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The Epigenetics of Human Diversity and Evolution: A Brave New World of Anthropology Inquiry

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Our understanding of the genetics of human evolution and diversity has remained rather static until recently. Yes there have been revolutionary developments in understanding our close genetic ties to other great apes (sharing 99% of our DNA with chimpanzees), the origin of our species starting with a mitochondrial Eve existing some 200,000 years ago in southern Africa, our ability to trace the movement of family lineages across time and space, and mapping out the human genome. However, we are still a very long way away from deciphering the genetic code that defines the biology of our species. That being said, the decades-long nature-nurture debates that anthropologists have expressed their angst over via pen and pulpit are now becoming even more complex. Enter the epigenome and the world of epigenetics. As the term implies these are factors that lie outside, or above and beyond, the traditional DNA found coiled in the chromosomes inside the nucleus of each of our cells.

My goal for this article is to define these concepts and highlight how our understanding of this process will forever change how we look at the origin and diversity of our species and life on earth. Please bear with me through the first three subsections since I believe that it is important to first review and work up to our current understanding of anthropological genetics. If you are so inclined please feel free to jump down to the epigenetic subheading.

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Message from the President

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More about the NEAA, More about Us

The Northeastern Anthropological Association is passing into its 52nd year. Key organization conditions set in 1960 by George Trager and other SUNY Buffalo founders are still vital today. And, these founding principles were evident at the recent 51st Annual Meeting in Rindge, New Hampshire thanks to the organizational work of Robert Welsch and the generosity of Franklin Pierce University. The NEAA remains a regional organization where professional anthropologists can experiment and freely exchange ideas.

On Saturday, March 26, 2011, Kathryn Boswell (Bard College at Simon's Rock) ran a session entitled *Timeless and Timely Narratives of Terrestrial and Metaphysical Orderings*. Concurrently, there were archaeological, museum, research and data analyses, and critical perspectives sessions on power, health, psychology, and narratives. There were sessions on student research (Franklin Pierce University), undergraduate ethnographic research (SUNY Genesco) and cultural expression (Roger Williams University). Vans of participants from SUNY Potsdam arrived, as did scholars from Wells College, St John's University, DePaul University, the Public Archaeology Lab, Inc., University of Wyoming, Dartmouth College, University of Vermont, Harvard University, UMass: Amherst, SUNY: New Paltz, SUNY: Oneonta, Keene State College, Bridgewater State University, Rhode Island College, and more. Denice Szafran (SUNY: Buffalo) won the Estelle Smith Graduate Student Paper Prize for *Falling Into Silliness: Play in the Age of Virtu/Reality*. And Katherine Curtis Donahue (Plymouth State University) delivered an overview of this year's NEAA theme in her keynote address: *Celebrating the Diversity of Anthropological Research in the 21st Century*.

Several earlier sessions on Friday, March 25, illustrate how the NEAA can be an exotic experience, a rite of passage to undergraduate and graduate students. Ceremonies demand preparation, as we witnessed in Ryan Adams' organized Lycoming College panel that evaluated theory from the scientific anthropology of Franz Boas to the postmodernism of Lila Abu-Lughod. And ritual participants require mentoring, as revealed in an Ithaca College session organized by Denise Nuttall that explored identity formation through performance, spirituality and art, particularly in Southeast Asia. These experiences and the research they represent can be transformative, as shown in the Northeastern University panel chaired by Mary Sterpka King where the promises of engaged research were critically discussed. How does anthropology confront 21st Century realities?

Graduation Rites of Passage

To an archaeologist it is plain as the dirt on which we stand: what is local and most familiar is scarcely separate from the exotic worlds we investigate. My office is part of a comprehensive state college. Ninety percent of my students are drawn from nearby neighborhoods and families. Even as I developed this essay, preparations were underway outside my office window for a major local rite of passage. Graduation 2011 would take place on the mall and for a few hours, thousands of citizens from Rhode Island districts and towns, including Pascoag and Woonsocket, would cram into this college green.

