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# RETURNING DISCIPLINE TO THE DISCIPLINE: *A MODEL PROCEDURE FOR REVIEWS IN ANTHROPOLOGY, SOCIAL SCIENCES, AND OTHER RELATED DISCIPLINES*

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## Abstract

*This piece uses participant observation of and research into disciplinary procedures to reveal that review policies in anthropology, other 'social sciences', and related disciplines have become arbitrary and politicised with little to protect professional standards of a discipline and to avoid conflicts of interest that prejudice scholarship. To address the problem, this piece takes the initial step towards establishing procedural standards. The piece offers a model procedure to incorporate in journal article and book publisher review policies, applying legal approaches to anti-corruption and procedural fairness along with key human resources principles to measure skills and competence. It also applies best practices from experiences from peer review failures in the natural sciences. This procedure offers standards to test the quality of policies of journals and publishers while offering journals and publishers the opportunity to demonstrate compliance. This focus on process is part of a larger effort to re-establish clear standards in anthropology (as a social science and humanities) as well as in related disciplines through which disciplines can hold themselves accountable and measure 'progress' while seeking to resolve internal debates over content.*

## Introduction

Nearly 20 years ago, physicist Alan Sokal sought to challenge the lack of scientific competence in and the politicisation of social science and humanities disciplines by submitting for publication a nonsensical article designed to test review policies of a journal in 'postmodern cultural studies'. Now referred to as the 'Sokal hoax', Sokal's article, filled with ideology and scientific illiteracy (referring to quantum gravity as a 'social and linguistic construct') was quickly published; sending a shock wave throughout the academy (Sokal 1996).

While the journal that fell victim to the hoax (*Social Text*) and other similar journals claim that they now have review procedures to assure that they will not be fooled again, the result may be exactly the opposite of what Sokal hoped and what academic discipline demands. Sokal's hoax was designed to spur more quality research and objectivity ('discipline') in social science by exposing basic incompetence and politicisation of disciplinary procedures, but there is little evidence that there have been efforts to focus on competence and objectivity in review procedures.

This study offers evidence that rather than improve, the procedures adopted by *Social Text* after the hoax sought to narrow who and what is published. Journals in anthropology and related fields have, in whole or part, explicitly or implicitly, followed this anti-intellectual path. Rather than assure that reviewers meet standards of methodological and scientific competence and are free of political or ideological biases, current procedures are actually designed to evade scientific standards of review and discipline in the name of discipline, while assuring conformity and control, as this article will demonstrate. This process works in much the way that churches establish doctrinal order to promote conformity to 'peers' but without any independent standard of quality. In short, current 'peer review' processes act to promote shared group benefits without any reference to objective standards that are

independent of the subjective interpretations of the observer. Review processes now offer no procedural safeguards to assure disciplinary competence or to screen out political biases or conflicts of interest. Indeed, the methods now used specifically reinforce these biases, promoting existing ideologies and shared interest at the expense of the stated professional goals of the field.

In a separate unpublished article on book reviews and the procedures and policies relating to book reviews in anthropology and related fields, the author demonstrates that social anthropology and apparently other related fields have degenerated into politicised cliques operating on the basis of power and self-interest rather than adhere to recognised procedural safeguards (Lempert unpublished). Within anthropology, the reason for this appears to be that the discipline has lost basic agreement on content and goals and simply works to allow researchers to present their data to say what they please and to define their goals as they choose, so long as those goals fit those of the journal editors. In other disciplines the problem may be the opposite; the discipline's rules may be clear but there are attempts to prevent objective challenges that would reveal underlying fallacies and political corruption. Within anthropology and, in general, across related fields, it appears that the very sense of agreement on objective process has disappeared and along with it any real 'discipline' (Duncan 2013; Lempert 2014b). Having lost adherence to basic principles in reviewing other work and having turned review processes into personal, idiosyncratic and political ones based on factors such as contacts, networks, hierarchy, and ideology, as this article demonstrates, the basis of 'discipline' is also lost.

Although those who have established careers in these disciplines can protect themselves from directly hearing the ridicule from outsiders like Sokal, this short-term protective strategy is ultimately one that is self-destructive. University disciplines facing shortages of public funding must recognize that they bear much of the responsibility. Given the realities of funding, if disciplines cannot continually generate predictive theories and applications, and only serve the interests of a few or of a certain sector of society rather than long-term, overall human interests and the advancement of human knowledge and technologies, they will attract neither students nor community support (Lempert, Briggs, et. al. 1995).

Corruption of review procedures is not the only failure that can undermine a discipline. For example, corruption of funding and hiring policies may be more responsible. Further, power is exercised without accountability or control in many components of publication decisions beyond simply 'review' procedures. Nonetheless, this article focuses on mechanisms to return 'discipline' to some of the components of the publication review process that are failing.

### **Background of the Debate in Anthropology and Social Sciences and Where Procedural Solutions Fit**

Most social and cultural anthropologists today agree that an abrupt change has occurred in the field in the past twenty or thirty years. The discipline of anthropology, once viewed as the holistic social science of human behaviour in groups, no longer recognizes this mission of social science. Other social sciences that could have fit under its umbrella (examining political, economic and social behaviours of groups – the fields of, political science, economics, and sociology) or above it (sociology as the study of cultures together in complex systems) have also turned away from taking a scientific approach to human behaviours at the level of groups.

In the 1960s and 1970s when I first learned about anthropology and was excited by it as a student, there was a core of anthropologists who believed the discipline could follow social science principles, much as psychology models and predicts individual behaviours (Harris 1979). In 'struggling for a science of culture', this group agreed to the use of the scientific method and hypothesis testing as the disciplinary standard. The belief was that the discipline could be built through a standard of measurements and testing of hypotheses that would be independent of each individual observer, with cases used to find principles rather than simply present information and idiosyncratic views. In doing so, their hope (indeed, "our" hope, since I was one of them as a student) was to free anthropology of ideological biases (shared group beliefs that were not independent of the group) and political biases (beliefs favouring the distribution of

resources for the benefit of specific groups, independent of objective measure and merit) that largely came from the colonial objectives of the governments in the places anthropologists worked in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Physical anthropology, studying the evolution of humans as primates, had followed this scientific approach, focusing on measures of environment and biology to derive explanations and predictions. So did archaeology and linguistics, the other two parts of four-field anthropology. As with the study of psychology, that is increasingly linked to biological and chemical studies, 'four-field' anthropology had been developing as a mixed natural and social science with social and cultural anthropology linking contemporary social and cultural processes to the longer historical record and the physical variables used in the other three sub-fields.

Today, social and cultural anthropology is not only increasingly detached from these other fields, but it has largely abandoned any link to science. Some anthropologists today readily admit that their goal is to support political interests and ideologies (either those of colonial governments or those of specific interest groups under them) (Duncan 2013; Lempert 2014b), much as earlier anthropologists had predicted would happen once scientific approaches were abandoned (Harris 1979). In doing so, they have largely turned social and cultural anthropology into political advocacy, journalism, and armchair philosophy with the very anti-science bias that Sokal's hoax revealed. Though this has been described as an attempt to establish a 'moral model' for the discipline (Hymes 1982; Andrade 1995), the morality of political groups pursuing particular interests rather than human knowledge and ideas of human betterment itself raises moral questions.

This attack on science is also an attack on the discipline, itself. Though ideology and politics can enforce adherence to specific sets of beliefs shared by a group (e.g., anti-science and promotion of political interests), this is simply a substitution of arbitrary control for objective standards of an academic discipline. Unlike science, the current anti-science processes of standardisation and control cannot be challenged by testing and replaced by better theory. This is because ideological and political controls do not allow for challenges, testing, or independent observations the way the fundamental tenets of science does.

Rather than focus on content in an attempt to define the direction of these disciplines to promote a particular politics and ideology, this piece focuses instead on the process issues. Procedural controls can rig selection of materials and views and determine the content/theory debates. The lack of fair, open, and consistent processes itself undermines the basic procedures for reaching scholarly consensus and assuring legitimacy. Once an appropriate process is in place, the content issues may then resolve themselves through the process. First, however, there must be a legitimate process to justify the definition of academic work as a 'discipline'. For those of us who see ourselves as social scientists, this is the basis of the scientific method and the establishment of disciplines (Comte 1853). For those of us who also or independently see ourselves working in the humanities, this basis of 'discipline' is a fundamental belief grounded in law and political process with truth emerging through the competition of ideas (Madison, Hamilton and Jay 1788).

