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# 14

## CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WHEN STUDYING THOSE YOU OPPOSE

*Erella Grassiani*

- **Research objective:** This chapter will help social science researchers who are “engaged scholars” and might have a political agenda to think through issues of positionality, reflexivity, methods and ethics.
- **Research puzzle:** The puzzle the chapter addresses in relation to secrecy and methods concerns ideas about subjectivity, positionalities and methods that are inherent to studying perpetrators of violence or other people who are part of a system or regime you oppose. I will show how one can carry out such research that is inherently subjective with people one opposes, while being an activist at the same time.

### Introduction

You are not objective; you do research on soldiers while you are leftist?!

Aren't you “untrue” to your informants as they don't know your “real” opinion?

Why aren't you looking at the victims, the Palestinians, but only at soldiers?!

Comments and questions like these have come my way frequently in the last decade or so. They are queries into my position as (a) an anthropologist who (b) studies Israeli soldiers and Israeli security personnel while (c) being a political activist opposing the occupation these soldiers and professionals are (in)directly part of. These confrontations have, in fact, helped me to articulate my positioning and to deal with surfacing dilemmas.

This chapter will help social science researchers, some of whom might have a clear political agenda, to think through and understand issues of reflexivity, advocacy, methods and ethics. I will not be able to give clear-cut answers, as these issues

should always be seen within their specific context, but hopefully I can make it easier to position oneself with more conviction, while keeping research rigorous. In order to do so, I will draw from my experiences as a Dutch-Israeli academic who studies the Israeli military and its security industry critically. And I will explore how I navigate my roles as an academic researcher and as an activist who acts against the military occupation of Palestine by Israel. My academic work is, inherent to my subjective positionality as an anthropologist, deeply political. Furthermore, I engage in the public debate as an academic. I see my academic work in a way as an extension of this political stance and both positions are fluid and blur into one another. In this chapter I will look at the ways I learnt to deal with dilemmas and questions concerning my role in my research and beyond it.

The “puzzle” I will engage with first of all concerns the idea of “objectivity” in research, which is still widespread in academia and the public debate. Qualitative scientists, especially those coming from anthropology, are scrutinized for being “subjective”, opinionated or “too political” within their research. Anthropologists have countered these attacks by explaining that their research is inherently subjective and have highlighted the importance of reflexivity; to be aware of and describe our subjective positions in the research (see also Hoijtink, this volume).

At the same time, within anthropology there has been a long tradition of trying to “give voice” to people who can’t speak up themselves because of a lack of power. Empathy becomes an important concept here. The researcher is seen as the one who can take the voice of those studied to the outside world. Some have taken this to the extreme by writing that all anthropology should be “militant” in this way (Scheper-Hughes 1995). Empathizing with the people we study and trying in some ways to support them has become almost synonymous with anthropological study.

I will deal with the question of what happens to our subjectivity, mentioned earlier, when (anthropologically) studying the “unwanted” powerful other, even if we “don’t like” them and/or, as in my own case, we oppose the system they are part of explicitly. What could this mean for studies involving secrecy and sensitive information where trust and rapport are extremely important for access? How can we as researchers who are concerned with the ethics of our research deal with surfacing dilemmas and critiques? I will discuss these ethical and methodological difficulties and possibilities through my own research experiences and by using the figures of the “trickster” and the “professional stranger”. As I argue, these concepts help recognize and embrace the ambivalent positions that engaged ethnographers find themselves in. They are important as they open up possibilities for the researcher to be in different positions, which might seem contradictory, at the same time. These figures can, furthermore, help us to think in an alternative way about relationships with the other whom we are studying.

### ***Research design***

The main aspect of the research design that I will tackle in this chapter is reflexivity and positionality, or consciousness of our own positions within the research and its

effects. For anthropologists this is a central notion and crucial part of the research process. An anthropological, especially ethnographic, research approach can be seen as inductive and circular, meaning that the process goes in “circles”, bottom up, instead of along a straight line from A to B. This implies that reflection takes place during all phases of research. It is part of the research proposal (expectations of one’s positioning), of the collection of material (how do I introduce myself, what do I share, what do I not, how do I situate myself, etc.) and after the research in the analytical and writing phase (writing about our position and the way it has influenced our research is at the heart of anthropological writing). However, in this chapter I will also show that taking an ethnographic approach, which involves empathy and closeness to our research participants, is not always advisable within specific contexts and in relation to certain (political) positions we take up.

