

ences. We write about indigenous people in order to further our own academic careers. Local actors have recognized the value of their own participation for the construction of our academic texts. They are now asking from us, in order to have their collaboration, to take their side and help them build the very images we criticize in our academic writings.

Immediate problems are evident. Whose side are we to take when we work across different groups of people in the same country? How do we carry out a critical anthropology when we have to engage in activism? What does authenticity mean, and how does the notion itself impact the everyday life of people in Latin America? How do we work with different types of people and texts, coming from disparate vantage points, in order to maintain a dialogue with activists and academics outside our discipline so that we manage to create texts in which our informants and local friends see themselves as well-represented? Academics, activists, bureaucrats and intelligence services are generating often contradictory texts and representations around the same or similar places and events. It is becoming increasingly complicated for anthropologists to remain aloof and dedicated to their academic interests alone.

At the session in honor of June Nash, the session in honor of George Collier and the SLAA's session "Conversations Across the America," some of the participants were of the opinion that we should take the side of indigenous people and do what they consider best, even if it goes against the grain of our disciplinary interests. Others posed that anthropology and activism should be kept as two different discursive fields. One of our SLAA special guests, indigenous leader Abadio Green, put it bluntly: either we join the efforts to help the indigenous people of Colombia build a coherent image that can help them further their claims for recognition, or they will be wiped out through the systematic aggression of the army, the guerrillas and internal fighting. Our two other special guests, Guatemalan academic and activist Irma Otzoy and Marcelo Fernández Oseo, from Bolivia, discussed the notion of authenticity and the need to reconsider our academic standpoints on it. Past SLAA President Joanne Rappaport described a collaboration project between academics (including her) and activists in Colombia, through a theoretical discussion group.

Maybe these matters are most acute in Latin America today, but they will probably impact anthropologists working in other areas of the world in a foreseeable future. We should, as a discipline, foster the discussion around activist anthropology. We should learn to negotiate with local people forms of representation, textual or otherwise, that are meaningful and truthful to all the parts involved; or at least to our discipline and to those in the weakest positions in their national societies, who are the ones calling out for our help and involvement. Otherwise we run the risk of becoming specialized producers of superfluous texts.

Please send short articles and photos for this column to: Gabriela Vargas-Cetina, facultad de ciencias antropológicas, universidad autónoma de Yucatán, tel and fax [52]999/925-4523; gvargas@webtelmex.net.mx or gabriela_vargas_cetina@hotmail.com.

Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists

BARB WEST, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Fieldwork and the Ethics of Sex

By Russell Westhaver (Simon Fraser U)

Recently, the AAA produced a *Briefing Paper for Consideration of the Ethical Implications of Sexual Relationships between Anthropologists and Members of a Study Population* as part of a "plan of action concerning the ethical implications regarding sexual relationships between anthropologists and members of communities or organizations with whom research is being conducted." The brief got me thinking about the "ethical implications regarding sexual relationships" in my own recently completed fieldwork, which in some very fundamental ways, is about sex.

My fieldwork was on "circuit parties"—large all-night dance parties that attract thousands of attendees, similar to a rave. Unlike raves, however, circuit attendees are almost exclusively gay men for whom sexual pursuits are a constituent component of the experience. Attendees uniformly dance shirtless while semiclad go-go dancers gyrate on pedestals above the crowd—a circuit party is, above all, a very sexy homoerotic event. In many ways, as a gay man, I am an insider to the circuit. I attended parties long before deciding to study them, picked up tricks at them and have even slept with one man whom I later interviewed. Importantly, these engagements have become data—either directly as fieldnotes or indirectly as what Roger Sanjek calls headnotes.

Substantively, this engagement has been enormously productive. It has allowed me to develop critical insight into the relationships between the circuit, gay men's communities, gendered identity and health. Indeed many of these insights may not have emerged otherwise. The aforementioned AAA briefing paper would have cautioned me to do otherwise; it asks researchers to tread very carefully around sexual relationships in the field. The brief implicitly assumes sex is, in some fashion, dangerous—at best scandalous—and the solution is to err on the side of caution.

While the brief struggles with an important issue, I think it might be even more productive to turn it on its head and ask: What are the epistemological implications of this briefing? In raising this question, I am not singling out the briefing paper itself but the normative notions on which the brief is situated.

