

SPA NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2018

featuring...

letter from the spa president
introducing new spa board members
report on SMA-SPA lunch mentoring
features by SPA prize winners
reports from SPA/RLF fellows
recent ethos publications
membership news

When people dwelling in the Sinja Valley (Western Nepal) are afflicted by issues or uncertainties, they visit a shaman (dhāmi), who will provide a viable solution, taming their unsettled feelings.

featuring photo by
Samuele Poletti

edited by Amir Hampel & Kathy Trang

MESSAGE FROM THE SPA PRESIDENT



With my first message as incoming SPA President, I am privileged to serve all of you, the exceptional group of anthropologists that form our society. I thank Carol Worthman for her extraordinary leadership of the SPA as its President (2015-2017) and all of the presidents who came before her who have worked tirelessly to build our society into an intellectual home.



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I have two developments to bring to your attention in this message and urge you to visit our website (<http://spa.americananthro.org/>) for all of the activities of and news from the SPA.

First, we are very excited that the next Society for Psychological Anthropology Biennial Meeting will be April 4-7, 2019 at the beautiful Tamaya Resort in New Mexico. We look forward to an exciting and engaging program with a beautiful and relaxing setting in which to network and engage with the cutting edge work that is being done in our field. The program will continue our successful breakfasts with the Lifetime Achievement Recipients and will include panels offering the range of issues being contributed to by our members. Please visit our website (<http://spa.americananthro.org/meetings/2019-biennial-meeting/>) and look for more details in the coming months!

The Tamaya Resort (<https://tamaya.regency.hyatt.com/en/hotel/home.html>) is owned by the Santa Ana Pueblo, with profits returning to the people of the Santa Ana Pueblo for a range of social programs. The Santa Ana Pueblo also maintains an important rescue program for the large numbers of horses abandoned in the Southwest. The Tamaya Resort is located between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, and not far from Taos.

I also am very pleased to announce a new opportunity to facilitate student attendance at our Biennial Meeting: The Beatrice and John Whiting SPA Biennial Travel Grants. We thank Hal Odden, our outgoing SPA Treasurer for his creativity and dedication to establishing this opportunity for our students. This new program honors the important work of the Whitings in their formative studies on culture and human development. The SPA Biennial Meetings represent one of the most important ways in which the SPA promotes and supports the continued growth of the field of psychological anthropology, and these travels grants provide financial assistance to individuals to attend our biennial meeting, who might not otherwise be able to attend. This award is open to undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and

un- and under-employed professionals who are presenting at the conference. More information about the travel grants are currently available on our website (<http://spa.americananthro.org/funding-opportunities/the-beatrice-and-john-whiting-spa-biennial-travel-grants/>).

I also want extend heartfelt appreciation to those who are stepping down from SPA leadership after exceptional service and those who are stepping up into these roles: Hal Odden for his long and distinguished service as SPA Treasurer/Secretary and Treasurer; Ted Lowe for his outstanding leadership of our flagship journal, *Ethos*; and Peter Stromberg who has led our successful book series, *Culture, Mind and Society*. We are grateful that these transitions are occurring seamlessly with Jeffrey Snodgrass, our new Treasurer; Greg Downey, who will assume the editorship of *Ethos*; and Yehuda Goodman who will take the lead on our book series. We thank them and also thank Cameron Hay who continues as our Secretary.

Our student members are core to the Society for Psychological Anthropology. Our new Graduate Student Representative, Ellen Kozelka, has enthusiastically started her term following the capable, energetic and creative leadership of Tawni Tidwell. Amir Hampel also replaces Tawni Tidwell as co-editor for the SPA column on Anthropology News while Kathy Trang continues on as SPA-AN co-editor and Electronics Publication editor.

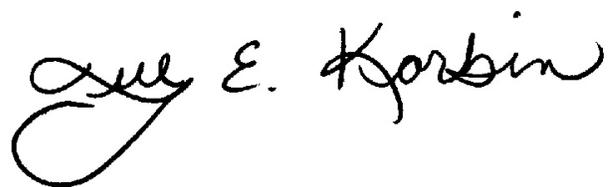
Finally, the awards offered by the SPA reflect the enormous talent of our membership. We thank the members of the review committees who devoted substantial time to these awards. Briefly, the SPA conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award for 2016 to Richard Shweder (University of Chicago) and for 2017 to Byron Good (Harvard). The Stirling Prize for the Best Published Work in Psychological Anthropology was awarded to Rebecca Lester (Washington University), with Honorable Mention to Bridget Haas (Case Western Reserve University). The Boyer Prize for Contributions to Psychoanalytic Anthropology was awarded to Christiana Giordano (UC Davis). The Condon Prize for Best Student Essay in Psychological Anthropology was received by Matthew McCoy (UCLA) with Honorable Mention to Alexa Hagerty (Stanford).

International Early Career Scholar Travel Grants to attend biennial the 2017 meeting in New Orleans were awarded to Nicola D'Souza (McGill) and Francesca Mezzenzana (College de France).

SPA/Robert Lemelson Foundation Student Fellowships were awarded to Sara Rendell (University of Pennsylvania), Emily Wilson (U Chicago), Reem Mehdoul (UCLA), Lauren Nippoldt (UCSD), Paula Martin (U Chicago), and Alexia Arani (UCSD). We thank Robert Lemelson for his continued generosity in offering these opportunities to our students, the future of our discipline.

**Are you ready for the
SPA Biennial?
April 4-7, 2019**

We have many outstanding members of our Society for Psychological Anthropology. If you have an interest in participating in any of our activities, please let us know! I look forward to seeing everyone at the AAA Meetings in San Jose next November 2018 and at our Biennial the following April 2019.



