This paper has evolved from four sources; in reverse chronological order, they are: (i) Several papers presented in a panel of the North American Association for the Study of Religion (NAASR), in 1999, which focused on the state of the history of religions in Germany. In particular, Hubert Seiwert's paper "Religious Studies and Political Discourses in Germany" (1999) described his role in advising the German government commission investigating the role of cults in contemporary Germany; (ii) A rather heated discussion between myself and a Dutch historian at the Satterthwaite Colloquium on African Religion and Ritual in which I publicly criticized him for the cavalier fashion in which he discussed the Casamance Secessionist Movement, ways that put members of the movement in potential danger (de Jong 1999); (iii) What I believe was an attempt by employees of the U.S. Department of State to recruit me into one of the intelligence services, in 1977, when I was a graduate student at Yale University; and finally, (iv) A long-standing awareness of the attempt by the United States and other governments to use academics as intelligence gatherers in areas where fieldwork is a common form of research.

All of these factors contribute toward what I perceive of as a growing insensitivity to the responsibilities of academics towards the communities they study. Since I began writing this paper, these issues have become more timely, given the recent accusations of unethical and harmful activities made against some anthropologists who have...
worked among the Yanomami and other communities of the Amazon rain forest.\(^3\) It is my contention that researchers must be fully aware of the potential uses of their publically presented research and they must seek to minimize any harmful consequences to the communities which are the objects of their study. Their responsibilities are particularly acute when they have conducted field research, lived in the communities which were the objects of study, established bonds of trust, and received information on the basis of their adoption into the community into which they were living. It gains greater importance when the government, either as a formal policy or through subtle forms of discrimination, works to diminish the place of the religions under study within a national culture.

Before returning to the four factors which brought me to write this paper, both at this point in my professional history and the history of my profession, let me situate my own research. I am a historian of religion, who has intermittently conducted field research on the history of an indigenous African religion, as well as Christianity and Islam, among the Diola of Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. I have conducted field research on ten different occasions in the Casamance region of southern Senegal, living in the Department of Oussouye, for a total of nearly four years.\(^4\) While Senegal is roughly eighty per cent Muslim, the remainder is split approximately on an even basis between Roman Catholics and followers of indigenous religions. The overwhelming majority of practitioners of indigenous religions are Diola, who constitute the largest community of traditionalists in the Senegambia region. Indeed, it is the continued vitality of this religion—referred to as the "awasena" path—that first interested me in Diola religious history. I have written a history of

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\(^3\) This controversy, while long-standing, has achieved new prominence with the announced publication of Patrick Tierney's new book, *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon* (2000a). The controversy is discussed in Miller 2000, Fluehr-Lobban 2000. (Ed. Note: see also the pre-publication excerpt from Tierney's book (2000b)).

\(^4\) Research was conducted initially through the support of a Wesleyan University summer study grant (1973) and a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship (1974-5, 1976) before I began graduate school. Dissertation research was conducted with the support of a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship and a Social Science Research Council Foreign Area Fellowship (1977-9). Post-Doctoral field research has been conducted with the support of the Ohio State University College of Humanities (1986, 1994), the state of Ohio (1987), the National Endowment for the Humanities (1996), and the American Philosophical Society (1997).