The central questions this article asks are:

- As anthropologists (and academics in related disciplines), what processes can we adopt to ensure quality as a 'discipline' and that assures debates occur in a way reflecting common standards rather than idiosyncratic prejudices?
- What review standards do we agree to offering some way of measuring and recording achievement and progress in solving certain research questions and problems?
- How can we assure real competence in our disciplines and sub-disciplines rather than simply substituting position, authority, and political norm for competence?
- How can we assure fair treatment of new and challenging work and eliminate conflicts of interest that politicize our field and destroy 'discipline'?
- What hidden or uncomfortable problems do we need to address in establishing and adhering to process that prevents us from doing this?
- How can we address them?

***Disclosure of the Author's Position in Scholarship and Openness to Diversity with Discipline***

The presentation here of approaches to re-establishing procedural legitimacy to academic disciplines is not targeting academia in isolation. The author of this article has worked in the field of law and governance reform, focusing on mechanisms of procedural fairness and safeguards against corruption across the globe, for more than 30 years. During this time, I have designed procedures for holding governments and international organisations publicly accountable to universal standards of community and individual rights, equity, opportunity, and procedural fairness, while also promoting the full advance of human inquiry following the principles of scientific neutrality and integrity (promoting the perspectives in this article). I have been drafting and publishing laws and indicators for accountability as well as extensions of professional ethics code in anthropology and related disciplines (Lempert 1997, 2011). The purpose of this piece is to apply the very same principles of standard processes and ethics to current activities in academia that are central to the idea of a 'discipline' and that call for the same kinds of reforms and safeguards in other public activities.

While I am a member of a minority ethnicity, a feminist, and someone who loves his country (and many others and their peoples), as well as an author of fiction, poetry, and essays, my reasons for entering anthropology were NOT:

- to use it as a vehicle for promotion of my sexuality, my gender or my feminist politics, or my ethnicity;
- to use it in a search for meaning over confusion of identity;
- to use it as a vehicle for power over any peoples or area or attempt to convert them or 'develop' them to promote any nationalist political goals or to become an area expert to categorize and monitor an area or peoples;
- to use it in an attempt to homogenize people for some standard or uniform equality; or
- to use it for any other goals that would open the door to any conflicts of interest with the advancement of social science and its humanitarian purposes (including the promotion of cultural diversity and sustainability of cultures).

I entered anthropology inspired by the goal of uncovering truths about how societies and cultures work and how to make them more accountable, more equitable, more diverse, more open and freer, through fair procedures. He believed he could uncover principles of sustainability, cultural survival, and change that could open the door to improvements in balance with nature, diversity, and choice. For me, those beliefs were also part of a cultural tradition of 'progress' and empiricism that were part of the teachings of Judaism (Cahill 1998) and that have been reflected in the work of secular Jews who were among many of the founders of American anthropology (including Boas and Sapir) and its scientific adherents (Wolf and Harris).

In my view, not only is the idea of social science (and perhaps also of humanistic progress) under attack today, but the current disconnection of social and cultural anthropology from the other three fields of 'four-field' anthropology appears an attack on Darwinian theories of evolution and on the partly natural and biological determination of human behaviours, including culture. In my view, the idea that culture is 'created' (or 'imagined') seems to reinforce a Christian theological belief similar to the anti-Darwinists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, seeking to reverse the basic principles of scientific causality and to replace them with beliefs of magic, randomness, and religious faith in individual free will completely apart from the natural and social worlds. In the same way that an attack on Darwin and on science is fundamentally a political and ideological attack on the idea of progress, the author finds similar parallels today in social and cultural anthropology (and other social science disciplines), even though they come from groups whose specific interests may (seem to) be opposed to fundamental religious teachings. That larger debate, however, is beyond the scope of this article and not something readers need to agree with in order to support the objective processes offered.

***Format of the Piece:***

This article is two parts. The first part examines the workings of review processes in academia, noting how these are corrupted and fail. The second part offers a solution that this journal has already partly tested by allowing the reviewer of this article to apply it in his/her review of this piece.

In presenting the evidence of how review processes work, the first part of the article follows a social science framework, offering both evidence and hypotheses, in a model of what social science articles can be but rarely are. In offering a solution rather than ending with fatalism, the second part of the article is something this author believes is rarely seen (or allowed) in anthropology articles today. This also makes a point about the implications of what has happened.

Revealing a problem, offering ‘proof’ and speculation where full proof is outside the current scope, and then a solution, makes this article longer than that allowed almost anywhere in anthropology, today. Even though many anthropologists today claim that they are being ‘political’ and working for ‘social justice’ and change, as part of the new “moral model” of the discipline (Andrade, 1985; Hymes, 1982) even something as seemingly innocuous as length requirements has consequences for a discipline. If the essence of social science is comparisons and hypothesis testing, and if the basis of anthropology is modelling societies, that requires more words. Shorter lengths are suited to single ‘arguments’, single ‘case studies’ and something more akin to journalism for rather than for doing the full holistic ethnographies, comparative studies of various cultures at once, or complex social modelling that a social science of anthropology originally envisioned and demands advancing social science knowledge and improving society.

**Part One. Investigating the Problem of Current Review Procedures**

A recent editor of perhaps the premier journal in the field of anthropology describes the review process of his journal as ‘fair’ and ‘thoughtful’, relying on ‘professional reviewers’. At the same time, he ardently objects to any attempts to screen reviewers for conflicts of interest or competency in the fields of the articles they review because he had ‘enough trouble finding reviewers as it is’. Asking reviewers to acknowledge conflicts of interest and areas where they lacked competence in reviewing colleague’s work would ‘daunt or even possibly antagonize many, many prospective reviewers’. In other words, his journal would lose most of its current reviewers if they would be required to disqualify themselves due to lack of competence or conflicts of interest. Anyone familiar with professional societies and journals knows that it would be very simple and probably welcome to create a requirement on members of a professional society that they register their areas of expertise and agree to assume responsibility for serving as a journal reviewer in order to advance and protect the field. Certainly, anyone who publishes in a journal should also agree to serve as a reviewer. It is both professionally responsible and easy to create such a data bank and to run such a system, and there are precedents for it. So, the fact that anthropology’s professional associations make the conscious choice NOT to follow established precedents and professionalize review obligations is good evidence that the association has other motives. Indeed, the author of this article would gladly serve as a reviewer for the field’s major journals and for the dozens of journals in which he has published but is rarely asked.

If the current review system, even in the field’s most eminent journal simultaneously claims that the process is ‘fair’, ‘professional’ and legitimate while being based on reinforcing conflicts of interest and hiding incompetence, this is an admission of fraud. This may be the reality of how review processes work.

This article is not the first critique of the corruption of academia by politics and ideology. Previous examinations of the processes for selection of articles for journals in other fields have discovered how existing procedures tend to reinforce selection of works from certain universities, citing certain authors, or adhering to specific ideologies in processes that reinforce hierarchy rather than objective disciplinary standards. A colleague recently exposed how this process works in economics (Klein 2006) and one would expect similar factors are at work in anthropology and related fields. Indeed, there seem to be

similar processes and problems common among social science and humanities in universities today (Lempert with Briggs 1995).

Part One of this article begins by applying the standard methodologies of our field for revealing this problem. It presents findings using the two different methodological approaches and discusses how current social science review procedures allow easy corruption by editors' political and ideological interests while failing to assure competence and objectivity.

### **Methodology**

This article collects evidence of the problems of lack of procedural safeguards in review processes in (social and cultural) anthropology in two ways:

- 1) From participant observation of processes -- the research standard for primary source data that is the central methodology of social anthropology that allows for the selection of a microcosm of the cultural whole as a means of providing a window for viewing the whole, and with the use of cross cultural data as a form of critique, and
- 2) From a review of existing codes and policies for reviews in journals inside and outside of anthropology, to determine whether there are any existing safeguards in use, and whether those existing minimize or reinforce conflicts of interest and lack of appropriate competence.