Jill E. Korbin
Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Lucy Adams Leffingwell Professor
Professor of Anthropology
Director, Schubert Center for Child Studies
Co-Director, Childhood Studies Program
Case Western Reserve University
President, Society for Psychological Anthropology

INCOMING SPA BOARD MEMBERS



GREG DOWNEY

Ethos Editor: Greg Downey (@gregdowney1) is Professor of Anthropology at Macquarie University in Sydney. Greg trained in cultural anthropology at the University of Chicago, working primarily in Brazil and the United States before moving to Australia. He is currently writing about human echolocation among the blind. His principal research interests are in the senses, sports, dance, and skill acquisition, where he tries to bring together research from anthropology and the brain sciences with evolutionary theory, neuropsychology, and sports science. Greg and longtime collaborator, Prof. Daniel Lende, created the weblog Neuroanthropology, which became one of the founding members of PLOS Blogs.



YEHUDA GOODMAN

Series Editor for Culture, Mind and Society: Yehuda Goodman is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His central interest lies in the pragmatics of identity politics and forms of cultural criticism – which he explores in various contexts in Israel, including therapeutic settings, religious conversions, schools, and the army. He examines the dynamic formation of identities through the negotiations between individuals and groups on how they are socially and personally constituted and represented.



AMIR HAMPEL

SPA-AN Co-editor: Amir Hampel received his PhD from The University of Chicago's Department of Comparative Human Development in 2017. His ethnographic studies investigate how people understand, define, and struggle to remake themselves. This work engages with theories of the self, personal identity, and social change. Amir's recent research has focused on communications and social skills training groups that are popular among young professionals in urban China. He is currently based in Shenzhen, China, where he is a Junior Fellow in the Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts, Southern University of Science and Technology.



ELLEN KOZELKA

SPA Student Representative: Ellen Kozelka is a PhD Candidate at UCSD. Her research interests include the US-México border, the phenomenology of healing, addiction, emotional experience, and global mental health. Ellen's dissertation examines the cultural definitions and lived experience of the “drug addict” during and after residential treatment. It is a comparative study of four community-based rehabilitation centers in Tijuana, México, though inpatients lives on both sides of the US-MX border. Ellen investigates 1) how each center interprets the problem of “addiction”; 2) how treatment is formulated around that interpretation; and 3) how this influences inpatients' understanding of themselves and their future possibilities.



ASHLEY MAYNARD

Elected Board Member: Dr. Ashley Maynard was trained by psychologists and anthropologists in cultural developmental psychology at UCLA and have always used mixed methods, including ethnography, in her research. She trains her students to do the same. She has been a member of the AAA and SPA since 1999. She investigates the ways that cultural pathways affect development and shape the people we become and our views and values. She has conducted fieldwork with Zinacantec Maya people in the mountains of Chiapas since 1995. She is currently Professor of Psychology at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, where she has been on the faculty since 2001.



JEFF SNODGRASS

SPA Treasurer: Dr. Jeffrey Snodgrass is Professor of Anthropology at Colorado State University. He has conducted long-term ethnographic research in India on topics typically related to religion. His current aim is to understand ritual and play therapeutics from an integrative bio-psycho-cultural perspective, with ongoing projects in the U.S., France, India, and China. This research critically reassesses the movement for global mental health. He directs CSU's Ethnographic Research and Teaching Laboratory, which involves students in original research.

SMA-SPA Box Lunch Mentoring Receives High Praise

By Juan Luque (FAMU), Tawni Tidwell (Emory U), SMA Membership Committee

The Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA) and the Society for Psychological Anthropology (SPA) co-sponsored an inaugural Box Lunch Mentoring Event at the 2017 AAA Meetings in Washington, D.C. Each mentee met with a mentor matched to their interests. The idea for the event was spurred by the AAA's call for grant applications for mentoring activities and was a follow-up to our successful "Speed Mentoring" event at the AAA meetings in 2016 in Minneapolis. The event was made possible by a generous mentoring event grant from the AAA and was also cosponsored by SMA and SPA. The SMA/SPA event planning committee coordinated the advertising of the event through listservs, websites, and social media to preregister mentors and mentees for the event. A total of 20 mentors and 20 mentees preregistered for the event and were matched by interests.

The event co-organizers provided a brief introduction, and then the event began with a short lecture by Kathy Oths (U Alabama) about mentoring and AAA initiatives around mentoring, followed by the one-on-one mentoring discussions. Evaluations collected from 33 participants suggested that the efforts of SMA and SPA to provide mentoring opportunities at the AAA meetings were highly valued.

Participants really liked the mentor-mentee matching based on interests. Mentees also liked the extensive interactions which were helpful for their job application preparations. One mentee commented, "my mentor introduced me to other faculty which in my opinion is key for conferences (beyond just this session)." Several other participants commented that they liked the earlier start time of the event (lunchtime) versus the evening speed networking format from the previous year in Minneapolis.

The co-organizers from SMA (Juan Luque) and SPA (Tawni Tidwell), the SMA Membership Committee, and the SMA and SPA Executive Boards were very appreciative of the event volunteers who included: Carolyne Egesa (MASA liaison and University of

Amsterdam), Catie Willging (PIRE), Ellen Kozelka (Incoming SPA Student Representative and UCSD), and Saira Mehmood (SMA Digital Communications Director and Southern Methodist University).

The organizers would also like to thank the following mentors who volunteered their time to make the event a success:

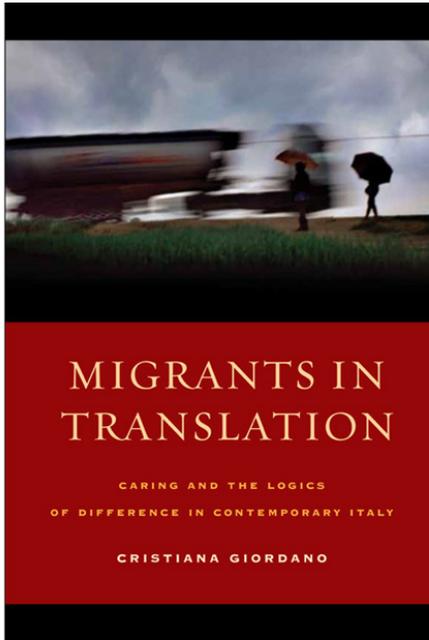
Baer, Roberta ("Robbie") (U South Florida)
Basile, Melissa (Northwell Health System)
Buchbinder, Mara (UNC-Chapel Hill)
Chapin, Bambi (U Maryland Baltimore County)
Deomampo, Daisy (Fordham University)
Dressler, William ("Bill") (U Alabama)
Guarnaccia, Peter (Rutgers U)
Korbin, Jill (Case Western U)
Levin, Betty Wolder (CUNY)
Luhmann, Tanya (Stanford U)
Luque, John ("Juan") (FAMU)
Myers, Neely Lorenzo (Southern Methodist U)
Oths, Kathryn ("Kathy") (U Alabama)
Pritzker, Sonya (U Alabama)
Raikhel, Eugene (U Chicago)
Roedlach, Alex (Creighton U)
Seligman, Rebecca (Northwestern U)
Sobo, Elisa ("EJ") (San Diego State U)
Weaver, Leslie Jo (U Alabama)
Willging, Cathleen ("Catie") (PIRE)
Worthman, Carol (Emory U)



SMA-SPA Lunch Mentoring Event, AAA 2017 (Omni Shoreham)

Boyer Prize for Contributions to Psychoanalytic Anthropology: Cristiana Giordano

Migrants in Translation. University of California Press, 2014.



Migrants in Translation is an ethnographic reflection on foreign migration, mental health, and cultural translation in Italy. The book addresses the larger context of rapidly shifting cultural and political identities in Europe, which are being negotiated as people balance cultural affinities and the challenges of a multicultural and multiracial Europe. The issue of migration and cultural difference figure as central in the process of forming diverse yet unified European identities. In this context, legal and illegal foreigners, mostly from Eastern Europe or Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, are often portrayed as a threat to national and supra-national identities, security, cultural pillars, and religious values. This book addresses the legal, therapeutic, and moral techniques of recognition and cultural translation that emerge in response to this social uncertainty. In particular, *Migrants in Translation* focuses on Italian ethno-psychiatry as an emerging technique that provides culturally appropriate therapeutic services exclusively to migrants, political refugees, and victims of torture and trafficking. In the book, I argue that ethno-psychiatry's focus on cultural identifications as therapeutic, inasmuch as it may comply with current political desires for diversity and multiculturalism, also provides material from which we can construct a radical critique of psychiatric, legal, and moral categories of inclusion. This therapeutic practice allows us to re-think the politics of recognition and cure. Through a reflection on acknowledgment, rather than recognition, I ask whether a different politics of life, beyond the logics of understanding and sovereignty, is possible. I

understand acknowledgment as the political and ethical act of surrendering the desire to know through already established categories, and of accepting the challenges of difference and the possibility of not knowing, not understanding, and thus embracing mis-understanding. Acknowledgment calls for a coming to terms with the fact that difference exceeds categories; the other cannot be assigned a fixed identity, only an opaque and shifting sense of belonging. This kind of relation to difference requires struggling with categories of recognition, undoing them in order to create a new space for politics, where difference introduces change and thus discards pre-existing discourses and identities.

Acknowledgment calls for a coming to terms with the fact that difference exceeds categories



Cristina Giordano is Associate Professor of Anthropology at UC Davis. She received her Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley, and her MA in Philosophy from the Università di Pavia (Italy). Her current research investigates new ways of rendering ethnographic material into artistic forms. Together with playwright and director Greg Pierotti, she has created Unstories, a 50-minute performance addressing the current 'refugee crisis' in Europe.

Stirling Prize for Best Published Work in Psychological Anthropology: Rebecca Lester

Self-governance, psychotherapy, and the subject of managed care: Internal Family Systems therapy and the multiple in a US eating-disorders treatment center. *American Ethnologist*, 44: 23–35.



‘The self’ has seen a surprising resurgence in recent anthropological theorizing, revitalizing interest in whether and how anthropologists can study the self ethnographically. Examining the moral work of a newly popular psychotherapy technique – Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy – in an American eating disorders clinic, this paper offers a way of engaging this emergent literature on the self. Specifically, a new critical anthropology of selfhood illuminates the vectors through which economic and political commitments become imbricated in ‘the self’ in ways that resist either psychologism or subjectivism, but hold these processes in productive—albeit sometimes troubling—tension.

IFS is an American psychotherapy technique developed in the 1980s by psychologist Richard Schwartz. Increasingly popular in the United States for treating personality disorders, mood disorders, and eating disorders, IFS is unusual among American therapies in that it envisions ‘the self’ as a dynamic, evolving, adapting, and open system of sub-personalities or ‘parts’ that operate in ever-changing relationships to one another. ‘The self’ in IFS is not a singular or bounded thing, but, rather, a process emergent from a complex of internal relationships among ‘parts’ that are constantly changing. Agency, accordingly, is not localized within a fixed, singular core, but is distributed and mutable, shifting among different sub-personalities depending on the setting, circumstances, and interactions at hand. This figuring of the self and agency has profound implications for how psychopathology is understood and treated.

Is it possible to place ‘the self’ at the center of ethnographic inquiry?

Several aspects of IFS merit anthropological attention. First, the model’s recent surge in popularity in the US is intriguing for what it might tell us about the appeal for both clinicians and clients of alternate epistemologies and practices of psy-care in the context of healthcare policy reform. Furthermore, the process of becoming an IFS therapist (which is both lengthy and expensive) speaks to the changing demands on therapists to become “therapreneurs”—or individuals who continually pursue additional trainings, new certifications, and new specializations in order to offer more marketable niche treatments—and to the convergence of structures of care and structures of finance. And, finally, the everyday practice of IFS foregrounds questions about how selves are locally enacted and understood within competing models of moral responsibility.