If we are to believe Foucault, problematizing is part and parcel of a set of power relations that produce and regulate the subject in the name of some higher purpose. As it cordons off sex as being more important than any other aspect of

our lives, the brief rearticulates an already-present "apparatus of sexuality." It also functions to barricade sex behind a familiar wall of sex phobia. Identifying sexuality as a—indeed the—major site of ethical quandary risks situating erotic subjectivity beyond the bounds of inquiry. There are significant implications emerging from this for the production of knowledge. In particular, hobbling inquiry about erotic subjectivity silences gay and lesbian ethnographers and threatens to silence gay and lesbian identities/communities. Sex and sexuality are of *critical* importance to gays and lesbians, and it is fundamentally impossible to think about gay and lesbian communities/identities without considering sex and sexuality as central axes of experience.

Any simple problematizing of sex is also part of social science's obsession with objectivity, an obsession that compels disengagement on the part of the researcher. At one level or another, the briefing paper assumes that desire functions to confound what we know—our passions get in the way and render our assessments suspect. A necessary correction is disengagement on the part of the researcher, a stance that is part of a broader set of binaries that pit the mind against the body, the intellect against desire. As feminist thinkers have aptly illustrated, these binaries are not *merely* binaries. The mind/body split is also a hierarchy, privileging the intellect over desire—a privilege mapped over the distinctions we make between men and women. Thus, while the brief threatens to silence gay and lesbian voices, it is also part of a broader cultural mechanism relegating women to a secondary position.

Without fear of too much overstatement: the effect of a blanket of specific guidelines concerning sexual relations in the field is chilling. This is *not* to suggest that we should be having sex in the field. It is to suggest that we think carefully about the implications of any ethical fiat about sexual subjectivity in the field, bearing in mind that for some researchers and communities sex and sexuality are overdetermined and without critical recognition of this fact, much stands to be silenced.

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

MARK ALLEN PETERSON AND JAMES STANLAW,
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Building Bridges

The SLA Executive Board met Nov 21 with AAA President Don Brenneis and AAA Executive Director Bill Davis about possible ways to resolve the withdrawal of the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas from the AAA Annual Meeting (see the Oct 2002 SLA column). At the SLA Business Meeting the next day,



members voted unanimously in favor of a resolution by Alessandro Duranti to fully support efforts by President Elinor Ochs and incoming President-Elect Leanne Hinton to reunite the two organizations.

Berber Shop

How does one use new technologies to build an accessible corpus of an unwritten language? That's the focus of an ongoing project in Paris sponsored by L'Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales. The objective is to create a unified database/textbase accessible to researchers working on Berber. Berber languages are mostly spoken (although some have recently started to be written), so the project focuses on tapes and transcripts of spoken discourse. As currently envisioned, the database will consist of transcripts of actual interactions recorded by researchers, together with interlinear glosses, translations and audiotapes or videotapes.

The database will focus on conversational corpora and interactive discourse, emphasizing relationships between genres, dialects and categories of speakers. There are no plans to tag or parse the corpus during the building of the database, but the hope is to proceed in such a way that this can follow some time in the future. Much of the work involved in such a project concerns protocols for how data is to be recorded so it can be shared and compared. The working group agreed on norms for transcription symbols (no easy task in itself), and are working on norms for the collection of data: word-processor formats, recording standards for prosodic treatment, basic and unified information on speakers, recording conditions, archivation system, access, and so forth.

If you are interested in this effort, either because of an involvement with Berber languages or an interest in the technical aspects of the project, please contact Amina Mettouchi, Chercheur (Researcher) à l'AAI (JE2220, Nantes) et au CRB (EA2522, Langues'O, Paris), Maître de Conférences (Lecturer/Associate Professor) à l'Université de Nantes, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Centre International des Langues, Rue de la Censive du Tertre, BP 81227, 44312 Nantes Cedex 03; tel: (33) 2 40 14 11 39; fax (33) 2 40 14 12 94; amina.mettouchi@humana.univ-nantes.fr.

Islam Online

Some 70% of Islamic sites on the Web are in Arabic, according to a study released Oct 29, 2002. The study, released at the Ninth International Conference on Youth and Globalization in Riyadh, said English was the second most common language, at 27%. "Islamic" here refers specifically to religious sites, especially those used for *daweh* (ongoing religious education and apologetics).

In another paper at the conference, Pakistani PhD candidate Mustafa Yousuf Ali called on Muslim intellectuals to use the Internet to strike back by challenging Western euphemisms like "targeted killing" for "assassination," "killed in crossfire" for "shot by soldiers," "respond" for "attack" and "collateral damage" for "civilian casualties."

