

about 200,000 trees that existed in Merida before the hurricane, some 40,000 were destroyed. I was surprised to hear people tell me the exact age of the trees they had lost, and to see them mourn as if they had lost a friend. One of my students, whose house had collapsed the night of the hurricane told me that the worst was the loss of the tree her family had looked after for the last 103 years. A neighbor told me that in the rented house where she lives they lost an 86-year-old tree. I learned that people in Merida celebrate their lives and relationships by planting and caring for trees.

A third lesson, often written about by disaster anthropologists, has to do with social inequality. The houses in northern Merida suffered only minor damages, compared with those in southern Merida and the surrounding countryside. Merida's north was provided with water and electricity within a week after the hurricane. In southern Merida and outside the city, many houses were destroyed partially or in full, and many months may pass before running water, electricity and communications are restored. It is poor people, as always, who are paying for the brunt of this disaster.

Articles, news, comments and photos that could be of interest to our readers are welcome. Please contact me at: facultad de antropología, universidad autónoma de Yucatán, Calle 76 #455-LL, Merida, Yucatan, Mexico; tel and fax [52]999/925-4523; gvargas@webtelmex.net.mx or gvcetina@tunku.uady.mx.

Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists

BARB WEST, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Homophobic Fields of Inquiry: Studying Youth Sexualities in the Rural US

By Mary L Gray (UC-San Diego)

The University Extension's local Homemaker's Club in Grayson County, KY, recently hosted a forum titled "Everything You Ever Wanted to Ask about Gay Teens." The club asked me to talk about my research examining the experiences of gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-identifying (LGBT) young people living in rural Kentucky, and what support and information youth questioning their sexuality or gender identity might find in the state.

At the end of the forum, I spoke with a young person who referred to himself as "the only out gay person" at his high school (he was quick to add that he certainly was "not the only gay kid there"). As Darin and I talked, a woman broke into the conversation to invite Darin to their church. She then shifted her attention toward me. "I bet you'll be happy to go back there [California] when you're finished with your project." I defensively answered that I wasn't sure when I'd be back to California. "I'm enjoying the time here with my partner's family, our two nephews, other relatives. . . ." And without hesi-

tation, she added, "And promoting your lifestyle." With that, she turned back toward Darin, smiled kindly, and walked away before anything clever made it out my mouth. As witty responses spooled through my head, it struck me that there was nothing I could say that would justify my research to this woman. I was a danger to her and her community precisely because I lent a scientific validation to sexualities and genders she considered deviant and sinful.

Many anthropologists doing advocacy work deal with personal attacks paralleling this one. Researchers studying sexuality and gender, however, also must contend with institutional and internalized homophobia that structures our projects. The presumptions and questions posed by the Grayson County citizen were not terribly different from ones I heard before I entered the field. Let me illustrate by briefly discussing difficulties I encountered with my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and in finding "acceptable" places to do ethnographic interviews.

One aim of my project was to address the need for a clearer picture of how youth politically organize around LGBT identities in their teen years. Federal IRB guidelines require parental consent when the research presents anything beyond a "minimal risk" to youth involved. Because I was primarily interested in LGBT youth's political organizing efforts, I naively thought my research could be conducted without formal written consent forms. After an exasperating talk with an IRB program assistant, I was told that any discussion dealing with sexuality was "too sensitive" to be exempted from requirements of parental consent. What frustrated me the most was the utilitarian need to accept the imposition of an institutional frame that made sexuality, specifically my sexual identity, a "risk"; something illicit, improper and potentially illegal.

Although I was able to successfully argue for waiver of parental consent, I inevitably stumbled upon another common stereotype. As someone talking with youth about queer sexual and gender identities, I was expected to safeguard against giving the appearance that I was "in any way influencing youth in their opinions about LGBT issues." It was difficult not to read this request as veiled concern that I might give the perception I was "recruiting" or that youth talking about sexuality could lead them to be sexually active. Ironically, I have internalized this panic when assessing "appropriate" places to conduct interviews.

Meeting in the local diner, fast-food restaurant or Wal-Mart where these youth usually come together compromises the separation they keep between marginal and ambiguous queer spaces and explicit LGBT identities. Lately, I've found myself relying on public parks to conduct my interviews. The irony here to me is I use these public spaces in the absence of any publicly or privately funded spaces where youth can have these conversations away from their homes. For some time I fretted that perhaps meeting these youth on my own in these parks would "look bad." "But, to whom?" I pondered. And, "As a

queer researcher researching queerness, what were my options?"

