviews @ \$12/interview: \$240

Partial Subvention of housing and per diem: \$600

Total: \$1000

Note: Berkeley is not my current residence; in order for me to be able to do this project, I need a minimum of \$600 to cover research and partial living expenses for room rental, the rest I will cover from personal funds. This partial living expense is in addition to the direct research-related expenses outlined above.

11. Staff (if others are to participate in the project as researchers or research assistants, please give their name and qualifications):

N/A

12. Outside Financial Support (list any other sources of funding for the project, either obtained or applied for, with amounts and restrictions):

I will contribute personal savings for rent an per diem expenses.

13. References Cited/Select Bibliography (list the sources you have cited in the proposal and/or used as background research. Use the style defined by the American Anthropological Association [see <http://aaanet.org>]; list a minimum of 10 sources to a maximum of one page).

Please see Attachment #1

14. Permits (demonstrate that you have, or are seeking, any necessary permits such as a research permit, a research visa, an antiquities permit, letter of welcome from an institution, etc. Attach copies to this proposal).

N/A

15. Transcript (submit a copy of your transcript with this proposal; it can be either official or unofficial. Without a transcript, your proposal is incomplete and will not be considered).

Please see Attachment #2

Attachment #1

Tentative Bibliography:

Alvarez, Sonia E., Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar (1998) *Culture of Politics, Politics of Culture: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Appadurai, Arjun, ed. (1986) *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Attachment #2- Transcript