Can the US Be "Othered" Usefully?

On an International Anthropology of the United States

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This book raises a question and addresses a mystery. The primary question is whether the United States can be usefully "Othered," and the mystery is why few social or cultural anthropologists outside the US seem to do long-term fieldwork in the US or consider the US their primary area of specialization. Since anthropologists as a whole study human groupings and cultures throughout the planet, and this is true in many different locations around the world, the question is why not study the US? And since scholars in a number of other disciplines in many different parts of the world do indeed specialize in the study of the people and things of the US—literature, foreign policy, and history, for example—the question in part becomes one about anthropology itself. To put it directly, if not quite bluntly, here, we ask whether there is something about contemporary anthropology that this absence reveals.¹

We consider this to be an issue of some importance and not just for anthropology. As we have explored this phenomenon over the past several years, it has become clear that a country of over 300 million people ought to command the curiosity and attention of more than a small number of colleagues, and that the colleagues who have indeed done extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the US deserve much more attention both inside and outside the US as specialists on the US than they seem to get, especially inside the US. In exploring the phenomenon and choosing colleagues to feature in this volume, we have been guided by the desire to lead readers to the issue of the US as a fascinating place, country, space, society, and

location that is definitely "Other" to most people on this planet and that could well use the careful and long-term insights of the worldwide anthropological community, and not just the insights of those anthropologists who live and work within it.

In this introduction we want to address a set of issues that no doubt arise when people we talk to first hear of this phenomenon—since we anticipate that such issues will arise in the minds of readers who come across this book. The issues are (1) whether this is not just about money, the costs of doing long-term research in the US, and the difficulty of getting visas to do such research in the US; (2) whether we are not actually objectifying colleagues as "Other" and assuming that their research, analysis, and interpretations are automatically different from those produced by anthropologists in the US itself; (3) whether we are not ignoring significant bodies of scholarship (including anthropological scholarship on the US) produced and consumed over long periods of time outside the US about the US; and (4) whether we are not fetishizing "fieldwork" as our marker of value in determining who is and is not an expert on the US. Each one of these issues deserves exploration, and we have obviously considered them with care, so we begin by addressing them here.

The Practicalities-Money, Cost, and Visas

The question of money and visas comes up frequently whenever we first broach the topic. Indeed we frequently hear that it costs money to do ten, twelve, or fifteen months of fieldwork in the US. The problem is that this does not explain why a number of anthropologists—anthropologists in other countries, including rather prosperous ones—become specialists in, and on, other parts of the world and spend a good deal of money getting to those places, living in those places, hiring field assistants with more skill or familiarity with those local languages, and so forth. There are, for example, numerous serious Latin Americanists in France (including in anthropology/ethnologie) and they do lengthy fieldwork in, among other countries, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico. There are also numerous excellent anthropologists in Germany who specialize in sub-Saharan Africa, and there are numerous important anthropologists in Japan who work in and on Southeast Asia. Money does not seem to be the obstacle in those long-term field projects. Yet money comes up as an obstacle when one asks colleagues in many settings, including those who work in and on the US, why there are not more anthropologists choosing to do the same.

An answer—hence an argument put forth—economizes the issue by invoking the cost of doing long-term fieldwork in the US. But we do not

believe that this is the main factor, not even for colleagues in middleeconomy countries or even poorer ones (since many of those still come on scholarships to the US to complete their graduate studies or they find their way to European states). There is something else. As one colleague in Germany put it just a few years ago, "I was told that there is no culture in the US so why am I wasting my time doing research there?" And another colleague, this time in France, put it also very recently: "I think I am the only anthropologist in France working on the US . . . Some have studied Native American/AmerIndian societies but they don't really see them as part of the US . . ." And then there are the sort-of travelogues like Baudrillard's America (1988) or even de Tocqueville's old Democracy in America (1835), which seem to imply that one can travel through the US and write reflections on what one sees and hears (which become bestsellers) or one can study societies in the US, though they are not considered to be a part of the US. To the extent that there is indeed something else going on that is not really about the cost or difficulty of getting into the US to do long-term anthropological fieldwork, we ask ourselves, and our readers, what that might be and whether the implication is not that the US is uninteresting or even, at the risk of raising postcolonial critiques of anthropology, not exotic enough to hold our interest.

As we contemplate this question of practicalities, and the perception that it is the primary explanation for the mystery we have uncovered, we ask readers to consider the following, even if the thought of money or cost is initially disturbing or off-putting:

- (1) Scholars and students often invoke money/cost/funding demands when explaining why few, indeed very few, social/cultural anthropologists normally located outside the US study the US, work on the US, or specialize on the US. But these are acts of invocation. Are they indeed explanations that account for most of the absences we note here?
- (2) Scholars and students (both in the US and in many other countries) often spend a good deal of money going elsewhere, learning other languages, and specializing in other regions or societies. When these issues come up in conversation, they have no explanation for those choices. Is something so taken-for-granted, tacit or, to invoke Pierre Bourdieu (1977), doxic in the world of social, cultural, or linguistic anthropology that it remains unnoticed or unremarked upon until someone (like us) takes it out of the "universe of the undisputed"? Yes, of course, there are now quite a few social/cultural anthropologists in the US who do not go abroad for their fieldwork, but many still do, and many do in countries other than the US (though not typically to, or in, the US).