## **Anthropology, positionality and subjectivity**

In this chapter I discuss the issue of positionality and subjectivity from the perspective of the anthropologist. This does not, however, mean that these concepts are irrelevant for other social scientists dealing with similar questions. I believe, though, that anthropology, as a discipline that has actively engaged in the discussion around the position of the researcher can be helpful outside of its boundaries.

### ***Positioning the researcher: subjectivity and critique***

Positionality is a theme that is an intrinsic part of doing anthropological research such as ethnography. And ethnography is one of the central anthropological approaches to study social phenomena and write about them. Importantly, and as Coffey (1999) writes, the position of the self, the identity of the researcher is something that is constructed and produced during and after fieldwork (p. 1). Anthropologists are expected to be conscious of the different positions and roles they have within the field and the way these influence and shape their study and writings. Such roles can serve as lenses through which social life is observed, analysed and described (Reinhartz 2011).

However, also when not doing ethnographic research, we should be aware as anthropologists of our positions and our research participants’ subjectivities and the politics at work (Ortner 2005). The fact that we take our positions as lenses into our fieldwork shows how anthropology embraces the subjectivities of the researcher as something that should be reflected upon.

In fact, anthropologists have written at length about their positions and subjectivities in their research and writings, especially since the “reflexive turn” that the discipline went through, which called upon anthropologists to be outspoken about these positionalities in the texts that they produced. The researcher thus received a bigger role in ethnographic writings, while in the past she had stayed in the margins. Especially for feminist anthropologists reflexivity became “a second nature” (Nencel 2014) in protest of approaches that stayed stagnant within anthropology’s colonial legacy.

Such reflexive work is part and parcel of critical ethnography. This kind of research, developed by anthropologists, “begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (Madison 2011: 5). Taking an ethnographic approach is deemed crucial here in order to deeply understand this “lived domain”. The critical tendencies of anthropology can be traced to Mead’s work in the 1940s and later as a reaction to the direct enlistment of many anthropologists by the state, especially during the Cold War (Low and Merry 2010: s205). And already in the 1960s there were calls for direct action in support of groups that were studied. The works of, for example, Gramsci (1971) were furthermore influential for critical ethnographers in the ways that class struggle and collective (class) cultures came on the agenda (Foley 2002).

Today we still find anthropologists calling for more engaged research; Low and Merry (2010) distinguish several types of such engagement ranging from “sharing and support” to activism (p. S203). Hale (2006), for example, draws a difference between activist research and cultural critique in his research among black and indigenous land rights activists in Central America. Activist research is considered to be “a method through which we affirm a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle and allow dialogue with them to shape each phase of the process” (2006: 97–98). Cultural critique, by comparison, is

an approach to research and writing in which political alignment is manifested through the content of the knowledge produced, not through the relationship established with an organized group of people in struggle . . . to champion subaltern peoples and to deconstruct the powerful.

*(ibid.: 98)*

Hale argues the two approaches should cooperate.

However, others disagree; Hastrup and Elsass (1990) argue that ethnography cannot be combined with advocacy as this would mean for “anthropologists to step outside of their profession, because no ‘cause can be legitimated in anthropological terms” (1990: 301). Their position has been criticized for being too rigid, and for implying that anthropologists should “not have morals” other than their research objectives.

Importantly, outside of this attention to subjectivities and engaged research within anthropology, there is a whole (academic) world for whom this discourse is a strange one. Actors in the public domain (such as journalists) and quantitative social researchers often view subjectivity in research as a flaw. I will come back to this shortly.

### ***Ethnography and empathy***

An important element of taking on an ethnographic approach is developing a relationship with the people we study that includes empathy. Within ethnography we engage in deep relationships where trust is extremely important. In order for us to

deeply understand the social life we study we need to gain the trust of our research participants and build rapport. However, within anthropology this approach goes hand in hand with a static notion of power relations between researcher and researched; the researcher is in a more powerful position than the people she studies. Empathy, also in light of what I discussed above, becomes a natural part of such research relations. In the following I will problematize this position.

### *When studying perpetrators*

I have tried to clarify the relationship between critical anthropological research and the positionality of the researcher. However, if we depart from the previous, we can understand that many anthropologists today still focus on the underprivileged of society; the poor, the victims of political and economic upheavals. Critical and engaged research is seen as very much in line with ethnographic research, and this kind of research is almost synonymous with studying people you want to support, act on behalf of or advocate for. Although there has been a change visible in the last decades with an increasing stream of studies on the powerful (elites and victimizers) (e.g. Abbink and Salverda 2012; Rodgers 2009; Grassiani 2013; Diphorn 2017), this change is still quite limited.