As Esther Newton has suggested, the Judeo-Christian conservatism that pervades our society ties our own discipline to a rigid silence about sex, and by extension, the complicated details behind constructions of sexualities and genders. Researchers studying these complications must take on the added responsibility of scrutinizing the moral currents that permeate our field sites, our institutions and our own psyches.

To join the SOLGA listserv, please send an email with "Subscribe Solga" in the body to listserv@american.edu. If you have a fieldwork story of your own to tell, contact me at bwest@uop.edu.

Society for Linguistic Anthropology

JAMES STANLAW AND MARK PETERSON,
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Is "Like" Liable to be a Liability in Language?

Anyone on any linguistics list knows that "like" is the totally cool "word du jour" of scholarly discussion these days. Part of this is no doubt because of attempts by an aging professorate to understand the nuances of their students' conversations ("Like, did you really mean the paper had to have five references?" which I heard just last week). Credit must also be given to Temple U English professor Muffy E A Seigel, who fanned the fires with an article in the *Journal of Semantics* last Aug. She argued that, among other things, the appearance of "like" in a piece of discourse suggests a potential mismatch between referential words and ostensive meanings (hence, my student's use of the term in the above sentence when it apparently was inconceivable to her that I would actually ask for such a long bibliography).

While her paper is technical formal semantics, Seigel also has struck an appealing chord in the chorus of the popular media. She appeared on a five-minute segment of National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" last Sept, and also has been covered in several AP syndications, the *Washington Post*, and MSNBC News. As she explained in her NPR interview with Alex Chadwick, "like" is, well . . . like no other morpheme in the English language: "So if you say, 'She has, like, six brothers,' you are really saying she has six brothers, but, 'I'm giving a little warning that I'm not completely sure about the number.'" This is different from the case of using "about," where somebody can explicitly disagree with you.

But even more intriguing have been some of the portrayals of her work in the popular press. Titles such as "Like, Wow, Linguist Defends 'Like,'" or "Teen Talk: What Does it, Like, Really Mean?"—with phrases such as "the crutch of teenagers" or "the bane of language purists"—obviously carry both an ironic subtext and ideological component.



Interestingly, some of these same issues have been addressed by "lay linguists" (for lack of a better term) on some of the more cerebral websites and newsgroups. For example, postings on the BBC's "h2g2 Discussion Message Board" a year ago suggested that American teenagers are not being less linguistically precise in their speech, just less assertive (that is, "like" is not an "um" word but simply a term that means "exactly how it is technically defined: similar to"). An interesting example of the debate between British and Americans on the merits of "like" is seen in the dissection of the following dialogues. The supposedly British-English version of the story was posted as follows:

"When he asked me to leave I thought 'There is no way I am doing that,' but then he took out a gun and said he was going to count to 10! So I just shouted at Richard to finish his drink and we immediately left."

The allegedly American version would go something like this:

"So he, like, asked me to, like, leave, and I was, like, 'No way, man,' but he had, like, a gun he took out and he was, like, 'I'm gonna count to 10,' and I was, like, 'Finish your drink Richard,' and we, like, left man."

While Britons were annoyed by the meaninglessness of "like" in the above sentence—and wanted to limit its use exclusively to either "introduce similes or express affection"—many Americans felt that "like" here was used in many creative ways "to indicate, variously, contempt, indecision and opposition to the ideas expressed." But some dismissed such responses, saying that "linguistic relativism—i.e., the idea that language shapes us, and not the other way around—was thoroughly disproved in about 1960 [by] Chomsky, Pinker [et al.]." I am tempted to respond, as one of my California students might, and say "Yeah, like, fer sure," but at this point I am not certain if that would be a statement of support or refutation.

More on "like," as well as a bibliography and citations for the sources quoted above, can be found under "Anthropology News" at <http://lilt.ilstu.edu/soa>. Please send your comments, contributions, news and announcements to SLA Contributing Editors Jim Stanlaw (stanlaw@ilstu.edu) or Mark Peterson (peterson@aucegypt.edu).

Society for Medical Anthropology

NANCY VUCKOVIC AND JANELLE TAYLOR,
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Thanks to all who supported the SMA-sponsored events at the 2002 AAA Annual Meeting in Nov. While thoughts of the meeting are still fresh, it's a good time to begin thinking about the type of sessions you'd like to see at next year's meeting. Suggestions can be forwarded to me or sent to members of the SMA Board. You can find their contact information on the new SMA website (www.medanthro.net).