The paper has two objectives: one ethnographic, and the other theoretical. Ethnographically, I ask: how do tensions between the IFS model of distributed agency and the managed care emphasis on personal responsibility unfurl in everyday practice? What might this tell us about how economic processes shape understandings of psychiatric distress, as well as how both clinicians and clients innovate and work around constraints in the system? At a theoretical level, I ask: is it possible to place ‘the self’ at the center of ethnographic inquiry? Under what circumstances, and for what kinds of questions, might a focus on ‘the self’ not only be desirable, but necessary? In bringing these ethnographic and theoretical questions together, I seek to bridge points of disagreement between those anthropologists who explicitly engage the self as an ethnographic analytic and those who view such engagements as epistemologically problematic.

*Rebecca J. Lester is Associate Professor of anthropology at Washington University in Saint Louis and a licensed clinical social worker. Her work considers how bodily practices deemed “deviant,” “extreme,” or “pathological” - and local responses to such practices - make visible competing cultural logics of acceptable moral personhood. Her most recent book *Famished: Eating Disorders and Failed Care in a Culture of Scarcity* is currently under review at *The University of California Press*.*

Condon Prize for Best Student Essay in Psychological Anthropology: Matthew McCoy

I Will Not Die On This Street:" Thinking Things Over in Conflicted Belfast

Many residents in the working-class districts of east Belfast have experienced their loved ones dying on the street. Indeed, this rings true for a large number of Protestants and Catholics in Belfast, Northern Ireland, people who continue to live in the very neighborhoods in which they once saw intense sectarian and colonial violence. Although Belfast is now generally considered as having passed into a 'post-conflict' era, many residents of its still divided and segregated communities confront the moral legacy of historical violence daily.

I lived in east Belfast for sixteen months and conducted fieldwork with Protestants and Catholics. My essay "I Will Not Die on This Street: Thinking Things Over in Conflicted Belfast" arose from the residents' disclosures to me about the way their ethical choices and inner lives have been shaped not only by the factional battles that once took place on the streets outside their homes, but also by the neighborhood's ongoing reminders of those past conflicts. My article specifically addresses the moral and existential trajectories of the residents of Short Strand residents, a working-class Catholic enclave of twenty-two streets, who live and labor under the veneer of a 'post-conflict' Belfast which still bristles with testaments of its more violent days: thirty-foot high 'peace walls' segregating Catholics and Protestants, CCTV cameras, and heavy police presence.

The transition out of political conflict and destabilization in Northern Ireland is a gradual one. However, as Belfast embraces ways of life outside of its historical place in the 'Troubles', the familiar identities and conceptual worlds once made possible by this conflict have become unbundled and untenable to practice. The Good Friday Peace Agreement of 1998, the repeated ceasefires and disarmaments of the paramilitaries, and an influx of UK and EU peace funding and private capital, have all undeniably altered many lives, yet many residents do not know as yet whether these changes are for the better. While many Irish Republicans (an anti-British and pro-socialist identity and political ideology found in Catholic working-class districts) in the Short Strand still speak about a United Ireland, there are deep schisms between those who want peace and dissidents who advocate a return to military campaigns against the British State to achieve their political ends. To make matters more complex, everyday life in the district is punctuated with worries about unraveling community spirit, and the community struggles with widespread drug use and alcoholism, pervasive mental illness, and high unemployment.

"I Will Not Die on This Street: Thinking Things Over in Conflicted Belfast" focuses on the daily trials of a fifty-year old lifelong Short Strand resident as he faces his own mortality and questions his place within the community, in dialogue with a childhood friend and with myself. This essay attempts to capture the ways in which possibilities for remaking one's moral self emerge during familiar – and fragile – moments that prompt us to reflect on the past and reorient our understanding of the future.

Matthew McCoy is a doctoral candidate in anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles. He conducted fieldwork in Belfast, concentrating on the emergence of moral subjectivities in the post-'Troubles' context of both Protestant and Catholic communities who are still segregated by a palimpsest of 'peace walls.' His research explores how residents living amidst these walls commemorate the past, cope with the present, and prepare for an uncertain future in their precarious State.



SPA/Robert Lemelson Foundation Fellow

Mirjam Holleman - University of Alabama

Initial Investigations of a Polish Cultural Model of Socially Expected Behaviors and Lifestyles

The overall aim of my research is to investigate stigma toward and the experiences of people with disabilities in the Polish city of Katowice. In 2004, Poland joined the EU, which mandated the promotion of social integration and inclusion of people with disabilities in society. However, stigma towards those with disability interferes with the successful implementation of legislative objectives (Antonak & Livneh 2000).

Sociologist Erving Goffman suggests that certain people become stigmatized when they are perceived, or expected, to fail to enact a socially constructed 'norm' of behavior (1959). Therefore, in order to understand the forms of stigmatization toward people with disabilities in a particular society, the cultural norms from which they are perceived to deviate need to first be determined. Thus, the first stage of my research involves investigating this 'norm' in Polish society. This short essay describes the methodologies I employed to this end during my pre-dissertation research, funded by the Society for Psychological Anthropology / Robert Lemelson Foundation Fellowship, in the summer of 2016.

I used several innovative ethnographic methods to investigate a cultural model, or implicit agreement in society (Goodenough 1996), on socially approved behavior and lifestyles in Poland. These included an analysis of heroes from Polish folk tales, movies, TV shows and news stories. I asked myself: Who is the hero? What are we supposed to learn from them? I also analyzed child-rearing practices by informally interviewing parents of young children and reading parenting magazines. What kind of norms and values do caregivers try to instill in their children? What kind of person (e.g. gentle, bold, respectful, independent) do they want the child to grow-up to be? Preliminarily, I found, among a sample of 33 that honesty, courage, humility, helpfulness, sensitivity (to the thoughts and feelings of others), and self-reliance and creativity (when dealing with challenges) are highly respected qualities.

Alongside these innovative methodologies, I also employed free-listing techniques. I interviewed participants and asked them to list all the characteristics they can think of relating to the domain of socially approved or respected behavior and lifestyles in Polish society. To make the domain more concrete, I asked participants to "Imagine the kind of person that is commonly considered to be a good, well-respected, member of Polish society (maybe visualize a real-life example, e.g. a character from a book, a historical figure, your neighbor), and list all the qualities and characteristics of this person."