(3) In at least some regions of the world, and certainly apparently France and Germany, one does not need to do much more than scratch the surface to be then given a different explanation (or at least to get such a view from those few who do study the US who are discouraged from doing so by their professional home communities). When challenged or questioned, other possibilities emerge, but are they the deeper issues rather than the first line of explanation that tends to be given?

Objectifying Colleagues outside the US as Other

An uncomfortable question also typically arises when we bring up this topic, and we assume that it will also come up when readers come to think of it. Hence, we consider it important to address here and to explain what our focus is. The issue is why we think that the absence of non-US anthropological research on the US matters. Indeed we sometimes hear from colleagues inside the US that our question makes little sense to them because there has, in fact, been quite a bit of anthropological fieldwork done in the US since the 1970s, and that our pointing out that the great majority of that work is done by people who live and work in the US means that we assume our colleagues outside the US somehow automatically see and perceive US things differently by virtue of being foreign. It is, of course, an important matter to address, even if it is an uncomfortable one for us as well as perhaps for some of our readers.

If we were indeed to assume that the issue was a cultural one and that we sought to point out that we would automatically get different insights on the US if we promoted the anthropological study of the US on cultural grounds, our skeptics would probably have a point. But that is not what we are interested in pointing out here. We are interested in why so few social/ cultural anthropologists outside the US actually do long-term fieldwork in (and on) the US. There is a very noteworthy pattern, and we argue that this needs to be noticed, acknowledged, and changed. For example, we are just as interested in whether there are perceptions of the US elsewhere and perceptions or practices within the anthropological community in the US itself that lead many anthropologists away from studying the US. These need not be the same, but it is clear that there is something (or some set of factors) that lead the US not to be studied by many anthropologists regularly living, teaching, writing, and working outside the US. Are these matters of access? Are they forms of anti-Americanism? Are these the product of interesting "imagined geographies" that work simultaneously to see the US as uninteresting or as "already known" or as less interesting

than societies more traditionally (or conventionally) within the purview of social/cultural anthropology?

The issue we bring up does not assume that anthropological colleagues outside the US would naturally or automatically see things in the US differently. It does, however, ask why it is that so few of the many thousands of social/cultural anthropologists who live and work outside the US do long-term anthropological fieldwork in the US. We note that some people may initially think of this as a question of access (and hence of the power of the US government to keep them out), but colleagues from quite a few parts of the world could enter the US with relative ease and do not. We understand that this is not the case with colleagues from certain regions or countries that the US agencies tasked with "homeland security" are most concerned about in 2016. In those cases indeed, the gatekeeping power of the US government and its agencies looms large. Yet many other countries and their nationals are seen as allies or at least not as threatening to the US and few anthropologists in those countries seem to do long-term fieldwork in the US or even to specialize on the US.

It seems to us that the issue is not the objectification of anthropological colleagues as either "American" or "foreign" but, rather, an interesting, if odd, combination of factors—some are perceptions of US society apparently held by numerous colleagues outside the US and some are perceptions of US society held by colleagues inside the US—that seem to make the US a very infrequent site of contemporary anthropological fieldwork except by people who already live and work in the US regardless of where they were born or raised.

We are tempted to say that these are questions of power, not of culture, but we recognize that they may well be perceptions of culture and society that presume the power of the US in the early twenty-first century. If so, they are indeed questions of power—but we are interested in the fact that these are not necessarily matters of foreign policy or military power. They may instead be examples of the ways US power is perceived and approached by anthropologists both inside and outside the US.

Scholarship on the United States

There is indeed anthropological scholarship on the US in the US itself. There did not always seem to be, or when there was it was often received with doubt, even suspicion. Good examples are the work of Hortense Powdermaker on Hollywood (1950) and Zora Neale Hurston (1937) on African-American life. That has changed since the 1970s, although it is not clear to us that much of that fieldwork claims high prestige (especially

when it is the result of not getting a major grant to go abroad). There are, of course, exceptions. In some cases, fieldwork on the US is conducted after a scholar in the US establishes his or her credentials based on longterm fieldwork outside the US, and arguably that reputation carries over to the fieldwork they later do on the US. Excellent examples of that are Catherine Lutz, Marshall Sahlins, and Chaise LaDousa. Lutz's original fieldwork focused on emotions in Micronesia (1988), but she has gone on to do insightful fieldwork in and on the National Geographic Society (Lutz and Collins 1993) and, more recently, on the US military and militarization, with long-term fieldwork in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and the surrounding community (Lutz 2002). Sahlins' earliest work was in and on Fiji (1962), but he went on to do influential research and fieldwork in and on history and historiography in Hawai'i (1981) as well as a book critiquing the use and abuse of biology in US scientific and educational contexts (1977). Chaise LaDousa did long-term fieldwork in and on educational practices and institutions in India for his doctoral dissertation (eventually publishing it as a book in 2014) but wrote a wonderful book on house signs and their meanings in Oxford, Ohio, long after working in India (2011).

There are, of course, others. Some like Stefan Helmreich do fieldwork in and on scientific communities in the US and carry that defamiliarizing (but learning) orientation in and out of those circles (cf. Helmreich 2000 and 2009). Still others tend to work in and on underprivileged and underempowered social circles—often migrant populations or populations racialized in the US as non-normative/non-white and often low-income. Some of that work has been highly regarded and cited—such as Karen Brodkin's How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America (1998), Nina Glick Schiller et al.'s Nations Unbound (1993), Carol Stack's All Our Kin (1975), and Arlene Davila's Latinos, Inc. (2001) and Barrio Dreams (2004). Much of this work has resulted in doctoral dissertations, academic and non-academic jobs, and some journal articles, but still not a great deal of intellectual prestige. This may be a controversial point but we are not sure how many US-based anthropologists would disagree with us. It is "anthropology at home" (cf. Jackson 1987; and DiLeonardo 2000), and it may be defended and endorsed as a way of countering primitivism and (neo)colonialism but it is still not the prime orientation of most US graduate training departments or the "area studies" centers that often count on social/cultural anthropologists to provide them with substance, language skills, knowledge, and dedication.