An important question to ask within such a context is what happens with a critical position (or how can we integrate it into our research) when you do research on perpetrators of violence, and/or with people who are part of a regime or system you oppose? (see also Chappuis and Krause, this volume.) Especially when researching victimizers or the perpetrators of violence in on-going conflict and or war/occupation, questions surface about the way researchers position themselves in the field and about empathy. While this positioning seems to go without saying when researching the underprivileged or victims as described above, it is not necessarily so for those researchers studying the ones on the other side of the power balance. Importantly, a different kind of relationship comes into being between researcher and research subject than one is used to or expects. However, also from outside of the discipline critiques are voiced: about the subjectivity of our kind of research and the influence this could have on the “quality” of our research.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important rules within the code of ethics of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) is “doing no harm”.<sup>2</sup> It tells us to be very careful in our research and never do anything that could possibly hurt the people we study. In many cases this means that we try to make sure we give voice to our informants and identify and sympathize with them. When we study victimizers this issue gets a twist. How should we position ourselves in such a field? What happens to our engagement if our research itself is not directly “engaged” as defined by anthropologists (see, for example, Sanford and Anjel-Ajani 2006). Can we be both good anthropologists, while opposing the world our informants are part of? And can we do so without ignoring our political ideas and maybe even responsibilities? The challenge here is to stay true to our personal and political beliefs and research objectives and true to the research at the same time. However we often cannot do

this within an ethnographic approach that supposes empathy. Can we empathize with perpetrators of violence and should we? I believe we need to consider alternatives to this kind of relationship and use the “trickster” as one possible model. In line with this I argue that when studying a (colonial) regime through its actors, an ethnographic approach should in some instances be avoided, especially when the researcher could be seen as part of the colonial power. I will come back to this below when I study my position as Dutch–Israeli, Jewish researcher.

### **Doing critical research in Israel on perpetrators**

In 2006–2007 I conducted fieldwork in Israel amongst (former) Israeli soldiers. My research interests were directed at their moralities, the way they perceived and gave meaning to their daily surroundings within a symmetrical conflict (which today, with my increasing political awareness, I would have simply called an occupation, abandoning neutral wordings such as “conflict”). For my research I interviewed Israeli combat soldiers who had served in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as conscripts. Ultimately, my work critically examined the context wherein Israeli soldiers act and thus the Occupation itself, looking beyond the empty state slogan of “the rotten apple”. I tried to voice an approach for studying perpetrators of violence by looking at the enabling context they acted within.

A decade or so later, I found myself studying Israeli security professionals and their export practices: the knowledge, technologies and materialities they sell to foreign clients. These professionals all hail from the Israeli military and came into the private security world after retirement.<sup>3</sup> The knowledge and “stuff” these men (there are hardly any women in the industry) sell at security fairs and during trainings, are directly connected to the Occupation as weapons, drones, anti-riot technologies are used and tested on Palestinians before they are sold to (foreign) customers (Graham 2010). In my work I explicitly engage with the politics of the industry and the way it enables human rights violations in Israel and beyond.

During both periods of research, violence broke out: in 2006 the Second Lebanon War started and during my latter research Gaza was attacked multiple times by the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces). During all this time I was actively engaged in protesting both the War in Lebanon and the attacks and continuing siege on Gaza. The reality was thus that at the same time as I was interviewing soldiers who had been active as combatants in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Lebanon and security professionals profiting from the violence against Gazans, I engaged in activities against the regime they were part of.

### ***Critiques and what it taught me***

As I mentioned above, anthropologists studying perpetrators are more likely to be asked to explain their moral position within the debates surrounding said conflict/war/occupation in order to legitimize our findings. In my case, I typically am confronted with two kinds of criticisms concerning my position as a researcher.

The first is critical about the subject of my research: I look at victimizers without focussing on their victims, and the second is critical about my “dubious” role as an activist on the left side of the Israeli political spectrum, while doing research about the military. In very general terms, I would call these left vs right criticisms, both of which attempt to force the researcher into a certain position they deem fit for the anthropologist or researcher in general.

