

## Diversity Initiative

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all the wrong reasons—instead of being recognized for their contributions to the discipline, they become marked bodies who represent an abstract sense of physical diversity, people who bring cultural distance “home” and to the seminar room.

My effort to intellectualize departmental racial politics is not to advocate a vulgar identity politics. Identity politics can be an obfuscating tactic: it is premised on the authority to speak for others while it simultaneously does not move beyond the self. In the US, this has yielded, as Singh writes, a kind of “national schizophrenia in which

racial difference is either shouted down in a chorus of national unanimity (color-blindness), or shunted into zones of institutionalized marginality—the ghetto, the prison, even the ethnic studies program.” But my concern is that we have *lost* potential anthropologists of color to ethnic studies programs—students who have a real contribution to make to anthropology—precisely because of racial silencing and ethnic pigeonholing.

### Disciplinary Possibilities

Can we imagine antiracist politics embodied in anthropological practice and in the larger discipline, not only in the field but at home? The University of Michigan ADI is a step for some. It is a safe space, a support group, if you will, where colleagues and I can discuss the silences that have threatened to

overcome the discipline and work to challenge the prominence of racial/racist ideologies in our Ann Arbor “field site” via an inclusive framework of social justice work.

Affirmative action rollback and the US political scene have clearly affected our anthropological work—instating a forced separation between the department and the field is profoundly regressive to the discipline. Although anthropologists are urged to avoid the use of essentialist categories in ethnographic work, I question the exclusive application of this critique to certain realms of practice. Racial silencing and other representational problems occur strategically and routinely, not only with ethnographic subjects but also in interactions between and among anthropologists.

Anthropologists must carefully consider the continuities and con-

nections between our field sites, departments and backyards; consistently engage the politics of race and identity with social life. This means not only projecting an image of diversity but also engaging in an urgent project of minority recruitment, retention and matriculation. All of this requires, of course, more work, time and energy. It also requires the courage of a vigilant criticism, and a refusal to allow the standards of anthropological practice to slip. ■

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# Anthropologists in Motion

## From Conference and Research Travel to the Wandering PhD

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**T**wo years ago, my department provided hotel rooms for graduate students 10 blocks from an applied anthropology conference. This sounds generous given the financial constraints of state-funded universities, but there was a catch. The department only paid for one room for every four students—two students per bed. The upshot was that just ten days after returning from a long period of dissertation research on another continent, I found myself sharing beds with (female) students I did not know. In one case, someone crawled into my bed in the wee hours, and I left for the conference before she woke up. That afternoon at the department gathering in the conference hotel bar, this student approached me. Not recognizing me, she introduced herself. I said, “Right, you were in my bed last night!”

### COMMENTARY

This bed sharing is an extreme example of the ways graduate students in our department get to know each other. Informal conversations with people who walk into your

hotel room (granted, these mostly occur during daylight hours), sharing a van and getting lost en route to other nearby conferences, and those gatherings in the bars help socialize us to the discipline and learn more about each other.

### Socialization Through Travel

Although fieldwork has long been foregrounded as the primary means of how anthropologists

form their professional identities, many occasions for socialization for graduate students happen in professional meetings away from home, when the distance of our day-to-day commitments lets us spend more time talking together. Without teaching obligations or expectations that other projects will be completed, we can listen to reports from recent fieldwork, discuss the latest theoretical trends,

bond over shared food and drink, and generally slow down, necessary to deepen relationships formed through coursework, computer lab camaraderie and shared teaching responsibilities.

Travel facilitates professional socialization for students in other disciplines as well. While working as a research assistant for the Center for Research and Innovation in Graduate Education (CIRGE) at the University of Washington, I helped evaluate interdisciplinary programs. These programs organized yearly retreats and field trips for their students. Sometimes the programs strove for intellectual stimulation in these trips—establishing or furthering joint research projects, learning about new topics, and meeting potential collaborators. Other trips were more explicit: through shared activities, they helped an interdisciplinary program to build a sense of cohesiveness among cohorts and faculty. Regardless of the stated purposes, students valued the retreats most for their role in bringing people together.

The students’ appreciation of travel together as a bonding experience echoes my own experiences traveling with colleagues in China on group research trips too short for doing full ethnographic studies. But eating together, sitting together in buses day after day, listening to renditions of Gilbert and Sullivan songs or college anthems following



A group photo from Blumenfield’s classmates’ trip to China with one of the IGERT cohorts in a Tibetan home in Jianpan, Sichuan. Photo courtesy Barbara Grub

a meal of stewed mutton and buckwheat cakes in a villager's home—there is nothing quite like that to bring individuals closer together, and to turn distant working relationships into bonds of friendship (or, at least, mutual understanding). Organizers of Chinese anthropology conferences seemed to understand that bringing people close together, fast, requires group travel away from strictly academic settings—and thus they always included sightseeing excursions dubbed “field investigations” (*kaocha*).