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NEAA 2012 Conference hosted by Bridgewater State University Bridgewater, Massachusetts

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

The 52nd Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Anthropology Association will be held at Bridgewater State University from March 8 – 10, 2012. Appropriate to the year in terms of the Mesoamerican calendar systems, marking both a 52-year cycle and the end of the 13th baktun, the theme of the meeting will be “Cultural Constructions of Time.” We have invited Dr. John Carlson, a renowned expert on the Mayan calendar, as a keynote to speak on the December 21, 2012 event. The conference is co-sponsored by the Bridgewater State University Anthropology Department, the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, and the Greater Boston Anthropology Consortium. The meeting will open with a reception and tour at the Massachusetts Archaeological Society’s Robbins Museum of Archaeology on the evening of Thursday, March 8th. Paper and poster sessions will take place at the Bridgewater campus on Friday and Saturday, March 9th and 10th. The keynote address will be preceded by a banquet. Papers and posters on topics from all of the subfields of Anthropology are welcome; the submission deadline is February 15, 2012. Bridgewater State University is easily accessible via commuter rail from South Station in Boston; a station on the Middleboro-Lakeville line is located right on campus. The Silver Line bus provides frequent shuttles to South Station from Logan Airport. For further information, please contact Dr. Curtiss Hoffman at c1hoffman@bridgew.edu.

The NEAA has a Facebook page

Did you know the NEAA has a Facebook page? We created this page for a few key reasons. The first is to reach members and others. There are over 600 million Facebook users, 50% of whom log in everyday, and each user spend an average of 55 minutes browsing Facebook content. The NEAA Facebook page therefore allows us access to both current and potential NEAA members. The second reason is to engage our members throughout the entire year. It also allows us to communicate on a less formal level. We can discuss news items relevant to anthropology, our region, and upcoming events, as well as answering direct queries or highlighting particular programs and field schools. In this regard, the NEAA Facebook page is updated regularly throughout the week, highlighting current events in anthropology. We also have a discussion boards available for undergraduate, graduate, and professional NEAA members to keep in touch long after (or before) the annual meetings. From a more analytical perspective, Facebook allows the NEAA executive board insight into our members in a way a website isn’t able to. By using the analytics available through Facebook, we can see our fans broken down by gender, age, and location. We can also track interactions with our page to see "likes," "comments" and "daily active users," allowing us to see which of our posts provoke the most interaction and therefore we can post more similar items in the future to encourage even more interaction. And lastly, Facebook pages are public, and as such they are indexed by the search engines. And, as the search engines are now treating ‘social signals’ such as comments, fan numbers, likes, etc. as indicators of importance, the more active NEAA is on these social platforms like Facebook, the better our ranking in search results, meaning more web traffic and more potential members.

A Mendelian Story of Peas and Ear Wax

Teaching classic anthropological genetics begins with the story of Mendelian traits. It is a rather familiar story to tell since we have all had some general exposure to the story of Mendel and his cross-breeding pea experiments in our secondary education. The one gene = one trait approach is also quite simple to understand. We can roll our tongues or we cannot. Our earlobes are attached or they are not. We can have wet-sticky or dry-brittle ear wax (cerumen) [For some reason this one always seems to gross out students. Therefore, I'm always tempted to bring in the cotton ear swabs for a test]. The traits are either dominant or recessive which determines whether or not they are expressed in the phenotype as physical characteristics. If they are not expressed recessive traits can still be inherited, encoded in our genotype as a sequence of DNA that we've named the gene. Given that as a species we have 23 pairs of chromosomes, Mendelian genes are matched allele pairs that either code for the same trait (homozygous) or two different ones (heterozygous).

The great thing about Mendelian traits is that they don't easily line up to any one ancestral group. Thus, in a diverse classroom it brings up an appropriate teaching moment for reinforcing the fact that racial groups are not genetic entities. The downside is that we really only know of about 5,000 Mendelian traits in humans. They have been systematically mapped out to the specific chromosome and gene location where they reside, but only give us a tiny window into our ancestry and diversity.

Polymorphic Genetic Traits: A Parasite's Tale

The next step is to review the concept of polymorphic traits. More than 50 years ago anthropological geneticist Frank Livingstone pioneered our understanding of the sickle-cell trait. Rather than following a simple Mendelian system the concept of co-dominance had to be considered. The trait was found in the alleles to be either for a normal hemoglobin protein or one that collapsed in on itself and sickled making it unable to fulfill its oxygen and iron carrying capacity, leading to the disease sickle-cell anemia.