This view of the anthropology of the US may not be universally shared but we believe that it resonates with a great deal of the actual teaching, mentoring, and hiring practices among anthropologists in the US. Looking at introductory anthropology textbooks produced and used in the US can be telling. They all make a point of presenting anthropology as global in its reach and applicable as well to the US. And we should not forget the interesting original, but also continuing, appeal of Horace Miner's 1956 article ("Body Ritual among the Nacirema") published in the *American Anthropologist* and republished multiple times since then—a spoof of sorts but frequently included in introductory courses and readers as a way of reminding entry-level students of the applicability of social/cultural anthropology "at home."

In this context, it is useful to consider Jessica Cattelino's recent (2010) and thoughtful review of anthropology in and of the US. In "Anthropologies of the United States," she states that she shows:

that anthropologists of the United States have been concerned to locate the anthropological field (as discipline, ethnographic site, and theoretical domain) in three ways. First, they have undertaken spatial projects that include regional ethnographies, community studies, and explorations of America's power at and beyond US borders. Second, epistemological and methodological projects have located Americanist anthropology in cultural critique and defamiliarization. A third area is emergent: ethnographic research that locates Native North America not as distinct from the Anthropology of the United States but rather as critical to it. (2010: 276)

True enough, yet it is worthwhile noting that the work referred to, discussed, invoked, and noticed (even when not the most prestigious in the profession) is nearly all done by anthropologists who live and work in the US. They may not all have been born and raised in the US, and at times they are consumed (even billed) as representatives of those countries or regions of the world, but they largely live in the US, are employed by US institutions, and are (de facto) US anthropologists.

Interestingly this is not a point made by Jessica Cattelino. In fact, she offers no comment at all on the fieldwork experiences of, or writing by, anthropologists who study the US but who live outside its territory. We do not find it surprising, but we still find it noteworthy. Clearly there is a pattern there, an expectation, an understanding that she shares—namely, that the only anthropologists who might be engaged in Americanist anthropology in the contemporary period would be those living in the US. Reworking a point that Cattelino makes in the same article (2010: 280)—but for reasons that are different from our own—we also contemplate (and want readers to contemplate) if an anthropology *in* the US necessarily adds up to an anthropology *of* the US.

This is an issue that SANA (the section of the American Anthropological Association called the Society for the Anthropology of North America) has struggled with for some time. It struggled to gain recognition in the

last decades of the twentieth century, and it remains an issue today. That Canadian colleagues have recently become leaders of SANA is an interesting development, though SANA has "North America" in its title and this has always meant to include Canada. Yet, who is doing anthropological fieldwork in the US and does SANA really reach out to sociocultural anthropological colleagues normally located outside the US who specialize on the US?

On Fieldwork and Why It (Still) Matters

As we ponder the phenomenon, perhaps we should address the questions that truly stare us in the face: Why study the US as an anthropologist? What might we gain in our understandings of the US from an ethnographic/anthropological perspective? How might we supplement and/or critique the work of those in the fields of Cultural Studies, American Studies, political science, or history where the study of the US is considered important, even essential? What is it that anthropologists bring to the study of the US and what is it that anthropology itself might learn about itself?

We realize that when Jasmin Habib (normally in Canada) speaks about this project in general, she tends to get a puzzled look that suggests the person is really asking: "Why would you want to do that?" As we contemplate this frequent reaction, we ask ourselves what lies behind it. Is it that some anthropologists in Canada (and other parts of the world) are so repelled by the thought of the US that they do not want to go anywhere near it? Can it be that there is—underlying all of this—a form of anti-Americanism that in/forms or rather de/forms this particular field of analysis? It is no surprise that Jasmin Habib finds herself asking why "those of us living outside the US [are not] compelled to study such issues as street violence, gun use, the high rates of incarceration, shopping zones and practices, street fashion, television viewing, family vacations, among many, many other cultural practices and concerns?"

It is important to ask about where one might find the "America" one is looking at, and for, in the US. Many of the non-US-based anthropologists who have done their research in the US have tended to conduct fieldwork in big cities—for example, in New York (Helena Wulff and Moshe Shokeid, in this volume); Washington, DC (Ulf Hannerz in his earlier work); the San Francisco Bay Area (Christina Garsten), but some have worked in rural areas and small towns (Eva Mackey in upstate New York; Lucy Pickering on the "big" island of Hawai'i), and others in smaller cities and metropolitan areas (such as Jasmin Habib, Keiko Ikeda, and Hyang-Jin Jung in the Midwest, and Sara LeMenestrel in southern Louisiana) (cf. Wulff 1998;

Shokeid 1988, 1995, and 2002; Hannerz 1969 and 2004; Garsten 1994 and 2008; Mackey 2005; Pickering 2009, 2010a and 2010b; Habib 2004 and 2007; Ikeda 1999; Jung 2007; LeMenestrel 1999). Of course, there are others, but the question is both about the type of location they have chosen and the "America" they have (or have had) in mind.