After a pattern of frequently mentioned "qualities of a good person" emerged from the free lists and representations in literature and media, a draft of a survey was developed. The survey contained a list of 10 scenarios, describing a person living or behaving in a way that either mirrors or runs counter to what can be assumed to be 'respected behavior' in Polish society.

These surveys were administered in the form of brief, structured interviews. Respondents were asked to not only rate on a scale of 1-4 how respected the type of behavior described in each scenario would be in their (i.e. Polish) society, but were to describe how they envisioned each character. For example, one scenario read: "Krystyna is a critical and analytical thinker who keeps up with the news and forms her own opinions." "Krystyna," was sometimes described as a grumpy old gossip, while I had pictured her as young, intelligent, independent thinker – and I had used this scenario to test how highly valued independent, intellectual thought would be in Polish society. By pre-testing in this way, I aim to increase the construct validity of the final survey, by minimize disparity between what I'm asking (or what I think I'm asking) and how people are interpreting the questions.

I am currently continuing this research, testing out more scenarios, and continuing revisions based on feedback during interviews. A revised and extended survey will soon be administered to a larger group of respondents, and a cultural consensus analysis (Romney et. al. 1986) will be conducted on the data. Once a clear consensus/cultural model is found, the same survey will be administered to a second group of participants, but this time respondents will be asked to rate not "how respected is this behavior", but "how probable is it that this person is in a wheelchair?" The correlation between the answers from round 1 and 2 will provide the stigma or perceived deviance score of people with disabilities in Polish society.



Holleman presenting on the topic of (dis) ability and social inclusion to a small audience at a festival (Slot Art Festival) in Poland, summer 2016.

My method of investigating disability acknowledges that 'disability' (or a 'cultural model of disability') cannot be understood apart from 'ability' (or the cultural model of 'ability'), and it provides a potentially cross-cultural framework for measuring and comparing levels of stigma toward people with disabilities in various societies. The generous support of the SPA/Robert Lemelson Fund helped me lay the foundation for this research.

Mirjam Holleman is a graduate student in the Biocultural Medical Anthropology Program at the University of Alabama. She is currently conducting her dissertation fieldwork in Katowice, Poland. Her mixed-methods research aims to develop a unique approach to investigating attitudes toward disability and understanding their impact on the social integration and experiences of differently abled people in society.

SPA/Robert Lemelson Foundation Fellow

Paula Martin - University of Chicago

Our Bodies Are Not Our Selves: Situating the Discourse of Gender Identity in the US

It was simple: meet up with a new informant, a non-binary professional willing to chat about their professional and personal experience in a highly gendered medical field. On paper it was a quick bike ride, and I felt justified bringing my favored transportation from my academic home in Chicago to my summer research sites in Seattle and Victoria. Yet, fifteen short minutes later, I was laid up on the sidewalk, the hill a veritable cliff that no person could hope to overcome, sweating in a heat I didn't anticipate, breathing in residual smoke from not so distant forest fires that had unexpectedly harshened the atmosphere. The tightness in my chest and blurred vision forced me to sit, and to wait until I could once again feel at home in my body; this was only one such moment, if the most physical one, in a series of pauses and hesitations that characterized my summer research.

My pre-dissertation research, generously funded by the SPA/Robert Lemelson Foundation (SPA/RLF), asked what historical conditions, technical developments, and individual experiences give rise to an understanding of gender as something located within the body, and thereby medically treatable, as well as something socially structured. I also investigate how such an understanding is situated within the United States, and within fields of knowledge such as adolescent medicine. These questions emerged from my research with young "gender expansive" people in the Midwest participating in a social support group that I observed and helped facilitate. In this initial work, my informants used the term "gender expansive" (rather than transgender) to refer to those who do not identify with their sex assigned at birth, a term chosen to explicitly include those whose identity may not adhere to a binary man/woman system of gender. I found that as a practice, gender affirming care — or interventions which work to align an individual's bodily characteristics with their sense of gender through biomedical and social interventions — often hold together two seemingly opposed conceptions of gender. The first is an understanding of gender as a social construct; an understanding that ties individual suffering to the dominance of narrow social understandings of gender identity. The second is a belief that the serious distress caused by a perceived separation between one's body and one's sex assigned at birth can be best ameliorated through hormonal and surgical interventions, along with social support. In many ways, this second belief works on an embedded notion of gender as fixed, innate, and even biologically given, rather than gender as a primarily social category.

Before my bodily collapse on the Seattle hillside, I spent two weeks in the rich Transgender Archive at the University of Victoria in Victoria, British Columbia. While there, I found my ambitions of scanning through multiple sub-archives stalling as I realized the depth contained within just one - the Rikki Swin Archives. These archives document the history of a now closed Chicago center that educated the public on gender identity. I was struck by the way that personal communication, like the annotated letters which transitioned into printed emails as the 1980's became the 1990's, spoke to the differences in knowledge networks before and after the age of YouTube and Tumblr. Such online resources are central to many contemporary youth's understandings of identity. As I paused, I noticed the history of dual discourses of social construction and essentialism in the face of serious institutional constraint. In particular, individual narratives often described performing a tightly constrained gender identity for gate-keeping professionals, like doctors. Yet, many such narratives remained clear that such a performance would be, or could be, just that – a performance. Stories about emergence of "gender expansiveness" often pose identities like "non-binary" or "gender fluid" as new, but despite the ways such identities have been institutionally rendered invisible, archives like this document a history of gender expansive folks who often questioned the expected relationships between medical interventions and the creation of neatly gendered bodies.