Observations as a participant observer come from experiences publishing articles and books, as well as reviewing them for various journals and publishers for over 20 years. I present my views not as 'proof', since they are idiosyncratic, but as detail of how things can go wrong in the absence of agreed procedural (or 'disciplinary') standards and enforcement, in comparison with established principles of fair process in law and in natural science. Although beyond the scope of this piece, replication of studies of review procedures by sociologists could identify how the lack of standard procedures may be working to reinforce particular ideologies and political interests from within anthropology or exerted on it from outside (Price 2003).

### **Findings**

The findings from the two types of data collected are as follows:

#### ***I. Findings from Participant Observation: Absence of Safeguards for Objectivity and Quality in Peer Reviews***

Presented below are:

- a) The chronology of how journal articles enter the 'peer review' process and the subjective or political biases that enter to distort it at each stage;
- b) A summary list of observations on failures, offering observations of the politicised decisions that are promoted by the current process; and
- c) The author's speculations on the 'deep structure' of the incentive systems that are at work to corrupt the process under a pretext of 'fairness' and 'expertise'.

Most of this should not surprise the reader, but the systematic presentation and collection of evidence taken together is what should generate thought. Some of the problem areas point already to the kinds of solutions that needed.

#### ***a) The Chronology of the Review Process and the Subjectivity (Conflicts of Interest and Undermining of Professionalism) that Occur or can Occur at Different Stages***

Here is how I encounter the process of preparing and submitting articles (and books) for review.

- ⇒ The initial limitation is one of format. Article formats are circumscribed and this influences content. The basis of ethnography is holism, so that human behaviour is studied at the level of the

culture and with comparisons of cultures, but holistic ethnographies (that can amount to multi-volume works of hundreds of pages, like this author's ethnography of Leningrad) no longer 'fit' the space requirements of book publishers (for some 200 or 300 pages) or journals that demand a single 'argument' in 8,000 words or less. There is no longer a place to present a new model, a critique with a solution, a new tool or a new philosophy of any real length or complexity, or to conduct comparative studies or anything more complex than just a journalist case study. Any readers who can prove the author wrong, please write to the author, who will gladly respond by sending an avalanche of unpublished work that cannot even be reviewed due to the lack of publication outlets.

- ⇒ Forums for publication are generally limited (compared to the amount of work competing for space) and journals often have very narrow outlooks on what fits their categories. This enables editors to weed out material that is not already favoured and to limit reviewed work to those promoting their careers or views. If a scholar offers a new measurement tool and tests it, designs a procedural code, fleshes out a new subfield (e.g. 'astro-anthropology') or offers a new interdisciplinary model (e.g., demographic models of cultural violence; ethnic explanations of social 'progress') there is very little opportunity for it to enter on its own merit. Each new journal is open to small groups of colleagues whose incentives, they readily admit, are to promote their own works for a like-minded audience.
- ⇒ A small but significant percentage of journals or issues (perhaps 5 to 10%) are devoted to 'symposia', pre-selected topics, or guest editors in which a small group of people with the influence of outside funding or with a cohesive interest, essentially takes over the slots, subject matter, and promote the ideology of a journal. Though there is still a claim of 'peer review', this is usually a pre-politicised process among a pre-selected group.
- ⇒ No triple blind processes appear to exist. Almost always, the first approach to an editor is to 'market' oneself and one's work. No journal guarantees review. Institutional backing, professional standing, link to specific cohorts, gender, and ideology all seem to weigh in. This is not this author's interpretation of reasons for refusal of review but simply a direct reporting of reasons given by editors, themselves. Even when pre-selecting journals with sympathetic mission statements, my experience is about *two thirds* of pieces are refused review for subjective reasons reflecting ideological or in-group biases not found in journal mission statements such as belief that the scientific method is only an "opinion" or that only the local "emic" perspective is valid but not an outside critical perspective, or that all citations must be of the authors of the journal or on narrowly focused debates in the past few years (almost a kind of "newspeak" rather than including classic works in the discipline or in related fields offering alternative approaches to the same research questions. This percentage is even higher for book publishers. Some journals claim that editors have conducted 'reviews' but offer no reasons or evidence to back their subjective judgments. Where pieces are particularly unusual (interdisciplinary, challenge to orthodoxy), the inability to find reviewers is often used as an excuse to reject a piece, with no reference to the merits.
- ⇒ Peer review processes are usually single blinded but not always double blinded. In other words, the reviewer's competence and objectivity is hidden from the author, with no opportunity for challenge or for transparency about the selection. Authors who are insiders have some opportunity to manipulate the process by naming favourable and biased reviewers.
- ⇒ Use of the reviews is itself subjective and politicised with no standard for what constitutes sufficiency to reject or to accept and no standardisation of criteria. I have yet to see a set of reviews that demonstrates any determination based on explicit professional competence criteria and evidence. Academic book publishers simply make a subjective decision on their view of what will earn profits, with no market testing or academic standards at all. In some cases, editors simply ask reviewers for a majority vote as to whether they 'like' the work and if it needs the

imposition of conditions before publication (like citing the work of insiders or articles in previous issues of the same journal). Since there is no clear objective competence or licensing standards in review procedures, the determination of whether shortcomings are critical or reparable is also a political one. Minor and unfounded objections can be used as a pretext for discarding a piece (often alongside a political or conflict of interest objection). At the same time, my experience in conducting reviews has shown that editors can ignore reviewers' objections to promote the work, ideologies, and interests of themselves or their friends (. A university publisher published one academic book I reviewed because the author had solicited political endorsements, despite the misuse of evidence and methodology. Similarly, an article based on government-funded research on controlling minorities that called for violations of international law and misused data and methodology was printed because the journal editor sought to curry favour. Such works then received the stamp of 'peer review' even though the reviews demonstrated they were unfit for publication.

- ⇒ Authors seeking an appeal by referencing standards or even the stated policies of the journal or ethics of the profession have nowhere to turn. Editorial boards exist on paper with no responsibilities. There are no processes in the discipline to challenge alleged abuses of power by journal editors and journals, and attempts to do so risk ostracisation and blacklisting from those journals. Journal boards act as a single voice backing the editor. My experience in one challenge to test the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) is that the associations turns such matters over to its lawyer who is not a member of the profession, with the focus on protecting the association and its staff, without considering implications for the profession.
- ⇒ Use of the courts for review of procedures in the discipline, in an attempt to enforce public and contractual standards, is possible but not a practical alternative. Lawyers and judges avoid these cases because no large sums of money are involved. Outsiders prefer to avoid involvement in academic disputes that they seem to view already as lacking any enforceable standards and with little real public concern.
- ⇒ Tenure review and academic committees in universities also have no incentive to deal with these disputes. Their focus appears to be on reputation and funds, not on standards in a discipline. Since there is no uniformity or agreement on skill sets and certification within most of the subfields of social and cultural anthropology, little in the certification of anthropologists by universities seems to offer any guidance as to the skills and qualifications making one eligible to competently review academic work, even in a sub-discipline,. In interdisciplinary work, this problem is even more pronounced.

#### *b) Summary of Findings: The Visible Lack of Standards in Reviews*

Send an article or book manuscript to any publication in anthropology or in other social sciences and humanities fields today and the process everywhere is almost exactly the same; mixing several subjective elements with a procedure claimed to be scientific and objective but also offering little assurance of standards. Subjectivity seems to enter at every stage while safeguards, quality controls, competency standards, procedures, and disciplinary bedrocks do not seem to enter anywhere.

There are often calls for citations and addition of or response to arguments but rarely any explanations that determine whether use of data or methodology is correct or incorrect or why.

Journal and book editors do not articulate and may not even be able to articulate what makes scholarship 'good' beyond quality of style and conformity to political or group prejudices. This seems to be due to the lack of standards.

In my experience, the typical reasons for acceptance of manuscripts reflect conflicts of interest more than tests of competence. Paraphrased, this includes the following statements:

- I agree with it.

- I like it.
- It reinforces the work I have been doing.
- It confirms what I believe.