Is there an "America" that is imagined and then sought in particular types of locations, and is this more prominent when speaking of colleagues outside the US, or does that not matter? The country is big, after all, and many types of projects seem to us worthy of study. At a minimum we would expect to see a mix of US-based anthropologists doing research and non-US-based anthropologists doing research in the US. Yet the fact is that there are very few anthropologists based outside the US who do fieldwork in the US and the question remains: why do they not?

Is it that too many people feel they actually *know* the US by virtue of the fact that so much of *it* is everywhere and all the time (in film, fashion, television, the Internet, news, books, music, alternative media, just to name all the kinds of things that blanket and circulate around the globe)? If so, we would need to contemplate what they are assuming and how this contrasts with the long-received wisdom drilled into most anthropologists around the world about the importance of deriving knowledge from long-term fieldwork and not just from media, circulating retail products and ads, or news reports. To say that the US might repel some people (or even many people) may not be important in and of itself, but it is important when we consider key aspects of anthropological practice, namely, our relationships and the wide-ranging commitments we make to those we study.

As Ulf Hannerz noted in a piece he wrote on multi-sited ethnography entitled "Being There and There and There!":

Anthropologists often take a rather romantic view of their fields and their relationships to people there. They find it difficult to describe their informants as informants because they would rather see them as friends, and they may be proud to announce that they have been adopted into families and kin groups—not only because it suggests something about their skills as fieldworkers but also *because it carries a moral value*. They have surrendered to the field, and have been in a way absorbed by it. (Evans Pritchard [1951: 79] shared similar sentiments: "An anthropologist has failed unless, when he says goodbye to the natives, there is on both sides the sorrow of parting.") (2003: 208–9; Habib's emphasis)

There is something to this point. Some of Jasmin Habib's colleagues are disturbed—really disturbed—that she would choose to do any research in the US. They think it is a place that is "on the decline," "a disaster zone," "dangerous," and, ultimately, even "uninteresting" and "unimportant." It

is not simply because they think the US is all of those things; rather any relationship to the US seems a waste of her time and, just as importantly, her efforts. They seem less interested to hear her stories upon her return—as compared to their response when she returns from Israel, or even after meeting with indigenous leaders in Montreal or Ottawa. Against the backdrop of so much US Cultural Studies, literary studies, communication studies, and US American Studies, which are more often than not textual in their analyses, one also has to wonder why there is not also the appeal or call to anthropologists to become more engaged in experience-based fieldwork.

In Being There (2009), John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi write that

[h]owever creatively we might interpret documents, a textualist approach is often duplicative of literary studies and, in insistence on power as the core substance of all experience, overlaps with political science. By insisting on it, we ignore what anthropology can bring to literary scholars and to political scientists, what other scholars cannot produce or intuit from the study of documents: the diverse forms of social action and interaction, interlocution in experience. (2009: 16)

We think they make an excellent point about what fieldwork brings to the world of knowledge, research, interpretation, and education, and why we believe it does matter that so few of our anthropological colleagues outside the US seem to engage in field studies in the US. While Borneman and Hammoudi may not have had the US in mind when they wrote their piece, much of their argument for fieldwork works here as well. "It is certainly true," they write,

that an encounter and an exchange, verbal and nonverbal—Being There, in short—guarantee nothing. And indeed, discrepancies between what is said and what is meant, in interaction, in writing, in reading, can play out ad infinitum; ambivalence, contradictory meanings, tensions cling to every word and utterance. Such is the predicament of discourse that every meaning implies a deferral. It is also certainly true, however, that the more one shares time and speaks with people, the better acquainted one becomes with the texture of other life, making it more probable there will be a closer fit between the order of orders and the order of things. (Ibid.: 14)

This is definitely an argument for long-term engagement with people in the field and it is one of the key reasons we stress work that is based on long-term fieldwork.

A book that is often-referred to in reference to "outsider" perspectives on the US is *Distant Mirrors: America as a Foreign Culture* (DeVita and Armstrong 2002). However, it does not draw on long-term professional

anthropological field experience. Of the nineteen essays included in that collection (whose third edition was published in 2002), the great majority are short essays based on encounters and observations but not long-term anthropological fieldwork. It is true that fifteen of the essays were written by people born and/or raised outside the US, but many wrote these as reflections or observations they made as university students or professors in the course of their everyday lives in the US. Two examples will suffice here.

Amparo B. Ojeda, born and raised in the Philippines, described in the book as "now an anthropologist and linguist" and identified as retired from Loyola University in Chicago, wrote a four-page essay for the book titled "Growing Up American: Doing the Right Thing" (2002). Her biography states that she "conducted fieldwork in the Philippines and is involved in ongoing research on the adjustment of Filipino immigrants in Metropolitan Chicago," yet the essay's abstract refers to her early encounters with the US and her reactions to it. She writes:

As a young student on her first visit to America, Professor Ojeda, a Fulbright scholar, was reassured that her adjustment to American life and culture would be easy. The orientation survival kit was of minimal help in adjusting to some American customs, especially those involving childrearing. Years later, in returning to the US with a daughter, Professor Ojeda was faced with a crucial conflict of values—American values versus the more familiar values of her own Philippine traditions. (2002: 44)

Likewise, Jin K. Kim, professor in the Department of Communication at SUNY-Plattsburgh, born and raised in South Korea but trained at the graduate level at Syracuse University and the University of Iowa, contributed an eight-page essay that is basically a letter to an old friend in South Korea after the friend calls Kim "an American"—presumably a letter from a "Korean cultural perspective" about US issues of "privacy, manners, sexual mores, individuality, interpersonal relations, and doublespeak" (2002).