As mentioned earlier, while positioning ourselves is crucial, some issues that relate to ourselves and our position in the field continue to be rather taboo within anthropological research. I first encountered these issues when I entered the university with the idea of studying Israeli soldiers, and I realized that I was immediately put into the “bad guys” category by some of my new colleagues, as an Israeli researcher who studied the IDF could not possibly fit into the leftist ideal picture of an engaged Amsterdam-based anthropologist. After learning about my politics, I was eventually accepted.

The first kind of criticism usually means an attack on the research for being “one-sided,” i.e. writing from the point of view of Israeli soldiers, not from that of Palestinians. Such a reaction can be understood in light of the critical focus within anthropology, which is based on engaged ethnography. I will give an example: during the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) conference of 2008, I presented a chapter of my PhD dissertation in a panel on the discourse of violence. I spoke about discursive strategies Israeli soldiers use and the themes that come up when they explain or legitimize their behaviour. Being an anthropologist who studied Israeli soldiers seemed to be enough for someone in the room to harshly criticize me. This person assumed I was not interested in the plight of the Palestinian people and was in some way “protecting” Israeli soldiers and legitimizing their acts. When I then positioned myself politically and told the audience about my activism in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories the critique died down quickly.

Different critiques came from outside of the anthropological or academic community. As an activist, so these critics said, I could not possibly do “fair” or decent research about Israeli soldiers or security professionals, because I was biased and not objective. In this case, my critics used my identity as an activist to delegitimize my research. Most of all, such critique tries to delegitimize the academic who chooses to be an activist as well. Studying victimizers as opposed to victims, especially in such a politically charged context as Israel-Palestine, is often seen as problematic. Such a focus only becomes accepted, it seems, when one has the “correct” political profile, which is an apolitical one. However, in this kind of context, I believe, politics never disappear and only the “left” are scrutinized for their subjectivity, while those in support of the powers that be are perceived to be “objective”.

As these critiques triggered me to think deeper about my strategies, I will now attempt to show in what ways the anthropologist, especially the one doing research amongst especially powerful victimizers, can position herself without having to give in to these different forces. I want to argue that while we have to be acutely aware of the ways our political ideas and positions influence the way we do research (what

methods we can or cannot use), who we study and the way we understand and write about who we study, this does not necessarily mean we have to study those who are victimized by the power structures we scrutinize.

An interesting approach that helped me to rethink these issues is the work of Van Meijl (2005) who did research among Māori in Aotearoa–New Zealand. In the public and academic debate Māori are perceived as “victims”, he writes, and he discusses his position in supporting their cause and being critical about them at the same time. He explains that as a social anthropologist, his position in supporting the Māori cause was assumed without questioning and he asks whether we should be committed politically to our sponsors (the group we research).

Van Meijl, in line with Pels (2003), then argues for a position of the anthropologist as trickster: we should stay in and embrace our ambivalent position, which makes it possible to support but still criticize what we see at the same time. The trickster, a mythical figure, is ambiguous by nature, equivocal and even unreliable (Van Meijl 2005: 240). Still, it is a good model, Van Meijl writes, as ambiguity and ambivalence are important for the role of the anthropologists. We need to be emphatic but critical as well and, most importantly, involved and detached when needed. He builds upon the concept of the “professional stranger” by Agar (1996) who wrote about detached involvement within fieldwork. This anthropologist can be engaged, but does not become “one of them”, one of the people she is studying and she will not necessarily agree with them either. The anthropologist–trickster can thus be an advocate for the people she studies, while at the same time being able to “take a step back and reflect on the construction, development and implementation of indigenous political strategies” (Van Meijl 2005: 241). She is then “not a traitor, but rather a trickster” he writes, “who embodies different roles in different contexts and combines both in the practice of what I would label critical ethnography” (*ibid.*).

I think this is an interesting position. I would, however, propose to shift the roles of the trickster somewhat, in the following way. While Van Meijl holds on to the ethnographic approach, I believe the anthropologist should be able to study and understand the powerful, or victimizers in other ways as well. By using methods that require less proximity than classical ethnography, we can still gain understanding about the people we study, but we can let go of a deep kind of empathy that is expected of anthropologists in many ways, without betraying the trust of our informants. Taking a role as a “trickster” then, the anthropologist can take a step back and look critically at the situation her informants are part of and openly criticize it, even as an activist without this compromising her research and as such the understanding of the people she studies. She does not need to empathize with those she studies, or establish close relationships with them in order to study them and understand their worlds. As a trickster these positions are never set and can be fluid, shifting according to the reality in “the field” of the anthropologists. The anthropologist, as the trickster, is indeed an ambivalent figure who “combines an either-or position with a both-and one” (Pouwer 1978 as quoted in Van Meijl 2005). Importantly, however, this is not to say that the role of the trickster is always easy

or comfortable. It gives the researcher some freedom to manoeuvre, but complex positionalities, as I shall show below, will always go hand in hand with dilemmas.

