

and valuable." Margaret Mead, in *Sex and Temperament*, made this observation about the Arapesh. Implicit in this statement is an assumption about making such long-established connections actually work. Something is missing, namely the broader idea of relationships.

In a 2008 survey conducted by Liz Claiborne Inc, 25% of young girls between the ages of 11 and 14 reported being called names, harassed or ridiculed by their romantic partner. That 250 out of a sample of 1000 reported this at this age is startling. Similar numbers appear in their same survey a year earlier. In 2007, a 20-year-old woman was killed and dismembered after repeated failed attempts to break off a relationship with her boyfriend. Reports like this are frequent, and many states are expanding domestic violence laws to try to cope.

There is a compelling side of this that doesn't get a lot of notice. What is it that young men and women don't understand about relationships that leads to such extremes? How do they come to such a deep misunderstanding about relationships? Clearly, both men and women are not "getting it" if a "relationship" means 300 text messages an hour. Cell phones and computers are increasingly an integral tool in these "assaults." Social networking has a new face.

I'll step off the ledge for a moment here and mention a non-academic book because it does a good job of bridging the gap between academic and popular writing in this area. One quote in particular is very illuminating: "I also discovered that a lot of young men are scared shitless—of women, themselves and their future." In *Best Sex Writing 2009* edited by Rachel Kramer Bussel, we find, among other things, a fascinating perspective on relationships. The aforementioned quote ties directly into the heart of the matter: what is going on in the minds of young men in the building of relationships? Further, how can we prevent confusion, anger and unhealthy notions of romantic partnership from turning into the kind of abuse that killed Heather Norris?

Elizabeth Miller, whose studies on teenage dating and abuse at UC Davis have gained attention in recent efforts to try to deal with this problem, notes that "[f]ew adolescents understand what a healthy relationship looks like." Where, then *do* our children discover what constitutes a healthy relationship? Do school and family provide positive models, or are they sites where children become exposed to factors that can play a role in abusive relationships, such as control or *machismo*, both larger cultural factors that Miller mentions in her studies?

At this point, you may be asking yourself what any of this has to do with SOLGA. A few years ago, when the really fringe right routinely attacked anything remotely related to homosexuality, one of their central arguments against anything "gay" was that sound relationships must begin with a man and a

woman, period. The influence from this sector has waned recently. Much has changed, and more change is still to come, but one thing we may have missed is that the information available to young people around the gritty details of relationships is still thin. Kramer Bussel's book embraces this problem. It is neither social science nor popular pulp, and we need more of this type of accessible and informative literature. I suggest that the deep ethnographic work of many SOLGA members also represents a significant positive contribution in our understanding of what constitutes good relationships. An odd irony, I think.

Is this mere self-congratulatory rhetoric? Hardly. Queer persons of all stripes have borne years of attack from many angles. The stereotyping of same-sex relationships (and other queer variations) as being somehow inherently "defective" or unhealthy has generated both a deep reflexivity and powerful honesty from those so attacked. It is instructive to realize that this segment of the population has been so deeply introspective about their own love lives. This deserves more than accolades. It is time to bring such work to the attention of those seeking to stop the abuses noted above, to make use of its potential to expand our understanding of what makes a healthy relationship.

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

Society for Linguistic Anthropology

JAMES STANLAW AND MARK PETERSON,
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Tatti Happens: Swearing, Switching and Speaking Cross-Culturally

By Mark Allen Peterson (Miami U)

The use of terms referring to taboo bodily functions as "swear words" seems a good candidate for a universal human linguistic behavior. But where is the cross-cultural study of cursing in anthropological linguistics?

I've been thinking about this since 1992. I was sitting in an editor's office at the *Times of India* when two women from the marketing department walked past me chattering in Hindi about a disagreement with their boss over a recent advertising campaign. Suddenly one of them code-switched to English: "—and I said to him shit you know—" then switched back to Hindi. Two things struck me. The first was the fact that she had apparently switched codes specifically to use an English swear word. The second was the lack of gravitas she gave to the word. There was no change in intonation, pitch or emphasis when she employed it. It wasn't "shit" just "shit."

