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FROM THE EDITOR

Editor, Writer, Teacher, Colleague

Tom Boellstorff
Editor-in-Chief

EDITING IN CONTEXT

No one, to my knowledge, goes to graduate school with the goal of becoming the editor of an anthropological journal. Those of us lucky enough to become an editor typically come to the work through twists and turns in the life course. Sometimes we have edited books or special issues of journals; in other cases, we plunged into editorships with little background at all, our enthusiasm standing in for experience.

Regardless of the path by which one becomes the editor of an anthropological journal, there is always a significant amount of learning on the job. Certainly in my case, given that I had never edited a journal prior to becoming editor-in-chief of *American Anthropologist*, my term has been a period of remarkable professional and personal growth. Of course, part of that growth has occurred through the work of editing itself: learning how to evaluate manuscripts, offer useful feedback to authors, manage production workflow, and collaborate with staff and an editorial board. However, few editors of academic journals have the luxury of being able to devote their full attention to editing. Our parallel work as writers, teachers, and colleagues intrudes on our editorial lives, no matter how generous the support we receive from our institutions. I have come to appreciate, first, that no matter how overwhelming the work of editing, one can find time for these other spheres of scholarly life and, second, that these other spheres of scholarly life actually help one be a better editor (and vice versa).

THE EDITOR AS WRITER

In my experience, the work of editorship makes conducting primary research difficult. I have been able to make two brief visits to Indonesia during my editorial tenure, but there has simply not been enough time to engage in fieldwork. My ethnographic research in virtual worlds does not require physical-world travel, but it does require time and I have not been able to conduct substantial fieldwork online during my editorial tenure either. This sacrifice in the ability to conduct research is unsurprising, a perfectly acceptable consequence of editorship.

However, I have been pleased to discover that I have been able to write scholarly pieces while an editor, either

based on previous fieldwork or in the form of theoretical reflections or discussions of methodology. In addition to several shorter pieces and three book chapters, I have published five peer-reviewed journal articles, two of them in well-known anthropological journals, *American Ethnologist* (2009) and *Cultural Anthropology* (2011). I am also completing a book on ethnographic methods for virtual worlds with three coauthors. Additionally, my "From the Editor" missives (like this one) that open each issue of *American Anthropologist* provide me an opportunity to reflect on the arts of editing and scholarly publication as well as on the discipline of anthropology itself.

Maintaining this level of productivity has not been easy, but in terms of my own personal growth, I have found it reassuring to realize that being an editor, even of a large and complex journal, need not mean that one's own scholarly writing come to a screeching halt. In addition, I like that even as I provide editorial advice to authors, I am receiving feedback from editors in regard to my own work. For instance, both my *AE* and *CA* manuscripts were originally rejected by the editors of those journals after blinded peer review and were ultimately accepted only after a round of revision and resubmission. The fact that I have been going through this process even as I "wear the hat" of an editor has made me a more well-rounded scholar and reminds me of the value of editorial work.

THE EDITOR AS TEACHER

I am extremely thankful that my dean and department have given me a 50 percent reduction in teaching duties during my editorial term; I see no way that I could do the work of editorship without it. Yet I am thankful as well that I do not have a 100 percent reduction; within reason, teaching undergraduate and graduate students has been helpful to me in my work for the journal. Aside from hiring some students as assistants and interns, I have become a better teacher in that I can now explain to students how journals work and how to improve one's own writing so as to increase the chance of getting published. I have also become a very efficient "power skimmer"; I can look at the draft of a student's piece of writing and quickly ascertain how the argument might be clarified and improved. I am also better able to locate

anthropological arguments in the discipline as a whole and relate to what might at first seem to be varying kinds of anthropological research. Given the controversy that erupted in December of 2010, the time at which I am writing this missive, over the (in my view, ill-advised) deletion of the word *science* from the “AAA Long-Range Plan,” relating to and valuing different genres of anthropological work is particularly important. (In a future “From the Editor,” I will discuss this controversy in more detail.)

THE EDITOR AS COLLEAGUE

Like the administrators at many research universities, those at my institution ostensibly assume that faculty divide their time in a roughly equal manner between research, teaching, and service. In reality, service work does take up a significant amount of time yet receives little attention in terms of assessment and promotion. Service work takes place in the background of academic life, from the morning round of e-mails to in-person meetings on campus and, perhaps above all, the seemingly endless preparation of documents, from letters of recommendation to teaching plans to proposals for pedagogical initiatives.