He claimed that Western news media's conflation of terrorism with Islam has become so pervasive that many Muslims are using derogatory terms for self-definition, unaware of their negative connotations.

Technology List

Phil Cash Cash, a PhD candidate in the Joint Program in Anthropology and Linguistics (ANLI) at the U of Arizona, reports the creation of a discussion list "to address the need for greater communication and sharing of information concerning the role of language and technology in the Indigenous language community." The Indigenous Languages and Technology (ILAT) Discussion List is intended as an open forum for community language specialists, linguists, scholars and students to discuss issues relating to the uses of technology in language revitalization efforts. You can join the list by going to <http://listserv.arizona.edu/archives/ilat.html>.

Please send your comments, contributions, news and announcements to Mark Allen Peterson (mpeterso@gettysburg.edu) or James Stanlaw (stanlaw@ilstu.edu).

Society for Medical Anthropology

NANCY VUCKOVIC AND JANELLE TAYLOR,
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

We have a number of people to congratulate for awards received during the 2003 AAA Annual Meeting in Nov. We'll be brief, due to space limitations. Check the SMA website (www.medanthro.net) for additional information on the winners, the awards committee and criteria for selection.

SMA Publication Awards

By Vincanne Adams (UC, San Francisco)

This year's winner of the Rivers Prize for outstanding work by an undergraduate anthropology student is China Star, a graduate of UC, Berkeley and currently an intern with Partners in Health in Boston, MA. China's essay "You Aren't the First and You Won't Be the Last: Unmarried Motherhood in Contemporary Rural Ireland" offers a sensitive exploration of the changing meanings and experience of unwed pregnancy and motherhood in rural Ireland. The winner of the Hughes Graduate Student Paper Prize this year was split between two winners. The first winner is Michael Oldani (Princeton) for his essay "Thick Prescriptions: Towards an Anthropology of Pharmaceutical Sales Practices," which offers a revealing look at the gift economy that undergirds the production of scientific knowledge in the pharmaceutical industry. The co-winner is Sylvain Perdigon (Johns Hopkins), whose essay "Words Around an Infamous Woman" explores the suicide death of Wafa Idriss, the first Palestinian female to sacrifice herself for the intifada.

The Polgar Prize is selected from the articles appearing in a single volume of *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* (volume 15 this year). This year's Polgar Prize goes to Kenyon Stebbins, whose essay "Going like Gangbusters: Transnational Tobacco Companies 'Making a Killing' in South America" offers a powerful exposé of the techniques used by transnational tobacco companies to expand their markets in South America and issues a "call to arms" to other medical anthropologists to do more work on this devastating epidemic.

AARG Service Award

By Elisa Sobo (Children's Hospital, San Diego)

The AARG Service Award is given every two years to a living anthropologist in recognition of meritorious contributions to the improvement of the health of people infected with or at risk of infection with HIV. The 2002 AARG Service Award goes to Alfredo González, a PhD candidate in anthropology at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City, and a longtime AIDS activist. For many years now, González has been on the front line merging anthropology and HIV/AIDS advocacy, using spoken, written and video reports as well as outright activism to address audiences where his findings can have a direct effect.

AARG Board Recognition Award

By Merrill Singer (Hispanic Health Council)

The newly created AIDS and Anthropology Research Group (AARG) Board Recognition Award commemorates service to building the AARG as a vital force in the promotion of AIDS research, service, policy formation and advocacy. It was created with its first recipient directly in mind. The first award was given to Rev Raymond A Bucko in recognition of the service he has performed on behalf of the AARG with his computer wizardry. Bucko created and maintains our listserv and our website, which has played a major role in increasing the AARG's salience and increasing AARG members' ability to network and learn about recent HIV/AIDS-related news and scholarship. As a result of Ray's efforts, as well as those of other AARG members, the organizational membership has tripled in the last year. With the Board Recognition Award, the AARG enthusiastically thanks and honors Bucko for his outstanding dedication and service.

CAR Publication Awards

By Janelle Taylor (U Washington)

At its Nov Business Meeting, the Council on Anthropology and Reproduction (CAR) announced three awards. Elly Teman (Hebrew U Jerusalem) won the second annual Student Paper Prize competition for her essay "The Medicalization of 'Nature' in the 'Artificial Body': Surrogate Motherhood in Israel." In the first annual edited volume book prize competition, two prizes were awarded. Alma Gottlieb's (U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) 1988 edited collection *Blood Magic:*