Notes from the Field Section Editor's Introduction: Research as a Practice of Learning

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The papers in this first issue devoted to "Notes from the Field" cover a wide range of fieldwork experiences, locations, and approaches. We asked contributors—all graduate students in anthropology or a related discipline—to select their own emphasis, suggesting only that they consider the ways in which fieldwork has formed them as scholars. A few themes emerge from this varied set of Notes, offering insights into our processes of becoming and being anthropologists. These short pieces are not meant to present full analyses of these situations or of the author's research. Rather, they highlight the complicated personal experiences of research itself as a practice of learning.

By way of introduction, I would like to highlight two sets of intertwined oppositions that emerge from the Issue 24 papers: interrogations of self and other, and examinations of the mundane and the spectacular.

Self/Other

Unsurprisingly, many notes address our disciplinary struggles with representations of self and other. While we see echoes of the reflexive turn in these pieces, we also see contributors engaging shifting sights of disciplinary and personal positionality. Each piece offers a provocation, asking how research forces us into situations where theoretical and practical attempts to use fieldwork to intentionally challenge norms of historical interaction do not always map easily onto the everyday.

Several Notes identify ways in which we are "called" to the role of researcher through experience and representation, with the authors drawing on Althusser's framing of inter-

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pellation as a social process of becoming. This process is often intimate, ranging from shifting familiar relationships to experiencing feelings of radical otherness. Saffo Papantonopoulou explores the ways in which our personal relationships are altered by inhabiting the role of "the researcher," particularly in situations where research interests intersect with family histories or identities. She asks how we might locate boundaries for the researcher role within these shifting experiences. Dana Osborne offers an almost surreal take on this question, using her experience of contracting Dengue Fever to examine how we become intimately linked to the people with whom we share our lives—and our deliriums—during fieldwork. Challenging us to find experiences of extreme closeness and radical otherness joined within single moments, and to cease looking past contradictions, Osborne encourages us to locate, within the stream of consciousness, a rhythm of becoming that is never completed.

Two authors extend these questions about otherness by juxtaposing researchers' experiences of being seen as "other" with a confrontation of social science's legacy of framing research subjects as sets of "others." Robin Steiner narrates his experiences as a white American man conducting research about increasingly western business spaces in Oman. There, Omani read Steiner's attempts to demonstrate fluency in Arabic and related forms of cultural competence as commentaries on Omani otherness, rather than as the suggestion of cultural connection he intended. When Steiner modifies his personal presentation, the fresh attempt becomes the embodiment of his Omani research subject's imagined American business acumen, while providing the interactional validity that they seek. Carrie Mott addresses questions of privilege locally, examining how the roles of whiteness and scholarship are linked in Tucson's and the US-Mexico border region's spaces of activism. Although Mott's experiences as an activist shaped her expectations for

how she would be read anew as a scholar, she also anticipated that solidarity movements would extend this critique more radically to their own engagements around whiteness.

Mundane/Spectacular

Notes by several authors consider patterns of research in the midst of mundane or spectacular activities. They examine various challenges of conducting fieldwork while the cadence of daily life in a place proceeds, especially given that fieldwork is embedded in broader systems of research and scholarship, and must respond to their demands.

Lauren Hayes and Megan Sheehan offer suggestions about ways to cope with everyday life and local social divisions while doing fieldwork, focusing on the difficultly of defining fieldwork boundaries when field sites are themselves unbounded. Analyzing research experiences in a rigidly stratified workplace, Hayes reports how she negotiated a space for fieldwork among workers on factory floors and managers who govern them. She prompts us to understand how international economic flows are grounded within specific, local interactional and social spaces of production. Sheehan examines the range and variability of field sites when research seeks to map the contours of shared social worlds. Her research on Chilean responses to migration in effect follows her as she attempts to take a break from fieldwork, suggesting the complications of delimiting fieldwork in physical spaces that cannot be neatly bounded.

Luke Kaiser and Luminiţa-Anda Mandache emphasize experiences working on research projects embedded in wider arcs of scholarship. Kaiser, reflecting upon his work's place within a larger archaeological project in Greece, discusses how individual research and training fit into more extensive team-based inquiry. His own daily rhythms of field-

work offer a microcosm for understanding wider patterns of knowledge-building. Mandache addresses the challenges of designing and carrying out a viable research project in one of northeast Brazil's already heavily-researched sites. She narrates the messy sites of interaction that can be left in the wake of other scholars, asking how to engage in ethical scholarship when you are read as a new iteration of an existing pattern. Writing in the raw voice of an anthropologist working under difficult circumstances, Mandache also asks how we can conduct fieldwork effectively in spaces of extreme structural and interpersonal violence.

The final two papers treat the fieldwork experience as inextricably linked to the wider socio-political worlds that our field sites inhabit. Danielle O. Phelps addresses the impact of the Arab Spring (December 2010-June 2011) and subsequent years of political upheavals upon archaeological excavations in Egypt, ultimately underscoring the persistence of work locally despite disruptions elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa. My paper probes post-Apartheid South Africans' experiences of national emotional upheaval and continued political struggle, especially during ten days of mourning that I witnessed in Cape Town following the death of former President Nelson Mandela in December 2013. These papers question what it means to conduct work in sites of political change and local stasis, where perceptions of change from a distance neither frame nor represent accurately daily life up close.

Fieldwork as Learning

"Notes from the Field" does not present peer-reviewed papers. They do not attempt to make broad claims about the methodologies utilized in or the scholarly outcomes of fieldwork. Rather, the papers offer critical and personal reflections on

how it is that anthropology comes to be practiced, known, and embodied in our experiences of research and our engagements with the multiple spaces of "the field." That these papers are all written by graduate students is significant. Although some contributors have conducted research over many years in the field sites discussed here, or in other sites, their processes of research remain purposefully constructed as modes of learning. The rigor and pressure of the academy forces many of us to mask the complexity of our personal experiences of research, in favor of highlighting the successes so as to be seen as fundable and employ-able anthropologists. Through the publication of "Notes from the Field," we encourage an open dialogue about the varied and complex experiences of fieldwork—the challenges, struggles, and failures, as well as the successes—and hope that the dialogue will be viewed as a necessary and useful part of graduate training in anthropology. We cannot ensure that we remain colleagues engaged in the joint pursuit of scholarship unless we name fieldwork itself as a contentious but important subject of conversation. Offering students opportunities to examine fieldwork during the formative phases of graduate training is crucial, because it ensures that fieldwork experiences will remain relevant to students personally and to their professional development.

I want to thank each of the authors for sharing their experiences, and for their patience as we put together this issue and the corresponding Graduate Fieldwork Symposium. Each Notes paper has been published in the writing style of the author; we intentionally did not work for consistency in the use of details such as font or naming mechanisms. These papers reflect each person's individual experience and what she or he contributes to and takes from our collective understanding of fieldwork and anthropology as a discipline. Thus, we preserve each author's distinctive voice.

Interspersed among the papers readers will find our

Fieldwork Gallery, images taken by a wider set of graduate students during field research. The images offer glimpses of an even broader range of sites, experiences, and perspectives than the papers on "the field" as a crucial, yet diversely defined space of experience.