The importance of Livingstone's work was that it demonstrated a selective evolutionary advantage of a polymorphic trait that provided protection against malaria. It was a co-dominant, heterozygous and polymorphic trait that was expressed as both normal and sickled red blood cells. The stark evolutionary reality is that those who have a double dose of the sickle-cell trait (homozygous) will generally die from sickle-cell anemia at a young age without medical intervention (approximately 1 in 500 African Americans develop sickle cell-anemia). Those individuals who live in malarial prone regions of the world who have a double dose of the normal hemoglobin protein will generally die from malaria at a young age. Malaria currently kills about a one million people a year, most of whom are children. However, individuals with both traits (heterozygous) are offered enough protection from the malarial parasite, which invades the red blood cell of its host, to survive to adulthood.

It has been an incredibly fast form of evolutionary selection most likely occurring over the past 2,000 years or so as humans moved into tropical ecosystems with slash and burn agriculture. This created environments (open pools of water in the newly cleared agricultural fields) ideal for breeding the mosquitoes (*Anopheles sp.*) that carry the malarial parasite (*Plasmodium sp.*). The bleak figures above

translate theoretically (by means of a Punnett square) into only heterozygous parents and their heterozygous children surviving, or 50% of the population. The death toll from sickle-cell anemia is approximately 25% of the population while another 25% will die from malaria. In evolutionary terms this 50% rate of survivability is more than enough to perpetuate the population.

From this work anthropologists were quick to realize that many traits that defined human evolution, adaptation and diversity were indeed polymorphic. In addition, not only were the expression of Mendelian traits not as smooth or wrinkled as dominant and recessive characteristics, many of the things that define us were also polygenic. This means that several genes governed at multiple allele locations are responsible for traits that shape how we look. For example, skin color is a polygenic trait governed by 6 loci and at least 12 alleles. With the spectrum of continuous polygenic traits we can once again realize how futile dividing our species up into defined discrete racial biological categories really is.

The Human Genome Project: Reminding Ourselves of How Little We Know

Amidst great fanfare it was announced by 2003 that the entire human genome or sequence of DNA had been decoded from beginning to end across all 46 of our paired chromosomes. The implications were profound. Could we now unlock the secrets of what made us uniquely human? Could we now put our entire genetic sequence on a chip embedded into our health insurance cards? Have we established ethical and legal safeguards for revealing this proprietary information? Do we even own the patent rights to our own genome? Yes, these are questions best reserved for a future article, but the reality is that at this point the answer to each of them is essentially, No. We still have a long way to go before our entire genome is actually known let alone what it means.

What was discovered was that humans had far fewer genes than we ever thought possible, less than 25,000. Water fleas and grape plants have over 30,000 genes. Numbers of genes of course do not easily translate into the complexity of the organism. Even though we do share about half of our DNA with bananas a most revealing dimension of the project was how genetic similar we actually were as a species, 99.99999 % (not a typo) functionally identical in fact. The differences however clearly have a profound impact on our genotype in terms of, for example, susceptibility to disease, and in our phenotype in how we define “otherness.”

One facet of the human genome that keeps geneticists scratching their heads is that only about 2% of our DNA actually codes for the proteins that keep us alive and make us who we are. In the past the other 98% was referred to as “junk” DNA and was thought to be useless, much like the urban legend that we use don’t use 90% of our brain (some even more). In reality that vast sequence of nucleotide bases that make up the difference is now called “non-coding” DNA. We are only beginning to understand how the genome communicates along and across chromosomes and the role of non-coding DNA in gene control and expression.

I hesitate to have taken you this far in reviewing how little we really know about our genome to then introduce concepts that have nothing to do directly with the structure of coding or non-coding DNA. Yet we are now in a brave new world that requires us to address the role of epigenetics and the epigenome in all of our anthropologically inquiry.

Epigenetics: Above and Beyond the Call of DNA

Epigenetics refers to a set of processes that impact gene function but these processes neither alter the sequence of DNA nor are they passed along through our inheritable genetic code. Yet mounting evidence suggests that the action of epigenetic factors control cellular differentiation during growth and development (what signals making a skin cell compared to a liver cell) and can indeed be inherited. This overarching control center of gene expression has been dubbed the epigenome, residing above and over the genome. Epigenetic markers can switch our genes on or off.

