

these topics and further ideas for the next AAA Annual Meeting.

Please send any comments, suggestions, ideas and photos for future columns to Hortensia Caballero-Arias at Centro de Antropología, IVIC, Carretera Panamericana Km 11, Caracas 1020-A, Apartado Postal 21827, Venezuela (hcaballe@ivic.ve).

Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists

DAVID L R HOUSTON, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Award Night at the AAA Annual Meeting

The Ruth Benedict prize this year found three different books to honor: *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*, by David Valentine; *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora*, by Gloria Wekker; and an edited volume, *Women's Sexualities and Masculinities in a Globalizing Asia*, by Saskia Wieringa, Evelyn Blackwood and Abha Bhaiya. Needless to say, it was a productive year! A brief note about each follows.

David Valentine kindly sent along his reflection on the award:

Receiving the Benedict prize for my book is a great honor. But being able to write "my book" itself obscures the reasons for my gratitude, as SOLGA and its many members were those who provided the institutional context, the friendship and the mentorship that enabled its production. There is a double sense in which this is true, though: on the one hand, our "ancestors" (who all still look fabulous!) fought the fights that allowed me, as a young anthropologist, to undertake my work with the certainty that there was an institutional context in which to present it; there is no way to quantify that support. On the other hand, the very security of having that space gave me the opportunity in *Imagining Transgender* to query some of the basic presumptions of gendered and sexual identity that underpin SOLGA's raison d'être. "My book" feels like a shadowing of this fundamental contradiction, but a contradiction that (in a contradictory sort of way) keeps us together because we are also able to talk about it. It is the very vitality of SOLGA members' ongoing discussions that enabled me to write as I did, and the Benedict prize is, I think, recognition not simply of the object my book has become, but of the strength of the Society and the work done by its members. So, thank you!

At our annual business meeting, Gloria Wekker spoke to a very receptive audience. Her work struck many as groundbreaking—the politics of sexuality in a place far removed from the usual paths we trek in our work. That she was there, accepting the award, spoke volumes to LGBTQ scholarship and the progress we have made over the past 20 years. Evelyn Blackwood accepted the award for the edited volume, as both of her coauthors were regrettably absent. She has a long history of thorough,

scholarly research, appreciated by many at the meeting. The wonderful sense of both past and present research appearing on the same stage at the same meeting was timely, particularly given the nature of the later discussion.

We applaud these authors and their efforts, and encourage another round of excellence for next year's Benedict prize.

What's in a Name?

One of the challenges facing the LGBTQ "community" is coherence. All of those letters are more than a series of characters, though we may all be such. Indeed, the whole matter of "who we are" took on a life of its own on the listserv, and that passionate discussion was then brought to our annual meeting in an effort to build both a larger, stronger group, and to develop a healthy sense of introspection. What is in a name? How do we honor the past and include the present?

The results are not in yet (despite those early caucuses). What we do have is a good working group, a volunteered cross section of SOLGA members who are already engaged in a process that will consider the ways in which we reach out to others and ensure a balanced representation on our board. It is impressive that, despite the sometimes-heated commentary that appeared on the listserv before this meeting, a tone of respect and civility predominated in a large group discussion. This bodes well for us, and speaks to the manner and integrity with which we are able to consider a difficult topic.

Change is rarely easy. It is often about rebuilding the airplane in midflight. This kind of balancing act requires sensitivity, mutual respect and the ability to listen—really listen—to what others are saying. After the members of the task force have simmered their collective ideas about this and brought it to the entire membership, it will be instructive to look back at this moment and carry forward the same levels of civility and care. Please get involved in this important conversation as it matures.

Join us. SOLGA wants you! Visit www.solga.org—news, mentors, listserv and more. Please send comments, suggestions and ideas for columns or just say "hi" to David Houston (dlrh+an@uvm.edu).