Distant Mirrors: America as a Foreign Culture makes a point of addressing anthropological history and expectations and is valuable as a teaching tool in that respect. Yet it clearly does not rely on the kind of long-term professional fieldwork that we have come to expect of social/cultural anthropologists. The message is clear on the back cover as well as in their editorial introduction. "This book," the back cover notes, "features intriguing essays, written by anthropologists and other scholars, that are selected for their captivating and often humorous views of American culture. Each essay helps you understand yourself better by focusing on your own culture and seeing it from a new perspective." And in the editorial

introduction ("Understanding Ourselves: About the Third Edition") the editors write appropriately:

Anthropology has a long history of concern with the "other," the different, the strange. This focus on others and their cultures gives anthropology a comparative perspective that provides a reflective lens for understanding ourselves and our own immediate world. However, the ethnographic spaces of today differ a great deal from the ones inhabited by exotic people seemingly untouched by Western influence who are considered by many to be the main subjects of anthropological scrutiny . . . We are, therefore, compelled to look closer to home for the strangeness and similarity that is the compelling part of the ethnographic enterprise. (DeVita and Armstrong 2002: xi)

This is pedagogically useful but it does little to address the mystery it contemplates. The question remains: why are more anthropologists from the very large community of professional and doctoral-level anthropologists all over the world not doing fieldwork in and on the US? While US-based anthropologists offer us a very rich ethnographic literature ranging from, and on, the effects of the attacks on 9/11, the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, a collapsing "middle class," the rising rates of incarceration in the inner city as well as along the US-Mexican border, finance and the financial markets, the rise of gated communities and wealth, and the like—all subjects that we would imagine could be of great interest to non-US-based anthropologists—little to no anthropological attention has been paid to these or other important issues by those living outside its borders.

Factors or Fudges?

To put this in broader perspective, we ask readers to consider the fact that many anthropologists indeed come to the massive Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association toward the end of each year, and that it is not rare to find anthropologists spending some of their sabbatical time (or some kind of postdoctoral or research period) connected to a university in the US. Yet it has become clear that this does not lead to many actively doing fieldwork/long-term research in the US. Examples that comes to mind are Indian anthropologist Nandini Sundar coming to the DC area for a number of months to write and use the US/DC-area libraries or Shinji Yamashita, Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Human Security Program, University of Tokyo, who held the Terasaki Chair in US-Japan Relations at UCLA in 2013–14. Earlier examples include noted French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss in New York during World War II and noted Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth (as a visitor at Johns Hopkins and later at Emory and at Boston University). Rather,

Nandini Sundar's (1997) work is about "sectarian"/ gender/communal violence in India, while Shinji Yamashita's work is on tourism, globalization, and migration in Southeast Asian contexts (Yamashita 2003; Yamashita, Bosco, and Eades 2004; Yamashita, Haines, and Yamanaka 2012). Claude Levi-Strauss and Fredrik Barth contributed much theory and, especially Barth, fieldwork-based knowledge and theory drawing on parts of the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Yemen, and Norway but not the US (cf. Levi-Strauss 1955; Barth 1962, 1969, 1975, 1987, 1993).

There are some who, of course, come to the US from outside the US to do their graduate studies (master's and/or doctorates), but few of those, to our knowledge, actually choose the US as their "field of study" and therefore very few do their long-term field research for their doctorates in the US. In fact, they tend to come to the US to acquire skills, knowledge, and degrees from US research universities but often choose to specialize in their home country or region (or are encouraged to do so by their US-based faculty advisers). Numerous examples come to mind—many from India, Latin America, Israel, Turkey, South Korea, Egypt, and China, to name just a few countries. In fact, the number of non-US-origin graduate students in past and present US Masters and Ph.D. programs in the US is quite large. Yet this has really not led to the development of US studies as an Area Studies that might be a specialty within world anthropology/ies.

If we broaden the context here, the mystery is even more compelling and noteworthy. Many thousands of people do study the US outside the US but they do so in other disciplines, especially literature and international relations/political science/foreign policy studies but also history (cf. Desmond and Dominguez 1996). It is equally important to note that there are established anthropological communities in many different kinds of societies around the world—and some of them are quite prosperous. Consider Germany, Japan, France, and Australia, to name but a few, and then there is Canada, of course.

In a study that Jasmin Habib conducted in the summer of 2009 (Habib 2009), she found two seemingly contradictory facts. On one hand, a number of Canadian anthropologists have been educated in the US and are (or were) US citizens, yet very few of those teaching in anthropology departments in Canada have conducted any field research in the US. Among those who did conduct such research, several have moved into other departments and/or disciplines (e.g., Eva Mackey and Jasmin Habib, among them).

So Is It Just Anthropology That Is the Problem?

All of this then raises the question of contemporary anthropology, and it is a troubling one. Has anthropology indeed changed all that much since the middle of the twentieth century, all of those postcolonial, subaltern, and postmodern critiques notwithstanding? The phenomenon we have been tracking (and now seek to share with readers) might suggest that there is more conservatism in the profession than most anthropologists either believe or want to believe.