Among reasons for rejection, reflecting a process riddled with conflicts of interest, are these:

- Most people disagree with the author (suggesting that majority ideology is the standard);
- The article challenges or criticizes colleagues and that is not allowed;
- The author does not use the approach that my disciplinary faction prefers and does not cite the authorities that my faction prefers (whether or not they are relevant);
- The piece is not important to me and I do not like it;
- The methodology partly comes from an outside field and no one knows whether it is valid or not. Better to reject it than to risk something new;
- The question is too big to ask or different from those others ask;
- There are some minor errors in terminology and I assume that means everything else is flawed, though I do not know enough to tell;
- The conclusions are uncomfortable;
- I never heard of the author or this line of work.

For book publishing, where publishing opportunities are even rarer, processes also seem to reinforce subjective factors under the pretext of merit. Here, double blind determinations are rare and add the following subjective criteria:

- The author is not famous and in a high position in the field and should not be published (or should be published simply as a result of position);
- The author's ideology is not fitting with the mainstream, so universities would not assign it (or should be published because it reinforces a mainstream ideology); or
- The author does not have an existing group of students or other readers to extort to purchase the work, and should not be published (or the opposite).

One might suppose a methodological basis to the standards of publication for research monographs. For works that might reach a wider market, one might expect financial considerations to enter, with publishers' test-marketing works and entering into contracts that allowed authors to subsidize works and share risks. In fact, true market and financial considerations seem to be irrelevant, with financial reasons used as justification on the assumption that authors know little about either the economics of publishing or of marketing. Academic publishers routinely make publication decisions based on ideology and politics under the pretext of 'the market,' without any actual testing of what the market will bear. Since academics rarely take the risk of starting their own book publishing companies and simply defer to the existing publishing hierarchy and its operations, this screening has become the norm in book publishing.

This also may explain why book publications are increasingly collections from multiple authors that offer little depth and little new. The idea seems to be to assure an established group of buyers and promoters belonging to an existing clique with the ability to promote each other and extort others to buy their book. Similarly, works with more secondary sources and quotes are favoured over more scientific works that would challenge convention and fill new market niches, as the quoted authorities have a stake in promoting the book.

Overall, in the U.S. and Europe, processes that often censor material are euphemistically called 'peer review' and utilize what is a deserved but unacknowledged pun; the 'blind review'. Ironically, these processes are almost the same as those I observed in the Soviet Union and documented there (Lempert 1995) and that were described by Western academics as in violation of procedural standards and unsuited to a democratic culture or to a system that had prospects of intellectual (and economic) advances.

*c) The Deep Structure ('Etic') of 'Peer Review' Processes: A Testable Hypothesis on What is Happening*

The author's interpretation of what is happening in social anthropology is that review processes today reveal networks of individuals at similar levels exchanging favours and reinforcing self-interest of their

cliques (horizontally) as well as partly vertically, through patron-client networks of teachers and 'disciples' following 'lineages' (and funders). This view of universities as following in the tradition of the church, from which they developed, should not be surprising given that it confirms the anthropological principle of cultural continuity. Nor should it be surprising that review processes maintain such hierarchies and maintains sects. What is surprising is that a church model that appears to protect standards for natural sciences simply replaces professional objective discipline in the social sciences. Rather than promote the profession through a shared and enforceable professional ethic and standards that are subject to objective verification and that could protect the discipline and its participants against political pressures, review processes appear to work to cement political alliances and ideologies that oppose or distort sciences, and are self-reinforcing through an exchange of favours. Marcel Mauss (Mauss 1954) probably didn't develop his idea of society being based on exchange relationships ('the gift') from watching cliques of academics using review processes to insulate the profession from outsiders, promote their friends and isolate those who sought standards and measurable benefits and 'progress,' but probably he could have, using contemporary observations. As the number of academics has grown, and as social and cultural anthropology has become associated with political interests (feminism, ethnic groups), and as funding has become scarce and also tied to specific commercial or (elite) interests, one can certainly understand how short-term interests could have entered to corrupt review processes. Instead of providing the required 'discipline' to the discipline, they work to promote friends, punish competitors, show fear of and subservience to elite funders, erase previous work in the field regardless of its validity or value if it does not serve current political interests, and create obligations for future favours from colleagues or currying favour from superiors.

The incentive structure seems to be this:

- Journal editors and book editors use journals as ways to advance their careers and those of a small group of peers (whom they put on the boards, establish as reviewers and whose works are published) rather than to set standards for answering professional questions in the discipline. Once editors have a journal, the first goal for many of them seems to be to offer a place to publish their own work and that of their friends on theme issues that create the opportunity. The journals offer a way to establish patron-client networks and to reinforce 'disciple' networks of older scholars and young. One also finds a number of interlocking boards (similar to the issue of interlocking directorates of corporations that establish de-facto oligopoly power). Often, the only journals in a specific subfield have the same group of people on their boards, define the subfield and then effectively lock out any new entrants in ways that prevent the ethic and accountability that is part of the process of an academic discipline. In the most egregious case of one subfield, I noted four different journals edited by four different editors as the main author and the other three as members of the interlocking editorial boards. On their C.V.'s or references, each scholar listed several publications written jointly with one or more members of the same group, publishing materials in journals of the co-editors.
- As euphemisms for the lack of competence and the narrowness of the field, material outside of the clique may be discarded out of frustration or lack of ability and interest to review it. The remaining criteria, in absence of wider competence, is political, with the editor seeking political protection in a way that will assure no road blocks to career advancement. Today, the standard political vetting is a request for addition of footnotes of the work of the group comprising the journal.
- No social science or related discipline seems to have established any obligation of members to conduct reviews, to report on conflicts of interest or to license and register specific skills for the review process, though it would not be difficult to do so. Editors choose reviewers not from an existing list of objective specialists but either from reviewers suggested by the authors, themselves (potentially favouring authors in an established reinforcing network) or from works cited. This gives reviewers the chance to punish critics with the protection of

anonymity, to compete against colleagues, and to favour those in patron-client networks. It also offers opportunity, with the protection of anonymity, to promote the citation of reviewers' own works.

## **II. Findings from Research into Existing Codes and Approaches**

A search for codes of ethics, standards, accountability, and guidelines in review processes in anthropology and in other disciplines draws mostly blanks. Random spot check on journals and a search for review guidelines that assure competence and that direct reviewers to follow and justify disciplinary standards suggest that they do not exist. Nor is there any screening for conflicts of interest. At best, one can find some attention to the issues of research falsification and influences of funding agencies in the hard sciences and applied research. Overall, it appears that no written standards exist and that processes are arbitrary and easily open to corruption (perhaps by design).

In anthropology as a whole, the closest thing to procedural standardisation of any kind appears to be the *AAA Code of Ethics* (1998). It offers a human subjects statement for research ethics and some mention of conflicts of interest, though nothing directly applicable to review processes within the discipline itself. Even with various draft changes under consideration, there is still no process for enforcement or review within the discipline even among academics. The *Code* does not apply to professional work or to sanctioning of outside organisations (including book publishers or interdisciplinary journals) that pressure members to violate the standards (Lempert 1997).

The current editor of the *American Anthropologist* (since 2012) has introduced a set of six review questions for journal articles where there seems to have been no list. The idea of a template is a step forward given that few journals even go that far. Most book publishers ask reviewers to answer a list of questions and one can sometimes find these in journal review procedures such as the six questions now used by the *American Anthropologist*. Yet, none of these templates seeks to screen for competence of reviewers or conflicts of interest. The *American Anthropologist's* questions ask reviewers to comment on whether the research findings are 'novel' or inventive in their subjective judgment; whether they have 'general significance'; whether the articles cites and engages with 'scholarship' without defining it; whether the data and analysis support the claims; whether there is clear writing and whether the piece meets the journal's space limit. There is no written protocol for the selection, certification, or screening of reviewers. Reviewers are not asked to report conflicts of interest or provide any objective basis for their claims. There is no challenge procedure, nor is there any ethics oversight. In several cases, this author has directly challenged editors where there was direct evidence of conflicts of interest and biases as well as rejections with no substantive merit. The standard response is almost always, 'The reviewers are experts in the field and the journal relies on their judgment. Good luck finding another place to publish your work.' This is a purely subjective process at the discretion of the editor, following the subjective discretion to grant a review (denied to this article because of both length and content).

