

Editor's Introduction

Collaborative Anthropologies rests on the premise that “collaboration,” in its many different forms and articulations, offers ongoing opportunities for critically exploring the possibilities and challenges for the future of anthropological theory and practice. Collaboration—in very general terms, the wide range of theories and practices that relate to the dynamic and complex processes of navigating joint projects and partnerships—has always been a vital, albeit often implicit, facet of what we do as anthropologists. We all collaborate on some level in our wide range of anthropological practices. Today, however, collaboration has become more central to these practices. Collaboration is no longer just a consequence of our multiple and diverse anthropologies; it now preconditions and shapes our anthropologies more pervasively than ever before.

Several scholars have noted that at the very time these collaborative anthropologies are becoming more common, the changing subjects, conditions, and work of our field are also expanding the range of collaborative possibilities—between and among researchers and their interlocutors, anthropologists and other scholar-practitioners, academics and other professionals, universities and local communities, faculty and students. These expanding collaborative possibilities are stimulating new theoretical and methodological approaches that promise to transform our anthropologies in new and exciting ways—especially as we increasingly bring together academic, applied, and public practices within ever more dynamic, multi-sited, and globalized contexts.

This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in our research with the various and shifting publics with whom we work—publics who have increasingly demanded not only that their voices be heard but that the research on which they consult benefit them more immediately and directly. While collaborations between researchers and such publics are

certainly not new, our still-emergent collaborative practices continue to offer formidable challenges to the conventional power differentials between “researchers” and “subjects,” and thus are becoming increasingly central to reconceptualizing conventional anthropological theory and practice.

While I personally have been keenly interested in these kinds of collaborative researches (especially as realized via collaborative ethnography), and while this journal embraces a special focus on the possibilities and challenges of these emergent collaborative researches (as noted in the bulleted list below), the scope of *Collaborative Anthropologies* is by no means limited to discussions of collaboration that follow these lines. More than one member of this journal’s editorial board, for example, has expressed interest in how anthropologists might reconceptualize working with *one another* (as well as with other researchers), recapturing, as it were, interdisciplinary collaborations that reach across (sub) disciplinary divisions in anthropology and traverse the humanities and the biological and social sciences in new and innovative ways. Others have expressed interest in how anthropologists might deploy more deliberately collaborative pedagogical approaches—approaches that engage faculty and students in transformative university-community partnerships and projects. Still others have expressed interest in how we might further explore, problematize, and question the deeper meanings of collaboration itself, in whatever form it may take, and, in turn, chart new theoretical and applied trajectories for anthropological praxis.

These varied positions set out a range of possibilities for *Collaborative Anthropologies* to serve as a forum for engaging ever-widening discussions of collaborative research and practice in anthropology and in closely related fields. The mission of *Collaborative Anthropologies* is lined out on the journal’s Web site but bears repeating here. In sum, this annual:

- facilitates dialogue about collaborative anthropologies, including but not limited to those between and among researchers and their interlocutors, anthropologists and other scholar-practitioners, academics and other professionals, universities and local communities, faculty and students;
- embraces a special focus on the complex collaborations between and among researchers and research participants/interlocutors, although it is by no means limited to this focus;

- promotes discussion about new forms of collaborative research that are engendering new kinds of collaborative anthropologies;
- charts new theoretical and methodological approaches, especially those that theorize collaboration and imagine new intellectual spaces for collaborative anthropologies;
- invites essays that are descriptive as well as analytical, interpretive, and exploratory;
- solicits works from all subfields of anthropology (and closely related disciplines);
- encourages interdisciplinary inquiry into collaborative anthropologies, especially those that connect collaborative anthropologies with other modes of collaborative research practices;
- seeks a diversity of perspectives on collaborative research, including those academic, applied, and pedagogic;
- considers scholarship from single- to multi-sited in scope and from all parts of the world; and
- invites book, media, and exhibit reviews that chronicle the creative and innovative use of collaboration in anthropology and closely related fields.

