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From the Editor

TOM BOELLSTORFF
Editor-in-Chief

Anthropological Innovations

INTRODUCTION

I am honored to have been selected by the Committee on Scientific Communication of the American Anthropological Association as Editor-in-Chief for the next term of *American Anthropologist* (September 2008 to September 2012). Because I have served as Editor-in-Chief in an interim capacity since June 2007, this means that, barring some unforeseen circumstance, I will serve for a little over five years as Editor-in-Chief. I take this charge seriously and hope to follow in the footsteps of my predecessors by working to continually transform *American Anthropologist* so that it represents the American Anthropological Association—and the discipline of anthropology more generally—as effectively and broadly as possible.

As is usual for incoming Editors-in-Chief, I intend to make changes to *American Anthropologist* that reflect shifts in the discipline and the needs of anthropologists within and beyond the American Anthropological Association. Of course, not all these changes can be implemented immediately. A new cover design, for instance, is not slated to appear until at least March 2009 (volume 111, issue 1). However, it will be possible for me to implement a number of changes in the next few months. Below I outline some of these changes and how I hope they will contribute to the journal's mission. Before doing so, it seems appropriate that I explain what I see the purpose of *American Anthropologist* to be and also introduce myself to *American Anthropologist's* readers. I will close by acknowledging some of the people who have supported me in attaining the editorship of *American Anthropologist* and whose hard work helps ensure the journal's continued success.

A JOURNAL FOR ALL ANTHROPOLOGISTS

As the flagship journal of the American Anthropological Association, *American Anthropologist* works to present the best work from the full spectrum of anthropological research. It is imperative that *American Anthropologist* publish work from a wide range of conversations and subdisciplinary debates, and not be seen as beholden to the inevitably limited research interests of any one Editor-in-Chief. I have been surprised by the number of inquiries I have already

received asking “will you publish so-and-so kind of anthropology?” My answer to such questions is always “yes”: submit your manuscripts and let the review process run its course! I hesitate to provide a list because of the risk it will be seen as exhaustive and thus exclusionary, but it should be clear that all forms of anthropological research are welcome in *American Anthropologist*, including work from all subfields of anthropology (archaeology, biological anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and sociocultural anthropology); qualitative and quantitative approaches; humanistic approaches (including the broad range of work that sees itself as such) as well as scientific approaches (including the broad range of work that sees itself as such); evolutionary approaches; critical approaches; medical, legal, political, economic, and other such anthropologies; and so on. I wish to make it particularly clear that *American Anthropologist* welcomes manuscripts from practicing anthropologists as well as from those engaging in work that is in some sense “applied” or “public.”

American Anthropologist welcomes work that bridges subfields or speaks to the interstices of subfields but also recognizes that the vast majority of anthropological research lies squarely within one subfield. Additionally, *American Anthropologist* recognizes that often the best work in any subfield may not be immediately intelligible to anthropologists working in other subfields. A “lowest common denominator” approach that would require authors to frame research questions in a manner intelligible to all subfields is a near-impossible task, for which only a few counterexamples exist (the best-known being race, food, and climate). Anthropologists not invested in a four-field vision of the discipline should feel welcome to publish in *American Anthropologist*.

Rather than forcing interdisciplinary or intersubfield conversations at the level of research questions, *American Anthropologist* welcomes manuscripts that speak across subdisciplines but also those that originate within a single subdiscipline. In the latter case, we work through the editorial process to unpack subdiscipline-specific terminology and provide contextual information that will make manuscripts maximally intelligible to all readers, without requiring that authors alter their research questions,

analytical style, or writing voice. Ideally, *American Anthropologist* provides an opportunity for anthropologists to peruse a range of top-notch research; the journal can represent a venue for anthropologists to educate each other about the various “cutting edges” of the discipline.

AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST AND OTHER AAA JOURNALS

American Anthropologist is one of over twenty journals published under the auspices of the American Anthropological Association. It is unusual in that unlike every other journal (save *Anthropology News*), *American Anthropologist* is not published via a section (in the way that, for instance, the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* is published by the Society for Linguistic Anthropology). As Editor-in-Chief, I am strongly committed to furthering the idea that *American Anthropologist's* “section” is not just the membership of the entire AAA, but specifically these other AAA journals. In upcoming issues of *American Anthropologist* (and also on the *American Anthropologist* Virtual Campus [see below]), I will use *American Anthropologist* to promote other AAA journals. I am particularly interested in encouraging innovation in all AAA journals and also supporting smaller journals of which many AAA members may be unaware. My opinion is that increasing the circulation and readership of all AAA journals lies squarely within the mandate of *American Anthropologist* and benefits us all.

ABOUT MYSELF

At 38 years of age and having received my Ph.D. only in 2000, I am one of the youngest Editors-in-Chief in the history of *American Anthropologist*. I am a sociocultural and linguistic anthropologist, with substantial experience in medical anthropology, practicing anthropology, and science/technology studies. In addition to the work on sexuality and nationalism for which I am best known, I have been conducting research on HIV prevention in Indonesia for 15 years, helped found one of the largest HIV/AIDS organizations in Indonesia, and sit on the Advisory Board of that organization and one other large Indonesian HIV/AIDS organization. (Before beginning graduate school, I was Regional Coordinator at the Institute for Community Health Outreach, based in San Francisco.) I continue to conduct fieldwork in Indonesia as well as on virtual worlds.

The specific projects of any Editor-in-Chief can never represent even a small fraction of the range of contemporary anthropological research, but my background in multiple subdisciplines and fieldsites gives me the strongest possible footing from which to appreciate the diverse approaches that anthropologists bring to their work. I have published three books in the space of 30 months: *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia* (Princeton, October 2005), *A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer Studies, Indonesia* (Duke, May 2007), and *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human* (Princeton, May 2008). In addition to these books, I have published three

edited volumes and articles in journals including *American Anthropologist* itself (in 2005), *American Ethnologist*, *Cultural Anthropology*, and *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. I have also served as co-chair for the Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists (SOLGA). Given that we live in a historical moment in which open, legally sanctioned discrimination against sexual and gender minorities persists and is even on the increase in the United States and other parts of the world, it is not irrelevant to note the significance of an openly gay man becoming Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist*, a fact that reflects favorably on the commitments of anthropology to diversity and social justice.

DIVERSIFYING THE JOURNAL

I have moved to diversify the governance of *American Anthropologist*. I inherited a structure in which there was one Editor-in-Chief and an Editorial Board (as well as a few specialized editors, such as those responsible for managing the book review process). Historically, however, *American Anthropologist* had at least one Associate Editor (the first being J. R. Swanton, in 1910), and later Associate Editors were added for the four subfields of anthropology in the American tradition (archaeology, biological anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and sociocultural anthropology). Subfield-based Associate Editors were eliminated in 1990 (with volume 92, issue 3), and although there have been Associate Editors in the recent past, their purpose was not always clearly defined.

In this light I have created a system in which there are five Associate Editors for *American Anthropologist*. For a flagship journal I believe this added layer of editorial oversight will help ensure that manuscripts get the most comprehensive and informed reading possible. These Associate Editors represent archaeology, biological anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and sociocultural anthropology, as well as an Associate Editor for practicing anthropology. One could imagine structures with more Associate Editors (for instance, an Associate Editor for practicing anthropology for each subfield, or Associate Editors for fields like medical anthropology, visual anthropology, legal anthropology, and so on). I believe that the structure of five Associate Editors outlined above strikes the best balance in terms of being maximally broad and minimally cumbersome, and I hope that readers of *American Anthropologist* will support me in this decision. The five new Associate Editors for *American Anthropologist* are:

Archaeology: Carla M. Sinopoli (University of Michigan)

Biological: Agustín Fuentes (University of Notre Dame)

Linguistic: Michael Silverstein (University of Chicago)

Practicing: Barbara Rose Johnston (Center for Political Ecology)

Sociocultural: Barbara Yngvesson (Hampshire College)

Please join me in thanking these individuals for their willingness to share their expertise with *American Anthropologist*.

