The Cultural & Ethical World of Nuclear Weapons Scientists

Hugh Gusterson

Professor of Anthropology & Sociology

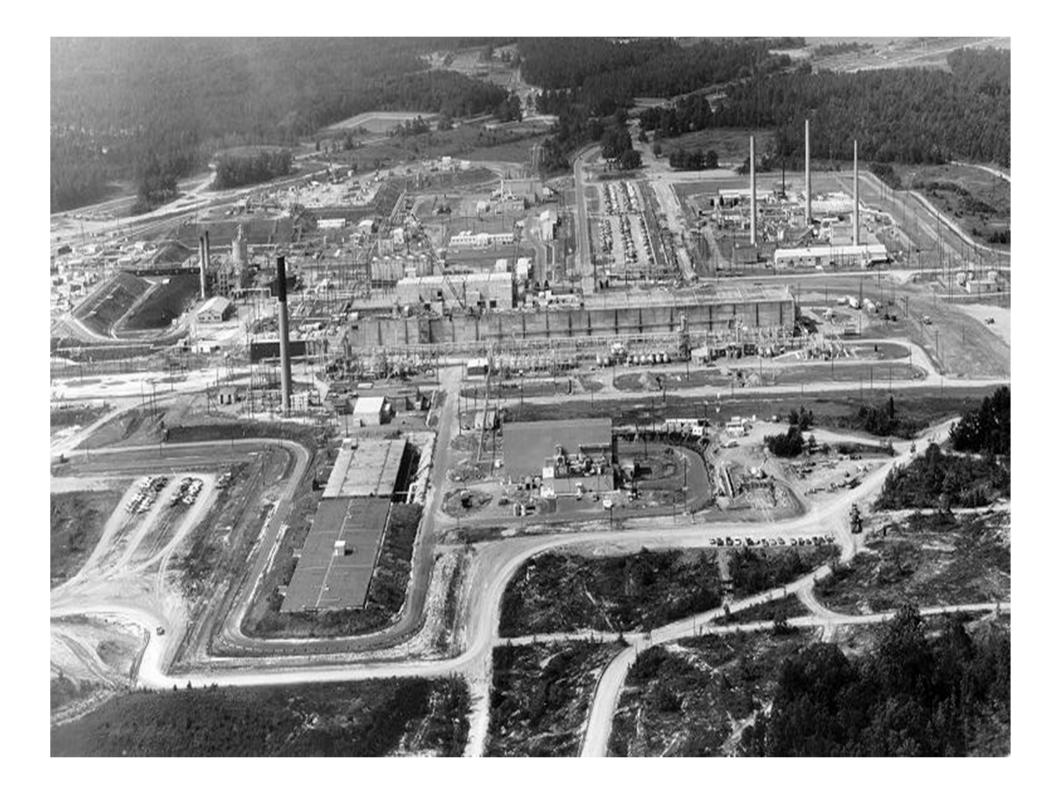
George Mason University

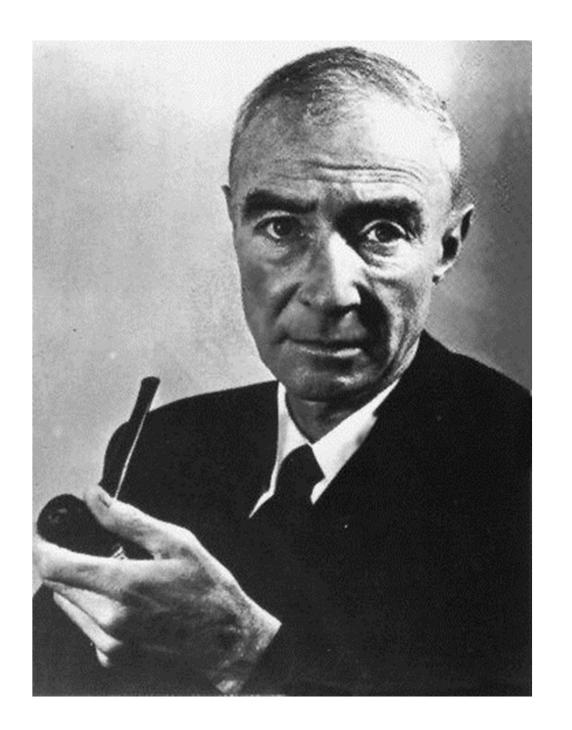
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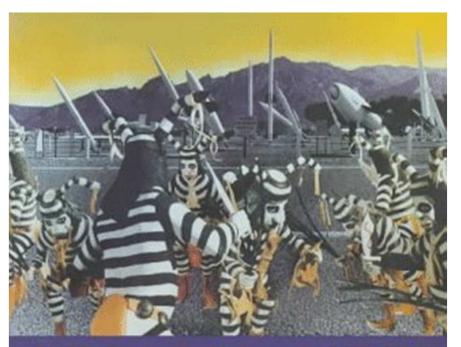