Indeed, the *American Anthropologist's* procedures are almost exactly like those that *Social Text* adapted after the Sokal hoax (shown on their website, 2015). Their categories of questions for reviewers ask whether the material is 'original'; methodologically 'sound'; 'ethical'; offers clear results that support conclusions; and offers correct references to previous work.

The one place that addresses the issue of ethics in reviews is the *Accountability in Research Journal* that promotes the *Committee on Publication Ethics Code of Conduct* (2011). This code only partially covers the many issues of ethics and standards. Moreover, it only offers guidance, no dispute resolution mechanisms, binding enforcement or legal obligations. The standards it offers are also subjective in some areas. For example, the *Code* 'champions freedom of expression' with a peer review process subject to 'standards' but without describing how freedom or standards are to be determined or protected. Though there is some attempt to recognize legal commitments, the standards are not set in accordance with actual contract law. For example, 'New editors should not overturn decisions to publish submissions made by the previous Editor unless serious problems are identified.' However, what is a 'serious problem'?

Similarly, 'Editors should not reverse decisions to accept submissions unless serious problems are identified.'

Though it deals with even fewer issues, outside of social behavioural fields, the *Geological Society of America's Ethical Guidelines for Publications* (2011) offers a definition of conflict of interest and references the scientific method. Nevertheless, it goes little beyond that.

In the natural sciences, specific disciplinary procedures for presenting and testing evidence and for certifying that reviewers also know these procedures is what makes those fields 'disciplines'. There are agreed standards of proof and testing. Training to the level of a Ph.D. or similar degree assures that reviewers have the same body of knowledge and skills that certify their competence. Some of the natural sciences have taken steps to try to codify their peer review processes in ways that protect against 'peer review failures' to spot abuses in use of data, or other misrepresentations in scientific work. There have been a number of discussions in the scientific community as to how to police the review process and protect against pressures introduced by funding agencies (Michaels 2006). The question on improving reviews in those fields, however, is generally limited to technical issues as to how the burdens of proof are determined (on proponents of ideas or on opponents?) and on technical standards of proof. Though there are some similar concerns of conflicts of interest and biases against new approaches, the sciences do not seem to have yet come up with clear procedures on how to address them.

In comparing how review processes work in the natural sciences (based on use of the scientific method and licensed skill sets) and in humanities, it may be possible to explain why social science peer review processes are so easily corrupted but also so readily treated as if they are legitimate. The hybrid mixture of procedures for screening social science and humanities articles invalidates both procedures through a logical design flaw. Rather than separate them for different types of articles, journals merge the two processes and distort the required quality tests without understanding the implications. There is little understanding that, to be more than just journalism, advocacy, or essay, scientific articles must meet scientific competency and methodological standards of proof and humanities articles must meet disciplinary standards. Such standards not only link them to scientific and disciplinary questions but offer structured ways of testing their implications, raising new questions, offering thought experiments, introducing ethical concerns, or providing cultural critique (Duncan 2013).

'Standards' used by journals in anthropology and other social sciences today reinforce internal biases against empirical social science and the scientific method but claim legitimacy at the very same time on the basis that they use scientific and professional review procedures. For articles that are pseudo-science and political or ideological, a functioning discipline would screen them out in two steps.

- First, it would demonstrate that the questions asked do not fit the framework of questions that are the basis of the discipline's steps for advancing human knowledge.
- Second, it would demonstrate that the procedures do not follow the scientific method for hypothesis testing.

Today, where anthropology and social sciences have now eliminated the idea that there is even a matrix of questions or 'laws' to be explained by empirical testing, there is no measure of what even constitutes a new or important question. With no certified standards to use in answering these questions, and with no testable models for predicting social reality, there is no competence test for reviewers. Nonsensical work is peer reviewed because colleagues judge it on whether the author 'does what he/she sets out to do' and whether it 'fits with previous work'. Case studies that take what is already known and simply apply it to a different context, or that focus on a sub-topic even more miniscule and inconsequential, are described as 'opening up a new field'. The processes of screening simply reinforce pseudo-science and protect ideology in the same way that church scholarship maintains an order.

With the introduction of scientific work using a rigorous method that would overturn existing ideological biases, the existing review procedure works to screen it out. Current review process assures that reviewers will include the very scholars (and often the most senior scholars) whom the author is criticizing, rather than seeking objective professionals who are expert in the methodology that the author is using. The screening of whether the work is 'methodologically sound' or 'ethical' by definition reports

back that it disagrees with the established ‘majority view’ that is the ‘standard’ or ‘norm’ in the field, rather than whether it is actually professionally competent. It is easy to screen out new work as ‘not significant’ and not engaging correctly with the existing ‘scholarship’ (i.e., not following doctrinal authority).

Moreover, there is no way of using legal or other outside mechanisms as a check against this kind of politicisation. In American law, courts often consider enforcement of customary dealings when there is a recognised standard of the ‘trade’. As an attorney, I consulted with colleagues who are experts on copyright law and contract to see if the courts recognize disciplines as having clear and enforceable standards to protect against politicisation of review processes. Though my belief is that there were clearly understood standards at least as of the 1980s, leading legal scholars today claim there is no recognised standard at all other than respecting the hierarchical authority of journal editors to act arbitrarily (!).

### **Results and Discussion:**

#### **The Apparent Disappearance of Procedural Standards and Its Implications for the ‘Discipline’**

Peer review processes today appear to offer no standards of accountability in social and cultural anthropology (or in related fields) that fit the idea of a ‘discipline’ promoting human advancement through scientific discovery or other measurable benefit. The recent opening up of the discipline of anthropology to multiple perspectives through selection of faculty members based on criteria of ‘representation’ has come with an elimination of disciplinary standards. Meanwhile, other social sciences have become increasingly doctrinaire in ways that impose discipline but have turned away from the goals and review procedures of social ‘science’.

Though social and cultural anthropologists operate today on the assumption that ‘social science’ was improved by the transition to a ‘moral model’ (Andrade, 1995) for a ‘re-invented’ (Hymes, 1985) humanities ‘discipline’, there is in fact no ‘moral model’ in anthropology or other social sciences and humanities because there is no set of moral standards or procedural protections in evaluation of work. If there were, anthropologists and those in other fields would gladly agree to hold themselves and their colleagues to legal standards, let alone moral ones, as well as to build a standardised ‘discipline’. In short, the ‘moral model’ has turned anthropology into (or has reproduced) the very thing the discipline was (and other social sciences and related disciplines were) being criticised for – the arbitrary use of ‘discipline’ to enforce forms of group self-interest and discrimination in absence of any real standard. The people and politics has simply changed to reflect certain under-represented groups, like women and certain minorities, with particular agendas (Duncan 2011; Lempert 2014b) but perhaps without any real ‘moral’ improvement that assures the discipline will be truly open to equal and fair competition of ideas and merit, rather than just new forms of politicisation.

Work that replicates and praises by offering case studies of what is accepted ideology, with multiple citations to the members of the group of ‘peer’ reviewers and with appropriate ‘ancestor worship’ (citations of its leaders) is favoured. There is less science because science would challenge the doctrines rather than recite them. There is less in new solutions and methodology.

Though *Social Text*’s editors and many scholars in the social sciences and humanities questioned Sokal’s ethics in exposing their lack of competence and their lack of fair procedures, it is difficult to find any enforceable standard of ethics in journals or book publishers today that puts the public and advancement of disciplines above personal interests of editors and reviewers.

What happened in anthropology is that, in its push to ‘broaden’ the field and bring in new questions, the idea of a doctorate certifying an inventory of skills, ethics, and understanding has disappeared. Certification with an M.A. or Ph.D. does not assure licensing or competence in anything that is standardised and fits a discipline. It simply suggests that one has paid money, shown up and taken a degree. The skills learned in anthropology departments today may be little more than glorified film journalism or language ability for work in a specific cultural setting. With no standard degree that reflects

the basis of a discipline, 'peer review' is unable to test the competence of a professional to apply specific skills. These two processes run together. Without any clear certification, it is difficult to claim objective, competent, and standards-based peer review.