Society for Linguistic Anthropology

JAMES STANLAW AND MARK PETERSON,
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

"What We Mean When We Say: An Explanation of Estimative Language": Linguistic Surprises from the Director of National Intelligence

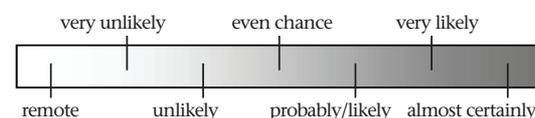
By James Stanlaw (Illinois State U)

Aside from courageously telling us which

celebrity is not wearing underwear at the moment, the big thing in the news this week (the first in Dec) has been the release of another National Intelligence Estimate from the Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell. This report, *Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities* (www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf), is controversial because it suggests that both the ability and the intent of Iran to acquire nuclear weapons have apparently been exaggerated by the Bush administration. As we have pointed out here in previous columns (eg, Apr 2007), these so-called NIEs are often treasure troves of governmental linguistic wisdom and knowledge. This one is especially interesting.

By now, most of their conclusions are well known: Incorporating all the information gathered by the 16 US government intelligence agencies as of Oct 31, 2007, they find—with "moderate-to-high confidence"—that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon. Tehran presumably stopped trying to develop nuclear weapons in the fall of 2003, and has not restarted this program. More importantly, "All agencies recognize the possibility [of Iran being technically capable of producing enough highly enriched uranium for a weapon] ... may not be attained until after 2015" (emphasis in the original); some believe that Iran might possibly do so by 2009 "but this is very unlikely."

What is most fascinating linguistically is this report's very careful and well-defined use of words. There is one whole page—more than ten percent of the total—devoted to "What We Mean When We Say: An Explanation of Estimative Language." Here special attention is given to estimates of likelihood and the language used in the analytical judgments. They start with this shaded seven-point scale:



Each node is explained in some detail. For example, "The terms unlikely and remote indicate a less than even chance that an event will occur; they do not imply that an event will not occur."

The distinctions are subtle. Though such cool tables are not usually given in introductory linguistics textbooks, what is being discussed here, of course, is grammatical "mood" or "modality," ways—among other things—that languages allow speakers to express their attitudes toward the probability of an utterance being true, possible or occurring. In English, modal auxiliary verbs like might or could are the most common devices used, although other languages have other strategies.

But what might be the biggest linguistic surprise in a government document is the degree of philosophical sophistication presented here. Although—gratefully—none of this jargon is used, what is actually being discriminated in this paper is differing kinds of modality: epistemic, evidential and alethic moods among others. How certain can we be of a claim based on evidence versus our judgments about that evidence versus the logical necessity or possibility that something must be true? I think any native English speaker could easily discern the differences between “John is in the office,” “John may be in the office,” and “John must be in the office”—to say nothing of “John should have been in the office” or “John could have been in the office.”

The current administration has long called a nuclear-armed Iran unacceptable. An often-quoted Oct 2007 press conference shows President Bush saying, “If Iran had a nuclear weapon, it would be a dangerous threat to world peace. ... So I’ve told people that if you’re interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from having the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon” (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/10/20071017.htm). It is hard not to notice the mood—both figurative and grammatical—of this statement. And in response to this NIE report, another repeated sound bite shows President Bush saying, “Look, Iran was dangerous, Iran is dangerous, and Iran will be dangerous if they have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon” (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/12/20071204-4.html).

But these two quotes remind us that there is also another genre of modality, sometimes call the deontic, optative or volitive mood (depending on whether you studied Greek or Latin). With my deepest apologies to philosophers of language, these moods reflect a speaker’s attitude of desire, hope, fear or wish toward an utterance. In the case of the president’s responses, one might be tempted to add the old modal adage “Be careful what you wish for ...”

Please send your comments, contributions, news and announcements to SLA Contributing Editors Jim Stanlaw (stanlaw@ilstu.edu) and Mark Peterson (petersm2@muohio.edu).

Society for Medical Anthropology

KATHLEEN RAGSDALE, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Congratulations to the Winners of SMA 2007 Awards!