It is because service work is so often unsung and unrewarded that I wish to emphasize how I have gained a great deal from my continuing work for my department, school, and institution. It may seem odd to see benefit in the service work that can, of course, be an impediment and irritation. Yet, from organizing workshops to heading tenure committees, serving as a core faculty member on an interdisciplinary Ph.D. program, and helping to craft a initiative on medicine, science, and technology, my service work has enriched my experience of editorship by placing it in the larger social and political environment of university life. Given the financial crisis that still threatens the entire spectrum of higher education in the United States, and certainly public institutions like my own University of California system, struggling as best I can to support my institution helps locate my editorship in a political economy of pedagogy, a debate over the future of higher education that—it is no hyperbole to state—will have far-reaching consequences for the unfolding human journey.

IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue of *American Anthropologist*, we feature a third set of “The Year in Review” articles, which in this case cover the trends, publications, and debates within five subfields of anthropology during the calendar year 2010: archaeology, biological anthropology, linguistics, public anthropology, and sociocultural anthropology. As in the past, the authors of these articles faced strict word limits; their task was not to be comprehensive but to provide a provocative overview. I thank once again the associate editors of *AA*, who selected and advised the scholars who have crafted this fascinating set of articles, as well as those authors themselves.

In addition to these “Year in Review” articles, this issue of *AA* contains five outstanding research articles. These articles were not submitted together as an “In Focus” section; they were simply the five accepted articles at the end of the production process. Yet these five articles strikingly share a set of themes concerning intersections of political economy and history with domains like ecology and gender. Such serendipitous resonances speak to emerging frontiers in anthropological inquiry that draw on enduring domains of interest and debate. In her article “Conceiving Kikapitapitmok: The Political Landscape of Anishinaabe Anti-Clearcutting Activism,” Anna J. Willow examines both how members of the Grassy Narrows First Nation in Canada understand their relation to place in the context of activism and “how anthropologists receive and represent the relationships between indigenous peoples and the environments in which they live and which they often struggle to protect.” Ann Marie Leshkovich, in “Making Class and Gender: (Market) Socialist Enframing of Traders in Ho Chi Minh City,” explores intersections of socialism and market entrepreneurship with regard to female traders in Vietnam. Her analysis reveals complex reconfigurations of economics and womanhood that are nonetheless shaped by traditional understandings of gender, markets, and the state. In “When the Wealthy Are Poor: Poverty Explanations and Local Perspectives in Southwestern Madagascar,” Bram Tucker, Amber Huff, Tsiazonera, Jaovola Tombo, Patricia Hajaso, and Charlotte Nagnisaha show how an ethnographically informed, localized understanding of what in English we term *poverty* is crucial not only for understanding culturally contextual corruptions of wealth and inequality but also in developing responses to that inequality. In “From Golden Frontier to Global City: Shifting Forms of Belonging, ‘Freedom,’ and Governance among Indian Businessmen in Dubai,” Neha Vora links contemporary forms of globalization and economic accumulation in Dubai with long-standing forms of Indian Ocean cosmopolitanism that include (but are not reducible to) networks of Indian merchants in the region. These Indian merchants are excluded from formal citizenship (and thus most forms of direct political participation) yet in some ways “enjoy forms of moveable entitlement, effectively belonging more than formal citizens.” Dana Lepofsky and Jennifer Kahn, in their article “Cultivating an Ecological and Social Balance: Elite Demands and Commoner Knowledge in Ancient Ma’ohi Agriculture, Society Islands,” plunge into well-established anthropological debates “about the relationships of subsistence-based indigenous peoples with their environments,” employing archaeological and ethnohistorical data to develop a “middle ground that recognizes both the complex mix of actors involved in a production system and the diverse data that can influence interpretations of that system.”

This issue of *AA* features a number of excellent visual anthropology, public anthropology, and book reviews. Among the book reviews is my review essay of S. Ann

Dunham's *Surviving against the Odds: Village Industry in Indonesia*. I was asked by the book review editors to review this book by the mother of Barack Obama, and I was glad to do so. As a fellow scholar of the archipelago, it was fascinating for me to be able to engage with Dunham's deep understanding of Indonesia, reflected in her careful ethnographic work.

This issue also includes obituaries of Carol Laderman and Olivia Harris. In her 1997 *AA* article "The Limits of Magic," Laderman paid close ethnographic attention to Cik Su, a traditional Malay healer, in the context of rural–urban dynamics and shifting beliefs about disease and healing (Laderman 1997). Speaking personally, I would note that *Taming the Wind of Desire* (Laderman 1991), the monograph in which Laderman delved most deeply into these issues, was one of the first books on Southeast Asia I read in graduate school, and it helped me develop my interest in HIV/AIDS in Indonesia. I would note as well that while Olivia Harris was well-known for her work in Bolivia, she was also an incisive feminist theorist. This year, while teaching one part of my department's yearlong graduate course on the history of anthropological theory, I will once again use the article she wrote in 1981 with Kate Young, a classic piece in feminist anthropology (Harris and Young 1981). The work appearing in this issue of *AA* shares the compelling integration of data

and theory that characterized the research of both Laderman and Harris.

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