In neighbouring disciplines, the situation is different but no better. One can argue that certification in other fields (such as economics, political science, and law) is training the wrong skills, the wrong ethics, and asking the wrong questions in a way that turns science into pseudoscience and undermines discipline (Lempert, 2018). Using disciplinary concepts of science and humanities could hold those disciplines to scrutiny and put them back on the track as social sciences and human intellectual pursuits rather than as theologies/ideologies and misapplied technologies.

To summarize the current situation, I have prepared the following table (Table 1), examining the current control processes that are at work in the basic social science disciplines. Note that while social and cultural anthropology has chosen to become 'anti-science' without any form of social scientific competency review, and no real discipline for works that are 'humanities' approaches de-linked from science, most of the other social sciences have review procedures that work to transform them into pseudo-sciences that claim to be scientific but are not. They actively screen out works that introduce objective variables and challenge biases embedded in the choice of disciplinary questions, methodologies, and conclusions.

**Table 1: Current Peer Review Control Systems, by Discipline, to Distract or Suppress Social Science Inquiry**

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Methodological Restrictions Rather than Free Choice of Methods to Answer Questions</i>	<i>Ideological Restrictions on the Questions/ Subjects and Objects of Study</i>	<i>Restrictions on or Rejection of Scientific Method of Prediction and Hypothesis Testing</i>	<i>Restrictions on Choices and Definitions of Variables</i>	<i>Political Restrictions on Acceptable Conclusions and Proposals/ Applications for Change</i>
<i>Holistic</i>					
Sociology (Societies)	Use of survey methodology to examine stratification more than processes of mass societies or modelling of societies. (E.g., little historic or contemporary modelling and comparison of ‘empires’ and change processes).	Goal is to promote uniformity in mass society rather than cultural diversity.	Use of scientific method but within the restrictions of policy outcomes for distribution or social action within specific industrial systems.	Historical and cross-cultural work is disfavoured with the focus on contemporary industrial society, established categories of stratification, and civil society or movement organisations.	The current discipline is really ‘distributive equity in industrial systems’. Conclusions must not challenge tenets of current civil society and service providing organisations on their values and benefits.
Anthropology (Cultures)	Ethnography/ journalistic case study method limits focus and comparisons as well as long-term change over time.	Restrictions on ‘studying up’ and dealing with challenges to elites and change, other than advocacy for specific interest groups.	Rejection of Scientific Method and solutions, replaced with philosophy and advocacy.	Holistic modelling, comparisons, and links to environment and genetics are replaced with ‘deconstruction’, micro-studies, and ‘arguments’.	Disfavouring of evolutionary, deterministic, predictive models. Schism in the profession between serving power for better assimilating minority cultures and for protecting cultural rights and opposing those who promote globalisation.

<i>Functional Sub-Set Disciplines</i>					
Sociology (Social)	(See above)	Focus on institutions, strata and 'equity'	(See above)	(See above)	(See above)
Economics	Mathematics and a priori behavioural assumptions (e.g., 'rational' choice, 'maximizing consumption' and 'individual utility') set the framework and data must then fit these assumptions rather than follow from empirical reality.	Limited to questions about 'growth'/ productivity and others that fit existing industrial economies and systems of trade and hegemony.	Only econometrics and some studies of psychology of individual economic behaviours follows empirical social science but within restrictions to protect existing systems. Little comparison of the full range of economic systems.	Variables are limited to those of 'policy tools' (e.g., interest rates) and impact on 'growth', 'efficiency', individual behaviours, rather than the actual study of economies in relation to demographics, environment, and other physical and social variables over time. Data must reinforce pre-determined assumptions and conclusions.	Favouring of globalisation and assimilation of cultures, industrialisation and urbanisation with increasing consumption. The current discipline is really 'production engineering'.
Political Science (Political)	Regression analysis and single variable studies across cultures rather than holistic modelling.	Restrictions on comparisons between contemporary powers (e.g. U.S.) and 'enemies' (e.g., Soviet Union, China, Nazi Germany) to model similarities.	Extract single variables from all cases and compare the cases without looking at the context and meaning.	Restrictions on use of natural variables and replacement with ideological definitions ('communism', 'democracy') and limited processes without their context ('free elections').	Reinforce the superiority of the U.S. political and social system or other powerful institutions and contemporary ideologies. Criticism cannot be in the form of real proposals (e.g., alternative constitutions) or empowerment (socialisation) but should focus on ideologies ('communism') to prevent change.

In visits to law schools in the early 1980s, Ralph Nader explained why his consumerist movement and publications had to be presented entirely outside of established legal scholarship even though he was a Harvard trained lawyer. He told law students that ‘you can’t have a new idea in law reviews’ (the journals of ‘legal scholarship’) ‘because you can’t footnote them’. When the test of a peer review becomes adherence to something already vetted in the profession by an authority, rather than by a test of competent use of methodology, there is no possibility for intellectual advancement. A discipline becomes doctrinal, imposing loyalty tests rather than competency tests. This is a form of censorship and self-censorship rather than the free and open testing of ideas through agreed procedures that constitute the essence of an academic discipline. Nor is it an approach that meets the real goals of inclusiveness and fairness that anthropologists claim are behind changes in the discipline.

Rather than have disciplinary standards that assure objective testing of social phenomena and presentation of ideas, we seem to have a system of pluralistic censorship and self-censorship. There is freedom but it depends on one’s ability to find peers and to start a publication, rather than reliance on objective established disciplinary procedures and standards.

Though academics present themselves as subject to higher standards of discipline than other professions, the current reality may be that they are, or have become, indistinguishable from other contemporary bureaucracies in the both the public and private sectors (of which academia is a mix). This means that academic disciplines now need the same anti-corruption solutions needed in other corrupt institutions.

Note, again, that the potential solution presented in the second part of this article is only one of many necessary steps, since corruption enters academic disciplines in many other ways. For example, many journals now offer publication and review for a fee. Money is already a factor that already influences the profession in several other channels (Lempert and Briggs, 1995) as are other kinds of political pressures (Price 2003).

## **Part Two. Solutions: Recreating Discipline:**

### **A Model Procedure for Reviews in Major Journals and Book Publishers:**

Although anthropology and other social science disciplines today have failed to establish clear standards to assure professionalism, the procedural solutions for improving reviews are relatively straightforward, following immediately from the problems and applying existing approaches from natural science review procedures and from law. Presenting solutions that confront short-term interests and appeal to long-term human needs is, indeed, the role and purpose of social sciences, though much of this ethic and vision has also been lost. Rather than just ‘deconstruct’ and leave the scattered pieces, one important role of a humanities side of a discipline is to reconstruct by offering visions of what is possible, arguing why they are beneficial, and then considering the possible pathways to achieving them as well as noting what could prevent them. This is in addition to offering predictive scenarios and seeking to establish a social science research agenda that is relevant to human needs and appropriate to the realities of human behaviours.

The proposal below calls for ‘self-discipline’ or voluntary acceptance as the first step towards returning to ‘discipline’ to anthropology, which must be done through adherence to clear procedures and professional and enforceable standards.

Since there are no specific existing Codes that represent agreement for review processes, this article presents the basic outlines of such codification as a first step in a challenge to journals and publishing houses to build their reputations on their procedural integrity rather than on false, short-term attributes like their abilities to attract funds and prestige. Below are some preliminary drafts of the tools and commitments that incorporate standard best practices for safeguards against corruption and for measuring

competence in five key categories. These approaches create responsibility at several levels: on the profession as a whole to commit to procedures and to their enforcement (1 and 5); on journal editors in the selection of reviewers and the way reviewers are used (2); on scholars submitting articles to think about their content and contribution and to use the abstract as a way to check if they meet professional standards (3); and on reviewers to recognize their competence and conflicts of interest (4).

They are as follows.

1. Standardisation of Review Procedures and Commitment to a Procedure that Reflects Competence and Screens Out Biases;
2. Policy on Selection of Reviewers and Screening for Conflicts of Interest and Competence;
3. Standardisation of Abstracts to Aid in the Process of Building Categories and Reviews in the Field (Beyond the Limitations of 'Key Words');
4. Review Template with Guidelines for Objective and Competent Peer Reviews; and
5. Enforcement of Policies and Due Process Commitments.