The fetal matrix through which we pass from a fertilized egg or single cell into a human is full of epigenetic switches as our ontogenic development recapitulates our phylogenic evolutionary past. At a macro level it is those gill-slits and tails we can see in early fetal development. At a micro level it may be turning on genes that both protect us or put us at great risk for developing a host of diseases as we age.

What can influence a change in the epigenome is none other than the environment. While many biological anthropologists have been obsessed with finding genes that were destined to explain human adaptation through reproductive ecology and evolutionary fitness, the reality is far more complex. Environmental factors such as synthetic chemicals, diet, prenatal nutrition, and psychosocial stress can alter the expression of the genome. Even more profound is that this could be passed on from one generation to the next.

It should be noted that the influence of epigenetics is not evolution, at least as far as we have traditionally defined it: changes in the frequency of alleles from one generation to the next. Epigenetic factors do not alter our sequence of DNA. However, we may find that the epigenome may have a substantial impact on the evolutionary process. No, Lamarck and his theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics will not have the last laugh. One is not acquiring new genetic traits through this process. Perhaps we need to refine our definition of Darwinian natural selection wherein nimble epigenetic inheritance allows constant adjustment to the environment through controlling gene expression without actually altering the genome. In short, what is at stake is not the genetic code itself but control over it.

Specific to cellular differentiation and organismal development, DNA methylation (adding methyl groups) is known to suppress or alter the expression of deleterious genes. This epigenetic function may be critical to healthy outcomes at birth and throughout our lives. Therefore, some have begun to advocate that prenatal nutrition should include supplements that increase the dietary intake of, for example, B vitamins which are known to contribute methyl groups.

The foundation of this work comes from studies of agouti mice which are destined by their genetic code to become obese and develop diabetes. However, experiments with two genetically identical groups have shown that the mice fed methyl donating B vitamins (folic acid and B-12) were not obese nor did they develop diabetes. Additional experiments on environmental exposure of pregnant mice to some synthetic plastics (e.g., bisphenol) actually saw a reduction in methyl groups. Again, the need to consider the consequences of environmental stress.

We must bear in mind that epigenetic responses may actually be inherited through many generations. Minimally, three generations can be simultaneously exposed to identical environmental stressors: the pregnant mother who ingests pesticide residue on an apple, a developing female fetus, and the eggs of her offspring. Therefore, prenatal environmental exposures can impact a woman's grandchildren. It has

been argued that the case for transgenerational epigenetic inheritance will best be supported if there is a change in the 4th generation.

Evidence for epigenetic inheritance in humans is slowly mounting with historical studies on the impact of feast and famine cycles on future generations. The rapid rise in diabetes worldwide has been theorized to now be best understood as a result not of a thrifty genotype [James Neel's hypothesis for the high rates of diabetes in Native American groups like the Pima and Papago] but of a thrifty phenotype (a.k.a. Barker's Hypothesis) in which the developing fetus is impacted when their mother's health and nutritional status are compromised.

Evolving Epigenomes and Paradigms

At this point in time, the specific mechanism for how the epigenome rides along the chromosomes to get passed on with the genome from one generation to the next is unclear. As I said in the beginning it does however signal a dramatic shift in how we understand the origin and diversity of our species and life on earth. The unexplained differences in biological outcomes, positive and negative, of genetically similar groups can now be seen in a new light. The most immediate application of this thinking is in shaping a new understanding of patterns of health disparities. The full integration of the impact of political-economic and sociocultural factors on human biology is much needed in an age of a renewed focus on the anthropology of the environment and climate change. Perhaps this might even establish a biologically informed call for social justice and a biology of poverty.

Don't expect a Kuhnian paradigm shift to happen anytime soon. For example, most recent editions of introductory physical anthropology textbooks either do not mention epigenetic concepts or only give it minimal "definitional" coverage. In addition, in all of the titles and abstracts of papers given at the 80th annual meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in Minneapolis in April 2011 any reference to epigenetics appeared in only three papers. Even in these cases it is generally used as a throw away term to explain shortcomings in the genetic data.

