From the Editor

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The Next Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist* Is . . .

Someone out there!

Now that I have your attention, I do wish to initiate a conversation concerning who will replace me as *American Anthropologist's* Editor-in-Chief. Because I completed the final months of the previous Editor-in-Chief's term, my tenure at *American Anthropologist* will be slightly longer than the usual four years (five and a quarter years to be exact: June 2007–August 2012). It may seem odd for me to raise the question of succession when three years remain in my term. However, the Anthropological Communication Committee (ACC) will likely make its call for a replacement editor in late 2010 or early 2011, with finalists interviewed at the 2011 meetings of the American Anthropological Association (AAA). Applicants will want to investigate the possibilities of support from their institutions (which ideally includes guarantees of teaching reductions, office space, and at least partial support for computers and staff). Those negotiations can, of course, take time, so if the call for applications will indeed go out in early to mid-2011, then ideally those interested in the *American Anthropologist* Editor-in-Chief position should begin discussions with their deans, department chairs, or supervisors in 2010, which is just four months away!

In other words, the time to pose the question of who will be the next Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist* is now, because this is an extremely important decision for the individuals who decide to put themselves forward as candidates, for the institutions in which those individuals work, and for the discipline as a whole. Because I have now been *American Anthropologist's* Editor-in-Chief for over two years, I am comfortable speaking about the individual challenges and benefits of the position. I cannot recommend it highly enough. The day-to-day work of editing a flagship journal like *American Anthropologist* is significant, but with sufficient institutional support it need not be overwhelming. I find it roughly equivalent to the work of teaching two undergraduate courses, but much of the work of editorship can be carried out anywhere—in the office, at home, even in a café or airport lounge (indeed, I wrote this particular sentence while on an airplane). *American Anthropologist* now has an online submissions system, and as a result all manuscripts can be accessed by the Editor-in-Chief anywhere in the world so long as there is an Internet connection. Additionally, manuscripts to be reviewed can always be downloaded; the work can be done even when one is unable to go online. Because I have become comfortable reading manuscripts on a computer screen, I go through the entire review process without printing out manuscripts or reviews: working in such a paperless manner is not only environmentally responsible but greatly reduces the work of filing and searching for manuscripts.

The work of editorship also includes a range of managerial tasks, from crafting budgets and staying in touch with the various review editors to administrative meetings with staff, but the burden of this work is not onerous. Additionally, the Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist* enjoys significant flexibility in terms of editorial duties—one can turn to other matters (one's own research and writing, teaching, etc.) for a few days and then set aside a half day for catching up on manuscripts, or even review a manuscript during a free hour or two between other tasks.

Against this undeniable workload, the individual benefits to the Editor-in-Chief position are, I believe, significant. For what it is worth, one gets to have the venerable (if slightly pompous) title of "Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist*" and is (rightly) regarded as playing an influential role in the discipline. The Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist* is exposed to a staggeringly wide range of anthropological scholarship and is thus able to "take the pulse" of the discipline after a fashion. Additionally,

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as Editor-in-Chief one encounters a broad spectrum of intellectual craftsmanship. At one extreme, this includes manuscripts that are nearly "ready to go" because of their high quality in terms of theoretical framework, data analysis, engagements with relevant literatures, and overall organization. At the other extreme are manuscripts that must clearly be rejected. Between these two extremes lie a whole range of manuscripts with varying degrees of promise and varying insufficiencies, which in many cases can be rectified by authors willing to put in the work of substantial revision. I find that I have become a better writer and a better advisor of graduate and undergraduate students because of my exposure to this broad range of manuscripts from across the subdisciplines. It has been a particular pleasure to work with (and publish the research of) junior scholars. The Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist* also has the opportunity to interact with and support editors of other anthropology journals and participate in a range of debates over the future of the discipline.

The editorship also brings benefits to the institution in which *American Anthropologist* is housed. There is, to my knowledge, no reason why the journal could not be housed in a nonacademic institution. However, because few nonacademic institutions would have the necessary resources and because *American Anthropologist* has typically been housed in an academic setting, I will for the purposes of this discussion assume that the next Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist* will be employed by a college or university (the points I raise are largely germane to nonacademic institutions). A journal like *American Anthropologist* is largely independent of the institution that supports it. For instance, I work with an editorial board and the Associate Editors who are by design not members of my own institution (the University of California, Irvine) to avoid any potential conflict of interest. Because of the normal procedures of confidentiality, I cannot, of course, discuss submissions to *American Anthropologist* with colleagues or students at my institution. I can, however, speak about characteristics of successful manuscripts across a range of methodological and intellectual approaches. In addition, having *American Anthropologist* housed in any department helps demonstrate that the department in question is both committed to the discipline and a strong participant in anthropology in the broadest sense.

In terms of contributions to the discipline in this broadest sense, the impact of the Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist* is, in my view, at its best (and its most appropriate) when cast in general terms. My experience leads me to conclude that any editor (and particularly the editor of a generalist, interdisciplinary, or otherwise broadly mandated journal) ideally seeks to present the best work in as many relevant intellectual conversations as possible. In the case of *American Anthropologist,* this includes all four subfields and a staggering range of theoretical approaches, methodological techniques, and political commitments. It is neither possible nor desirable to get all of these perspectives to speak the exact same language: a discipline is determined not by lockstep unanimity but by a range of partially overlapping communities of research and debate.