The many possibilities, potentials, and challenges for exploring the complexities of collaboration in the pages of *Collaborative Anthropologies* offer much promise. Given this, however, we are mindful that discussions of collaboration always risk falling back on what is by now a rather well-known “trope of collaboration,” which can do more to obscure than elaborate these possibilities, potentials, and challenges. Indeed, although “collaboration” has become an oft-heard motto in our field, the deeper complexities of collaborative anthropologies remain elusive. The nuances of collaboration, for instance, are at times glossed over in overly simplistic or celebratory accounts of what otherwise may be extremely complex partnerships. Calls for collaborative anthropologies can be consequently (and perhaps understandably) dismissed, and accused, in equally simplistic and unsophisticated terms, of being not much more than one-dimensional exercises in ascertaining agreement, or, worse, of being uncritically complicit with the agendas of our research collaborators (whoever they may be). One of the key challenges of this journal is thus to help “thicken” discussions of collaboration so as to move away from such tropes and toward deeper, more critical,

and more complex discussions and understandings of collaborative research processes.

The articles and reviews that constitute this inaugural issue of *Collaborative Anthropologies* make abundantly clear that collaboration is inherently complicated, involved, and multidimensional. And divergent too: while the authors may agree on the growing role of collaboration in our field, they differ (some more than others) on how collaborative anthropologies have and will shape anthropological theory and practice. As such, they point to a growing dialogue about collaborative anthropologies that is vibrant, diverse, and polyphonic. The following articles and reviews thus include varying perspectives emerging from researches both academic and applied, perspectives that engage authors in a range of very different experiences with and visions for doing and thinking about collaborative work, experiences and visions that can, at times, conflict. But, as in any collaboration worth pursuing, embracing, dialoguing with, and working across, difference is every bit as important as finding common ground. And in my view, this is precisely the kind of polyphonic discussion that *Collaborative Anthropologies* has the potential to encourage.

Several of the following papers (by Field, Schensul et al., Cook, Peacock, and Fluehr-Lobban) grew out of a 2007 American Anthropological Association (AAA) Presidential Session, “Collaborative Anthropologies, Public Engagements, and Epistemologies of Equity,” in which we (along with other session participants) explored the intersections of difference, (in)equality, and justice (the meeting’s theme) via our various articulations of collaborative praxis. The remaining papers (by Rapaport, Reddy, Holmes and Marcus) and the book reviews were volunteered or solicited to help further the first volume’s tone and approach. Having noted this, there is, of course, much more to the “tone” and “approach” of collaborative researches, which this first issue of *Collaborative Anthropologies* only begins to touch upon.

Obviously, those involved in collaborative researches are not engaged in a single, uniform “collaborative anthropology,” but rather multiple and diverse “collaborative anthropologies.” I do not presume, therefore, that this journal (in this volume or in future volumes, taken independently or together) can be exhaustive or representative of all the kinds of collaborative anthropologies now at work in our field. This being the case, though, I look forward to the potential of *Collaborative Anthropologies*

to highlight, elaborate, and advance our various and diverse collaborative researches. All of us—practitioners, academically situated scholars, students, and importantly, the people with whom we work—stand to benefit, it seems, from engaging in dialogue about these issues. I, for one, continue to be deeply interested in and inspired by the broad range of collaborative work now materializing in our field.

I do hope, then, that scholars and practitioners engaged and interested in these issues in whatever form will feel welcome to submit their work to *Collaborative Anthropologies*. While subsequent issues of the journal will no doubt continue to include traditional “research articles,” I hope also to incorporate more explorations like those featured in the “Reflection and Commentary” section herein. Dialogue and debate, critique, interviews, experiments in collaborative practice, descriptions of university-community collaborative partnerships and projects—to name just a few—are all future possibilities. In this same vein, I would also like to feature other media reviews in addition to book reviews. Whatever the nature of your collaborative anthropologies, I hope that you will feel free to contact me or any members of the editorial board with ideas and suggestions. We look forward to hearing from you.

Acknowledgments

Parts of this introduction were presented during the 2007 AAA Presidential Session, “Collaborative Anthropologies, Public Engagements, and Epistemologies of Equity,” and appear in the originating abstract for *Collaborative Anthropologies* and on the journal’s Web site at www.marshall.edu/coll-anth. The idea for *Collaborative Anthropologies* rests with Gary H. Dunham, former director of the University of Nebraska Press and current director of the State University of New York Press. I am grateful to the editorial board members and outside reviewers who so generously reviewed essays; I am especially grateful to board members Les W. Field, Joanne Rappaport, George E. Marcus, Jean J. Schensul, Samuel R. Cook, and James L. Peacock, who were instrumental in helping me pull together this first annual, graciously provided their papers to feature herein, and offered much appreciated advice and direction. (Any and all editorial shortcomings are mine, however.) A deep debt of thanks is owed to Marshall University interim deans Rudy Pauley (Graduate School of Education and Professional Development)

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