It is appropriate to begin to rethink our long-standing assumptions about human adaptation with an epigenome that can quickly adjust our genome to changing environments. For example, what we thought were genes specific to some populations may in fact be held by our entire species but are only expressed in those groups due to epigenetic factors responding to environmental change. We truly need to throw the dichotomous and contentious nature-nurture debate out the window and begin to conceptualize how our human actions impact our biology in both the short and long term (How do we explain for example the rise in asthma and allergies?) Although we like to tout anthropology's holistic understanding of human adaptation in terms of phenotypic plasticity we now have to consider the implications of genotypic plasticity, too. It is an important lesson in this brave new world of genetic reductionism that we do not lose sight of our holistic and even Boasian commitment to an anthropological inquiry that reveals the particularistic legacies of our biological life-histories.

Suggested Readings:

Cloud, John

2010 Why Your DNA Isn't Your Destiny. *Time*. January 6, 2010.

<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1951968,00.html>

Feinberg, Andrew P.

2007 Phenotypic Plasticity and the Epigenetics of Human Disease. *Nature* 447: 433-440.

Jablonka, Eva and Gal Raz

2009 Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance: Prevalence, Mechanisms, and Implications for the Study of Heredity and Evolution. *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 84(2): 131-176.

Kuzawa, Christopher W. and Elizabeth Sweet

2009 Epigenetics and the Embodiment of Race: Developmental Origins of US Racial Disparities in Cardiovascular Health. *American Journal of Human Biology* 21:2-15.

NCMHD Center of Excellence for Nutritional Genomics

2010 Nutritional Epigenetics: What Your Grandmother didn't tell You about Nutrition. NCMHD Center of Excellence for Nutritional Genomics: University of California-Davis. <http://nutrigenomics.ucdavis.edu/documents/NationalWICIRLR09232010.pdf>

Continued from page 2 Morenon Exotic Localism

It is important to acknowledge the tremendous accomplishment and potential represented in the thousands who march down campus malls each May, matched by millions who make similar treks around the globe. Many new graduates are the first in their families to attend college. Some now have skills to create new information. Others have acquired skills to retain and share knowledge that has accumulated in our memorable places over millennia. Rhode Island College 2011 graduate Joe DeFrancesco, for example, read his first professional paper at the 51st NEAA conference six weeks earlier.

Familiar and Exotic

Some of this year's graduates may think about the diversity of languages understood and about the range of performances that have preceded them as they listen to the incantations of each speaker who steps to the microphone. Perhaps one or two will turn their eyes to the ground and wonder about ancient stories that rest within these soils, as contemporary heroes recite memorable truths – “go forth class of 2011.”

Yet, before 1957 anyone seated on Rhode Island College's graduation green would have seen cows grazing on pastures and children from the nearby State Home and School, the state “orphanage,” at work and play. And, thousands of years earlier the children and families of Narragansett communities tapped the oak hickory woodlands that are still part of this urban campus. This is not an imaginary reconstruction: ecologists have described the twelve foot diameter white oak trees that stand on this campus, and archaeologists have recorded stone walls, plow scars, institutional pottery and quartz flakes – the by-product of indigenous tool manufacture – on and in these soils. Thus, it is hard for this archaeologist not to think of the ceremonies on the green graduation mall in exotic and familiar ways.