Note that these are procedural mechanisms to protect processes and their legitimacy. They are only indirect mechanisms to resolve debates over appropriate content, questions, and 'discipline' in social science discipline's teachings and ordering of knowledge. The goal here is not to restrict freedom of new journals to promote political goals in scholarship, especially where they seek to develop approaches not protected elsewhere in the discipline. It is simply to assure the accountability of journals and publishers and the transparency of their biases and competencies. Likewise, disciplines as a whole should be accountable to their principles as academic disciplines. Journals established to represent associations of disciplines or sub-disciplines must be subject to certain obligations for protecting those disciplines and sub-disciplines, as caretakers of the public interest. This approach holds them to their responsibility to demonstrate objectivity, fairness, openness, measurable standards and concern for the public rather than hide conflicts of interest, ideological biases and inadequacies.

**1. Standardisation of Review Procedures and Commitment to a Procedure that Reflects Competence and Screens out Biases**

There are different ways of protecting the integrity of the review process as well as encouraging minority approaches (to challenge orthodoxy). Journals and book publishers should clearly state how they are accountable to their missions and goals in these processes. Included below are statements for ‘triple blinding’ and ‘one-way blinded, transparent’ procedures. These are in clearest compliance with good governance procedures and do not seem to be used anywhere.

**Statement on Review Procedure**

This journal follows the review procedure of:

*Triple Blinding Peer Review*

All communications with the journal editors and by reviewers will be completely anonymous to ensure no favouritism in the screening or the review process. If this journal uses a preliminary screening and does not send all articles for review, the journal will place a full accounting of the reasons for non-review and will open a web page for interactive comments. Otherwise, all articles are reviewed using the review template shown for this journal. Reviewers and authors are blinded from each other. A description of procedures for reviewer selection, for challenges to reviewer competence and conflict of interest, and oaths to codes of conduct follows ... The journal also welcomes scholarship from anonymous authors and authors writing under pseudonyms since its focus is on ideas and the discipline, not on personal careers, conflicts, or interests.

OR

*Transparent and Accountable, One Way Blinded Peer Review*

Communications from authors will be anonymous but those of the journal will be open, signed, and accountable, with reviewers responsible for using our review template, reporting all conflicts of interest (subject to challenge by authors) and offering clear reasons for determinations based on specific methodological and competence standards (subject to challenge by authors through the following procedures ....).

OR

*Independent Review Process (for Independent Journals)*

This journal does not adhere to established review policies in the belief they restrict scholarship, hide self-interested decisions, and promote agendas of ... in the field of this journal’s publication. The purpose of this journal is to advance scholarship that has been disfavoured and that does the following ... In the interests of promoting scholarly integrity, competence, objectivity and discipline within this area, all pieces submitted to this journal must meet the following standards with use of the following objective procedures ...

AND [for all]

To protect the public interest and profession from corporate or other funding biases, the journal will investigate and disclose the funding sources and influences of any articles submitted for publication. The journal will find reviewers who will also protect the public interest and profession from any manipulation of the discipline’s agenda from funding biases. The journal will be open to ethics challenges through ....

## **2. Policy on Selection of Reviewers and Screening for Conflicts of Interest and Competence**

Policies like the one below can change the incentive to review from self-interest to professional duty and will professionalize reviewer selection.

### **Policy on Reviewer Selection and Obligations**

All members of the association or authors submitting to this journal are placed on a list of potential reviewers by various specialties. Every member will be obligated to serve in turn, as a faithful reviewer as a requirement of membership and affiliation with the association and/or this journal. All reviewers take an ethical oath to faithfully report on competence and skills level and answer competence questions in the review template.

## **3. Standardisation of Abstracts to Aid in the Process of Building Blocks, Categories and Reviews in the Field (Beyond the Limitations of ‘Key Words’)**

Professional, standardised abstracts can help bring discipline and clarity to the review process and to the discipline as a whole. They can also aid in the selection of competent reviewers by helping to develop categories of work and licensing of skills. Current approaches are haphazard and encourage the lack of discipline since they do not classify work by disciplinary approaches (or questions) and methodological categories. This is part of a larger problem. Universities are now failing to certify graduates in measurable skills within the social sciences and related humanities. Fields no longer appear to have a set of specific problems to address or categories (sub-fields) that serve to focus on sets of related problems. Many of the categories that did exist have broken down. The scheme below for standardizing abstracts is part of a process to recreate disciplinary structure where members demand study and certification of specific skills and to view disciplinary questions in a context of solvable problems rather than in terms of area studies, case studies, ideological or random labels.

An additional goal of a standardised abstract with a simple declaratory checklist to show that the purpose of the article complies with a disciplinary mission, is to expose work that is simply journalism and case study or scripture/church scholarship/ideology with secondary sources, and to distinguish work that may be essay, advocacy, literature review, or curricular material so that it can be judged in an appropriate category. Readers can test the process on the abstract for this article, which should reveal that the article is dealing with a meta-problem in the discipline (of standardisation) that is key to the process of the discipline, offers a new tool/methodology and can be applied to the discipline to improve it.

### **Standardised Article Abstract to Aid in Review Process and Placing Works in Disciplinary Context**

The abstract should include:

- The scholarly problem being addressed or tested;
- Why it is important to the discipline;
- Whether the contribution is a scientific hypothesis test or humanistic approach to further the science (culture critique; thought experiment; moral concerns; application)
- What is new (methodology, proof, tool);
- The methodologies used; and
- Potential applications and benefits of the work to humanity.

#### 4. Review Template with Guidelines for Objective and Competent Peer Reviews

Rather than being motivated by self-interest, the key to a competent and uncorrupted review is the professionalism of reviewers' judgments and the specific matching of skills with particular pieces of scholarship. No process can ensure full honesty, but the only way to move toward disciplinary integrity is to hold individuals accountable for their actions. The review template below seeks to do that.

It might be possible to transform this template into an indicator for use as a checklist to 'score' compliance by specific journals and their editors with standards of competence and protection against conflicts of interest. The purpose here, however, is to simply offer a template for reviews almost any journal or book publisher can use.

#### **Review Template with Reviewer Guidelines for Professional Journal Articles For Double (or Triple) Blind Review**

##### **Qualifications/Competence:**

What is your specific sub-fields expertise for the area(s) of review of this article that qualifies you as a 'peer reviewer' for that sub-field? (What specific certification and methodological expertise do you have that is specific to either the question the author is trying to solve or the specific methodology used to try to answer that question?) Does it apply to everything in the article or just certain parts? [This question requires the author and editor to identify the sub-fields in advance.]

Are there any methodologies or parts of the article that are unfamiliar to you?

What disciplines or sub-disciplines in the article are outside of your specific expertise (specific pages/parts of the article)?

##### **Conflicts of Interest and Biases:**

Might you have any direct conflicts of interest with the author? (Note that you are bound to reveal these as a professional ethics obligation.)

Do you have any indirect conflicts of interest that might be challenged by the author such that publication (or rejection) of this article might have a positive or negative impact on your career, colleagues and the subfield?

Do you have personal, political, ideological reactions to the piece when you read it? (Place them here and NOT in the part of the professional review since these are to be separated from analysis of the actual work)

Where does this piece fit in terms of the ideology of contemporary articles within and outside of the discipline, today?

##### **Social Impact:**

Does the work ask an important question for social betterment that will have benefit for the human prospect and how do you and your profession measure that benefit or lack of benefit?

Is the work broadly and easily applicable outside of a single case study/area such that scholars and/or practitioners will be able to use the tools/findings for application in several other areas?

Is there a specific technological application that leads to one of the moral and ethical goals of our field for human betterment?

Do you suspect that the framing of questions in this work may favour a corporatist agenda, or the agenda of a large organisation or institution (diverting attention from larger questions of public interest or self-censoring)? Or, do you suspect that this work is part of an effort to dominate a research agenda for narrow interests rather than the public interest?