The vision for a journal like *American Anthropologist* must, in my view, thus be a vision of fostering this range of communities of research and encouraging forms of interchange between them, but doing so without imposing a singular interpretation of what counts as top-notch work. Far better, and far easier on any editor, to allow the discipline itself to answer such questions and to evaluate work based on the assessments of peers who participate in the research communities of the author herself or himself, rather than some putatively universal standard. It is by fostering these discussions within and between anthropological research communities that the Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist* can make an important contribution—whether such research communities are defined by subdiscipline, theoretical approach, geographical area, topic of inquiry, or any other parameter.

Of course, in addition to fostering such conversations, the Editor-in-Chief stands to make more direct contributions to the discipline. "From the Editor" missives such as this represent one way by which I have offered my thoughts on everything from getting an article accepted to review and open access. Although in my capacity as *American Anthropologist's* Editor-in-Chief I rarely discuss my own research on sexuality and globalization in Indonesia, on HIV/AIDS prevention, or on virtual worlds, I certainly hope that one indirect effect of my editorial position is that research on these topics will be more valued.

Whoever takes my place as Editor-in-Chief will, of course, have his or her own vision for the journal and background as an anthropologist. No matter what, however, certain aspects of editing the flagship journal of the AAA will persist. It is an incredible journey, a true honor, and a wonderful learning experience, and I encourage you with all my heart to consider applying for the position and also to encourage those you think might excel as Editor-in-Chief to consider applying. It is a rare opportunity that brings unique personal and professional benefits. It is my hope that the largest possible pool of qualified candidates will apply because I believe the position of Editor-in-Chief of *American Anthropologist* to be so crucially important to our discipline.

IN THIS ISSUE

As with previous issues under my editorship, this issue of *American Anthropologist* features research articles that demonstrate the range and innovation of contemporary anthropological inquiry. We begin with an "In Focus" section entitled "Global Change and Adaptation in Local Places." In their introduction to the section, Donald Nelson, Colin Thor West, and Timothy Finan discuss how contemporary anthropological research has an important role to play in exploring cultural responses to (and engagements with)

climate change and the political economic forces shaping that climate change. In the first of the three research articles making up this section, "Domestic Transitions, Desiccation, Agricultural Intensification, and Livelihood Diversification among Rural Households on the Central Plateau, Burkina Faso," West examines how forms of domestic organization in Burkina Faso shift in response to environmental risk in ways that cannot be reduced to either a social or an environmental determinism. Marcela Vásquez-León's article, "Hispanic Farmers and Farmworkers: Social Networks, Institutional Exclusion, and Climate Vulnerability in Southeastern Arizona," discusses how Hispanic farmers in the U.S. Southwest respond to specific conjunctures of institutional exclusion and climate variability through shifting forms of social network. Nelson and Finan round out this section with "Praying for Drought: Persistent Vulnerability and the Politics of Patronage in Ceará, Northeast Brazil." This article turns attention to northeast Brazil, a region well-known for persistent poverty linked to environmental risk and degradation. The article builds from this context, exploring how rethinking notions of adaptation can help us better understand how persistence and vulnerability operate in everyday contexts of inequality and state power.

Five more research articles follow, and the first two in particular engage with some of the questions and themes present in the "In Focus." Matthew Lauer and Shankar Aswani's article, "Indigenous Ecological Knowledge as Situated Practices," engages with conceptions of "indigenous knowledge" through an in-depth examination of fishers in the Western Solomon Islands. The "practice-oriented approach" developed in the article not only speaks to questions of culture responses to climate change raised in the previous articles but also examines how the category of knowledge itself can be understood in terms of embodied action. In "The Arctic Cooking Pot: Why Was It Adopted?," Karen Harry and Liam Frink explore an archaeological mystery: Why, for over 2,500 years, were ceramic cooking pots used in coastal Arctic regions when there were no nutritional benefits to doing so (the diet in the region) and the climate makes the manufacture of such pots extremely difficult? I leave the reader to discover Harry and Frink's answer to this question, save to mention that it brings together issues of culture and environment in ways that might rightly be seen to resonate with points made in the "In Focus" preceding it. Questions of food and diet are taken up by Robert Cook and Mark Schurr in their article, "Eating between the Lines," which brings together archaeological data with internal variation of carbon isotopes for human burials to advance compelling claims about patterns of prehistoric migration in the Ohio Valley region. In "Old Jokes and New Multiculturalisms," Fernando Armstrong-Fumero looks at how Yucatec Maya ways of speaking are shaped by dynamics of class, national belonging, and state power in ways that draw on both longstanding histories and emergent debates over identity, community, and indigeneity. Finally, in "Contagion and Alterity," Timothy Pugh takes an archaeological look at Kowoj Maya appropriations of European objects, with particular attention to questions of alterity.

It bears noting that both the Harry and Frink and Cook and Schurr articles and the articles of Armstrong-Fumero and Pugh can be productively read as impromptu "In Focus" sections, the first pairing addressing questions of food, knowledge, and adaptation, and the second pairing addressing questions of belonging, history, and identity in Maya contexts. I can bear only partial credit for such impromptu pairings: the manuscripts did end up moving into production around the same time, but these emergent pairings can also be rightly interpreted as marking themes and trends in anthropology more broadly.

This issue also features the final set of "From the Editor" pieces by the editors of other American Anthropological Association journals. I sincerely hope that these reintroductions, as well as the "For Further Reading" additional bibliographies that now appear after research articles, will serve to build interest in the broad range of journals published by the AAA.

A number of reviews round out the issue, including a report on the new website for the Society for Visual Anthropology, as well as obituaries written in remembrance of George William Skinner (1925–2008), by Katherine Verdery and Carol A. Smith, and William Timothy Sanders (1926–2008), by Jeffrey R. Parsons.