Some years ago Michel-Rolph Trouillot wrote an essay in Recapturing Anthropology (1991) in which he named a "space" he called "the savage slot," which he identified with anthropology. As we ponder why so few non-US-based anthropologists specialize in the study of the US, do fieldwork in the US, or even identify themselves with American Studies abroad, we want to raise the uncomfortable suggestion that some version of "the savage slot" continues to exist in the practice (and training) of anthropologists today. When other places, societies, locations, and sites seem much more interesting to anthropologists than the very complicated and powerful US, should we not contemplate the possibility that there is still the lure of the "exotic" (or at least the "exoticized") in the world, or what Anna Tsing (1993) calls the "romance of the primitive" and the "dream space of possibility" associated with small-scale societies that much of the world still thinks of as marginal or "primitive" or frankly unimportant in today's geopolitical makeup? Or, to put it differently, what if there remains a tendency to study people without power and those societies that do not have real economic or military power—power one now most often associates with European and Euro-settler-colonial states?

While we might not be comfortable labeling any societies "primitive" or "marginal" or even "unimportant," and we might even make the point that other disciplines actually primitivize, marginalize, and/or ignore many of these societies, and as such it is our responsibility to continue to do research in and alongside those cultures and communities. But is it possible that all this is behind that very apparent absence of anthropological fieldwork in and on the US outside the US? Another way of putting it could be that there remains a widespread commitment to inclusivity that has long led anthropologists to study, and remain engaged with, those parts of humanity largely ignored by other fields of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences, and that this has tended to mean not studying the US? Then perhaps this has amounted to a commitment to a kind of continuation of "the savage slot" even when (or precisely because) power and inequality and the politics and ethics of knowledge production have become highly visible issues for nearly all anthropologists.

We also need to contemplate the idea that the avoidance of fieldwork in the US except by those living in the US might also be an unarticulated response to postcolonial critiques of anthropology—first expressed by Edward Said as the engagement in Othering practices of Orientalism (1978)—that largely lead scholars (and perhaps especially sociocultural and linguistic anthropologists) to avoid the study of "Others" in the world thus unwittingly producing a privileging of an "anthropology at home."

We are clearly not making a point about the US being outside the realm of anthropological research. On the contrary, a great deal of work goes on, and it has especially grown in the past twenty or thirty years, but it is interesting, and ultimately worrisome, to see who is *not* doing that work. Hence, we want to call attention to issues raised through this phenomenon as well as to what may be lost if this pattern persists. Consider, for example, the issues of power and their continuing impact on anthropology. These are related to the attribution of power, the expectation of power, and the very unsettling possibility that this area of knowledge has not, in fact, changed as much as many anthropologists hope or assume.

The issues are both simple and daunting but absolutely worth exploring. It is hard enough to do fieldwork, but what exactly is it like to do fieldwork in the US, and does it help, hurt, or play little role when the fieldworker is (and is seen as) an outsider to the fabric of US society? If we look at who is actually doing the fieldwork, and the kind of fieldwork they are doing, should we not ask anthropologically, sociologically, politically, and, yes, ethically, why so much of it is being done as "anthropology at home" in a field that prides itself in taking all of humanity into account?

A Beginning and an Approach

The essays we chose to include in this volume show both how some anthropologists normally residing outside of the US have contributed substantial insights to anthropological topics through their fieldwork in the US as well as how their "outsiderness" matters.

Helena Wulff's "Manhattan as a Magnet: Place and Circulation among Young Swedes" addresses the role of Manhattan in the imaginary of some (perhaps many) normally outside the US, but it also points to a habit (common to the social sciences and many in the general public in the US) of thinking that the US is a magnet for people in poor (or poorer) countries who see in the US a path to upward mobility and, hence, that the issue of immigration and illegality is always one concerning the US's relations with the poorer countries in the world. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with Swedes living in New York City throughout the

1980s and 1990s, Wulff explores how young adults flock to New York to experience the city's expansive economy and culture. Wulff asserts that early in Swedish childhood and, since the end of World War II, the US circulates through popular media as a site of the imaginary, which facilitates an "anticipatory socialization" of young Swedes. Wulff invokes Erik Eriksen's concept of a "psychosocial moratorium" (1968) to describe the young Swedes' sojourns to New York: a delay of adult commitments and a prolonging of their youth. Interestingly, the experience that young Swedes acquire during their sojourn in New York is not merely understood as a transnational experience but, rather, a global one in large part because, for Swedish sojourners, living in the culturally diverse, economic powerhouse, and cosmopolitan city of New York is described as "reaching across the world."

For many, New York City is its own separate country, distinct from Swedish society as well as the larger US society. Stays in New York, according to these travelers, have taught them more about the world than about the rest of "America," providing them with global competence and sensibility rather than deep knowledge of the US per se. At the same time that New York is regarded as culturally apart from the US, it remains a product of the US: Manhattan is only Manhattan because it is located and locatable as a US city. Living in New York is also a means of acquiring social and cultural capital, providing some travelers the opportunity for career enhancement and personal development as well as "temporary opening of imaginary opportunities."

Here Wulff reflects on the common theme of experimentation—wherein the Swedes shared how they felt they could play with their identities and "try on another possible life." Drawing on Arjun Appadurai's work on fantasy as social practice (1996), Wulff describes how young Swedes see their current lives through the New York imaginaries they created in response to the mass media—created "America" they had been exposed to in their childhood. Swedish travelers, Wulff tells us, prepared themselves for the exceptional to occur during their Manhattan experiences—largely based on the notion that New York was the city where anything was possible. Whether the travelers were entirely successful or rather unremarkable did not seem to be the point. Given that their journey to New York served as a method of attaining social and cultural capital and not economic benefit, even the lack of success in New York was translated into cultural capital upon returning to Sweden.