Beyond the Editor-in-Chief and the Associate Editors, the Editorial Board is extremely important to the management of the journal, because it is they who are primarily responsible for suggesting reviewers for manuscripts. I have selected a very broad range of anthropologists to represent the discipline; please join me in welcoming them as well.

DISSEMINATION AND ACCESS

I am in the process of moving *American Anthropologist* to an online submissions system. This will represent a significant advance over the current system, in which manuscripts are e-mailed (or mailed) to the *American Anthropologist* office. It will make the administrative work of managing the review process much easier and will also make the journal more accessible to potential contributors.

We are in the midst of a continuing and quite radical transformation in publishing, driven by a variety of factors but above all by the continuing rise and diversification of Internet-related technologies. As an anthropologist who researches these technologies, I am interested in their potential, particularly with regard to questions of open access and new forms and genres for disseminating anthropological research. At present I will work within the print and AnthroSource frameworks in which *American Anthropologist* currently operates, with only small innovations such as the possibility for a “print plus” option in which authors could post additions to the web-based versions of their research articles.

I am exploring other possibilities that might exist for dissemination and access of *American Anthropologist* in the light of ongoing technological changes. In particular, I have created the *American Anthropologist* Virtual Campus. This set of buildings is located on Anteater Island in the virtual world “Second Life,” with the kind support of the University of California, Irvine Libraries. I hope this virtual campus can provide *American Anthropologist* authors the chance to explore innovative possibilities for building on their publications, as well as furnish a means for supporting other AAA publications.

THANKS WITHOUT END

My ability to take on the burden of Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist* could not happen without the support of many individuals. The Dean of the School of Social Sciences at the University of California, Irvine, Barbara Anne Doshier, has been incredibly supportive and generous; this institutional support is critical to the success of a journal like *American Anthropologist*. Mayumi Shimose has continued in her position as Managing Editor and is absolutely indispensable to the success of this journal. Neha Vora, who began working in August of 2007 as Editorial Assistant for *Amer-*

ican Anthropologist, has made my job immeasurably easier. Below you will find brief welcome messages from Mayumi Shimose and Neha Vora. I am eternally grateful to Rosemary Joyce and Justin Richland, the Book Review Editors for *American Anthropologist*. Karl Heider, Visual Anthropology Review Editor, and Sydel Silverman, Obituary Editor, have continued in their positions, and I am thankful for their continued support. I express my thanks to every member of the outgoing Editorial Board for their support of me during the transition, and to the new Editorial Board for their willingness to participate in *American Anthropologist's* success.

The generosity and aid I have received only further renews my enthusiasm for anthropology, which I see as playing an important role in a broad range of conversations within and beyond the academy. Too often pigeonholed as old-fashioned or “traditional,” the best in anthropological inquiry lies at the forefront of a range of methodological, theoretical, and substantive debates. It provides a deeply interdisciplinary perspective and the ability to speak to rapidly shifting aspects of the human condition, while still addressing enduring themes of selfhood and society. Indeed, a striking feature of anthropological thinking across all subdisciplines and fields of inquiry is its aversion to sweeping generalizations and its interest in attending to both emergent phenomena and the historical forces that shape our present possibilities. The innovative power of anthropology is shaped by innovations within anthropology itself, and in regard to each of these, I look forward to the contribution *American Anthropologist* can make.

I thank you for your support and invite you to enjoy the journal. I hope you find in each issue something that speaks to debates and literatures with which you are familiar, and also something that at first glance lies across a significant methodological or substantive chasm but on closer inspection can provide some unexpected appreciation for differing modes of anthropological inquiry. Perhaps it is with reference to this sense of transcendence that Claude Lévi-Strauss spoke of the possibility of “grasping, during the brief intervals in which our species can bring itself to interrupt its hive-like activity, the essence of what it was and continues to be. . . in the brief glance, heavy with patience, serenity, and mutual forgiveness, that, through some involuntary understanding, one can sometimes exchange with a cat” (Lévi-Strauss 1973:414–415).

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