## **My positions in the field**

I will now lay out the specifics of my own position and the ways these different layers form the lenses through which my research is coloured. I chose to discuss a few “lenses” in more depth that are relevant for our discussion here, while realizing there are many more positions that influence my research, such as me being a woman (for example, see Hoijtink, this volume).

### ***Being a Dutch-Israeli Jewish researcher***

As was written in the introduction to an important special issue on Israelis studying the Occupation, “the occupier has always studied the occupied population and the occupied territory” (Handel and Ginsburg 2018). What could then be the role of engaged Israeli researchers studying this occupation? They are in a special position in which they can speak out about it critically, but as Hagar Kotef (2018) asks: how can Israeli Jews write and act against the Occupation while being part of it? Should we deliberately not write about Palestinians, as we are part of the colonial power? Shall we write to “remove the masks” and show the world what is going on, and would this work? There are no easy answers to her questions, but importantly and as I understand it, there is a role for academics in our position and that is not to be silent.

A side-note is important here, however; my role is a bit more complex than sketched out above, as I am both Dutch and Israeli. This gives me more freedom to manoeuvre my identity, like a trickster, between emphasizing my Dutch side and my Israeli one – and most of all it has given me the opportunity not to work within Israeli academia, which is complicit with the Occupation in many ways.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Being an activist: the political self***

Some people urge me to begin every presentation with positioning myself within the activist field, to avoid the kind of criticism described above from the start. However, I do not believe the researcher should be forced to position herself politically in order for our research to be legitimate in some way. This would, I suspect, disadvantage critical leftist researchers while “rightist” researchers would be seen as “objective”. However, it is an important lens through which we come to our research subject, to the questions we ask and the way we do our research.

I have been active against the on-going Israeli occupation of Palestinian land for a few decades. Being Israeli made my connection to the political situation in the area even more emotionally charged and I have been active within the Israeli “leftist”, often called “radical leftist”, activist community for many years. In the Netherlands I co-founded an organization for “Critical Israelis in the

Netherlands” in 2007 that organizes a range of events to raise awareness about the Occupation with a Dutch audience.

During my fieldwork in 2006–2007 and again in 2016, when living in Israel, my activity meant taking part in protests against the Occupation, the siege and attacks on Gaza, and other events taking place during that time. This included participating in solidarity protests with conscientious objectors and participating in a critical conference called “In-Security” organized in “the shadows” of one of the main security fairs in Israel.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned above, it is not to say that the role of the “trickster” does not come into play here (quite literally in the last example as I did fieldwork at the “real fair” while participating in the shadow conference the next day). At times, especially during my research on security professionals, I felt “guilty” after interviewing informants as they assumed me to be “on their side”. This assumption came with me being Israeli and speaking Hebrew with them, and in the Israeli context the mainstream population is very uncritical of security companies and their work. While not lying to the people I research, I also do not feel the need to convey my political stance before interviews. However, some feelings I believe cannot be avoided. It will always entail the juggling between doing right by your informants and your own beliefs.

### ***Being an anthropologist***

As I have shown above, with the “title” of being an anthropologist, certain expectations arise and many were surprised not to say suspicious when hearing about my topic of research, especially when combined with the Israeli context it was placed in. By identifying as anthropologists our research methods are also assumed, with ethnography being the main approach used. However, as I already indicated above, I believe we cannot and should not take on the ethnographic approach, as it is defined within anthropology, in every context. As mentioned earlier, anthropologists take ethnography to be almost synonymous with deep and empathetic relations of trust with the people they study, the communities they research. In my own case, in which I studied soldiers and security professionals in Israel I believe that I could only stay critical and true to my political position if I avoided ethnography and the expectations of empathy and trust. Of course, important ethical issues such as anonymity still apply in such research, but I could not have gotten “ethnographically close” to the people I studied while deeply disagreeing with what they stood for. This is especially true for the research I am currently conducting on security professionals, as they chose much more consciously to be part of a regime than the conscripts I studied a decade ago. Instead, I use methods that allow me my ambivalent position; of an academic with a clear political stance. I use observations that are sometimes more, sometimes less participative and (in depth) interviews to answer my anthropological queries. I continuously shift along the continuum of taking part and taking my distance, according to the situation. Other methods that I use are (in-depth) interviews and the analysis of secondary sources, films and PR materials, for

example. These methods allow me to understand a world, but don't force me into relationships of trust and deep empathy that I am not comfortable with.