While some Swedish transplants to New York stayed in the city on a permanent basis, Wulff focuses her attention in her chapter on those who returned to Sweden and asserts that the return completes the psychosocial moratorium. Young Swedes describe returning to Sweden with a

new identity formed out of their global experience. Many complained they faced difficulties relating to old friends who lacked the Manhattan experience. In fact, Wulff writes: "The Manhattan experience is not completed until afterwards, when it is recreated through the young Swedes' recollections, both individually and collectively in groups." Borne out of their Manhattan nostalgia, returnees have contributed to the creation of Little Manhattan in Stockholm. Despite their attempts to recreate their former experiences of young adulthood, Wulff emphasizes the inseparability of sense from place. In this chapter, Wulff has traced the effects of a physical mobility—to and from the US—as well as how what circulates is also an imaginary US both in the US and abroad.

Jasmin Habib's chapter considers the "global" imaginary within. Drawing on Amy Kaplan's work, she examines how US global power and empire have affected US Jewish activism. She focuses on US Jewish activism in the context of the Israel/Palestine conflict, particularly for those living outside cosmopolitan cities and centers. The point of Habib's essay is not to idealize or romanticize the efforts of such activists but, rather, to understand and appreciate the extent to which their lives are marked by their difference as Jews living in the US. She is especially interested in the fact that they speak against empire and produce a counter-narrative, but that this also often reveals a rather complex crisis of belonging. Habib's contribution in this volume shows activists supporting nonviolence, criticizing Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and the settlement project, opposing all forms of militarism, and publicizing Israeli human rights abuses. It also shows them involved in criticizing US inaction on the peace process, and promoting Palestinian autonomy and selfdetermination, in a range of forms from support for non-state autonomous regions to advocacy for one democratic state.

Habib is also interested in apparent contradictions and struggles. For example, she shows that during periods of extreme violence activists call for a ceasefire and the immediate return to negotiations and that, to a large extent, these activists rely on Israeli Jewish peace and human rights organizations for information and calls to action. Jewish activists she interviewed in the US surprised her when they spoke of US anti-Semitism while talking about their views regarding Israel and Palestine. They invoked a long history of US anti-Semitism as the backdrop for some of their fear of speaking out. But they also invoked it when talking about the extent to which criticizing the US was problematic, particularly in the post-9/11 period. As Kaplan notes, empire frames the terms for engagement with "the foreign" as well as "the domestic." Therefore, a focus on "the homeland" has an exclusionary effect that underwrites a resurgent nativism and fear of "the other within." Habib examines the difficulties of

these critics and takes the topic to heart, yet we note that she does so both with compassion and worry.

Criticizing the US takes on a much greater weight when the lens—in search of enemies within-turns inward to the "domestic front." As such, Habib points to how US Jewish activists convey the sense that they are carrying a double burden: those who are critical of US policy vis-à-vis Israel/Palestine are also critical of US foreign policy more generally. Criticizing US policy toward Israel, which is a policy developed out of empire, is tantamount to being critical of the US and, as such, could be considered "un-American." That this is a label that "tarnished" those who criticized past wars, particularly in Vietnam and Iraq, becomes an important point here. Habib asserts that US Jewish activists alert us to an imperial presence in the country, and that their perspective leads us to see important political and cultural processes and institutions that are shaped by, and within, the context of empire. This chapter highlights how empire is alive in institutional life, how heroic narratives are developed and incorporated into US history, and how militaristic and masculinist/ patriotic citizenship may be embodied. Habib pinpoints paradoxes of contemporary US Jewry's relations to their "Americanness" while shedding light on broad questions of nationness and belonging.

Limor Samimian-Darash's "Biosecurity in the US: The 'Scientific' and the 'American' in Critical Perspective" raises questions about biosecurity in general but also about those taken-for-granted elements of STS (Science and Technology Studies) scholarship that background the Americanness of much of the biosecurity talk in both the US and STS. Samimian-Darash analyzes the problem of biosecurity in the US in an effort to highlight the contradictions that exist when "one sees science and the US as both global and non-cultural." She details the perceptual framing of this disconnect in two ways. First, she asserts that there is a disconnect between science and security, resulting in "the social" implications of biosecurity research being regarded as outside of the "domain of scientific research and responsibility." And, second, she observes that US scientists involved in biosecurity issues refer to themselves as engaging with a manifestation of a global problem, rather than with a local problem. Samimian-Darash's intention is to disconnect these contradictions through the use of a US case study, namely, Fouchier and Kawaoka's 2011 research on the H5N1 virus (Enserink 2011; Enserink and Malakoff 2012), which science regards as a "global case" meaning that it is beyond culture and society. By detailing the history of biosecurity in the US and calling attention to the dramatic increase in US government spending on defense since 9/11, Samimian-Darash provides us with an interesting case study as US and international scientific communities' positions on the dissemination of this research

diverged on the most fundamental of levels: while US discourse on the issue centered on the deadliness of H5N1 and thus its potentially deadly uses and on matters of biosecurity, scientists in the "international" arena were instead concerned with public health preparedness and the advancement of treatment in non-Western (Euro-American) zones. Their concern lay in what they believed would be constraints and limitations on the dissemination of information that could have negative global impacts. Samimian-Darash asserts that the US discourse on biosecurity decontextualized the problem, identifying it as a primarily national-local concern and that could have a global impact or reach. To foreign actors, the US problematization of the issue represented US dominion/control over global public health discourse. Lastly, Samimian-Darash argues that when one conceptualizes the US field and scientific profession and its interests as global, one actually drastically minimizes (or even causes the disappearance of) the extent to which scientific concerns about and attention on biosecurity is a matter that has a social context and field.