Human Rights—Haitians Living in the Bateye Communities of the Dominican Republic

By Lara Tabac (*International Planned Parenthood Federation/WHR Inc*)

Sociopolitical unrest and poverty converge in Haiti to a degree unparalleled in the Western Hemisphere. As Haiti struggles to find internal stability, the ongoing situation of turmoil—evidenced by the inability of the state to supply basic services such as running/potable water, a civil protection force and health care—means that 80% the population lives in absolute poverty, forcing many to look for havens beyond the borders of Haiti.

No country feels this pressure, or has a more ambivalent relationship to Haiti, than Haiti's neighbor to the east—the Dominican Republic (DR), which shares the island of Hispaniola. In the early 1900s, Haitians were brought to the DR to harvest cane and expected to return to Haiti during the "dead time." Haitians were confined to communities, called *bateyes*, which were initially conceived of as seasonal housing, but have in fact become permanent housing and zones of cultural reference for a stable population of first- and second-generation Dominco-Haitians (estimated to be between 300,000 to 1,000,000), most of whom speak Spanish and have no family in Haiti. The conditions in the *bateyes* mirror those found in the poorest slums of Haiti. In the DR, Haitians live in a Catch-22 limbo—invited/necessary/permanent, yet expelled/reviled/temporary.

Dominico-Haitians are not afforded the right to citizenship and therefore cannot access the education, public health or legal employment systems. With the fall of the cane industry in the DR, Dominico-Haitians now are working in other agricultural sectors, as well as cane, and still remain a critical source of low-paid labor in the underground economy, construction and domestic work. In none of these endeavors are they afforded the most basic protection from exploitation.

During a recent visit, I was told that it often is construction bosses who call the immigration authorities when a construction project is finished so that the Haitian workers will get deported rather than paid. Deportation remains a constant threat for Dominico-Haitians and any black person in the DR. (The army has been known to round up people based solely on the color of their skin, without asking for any sort of documentation.)

The illegal status of Dominco-Haitians in the DR and the racism and "anti-Haitianism" that defines public discourse is an obstacle for local NGOs who work with this group. At present, there are several small community-based organizations (CBOs) working with this population that tend to fall below the radar of the Dominican authorities, who de facto prohibit service delivery to Haitians. In theory, these CBOs offer health, legal, educational and micro-enterprise development services for *bateye* residents. In practice, these groups, which provide linkages to the out-

side world and the international donor community, participate in a much wider range of support services on an emergency basis.

The need for human rights—legal access to state services and freedom from racism—for Dominico-Haitians in the DR is stark. As an anthropologist and program designer, I am working with NGOs to create collaborative networks with CBOs to provide nested sexual and reproductive health services that are linked to other necessary services. The effort is only in its infancy, and funding is difficult to secure, but hopefully a larger movement is starting.

Please send your comments, contributions, news and announcements to SMA Contributing Editors Nancy Vuckovic (nancy.vuckovic@kpchr.org) or Janelle Taylor (jtaylor@u.washington.edu).

Society for Psychological Anthropology

REBECCA J LESTER, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

SPA Biennial Meeting

The next biennial meeting of the SPA (www.aaanet.org/spa/biennial03.htm) is scheduled for Apr 10-13, 2003, at the Catamaran Hotel in San Diego, CA. The theme is "Reaching In: Conversations between Psychological and Cultural Anthropology." In addition to hosting scholarly sessions and special events, this meeting marks the 25th anniversary of the SPA. We hope you will plan to participate in this special occasion.

A *presidential forum* will offer a keynote presentation by Sherry Ortner titled "Serious Games," with invited responses and commentary by Jean Briggs and Jean Lave.

Lifetime achievement awards will be presented to Walter Goldschmidt and Theodore Schwartz for their contributions to the origins of the SPA and its journal *Ethos*.

Proposals for organized sessions, papers and posters are invited. The agenda allows space for 10 three-hour sessions of organized panels and volunteered papers, as well as a poster session. Ideas for sessions that make creative use of meeting time to promote discussion are particularly welcome. Contributions from student members and panels including student participants are also encouraged.

Deadline for session, paper and poster proposals is Dec 2, 2002. Submit via email to SPA President Geoffrey White at white@hawaii.edu. Abstracts should be no more than one page in length (session proposals should include abstracts for the session as well as for individual papers). Those who submit proposals will be notified by Jan 1, 2003.

New Centers at UCLA

The Center for Behavior, Evolution and Culture (BEC) unites scholars exploring the connections among