NUCLEAR RITES

A WEAPONS LABORATORY

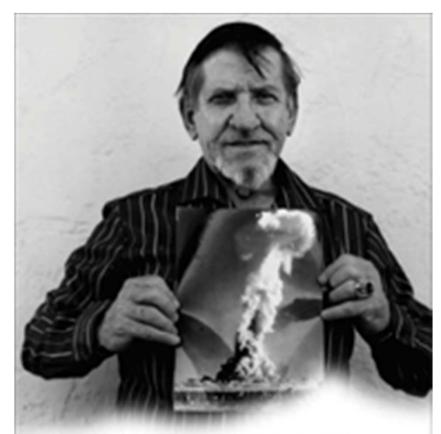
AT THE END OF THE

COLD WAR

HUGH GUSTERSON

"Reading this fascinating and fairly written book is the best way to understand the moral dilemma that has haunted the inventors of high explosives, from Afred Nobel to J. Robert Oppenheimse."

Rober Ripograft, Sim Familian Official



PEOPLE OF THE 80MB

HUGH GUSTERSON

The Question

 How do scientists come to feel they have a vocation to design weapons of mass destruction, and what is the relation of culture to that?



NOTICE

ALL VEHICLES AND CONTAINERS ENTERING OR LEAVING THIS AREA ARE SUBJECT TO SEARCH.

PROHIBITED ARTICLES

Prior Authorization is Needed for Admitting

- Dangerous weapons
- Explosives
- Other dangarous instrument or material likely to produce substantial injury or damage to persons or property (Title 10 Code of Federal Regulations § 860.4)

United States Department of Energy



Securities whiches and hand-comed thems may be inspected to assure compliance

No Trespassing

United States

Department Of Energy

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Los Alamos

LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY
OF THE LINVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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Polar: Political and Legal Anthropology

Review

Volume 20. Issue 1. May 1997 (Pages 114 - 119)

Studying Up Revisited:

Hugh Gusterson

Research methods

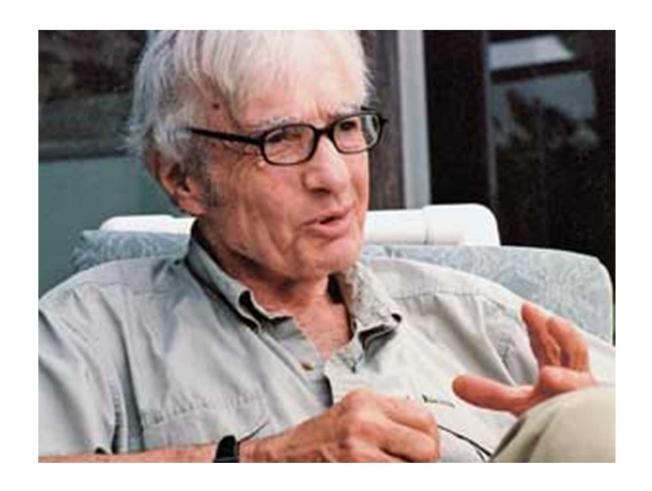
- Informant zero, snowball samples, diversity
- Life histories
- Roommates
- Church
- Baseball
- "deep hanging out" (James Clifford)
- Newspapers
- Activists

Elements of Weapons Scientists' Culture

- No political uniformity
- Euphemism
- Black humor
- Religion
- Rationality and the racial other
- Practices of secrecy
- Also: anti-authoritarian, high value on autonomy

Choosing the Lab

- Little on national security imperative
- Constrained options
- Salary
- Dislike of universities
- Resources
- Interesting work
- Interview: "getting their interest in the physics to outweigh their natural repugnance at the task."



Robert Jay Lifton

Author, Indefensible Weapons (1982), The Genocidal Mentality (1990), the Broken Connection (1983)

Ethics

- Lifton: Numbness and denial
- Little public discussion, but...
- "You're lucky you're talking to me"
- "The central axiom"
- Consequentialism versus deontology

Ethics (2)

- Fundamental belief weapons won't be used
 - With one exception
 - And get-out clauses
- Nuclear weapons MORE moral than conventional weapons
- Immoral to leave Americans undefended
- In a democracy...
- Weapons already exist, but can be safer

Local pastors

- Catholic and episcopalian misunderstood national church's position
- Presbyterian disagreed with national church
- Methodist cast peacemaking as refraining from judgment
- Evangelical doubted possibility of peace and focused on individual salvation

The End

• Questions?