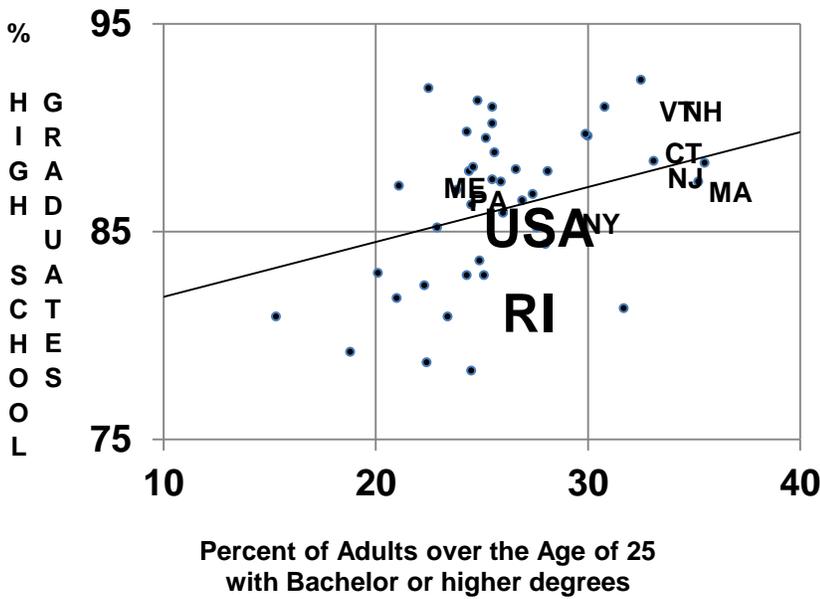


Figure 1: Educational Attainment by State in 2004 (U.S. Census Bureau: 2005: Table 13)

Creating More Skills

Rhode Island underscores the importance of graduation ceremonies at each level of education. Rhode Island is currently near the bottom on the important measure of the percentage of adults over the age of 25 who have completed high school (Figure 1). States in the Northeast from which the NEAA regularly draws participants are highlighted here. Most NEAA states have among the highest percentages of high school and/or college graduates in their 25 and older adult population, but not Rhode Island.

This is not a monotonous statistic because graduation rates vary greatly by school type, community and socio-economic status. Our few, small elite preparatory schools expect 100% graduation rates, while our many gritty urban communities hope for half that rate. As is the case for many comprehensive state colleges and universities around the nation, our students work. It is difficult to maintain full time student status and hold down a twenty to forty hour a week job. Nationally, only half of the entering freshmen graduate within six years. Moreover, Rhode Island's unemployment rate now hovers around 11%, and its poverty rate is slightly better than the national average (Figure 2).

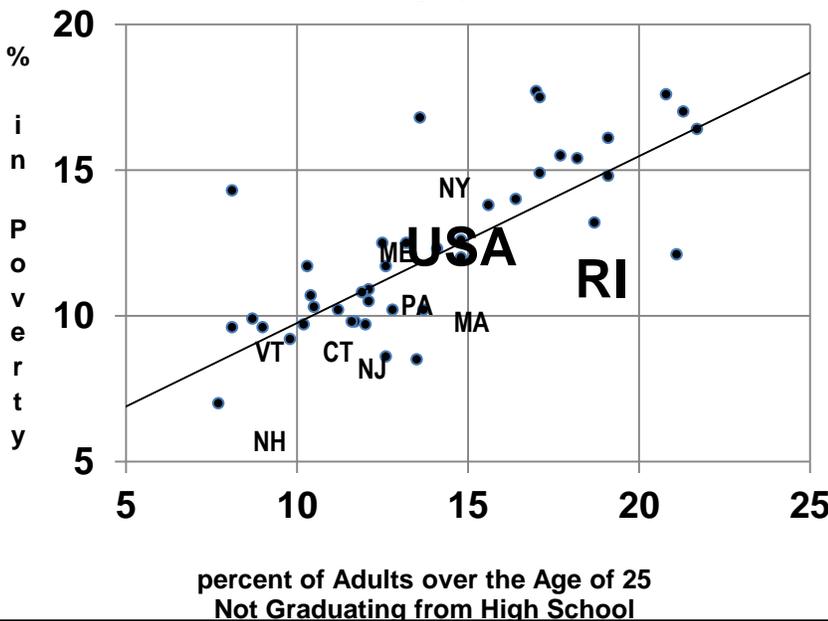


FIGURE 2: Poverty and Educational Attainment by State in 2004 (DeNavas-Walt, et al: 2005: Table 10; U.S. Census Bureau: 2005: Table 13; Huebler: 2005)

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Poverty, graduation rates, college engagement and anthropology programs are co-dependent variables here. If anthropologists wish to be attentive to confronting the realities of the 21st Century, then our work needs to be conducted globally and locally. In this regard, even our classrooms become places for fieldwork.

The Importance of Studying Local Places

Each semester students in my introductory archaeology class are challenged to observe and write about places. Each must select a place which is seen, touched and

measured in the process of study. Thus, I rarely receive studies of Tikal's temples. Rather, more immediate places are invariably selected, like a dorm room or mom's kitchen counter. For example, a study of a kitchen garden discovered that the fresh tomatoes from a backyard have deep roots in the Italian countryside of a boyfriend's grandfather's origin. However, studying familiar places invariably proves problematic because writers are required to discover something "new" about a place that is "old" to them. They must ask questions about places for which there are no ready answers.