I discussed this several months later with Probal Dasgupta, sociolinguist at Hyderabad University and my favorite writer on Indian English. He offered the kinship metaphor of English as an "Auntie" tongue—"Auntie" being a term in India for an intimate, older fictive kin, like your Mom's old college friend or that neighbor who is always in and out of your house. Intellectually, these Indians know perfectly well what shit means and how it is to be used, but it does not carry with it the intimate connotations of filthiness that it does for native speaker, or that the cognate Hindi words do.

In other words, the young woman code-switched because she wanted to express the denotation of the swear word without indexing herself as foul-mouthed. Since English is my mother tongue, I was shocked to hear her use it so casually in an office setting. Since English was her companion's auntie tongue, it carried no such affect. Later, another advertising executive told me she was terribly foul-mouthed in English, but nobody took it seriously because English swearing is just "conversational."

Invoking as it does issues of identity construction, politeness, class, gender, hierarchy, semantics, code-switching, performance and language ideology, swearing is an area ripe for study, especially as it evokes elements of affect, shame and embarrassment to a greater degree than many other forms of utterance. In a time when mobility and translocality are particularly being emphasized, swearing takes on even more interesting elements, as people bring their swearing practices across increasingly distant and differently constructed social fields.

I am thinking about this because of a recent incident in our home here in an upper-middle class neighbourhood in New Delhi, where I am once again studying the Indian news media. Our five-year-old downstairs neighbor asked where our daughter Sophie was. When my wife told him she was down the street at her friend's, he replied, "Oh, shit. We're not allowed to go that far without a grownup." He said it in an even tone, in his cute little baby voice. "Conversational" indeed.

Both our children are picking up some Indian English. Neither has any Hindi grammar to speak of, but they both incorporate certain idiomatic words and phrases in their speech with their neighbourhood friends. Sophie, aged 13, assures us that her peers have plenty of Hindi words for bodily functions that they use for cursing. As an assertive tomboy (with two US national bronze medals in Tae Kwon Do) in a very patriarchal adolescent hierarchy, she's had more than a few of these words used on her by some of the neighborhood boys.

For her, words like *tatta* and *bhen chhod* have meaning but no affect. Her girl friends whisper the meanings to her and make her swear to never say them in public. They get very upset if she uses them, especially where a grown-up might hear them. Yet there's



no convincing them that “shit” should be used according to similar politeness rules. It’s perfectly okay to say that one in front of the neighborhood adults without shame. Of course, my teenager experimenting with these words is one thing. The thought of my six-year-old returning home with this newly learned set of politeness rules, and the responses of neighbors, coaches and teachers as he uses them in the social fields of middle-class US children, is a bit dismaying to say the least.

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

Society for Medical Anthropology

KATHLEEN RAGSDALE, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

SMA Conference 2009: Medical Anthropology at the Intersections

By Marcia Inhorn and Emily Wentzell (Yale U)

The Society for Medical Anthropology announces an international conference, “Medical Anthropology at the Intersections: Celebrating 50 Years of Interdisciplinarity,” to be held September 24–27, 2009, at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. As the discipline of medical anthropology reaches half a century of existence, it is time to celebrate both its accomplishments and its interdisciplinarity. This conference highlights over a dozen areas of emergent interdisciplinary work in “new millennial” medical anthropology. It will bring together the world’s medical anthropologists, including faculty, students and practitioners, to celebrate past achievements and to foster an exchange of ideas that will inspire path-breaking work in our next 50 years.

The conference will begin on the evening of Thursday, September 24 with a keynote address, followed by three days of morning plenary sessions and afternoon sessions devoted to paper, poster and new media presentations by participants. Plenary speakers will address the following key areas of intersection:

- **Medicine/Primary Care:** Paul Farmer (Harvard U, Partners in Health), will address the intersection between anthropology and medicine, particularly the importance of primary health care for the world’s poor.
- **Global Public Health:** Didier Fassin (U Paris) will discuss the burgeoning interest

in global public health and medical anthropology’s contribution to the alleviation of global health inequalities.