### **BOX 14.1 NON-ETHNOGRAPHIC ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

Ethnography has been synonymous with anthropology for a long time. I pose that doing anthropology and taking an anthropological approach to studying the social world can be done in different ways, including without doing "pure" ethnography. Our questions can be still anthropological, and touch upon the everydayness of acts, on interpretations of meanings, on power differences and all from the bottom up. However, to answer these questions we don't necessarily need to engage in deep participant observation, create deep relationships with our research participants or develop trust and empathy. These issues are difficult and, I argue, not advisable when studying power holders and members of regimes we oppose.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) makes a similar argument concerning methods, albeit she is concerned with the study of the occupied by the occupier, while in my case one could say I studied the occupier himself. Others have argued that the study of the occupier blurs the occupied (Handel and Ginsburg 2018). However, I believe that such studies, in a non-ethnographic way, are the only way to "unmask" the realities of the regime I am critiquing (Kotef 2018).

### **In conclusion: being a "trickster"**

In this chapter, I showed how having an outspoken political agenda can go hand in hand with ethically and thoughtfully studying perpetrators of violence or other power holders who are part of systems or regimes we oppose. While in anthropology engaged research is usually almost synonymous with an ethnographic approach where relations of trust and empathy play a role, this is more complex when studying people we oppose or whose agendas we don't sympathize with or even oppose. I argued in this chapter that in some cases, abstaining from the use of ethnographic methods, which include a high level of intimacy, is the most ethical choice. In this way we don't have to come too close to our research informants and can stay true to our political selves and our engagement with the bigger political context, which in my case was my criticism of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and accompanying human rights violations.

However, what approach we choose depends on the context and our positionalities; who are we, who are we studying, and what is the question we want to

answer. For example, the soldiers I studied are not necessarily only perpetrators; they are victims themselves on a certain level. They are part of the system, a system we should study from every perspective possible. The security professionals I interviewed were much more complicit and hence my research relationship with them was different.

In my research I do everything to ensure the anonymity of my informants and I was honest about my research intentions. However, this does not mean conveying all aspects of my identity and opinions (as we never do in research). At the same time, I do not sympathize with their actions or goals in life or even empathize with them. Often what soldiers told me they had done during their military service or to whom professionals would sell their security technologies appalled me. However, as mentioned earlier, concerning the soldiers I could see them as “victims” of the system in some ways, and thus my views and approach was never black and white.

The concept of the trickster (Van Meijl 2005 and Pels 2003) is useful here and shows that it is possible to study a group you do not support or agree with while indeed doing them no harm, but at the same time without the need to sympathize or empathize with them. One can go in and out of roles and be an engaged researcher without this engagement being directed towards the people we study. As such we should not shy away from embracing the ambivalence this brings. Reflection on our positions and politics is key here.

## Suggestions for further reading

- Heidi Armbruster and Anna Lærke (eds) (2008) *Taking sides: Ethics, politics and fieldwork in anthropology*, Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books.
- Didier Fassin (ed.) (2014). *A companion to moral anthropology*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Ciara Kierans and Kirsten Bell (2017) “Cultivating ambivalence: Some methodological considerations for anthropology”, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 7(2): 23–44.
- Victoria Sanford and Asale Angel-Ajani (eds) (2006) *Engaged observer: Anthropology, advocacy, and activism*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

## Notes

- 1 In the Netherlands parliamentary questions were even asked concerning the need to be transparent about the political color of researchers, as a result of anthropologists wrongly being accused of supporting a militant group. See here for more information: <http://religionresearch.org/closer/2018/05/31/de-wetenschap-de-nrc-en-de-veiligheidsdiensten/> (Dutch only, accessed 9 July 2018).
- 2 <http://ethics.americananthro.org/category/statement/> (accessed 2 July 2018).
- 3 Those who become career officers in the IDF often retire at 45.
- 4 <https://972mag.com/is-academia-the-last-bastion-of-progressive-thought-in-israel/132623/> (accessed 9 July 2018).
- 5 See <https://en.hamushim.com/in-security-conference/> (accessed 9 July 2018).

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