**Professional Evaluation of the Work:**

*Context:*

Is there a clear research question or hypothesis posed that the author is trying to answer or new methodology being presented or tested? Is this a new and necessary field-expanding test, or simply 'new' because it replicates something already known in a new geographic area or sub-area?

How does the work expand on or test existing questions in the field? Is it clear in the article?

Is the work appropriately placed within the context of previous work that it might either: replicate, extend, or refute (and which label best describes the piece)? What works do you feel are missing that extends this mission of replication, extension or refutation?

Given potential conflict of interest, are you mentioning any specific works of yours/ your students/ your teachers or professional networks? If so, how do they specifically relate to this article, such that not mentioning them specifically disproves or disqualifies the central content of this article and therefore be an act of professional negligence/incompetence? How can you objectively back this criticism?

Are there too many citations, (e.g., for the purposes of political support or educating readers or using secondary sources as proof, in place of primary data and analysis)?

If you believe there are too few citations, is this for a political or educational reason (e.g., the piece offers a minority view; few readers know the subfield) that really is discretionary, or does the piece really need to distinguish its approach or conclusions from previous work to clarify where it fits?

Are citations used correctly?

*Content:*

Are the correct methodologies to test the research questions or hypotheses employed? What makes another methodology better, is it possible to use this methodology here and what is the objective basis used in the field for such determination?

Is the methodology used correctly? If not, how significant is the error and on what standard are you relying other than personal judgment?

Is evidence sourced correctly? Is there better, more objective sourcing, is it possible here and what is the objective basis for such determination?

Do the Results, Discussion, and Conclusions follow logically? Are there alternative explanations or tests? If so, how significant are the errors for this piece?

If the test is valid, are there political and ideological reasons that might cause other reviewers or readers to be uncomfortable and to seek to undermine the piece? How does or can the author deal with this?

What is your personal reaction to the specific conclusions?

**Writing Style:**

Do you find the style to be jargon free and simple/direct?

Are there other concerns for copy editing or writing?

**Recommendation:**

Publish as is/Publish subject to revisions-inclusions/Resubmit to the following professional specifications/Reject

- If you suggest rejecting this piece, what are the names of three other journals you believe are better suited for this piece and how do you suggest the author approach them
- If you suggest rejecting this piece for reasons of professional competence, what do you think has gone wrong such that this piece that does not meet professional standards? What implications might there be for the profession, if any, for where changes are needed?
- If you suggest publication of this piece, do you feel this piece reflects a minority view that a majority vote of reviewers in the discipline would be likely to reject? Does this piece deserve special support and tagging as something representing a minority faction or innovation in the discipline that the mainstream might otherwise seek to suppress or disregard?

What are your feelings on the possibility for a fair review of this piece if it is multi-disciplinary, new, or unusual? Is this a piece that might be difficult to review in this field? Should a piece like this be tagged as unusual and placed in a category of 'novel' or 'multi-disciplinary' pieces that are published for discussion and without the usual review process? Do you suggest any changes in the journal to deal with a piece like this one?

**5. Enforcement of the Model Review Procedure and Commitment to Due Process**

It is an openness to challenge which makes self-reported information reliable, and this lack of enforceability makes current review processes easily corrupted.

**Enforcement of Policies and Due Process:**

**Ethics Code**

[This journal subjects itself to ethics challenges for conflicts of interest and professionalism, open for adjudication by X body and open for legal challenge in X courts]

This journal (or book publisher) offers the following procedures for accountability to the profession and the public:

- Journal board members will receive and hear any complaints of ethical or editorial unfairness and offer an appeals process;
- The Journal will open itself up to a panel of scholars from outside fields not covered in the journal and members of interest groups to comment on the public value and biases of the journal;
- The Journal will offer X amount of its space (and/or an open website area) in the form of a Commentary and Letters to the Editor section, with independence from the journal editors, to print, hear and post alternative views on journal articles and policies.
- The Journal will welcome challenges to its policies before the ethics panel of its professional association and in the courts, including openness to lawsuits under the False Claims Act (if in the U.S. or applicable elsewhere) for use of public funds.

### **Conclusion: Pathways to Improvement and Practical Concerns**

Will this journal make a pledge to adopt these procedures or will it only open up academic discussion in a way that is co-dependent on problems and avoids solutions? What about the journals that the reader edits?

Using the proposed Review Template could potentially require twice the time of a current review, requiring reviewers to think through his/her own biases and to present them. These immediate costs are higher and many academics may be unwilling to spend the time given an incentive to have greater influence (conduct more reviews). Nevertheless, when seen from the perspective of either the discipline or society, the result of that additional time is higher standards of quality for the profession, a greater diversity of material with a wider presentation of views, and quicker time of acceptance for an unusual piece like this one.

There also appears to be a common fear among many academics today; that most standardisation is promoted by a corporatist, statist or other elite agenda with motives that are anti-intellectual (Strathern 2000). Although, by creating a united code of professionalism that binds actions and deters pressures, quality professional standards are the very thing that protects professionals against political pressures, the system of standards have so broken down today that there are fears at trying even to rebuild. Perhaps, behind the fear of politicisation, many academics also fear their replacement by those more competent, or the revelation that they actually promote the very politics they claim to oppose (agendas such as globalisation, colonialism, hierarchy and inequality, and suppression of ideas).

Indeed, a typical excuse among academics today that is used against efforts to establish procedures like those in this article is that procedures, themselves, as a whole are faulty and cannot be trusted (which, itself, makes a mockery of the idea of 'scholarship'). Their 'argument' is that political pressures and finance have so destroyed legitimacy that one cannot even think of relying on standardised or legal judgments, let alone seek to listen to the public. Yet, if scholars do not set standards based on the principles they would expect others to apply, they (we) are part of the problem.

The Sokal hoax suggests that much of social science today invites its own ridicule, and that in continuing to produce scholarship that is far removed from science, from community benefit, and indeed from reality, many disciplines including social and cultural anthropology are actively in the process of their own suicide without acknowledging or realizing it. This requires a wake-up call followed by action that both recognizes the discipline's traditions and reaffirms them.

It may be impossible to put the Humpty Dumpty of social anthropology and many related fields back together even with some attempts at standardisation and codification of process. The current lack of standardisation may have so politicised and fragmented the discipline and so distorted social sciences and humanities that any kind of rational consensus may be impossible. There are now scholars who, to protect their own work and position; have a definite interest in opposing any kind of discipline or standardisation.

However, creation of a 'discipline' is also a competitive process where standards advertise their own quality and results. Among those who are committed to a professional ethic beyond a political or financial one, it can partly work to replace a lack of standards.

One suggestion for recreating a social science of 'social and cultural' 'anthropology' would be is the creation of at least one journal of anthropology of living cultures. This journal would be committed to social science, with physical anthropologists and archaeologists on the board to help assure the commitment to social science of the contributions on living cultures, and with written procedures for reviews and related processes.

One suggestion for recreating a humanities of 'social and cultural' anthropology would be to assure there is at least one humanistic journal of anthropology of living cultures that would serve as culture critique with utopian visions, pathways, and measures of 'progress' and goals and with written procedures for reviews and related processes.

Both of these basic journals would enshrine a framework of the fundamental questions that the discipline is to solve. We must restart the discipline with a framework of the fundamental questions we

are trying to solve and see both the questions and the discipline in a global perspective, each with their relative importance. It is only by engaging in such a process that anthropology will not descend into work driven by journalistic access, places, or topics, with few questions and without any relative sense within an academic discipline.

Social and cultural anthropology's introductory textbooks should do this, but they fail to do so. Similarly, sub-field journals should do this for their sub-fields but they also do not. They simply establish a medium for publication without any real semblance of order.

Perhaps the discipline could return to an 'Annual Review of Anthropology' (or of 'Social Science') in a way that offers at the end of each year a systematisation of the questions anthropologists are asking (and not asking) and the progress in each as a way to mark achievement in the discipline that goes beyond pages produced and research projects completed.

Now, without written and enforceable procedures, when anything goes, when authority can be used for protecting one's cliques without any real accountability to a higher duty to human knowledge and to humanity, the field's challenge is simply to establish the basics of 'discipline' to assure that there is work worth funding and publishing at all.

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