This column will be devoted to the SMA Career Award, New Millennium Book Award, Basker Prize and the Foster Award. The March

column will highlight the SMA paper prizes and MASA prizes. SMA would also like to ac-



Gay Becker Photo courtesy Roger Van Craeynest

knowledge the presidential session entitled, “Inequalities, Chronic Illness and Chronicity: Dedicated to the Memory of Gay Becker.” An esteemed colleague, former *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* editor; University of California, San Francisco faculty; and scholar of chronic medical conditions, Gay died unexpectedly in Jan 2007. This special session gathered together a diverse group of scholars to discuss the problematic notion of “chronic” disease and implications for persons suffering from stigmatized conditions as varied as diabetes, infertility and Down Syndrome.

Established in 2004, the SMA Career Achievement Award honors colleagues who have advanced medical anthropology through career-long contributions to theory or methods, and who successfully communicated medical anthropology’s relevance to broader publics. This year we have two winners of this award, Margaret Lock (McGill U, Canada) and Ronald Frankenberg (Keele U, UK), both professors emeritus. Margaret Lock is noted for her outstanding body of research in Japan, including her now classic work on menopause among Japanese women. Margaret has received nearly every major award and honor our discipline bestows, including the Robert Textor Award for anticipatory anthropology, the Wellcome Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, the Staley Award of the School of American Research, and the Eileen Basker Prize. Margaret is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and an Officier du L’Ordre Nationale du Québec and has received the Killam Prize and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Gold Medal. Her work has been extraordinarily influential in increasing public awareness of the social sciences internationally.

Likewise, Ronald Frankenberg has been instrumental in increasing public awareness of anthropology and has pioneered new fields in our discipline, such as critical medical anthropology. Ronnie conducted one of the first community-based ethnographic studies in the UK, well before doing ethnography “at home” was accepted practice in anthropology. A trailblazer in critical medical anthropology, Ronnie insisted on understanding social processes that underlie the creation, spread and treatment of diseases. According to Alan Harwood, Ronnie was an early adopter of a “critical theoretical position in anthropology at a time when it was neither politically nor professionally advantageous,” and a

major contributor to the development of university-based medical anthropology programs throughout Europe.



The New Millennium Book Award for excellence in medical anthropology honors the best book in medical anthropology in an area outside of gender and health. Sharon Kaufman (U Cal, San Francisco), has been unanimously selected to receive this year’s award for her book *And a Time to Die: How American Hospitals Shape the End of Life* (2005). It is especially poignant that Sharon’s book was nominated by the late Gay Becker, who wrote that, “Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork in three California hospitals, the research was motivated by the growing discourse of complaint in the US about overly-technological dying ... and the fact that ‘solutions’ to the ‘problem’ of US death were being articulated mostly in terms of the bioethics enterprise ...” Sharon receives this honor based on the strength of her book as a powerful ethnography, the difficulty and courage of her fieldwork, and the contribution of *And a Time to Die* to discourse on end-of-life decision making among broader publics.

This year’s Eileen Basker Prize for excellence in research on gender and health goes to Sophie Day (U London) for her book *On the Game* (2007). Sophie has been unanimously selected to receive the Basker Prize for her exemplary study of women’s sex work, health concerns, and the construction of personhood in London. *On the Game* is the product of 20 years of research and practice by Sophie, which included establishing a drop-in medical center for sex workers. To quote from a nominating letter, “In addition to her medical and epidemiological work, Sophie Day is also an anthropologist who uses her skills as an ethnographer and the insights of feminist theory to explore the lives of sex workers, in terms of what she calls their ‘struggle for personhood.’”

The George Foster Practicing Medical Anthropology Award goes to Susan Hunter (State U New York, Albany) for her dedication to addressing HIV/AIDS. An advocate for anthropology and sound, humane HIV/AIDS policies and programs, Susan has worked in 30 countries with organizations including UNICEF, UNAIDS, USAID, US Peace Corps, US Department of Labor and Save the Children. In 1998-99, she headed the UNICEF Headquarters’ international project on orphans, which resulted in the International Framework of Action for Children Affected by HIV/AIDS. Susan’s books, including *Black Death: AIDS in Africa* (2003), *AIDS in Asia: A Continent in Peril* (2005), and *AIDS in America* (2006), have increased public understanding of this global epidemic.

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