Much of the historical record I examined shows how inequality and discrimination actively persist into the present day, often showing repackaged (but rarely unpacked) trends towards transphobia, racism, and classism within medical and legal systems. Yet, I also found myself pausing to acknowledge and appreciate the resilience of trans folks and the differences between past and present treatment options. During a talk on chest dysphoria at Gender Odyssey, a professional, community and family conference on gender, workshop participants silently surveyed two bared chests, which were offered spontaneously

by two transmasculine attendees of significantly different ages. One huskily discussed his long-healed scars, while the other offered a poignant counterexample of an a more contemporary intervention, minimally invasive. It was more than a comparison of treatment options. Gingerly voyeuristic, we all looked, grappling with unnamed tensions between desires to know, even to protect, and the collective awareness of confronting bodies we have no claim to. In their display, the men answered a question that was never explicitly asked, and the shared sense of vulnerability created a moment of hushed, nearly reverential stillness.

While cycling up a hill I wasn't ready for forced me to wait, to reflect on my body as well as my ability to accurately assess my own capacities, developing a dissertation project has me feeling similarly suspended. I take my SPA/RLF-supported research as a grounding experience which has helped me contextualize and specify my current questions. I anticipate following up with informants and revisiting both Gender Odyssey and the Transgender Archive in the coming years, finding more moments that force me to sit down and reckon with what, exactly, I'm hoping to accomplish.

Paula Martin is a graduate student in the Department of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago, working in gender studies, science and technology studies and anthropology. Paula's dissertation will explore the development and use of biological interventions for transgender and gender expansive youth, in particular hormonal treatments, and track the production and circulation of knowledge about gendered bodies and selves that accompany such interventions.

SPA/Robert Lemelson Foundation Fellow

Lauren Nippoldt - University of California, San Diego

Navigating Moral Experiences with Care: Discussing Motivation and Wellbeing among Care Workers in Chandigarh, India

With the generous support of the SPA/Robert Lemelson Foundation Pre-Dissertation (SPA/RLF) Fellowship, I conducted my dissertation pilot study among voluntary social workers in India during the summer of 2017. My goal was to understand the moral experience of caring for non-kin others within culturally-specific forms of social work in Chandigarh and Delhi, India. During this fieldwork, I worked primarily with groups of Sikh sevadars, individuals who volunteer doing seva (selfless service in the Sikh tradition). I aimed to uncover how traditions of care in India are infused into social work and how the ideology of seva shapes and influences motivation, moral experience, and continued engagement for volunteers.



Nippoldt making roti with sevadars

My fieldwork was multi-sited, and each site differed in terms of Sikh population. I began my fellowship in the city of Chandigarh in Punjab, the only state in India where the Sikh faith is the majority religion. After five weeks of fieldwork in Chandigarh, I began fieldwork in Delhi, the nation's capital and a place where Sikhs have a history as refugees, victims of violence, and where they continue to be a religious minority. By comparing these two field sites, I saw the role that geopolitical histories have played in influencing cultural definitions of seva, inspiring motivation to engage in seva, and shaping moral experiences related to the practice of seva. By moral experience, I mean experiences, such as emotions or embodied feelings, that propel subjects to evaluate themselves, their circumstances, their relationships, and their values in ways that are oriented to culturally-specific understandings of the moral (Mattingly 2014; Parish 1991).

At the beginning of the fellowship period, I worked closely with a local field assistant to develop an approach to person-centered interviewing (Levy and Hollan 1998) focused on moral experience in the Indian context. This included creating a lexicon of Hindi and Punjabi vocabulary referring to moral experiences. In both sites, I began by conducting participant observation with sevadars. This included participating in different seva activities such as cooking and distributing free meals, providing free medical services, and cleaning community areas. I also accompanied sevadars to their homes, met their families, and conducted person-centered interviews with a total of fifteen participants recruited through snowball sampling.

In my preliminary analysis, I found that the religious ideology associated with seva offers a framework that supports sevadars continued involvement and promotes wellbeing. However, I have also begun to discern how individual characteristics of

sevadars, such as age, gender, and socioeconomic class, influence not only the extent of their involvement in seva and the type of seva in which they engage, but also the types of moral experiences they encounter through their involvement. Additionally, I found that relationships that develop through seva are often imbued with aspects of kin-based models of care, such as delayed-reciprocity and hierarchical arrangements of serving (Bornstein 2012; Lamb 2000). In my fieldwork, I was not expecting the sevadars to describe, as they did, their practice of seva in relation to the communal violence they experienced. This included beliefs that seva was a way to improve intercommunity relationships, change Sikh's reputation, and transform personal sentiments about identifying as Sikh. This preliminary research raised many more questions about the contemporary practice of seva, its meaning for Sikh communities, and how seva may act as a way for individuals and the community to heal following experiences of violence.

The SPA/RLF Fellowship has been instrumental for the development of my dissertation project. By conducting this preliminary research, I developed connections with participants who will continue to collaborate with me during my dissertation research in the future. I have narrowed the focus of my dissertation to investigate the contemporary meaning and practice of seva among Sikhs. I will focus on investigating the impact of participants' subject positions on their moral experiences. More broadly, I aim to identify how seva facilitates transformation on the level of the person and the community, and how these transformations via seva shape moral experience, foster wellbeing and healing, and promote intercommunity harmony in the aftermath of histories of violence and conflict. This fellowship allowed me the opportunity to develop important methodologies that are linguistically and culturally appropriate for inquiring about moral experiences. Finally, my experience in the field also allowed me to connect with the academic community in India which has and will continue to offer opportunities for collaboration and intellectual growth.

Since conducting the pilot study, I have presented portions of my findings at the 2017 American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting and the 2018 Sikholars Conference, held at Stanford University, where I was awarded the Ajeet Singh Matharu Memorial prize. I also recently received a Global Religion Research Initiative Grant to expand this project and investigate the meaning and practice of seva among Sikhs in different parts of India and within the Sikh diaspora.



Mobile outpatient clinic

Works Cited

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Distributing langar (free meal) in North Delhi

Lauren Nippoldt is a PhD student in Anthropology at the University of California, San Diego. Her research investigates the experiences of individuals who perform seva, voluntary religious social work in the Sikh tradition, in Northern India. She is interested in how different sociodemographic subject positions impact moral personhood through seva. She explores how seva can foster experiences of wellbeing, communal healing, and intercommunity harmony.