Discovery often starts with ordinary categories, which can prove to be taxonomic quagmires. Consider this analysis: last semester in late October someone asked if a bus stop would be a good place to study. My thoughts turned to an earlier study where ethnic wars fought in a local high school were documented on the tags sprayed and etched on a bus stop enclosure. So, I encouraged more graffiti research as part of this new bus stop study. But that was not possible because this bus stop was not enclosed; it was an intersection. So, attention turned to the signage at the cross roads.

A week later this question was raised: could a tree near the bus stop be included in this study, since a bus stop sign was nailed to it? The tree was a signpost, a boundary to this place; and the attached sign named it. I mentioned that it was too bad that the research was being conducted late in the fall because determining a tree type would be more difficult without its leaves. That was not a problem because the researcher had never seen a leaf on this tree. Furthermore, it had no limbs. I imagined a metal bus stop sign pinned to an amputated trunk; a brutally de-limbed tree standing within a stark urban streetscape of asphalt and concrete. This tree must be dead, indeed.

Naming Familiar Things

Next, I learned that the tree was also full of wires, which finally led to this question: was this tree really a telephone pole? That name, telephone pole, was a curiosity to my researcher, as was my description of telephone wires. This student only used a cell phone. In retrospect, telephones with wires and telephone lines were unfamiliar in a wireless world. It appears that prior to this bus stop study, telephone poles had been an unnoticed and unnamed part of this researcher's everyday landscape.

The completed excellent study was different from what I expected, based on the discussions outlined above. Discrete objects dropped by bus riders proved to be more intriguing than that telephone pole. By simple deduction, many of the items noticed on the ground twice a day, while stepping on or off the bus, were activity indicators. Through fast food containers, beer bottles and other substances, the actions of riders and the nearby businesses that they frequented became the data. This bus stop provided an opportunity to investigate details about fellow bus riders who were strangers and vastly more interesting. On the other hand, the telephone pole was merely a lesson in classification. Some dead trees are telephone poles.

It still is difficult for me to imagine a street without telephone poles, but that world might be near. Telephone poles could soon be as unusual as computer punch cards and fountain pens, or as curious as quartz flakes. Boundaries between the ordinary and extraordinary are always contested.

Accessibility

Sometimes the treasure hoard of new information is daunting. I fear being buried by information, but then that is only my fear. My primary education occurred before computer search engines gave any elementary school classroom ready access to billions of records. I believe that many of my 1960s instructors viewed knowledge as discrete and assumed that just a few essential skills need be mastered. Information today appears infinite. In this light, the telephone pole tale is a reminder that much does go unnoticed. Those who live side by side have such varied experiences. Common knowledge is an assumption. Engaging in serious local research demands critical inquiry of the most ordinary of places, because it is not clear what actually is known. Nearby does not imply noticed; ordinary does not mean understood. Local should not be confused with well-examined.

At the start of any semester, very familiar knowledge deserves to be reintroduced. Everyday words and categories, like the common telephone pole, need to be reviewed in context. I do assume that information is ever expanding, but not necessarily at the same rate, everywhere. Ever increasing costs of higher education and low graduation rates in some communities limit access - to jobs and knowledge. Some might argue that the expansion of information is increasingly concentrating in fewer hands, as is the case for wealth and property. I am not sure I can accept this proposition, but the prospects of limited access to knowledge, in an expanding limitless universe of information, deserves our attention. This leads to some other NEAA principles – affordability and accessibility to the creation and re-creation of knowledge.

I look forward to the 52nd NEAA that will take place on the campus of Bridgewater State University in Bridgewater, Massachusetts in March 2012. Organizer Curtiss Hoffman will undoubtedly use this venue to initiate dozens of Bridgewater students to anthropology. Moreover, hundreds of scholars from dozens of other places, who might not otherwise be afforded this opportunity, will be invited and will participate.

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MEMBERS RECEIVE 4 ISSUES OF THE NEAA NEWSLETTER PER YEA