### Punctuated Nomadism

Recent research by CIRGE, on early career outcomes of anthropology PhDs five to nine years after degree completion also shows how important being accustomed to a life in motion is for an anthropological career in academia. From CIRGE data and from anecdotal evidence, we know that academic careers in anthropology require frequent movement—to research for publications, to take on postdoctoral appointments and temporary teaching positions, and to eventually settle into a long-term position. But we do not always connect these postdoctoral movements of anthropologists to their professional socialization as graduate students.

The CIRGE report shows that temporary teaching positions and

postdoctoral appointments for recent PhDs are an important indicator of subsequent tenure-track faculty appointments in anthropology. Sixty-eight percent of former postdoctoral fellowship holders are currently in ladder faculty positions, whereas only 49% of nonformer postdoctoral fellowship holders are in these positions. In all, 43% of anthropology PhDs surveyed began their careers in postdoc or non-tenure track appointments.

Although the study did not aggregate data on where their relocations took them, we have enough evidence to understand that stepping into long-term academic careers often involves cycles of packing, moving, unpacking and repacking. And we do know that 54% of anthropology PhD recipients who held faculty jobs had moved outside the region where they received their degree, presumably to take on those jobs. Other PhD recipients, ostensibly valuing geographic stability more than their faculty peers, found jobs in nonacademic sectors—business, government or nonprofit organizations. Only 29% of PhD anthropologists working in these sectors live in different regions from where they received their degrees.

Reading the survey data made me wonder—has my department been trying to prepare me for a life of punctuated nomadism all along? In my program, nobody

speaks explicitly about the years immediately following the PhD program. But the data—along with anecdotal evidence—demonstrate that graduate students' early conference travel and research trips develop next into a period of professional wandering before anthropology PhDs settle down in a longer-term job or locale.

Perhaps this is the rhythm of an academic anthropology career. And to succeed in this career, graduate students are socialized through travel.

### Rethinking Academic Mobility

The real question is how well this requisite mobility fits in with the realities of contemporary graduate student life. A system predicated on punctuated nomadism may have sustained previous generations of academics, but will be less and less feasible—or desirable—in the future as anthropologists start families prior to beginning long-term academic posts and settling down.

In an era when more women than men enroll for graduate studies, graduate students begin their degrees later in life, and universities like Princeton, University of California, Berkeley and Stanford are beginning to recognize that student parents deserve paid parental leave as much as professional employees, keeping up with the model of academic in motion may be increasingly challenging

for students and degree recipients.

Many of the anthropology PhDs surveyed five to ten years after obtaining their degrees expressed consternation about the work-life tradeoffs that academic careers require and the challenge of balancing families and careers. Given that Generation Y is purportedly more concerned with quality of life than high salary, this consternation may foreshadow a growing trend: academics in search of balance. Creative alternatives to the status quo could help align the world of academic employment with the values of new graduates. For example, part-time, tenure-track posts and creative career configurations like job sharing may make some academic jobs more attractive to those currently holding adjunct positions. Better training for nonacademic careers, affirmative action for local job candidates and courses taught through distance learning programs could make geographic considerations less important. These innovations would be a welcome change to a system of rotating lectureships and academic nomadism. ■



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## A Graduate Advisor Comments on Graduate Student Socialization

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In some senses, faculty members of anthropology departments think about student socialization constantly. And professors in graduate programs think and talk far more about graduate student socialization than about undergraduate socialization. But we think about *education* more than *socialization*. Attention focuses on overall curriculum design, exam structures, research proposals, dissertations and job hunting. “Socialization” implies a broader view that encompasses formal education, but is not limited to it. And that broader perspective is the perspective taken here by the students who wrote

these essays. Each essay, in a different way, conceptually expands the boundaries of socialization beyond “education” in the narrower sense.

### COMMENTARY

All of these essays are aspirational. All of the authors want to see changes in graduate student socialization in anthropology departments. All are proposing that something happen that is not happening, something they believe will deepen and enhance the socialization experience and ultimately our discipline.

Jessica Falcone invites us to turn our own analytic tools on ourselves (a theme in Eli Thorkelson's writing

as well). Shoshaunna Parks calls for a renewal of the intellectual interconnections between archaeology and cultural anthropology that she sees as having become attenuated in the discipline. Tami Blumenfield extols the strengthening of friendship bonds among graduate students who travel together, but also directs attention to the negative effects of travel on young professional families who must move from one temporary job to another in the early years of their careers. And finally Aneeth Hundle both argues for a more racially inclusive anthropology and describes how this is being pursued by students in her own program. One has the sense that each student speaks from a specific graduate program experi-

ence or subculture out of which their specific concerns have arisen.

However, I must confess that it is far from clear to me what actual outcomes are hoped for or expected from attention to the issues we are exhorted to attend to. Rather, there is a faith or belief that some good will come from such attention. Each of the explicit issues raised—particularly racism and lack of disciplinary coherence—poses a significant challenge to our field. To seriously address them in a disciplinary-wide way would require considerable effort.

At the same time, department-specific efforts have the potential to provide successful models of change that can be replicated, if information about them is disseminated to the field. It would not be difficult, for example, for a given department to have a series of faculty-student workshops on coherencies or

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