SPA/Robert Lemelson Foundation Fellow

Emily Wilson - University of Chicago

Intimacy for Hire: Sensorial Care in the American Gig Economy



A participant at a “Free Hugs” rally at the Santa Monica, California farmer’s market

I was awarded the Society for Psychological Anthropology/Robert Lemelson Foundation (SPA/RLF) Fellowship to fund preliminary fieldwork on therapeutic touch and healing practices in the United States. I investigated ‘Professional Cuddling’, a form of intimate labor that emerged in 2004 in New York City as a commercialized healing service and is now practiced throughout the country. The research question guiding my ethnographic work was “How do professional cuddlers transform stigmatized intimate labor into a fulfilling way of life?”

In the summer of 2017 I traveled to Portland, Oregon where the first professional cuddling storefront in the United States, Cuddle Up to Me, was opened in 2015. While professional cuddlers practice out of their homes throughout the United States, Portland is one of the few cities that has an organized cuddling business. Thus, it was an ideal site to observe and interview a group of professional cuddlers and their clients. Professional cuddling is part of the American ‘gig’ economy, which is a labor market characterized by short-term, contract employment. Portland, a hub for creative, independent workers, has an active and growing ‘gig’ economy. I also traveled to Los Angeles, California, and stayed with a professional cuddler from another business, Cuddle Sanctuary. For three months in Portland and Los Angeles I regularly attended and participated in group cuddle meetup events, participated in professional cuddling marketing and promotional activities, and interviewed cuddlers, touch therapists, and some clients.

The ability to infuse bodily work with a soulful, authentic mission was crucial for professional cuddlers. Every cuddler I interviewed described their entrance into professional cuddling as a journey of discovery and a path towards a meaningful life, and as building on the skills they gained in previous careers in sales, education, and religious work. This is because professional cuddling work allows practitioners to use their bodies and emotions in ways that feel authentic and impactful, as opposed to forms of alienating office and sales work that they performed in the past. For those who were religious, cuddling work is less restrictive and black-and-white than Christian and Mormon ideologies and practices.

source of ethnographic data. The majority of cuddle participants worked in the ‘gig’ economy as contingent laborers and sought out group cuddle events as a way to connect with other people and fulfill their touch needs. I discovered that it was not touch alone that produces healing effects, but also carefully organized and negotiated forms of social interaction. Cuddle groups are highly structured events: each event begins with a consent workshop in which participants learn how to make cuddling requests and either accept or reject requests from others. During the sixty minutes of free cuddle time following the workshop, individuals negotiate touch and non-touch interaction using specific consent templates. They also relax and have a good time. The bonds people make in cuddle groups are temporary and non-binding: individuals interact with one another and then leave the interaction whenever they want without any negative consequences. Group cuddle events provide an antidote to and perpetuate the precarity and contingency inherent in ‘gig’ economies. As a cuddle participant once remarked, “Cuddling is like medicine.”

Group cuddle meetup events were a regular part of my weekly routine and my main



A group cuddle room in Portland, Oregon

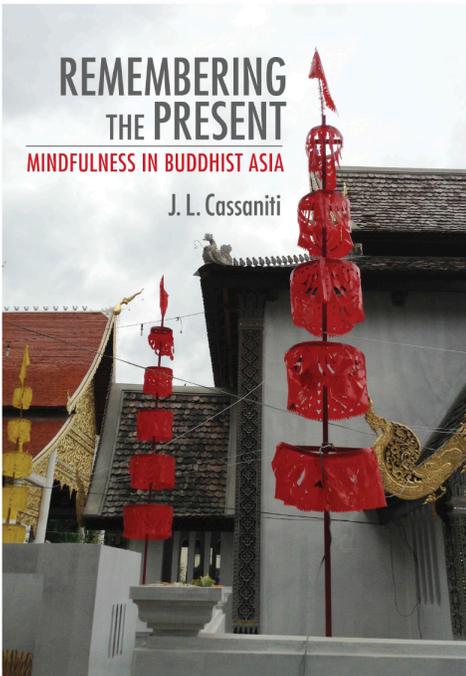
My research on professional cuddling joins anthropological and sociological research on labor, affect, and intimacy under global capital. Anthropologists define ‘intimate labor’ as forms of bodily and emotional work that individuals and societies require to survive and flourish. Starting in the late 1970’s, intimate labor professions such as massage therapy, home care, beauty services, and sex work have expanded and diversified within the American service economy. Anthropologists have conceptualized intimate labor as part of a global ‘care chain,’ or a network of laborers who leave their families in poor countries in order to care for others in wealthier nations. Chains represent the string of care labors that crisscross the globe, binding together certain kinship structures while separating others. But a chain also elicits images of the nature of these labors: intimacies that are forged not through choice, but out of necessity. Professional cuddling, however, is unlike many other forms of intimate labor. Professional cuddlers are often white, middle-class women who view their work as a liberating, embodied social mission. Professional cuddling exemplifies intimate labor under America’s flexible ‘gig’ labor economy, in which labor arises both from the laborer’s desires as well as the consumer marketplace’s demands.

I am currently working on a paper that uses professional cuddling as a way to study emotions and work beyond alienating care chains. My proposed dissertation project builds on the themes of economies of care and intimate labor that were central to my professional cuddling research. In particular, I will research intergenerational homeshare projects in which younger tenants care for older homeowners in exchange for free rent. These projects have proliferated in the US and Western Europe beginning in the 1990's alongside nation-wide crises in state welfare programs. Like professional cuddlers, many homesharers view their work as a form of intimate friendship, rather than a burdensome obligation.