- **Mental Health:** Arthur Kleinman (Harvard U) will discuss medical anthropology’s long-term concern with ethnopsychiatry, as well as new forms of mental illness related to war, refugeeism, homelessness, and other forms of trauma.
- **Medical History:** Lynn Morgan (Mount Holyoke C) will discuss the use and relevance of historical approaches to medical anthropology, and the value of applying historical perspectives to medical practices and concepts.
- **Feminism and Technoscience:** Emily Martin (New York U) will address the intertwined histories of medical and feminist anthropology, outlining future possibilities for applying feminist analytics to technoscientific developments.
- **Science and Technology Studies:** Annemarie Mol (Amsterdam U), will examine how science, technology and medicine are produced, reproduced, reformulated and resisted within diverse cultural settings.
- **Genetics/Genomics:** Margaret Lock (McGill U) will discuss the development of genetic technologies and how they produce new knowledge and subjectivities regarding hereditary forms of risk.
- **Bioethics:** Barbara Koenig (Mayo Clinic, U Minnesota) will discuss bioethics and regulation regarding new forms of medical intervention, and how local moral systems intersect with religion, medicine and law.
- **Public Policy:** Merrill Singer (U Connecticut) will discuss ways that medical anthropologists can contribute to health policymaking, including among governments, NGOs, philanthropies and think tanks.
- **Occupational Science:** Gelya Frank (U Southern California) will discuss the ways that work, and the organization of physical and social space, affect people’s well-being, and how occupational science is emerging to address these issues.
- **Disability Studies:** Rayna Rapp (New York U) will discuss anthropological perspectives on the experiences of people with non-normative bodies and minds, and disability studies’ emergence to examine interactions with social, built and political environments.
- **Gender/LGBT/Sexuality Studies:** Richard Parker (Columbia U) will discuss medical anthropological engagement with gender

studies, including the importance of LGBT and sexuality studies in the era of HIV/AIDS.

- **International and Area Studies:** Lawrence Cohen (UC Berkeley) will discuss the importance of language, culture, history and politics in the understanding of health, illness and healing around the globe.

We particularly welcome abstract submissions that address these key intersections, though all types of medical anthropology are welcome. We encourage submissions of: (1) individual papers; (2) individual posters; (3) pre-organized panels of 5–7 papers/discussants; (4) pre-organized workshops of pre-circulated papers; and (5) films and other media. To submit an abstract or session for review, see the instructions on the website www.yale.edu/macmillan/smaconference, then email your abstract(s) to medanthro.conference@yale.edu. The deadline for abstract submission is April 15, 2009.

Early bird registration ends April 15, 2009. Early registration costs \$75 for US professionals, \$50 for non-US participants, and \$25 for students. Full-price registration will then run until September 1, 2009, at a cost of \$25 more. You can register online at the conference website. Special conference events include a dinner dance and a reception in the world famous Yale Peabody Museum. There is also much to do in New Haven, a small and vibrant city within easy train, car or bus travel from New York, Boston, Philadelphia and other East Coast cities. Travel and lodging information is available on the conference website.

To submit contributions to this column please contact SMA Contributing Editor Kathleen Ragsdale (kathleen.ragsdale@ssrc.msstate.edu).

Society for Psychological Anthropology

JACK R FRIEDMAN, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Reminder

The SPA Biennial Meeting will be held March 27–29, 2009 in Asilomar, CA. For more information see www.aaanet.org/sections/SPA/meetings.htm.

The Encultured Brain: Neuroanthropology and Interdisciplinary Engagement

By Greg Downey (Macquarie U) and Daniel H Lende (U Notre Dame)

Today, developments in the neurosciences have opened new avenues for anthropological research and collaboration. The 2008 AAA session “The Encultured Brain” both opened and closed by emphasizing the brain’s plasticity and connectivity. Co-organizer Daniel