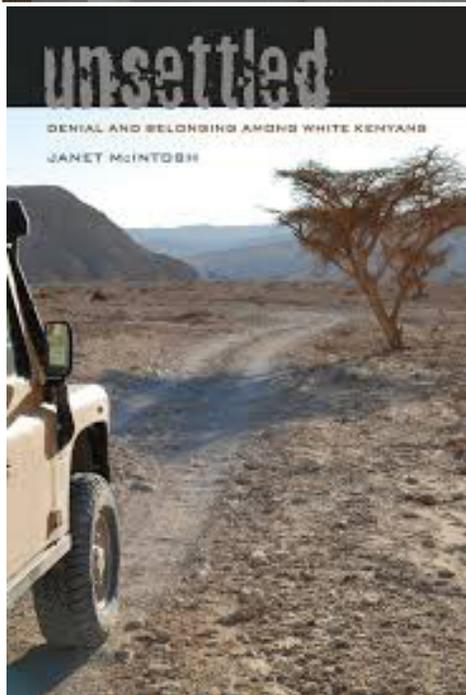
I could not have done this research without the generous support of the SPA/RLF Fellowship. The SPA continually supports graduate students and scholars in the production of original and groundbreaking work. Support from the SPA/RLF Fellowship gave me the time and financial support I needed in order to build connections with a diverse network of intimate workers and to understand the circumstances of their lives and the nature of their healing work.

Emily Wilson is a PhD student in Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago. She received her Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW) from the University of Michigan. Her research examines how care and intimacy are elicited and arranged under conditions of social and economic precarity.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS



Out this April 15: Julia Cassaniti's *Remembering the Present* offers a psychological anthropology approach to understanding mindfulness in cultural context, with an engaged ethnographic account of sati ('mindfulness' in the Pali language of Theravada Buddhism) in the lives of monks, psychiatrists, and students in Thailand, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Through an investigation mindfulness' cultural affiliations with temporality, affect, power, ethics and selfhood, *Remembering the Present* combines 'global scientific conversations about contemplation with local South and Southeast Asian medical and religious engagements, arguing for the continuing importance of contemporary contexts in the anthropological study of mind.



Janet McIntosh's *Unsettled: Denial and Belonging among White Kenyans* receives Honorable Mention in the 2017 Victor Turner Prize for ethnographic writing. In this book, McIntosh looks at the lives and dilemmas of settler descendants living in post-independence Kenya. From clinging to a lost colonial identity to pronouncing a new Kenyan nationality, the public face of white Kenyans has undergone changes fraught with ambiguity. Drawing on fieldwork and interviews, McIntosh focuses on their discourse and narratives to ask: What stories do settler descendants tell about their claim to belong in Kenya? How do they situate themselves vis-a-vis the colonial past and anti-colonial sentiment, phrasing and re-phrasing their memories and judgments as they seek a position they feel is ethically acceptable? McIntosh explores contradictory and diverse responses: moral double consciousness, aspirations to uplift the nation, ideological blind-spots, denials, and self-doubt as her respondents strain to defend their entitlements in the face of mounting Kenyan rhetorics of ancestry.



SPA member Greg Thompson and his students at a temple stay at Jogyesa Temple while taking a break from ethnographic research in elementary schools in Seoul.



SPA member Elena Lesley participating in a Katen ceremony in the Kompong Chhnang province.

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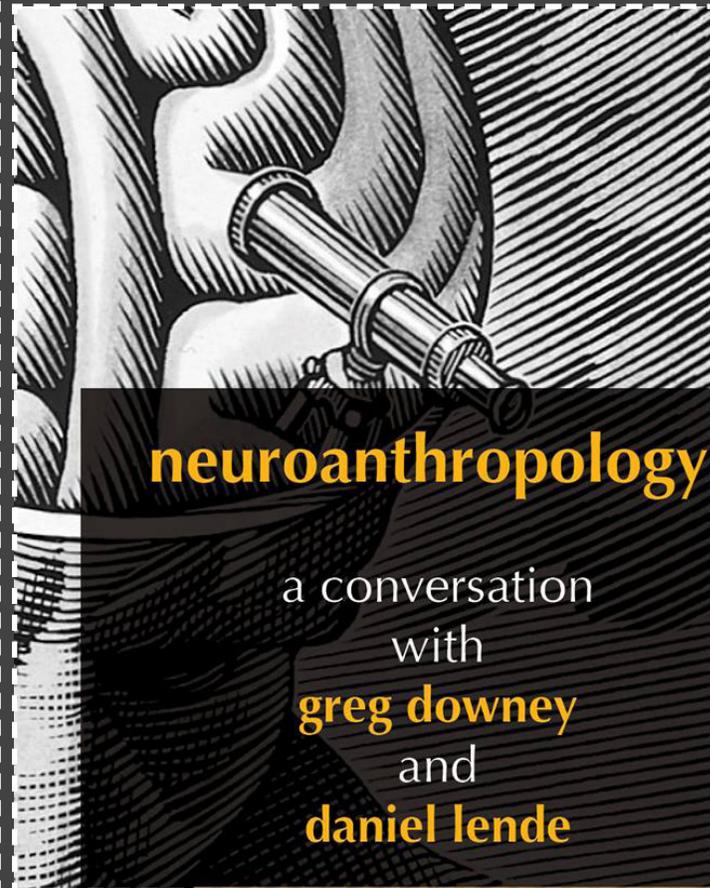
anthropology
NEWS

Your SPA co-editors on Anthropology-News (Amir Hampel & Kathy Trang) would like to hear from you! Do you have pictures from the field or any accolades, publications, or news you would like to share with other SPA members? Throughout the year, SPA-AN regularly features research by our members and the team is always looking for ways to better engage with the interests of members. If you have an idea for a piece or for a series, be in touch (spa.an.submissions@gmail.com)!

NEW ON SPA *vimeo*



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Dr Rebecca Lester (WUSTL)
conducted by Ellen Kozelka (UCSD)



neuroanthropology

a conversation
with
greg downey
and
daniel lende



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cal research. Digital sensors and mobile
observe social behaviors and psycho-physio-
lay life with increasing fine granularity. By
variability across time and space, these tech-
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her with anthropological methods, provide
atial processes scaffolding cultural learning
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