In some unexpected ways, then, Habib and Samimian-Darash's pieces point to the role of domination and the power of empire to frame, as well as establish, the taken-for-granted or politically normative. Both also shed light on the broad questions that are of interest to contemporary anthropologists: on the silences, imaginaries, and occlusions of power.

Ulf Hannerz's "American Theater State: Reflections on Political Culture" explores theatricality in US political practice and culture but also raises questions about what counts as fieldwork and how temporality matters. Born and raised in Sweden, Hannerz describes himself as an "ethnographer at large" who has engaged in observing the US beginning as an exchange student and visiting scholar throughout his long career. Hannerz suggests that this long-term, low-intensity method of fieldwork is fairly unconventional in the field of anthropology. As an outsider, Hannerz asserts that there are two main ways in which his perspectives are useful: first, it fulfills "an intellectual niche for perceptive outsidership," providing "consciousness raising in relation to what is usually taken for granted"; and second, the outsider may become a "cultural broker" who can interpret foreign places to the people of their home country upon their return, and in this way foster greater global understanding.

Hannerz identifies the connection between contemporary US political culture and the entertainment industry, arguing that performance, commentary, humor, satire, and politics are all interwoven into US political culture. This is evidenced by the fact that several Hollywood stars have achieved great success in the US, with former President Ronald Reagan and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger two of the most prominent and well-known examples, although Donald Trump's multi-year

experience on television and effects on 2016 electoral politics clearly continues the tradition, too. In the same vein, former politicians can go on to achieve success in entertainment and media, with Al Gore winning an Academy Award for his film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. Hannerz notes that studies have shown that most Americans prefer to get their political news and commentary not from traditional news programming but instead from satirical programs such as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *Saturday Night Live's* "Weekend Update."

Hannerz draws attention to the theatricality of US politics by invoking the concept of "politics as theater." Following Clifford Geertz (1980) and citing Fareed Zakaria's work The Post-American World, Hannerz asserts that the US political system has been "captured by money, special interests, a sensationalist media, and ideological attack groups" (Zakaria 2008). In the US, he argues, political theater is an important way for a politician to present himself (or herself) as a well-rounded, likable public personality, one who can play more than an official role and who is personable. This remarkable interpenetration between politics and theatricality is of interest to Hannerz, who is also concerned with difficulties faced by reputable print media. On another plane, Hannerz speculates on the relationship between "the sense of politics as entertainment and a certain weakness for conspiracy theory" and, in this context, recalls historian Richard Hofstadter's description of the "paranoid style" of American politics that emerged in 1965. To Hannerz this still describes the paranoia and suspicion that have found new expressions in contemporary US politics.

Of course, Hannerz recognizes that elements of theatricality also exist in European politics, both historically and more recently. The scandals surrounding Italy's Silvio Berlusconi provide a contemporary and vibrant example. Yet Hannerz concludes his chapter highlighting how US political culture is perceived and received abroad. Invoking Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power" (2002, 2004), Hannerz stresses that US political values—democracy, personal freedom, and upward mobility—are projected onto the global stage using education, foreign policy, and, most importantly, popular culture. The global circulation of US political values and culture is reinforced by the political system's strong attachment to the entertainment industry, which has achieved remarkable success around the globe.

Moshe Shokeid's chapter reflects on ethnographic research that he conducted in Greenwich Village, New York City, throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Early ethnographic studies of gay communities in the US focused largely on the field of anonymous sexual relationships in commercial sites and public spaces. Shokeid's observations presented in this study expose another reality of gay life. Intrigued by the diversity and expansion of new voluntary associations among gay communities, Shokeid employed

fieldwork based on the "extended case method." He observed the operation of various voluntary organizations in Greenwich Village Center. In this chapter, Shokeid begins by calling our attention to the historical importance of voluntary associations in US culture. Such civil organizations have sustained importance in US urban life, providing the means by which individuals may identify and engage. Reflecting on his upbringing in Israeli society, Shokeid asserts that the extensive role that voluntary organizations play in society is a distinctly US phenomenon.

In this essay, Shokeid makes a point of tracing the proliferation of voluntary associations within non-heterosexual communities in New York and describes the extent to which these organizations have expanded beyond their traditional tasks of sociality, national improvement, and reform, and in this way have become part of the "mainstream." They have expanded their roles to provide spaces for their members to engage in therapeutic models of civic engagement. Throughout the essay, Shokeid emphasizes his "outsider" status stressing that his Israeli upbringing did not prepare him to divulge intimate personal stories to strangers, a common practice for all those engaged in these organizations in New York.

Among those of Shokeid's generation, indeed a common Israeli attitude has been that therapy should only be for those with severe emotional problems, and that such issues should be kept a secret. While clinicians often dismiss the role of such practices in gatherings as simply "curing," Shokeid objects to such simplistic descriptions noting that these voluntary organizations were not support groups led by professionals working with traumatized individuals. Instead, he explains, dedicated individuals who catered to their communities' needs in the midst of liberation activism, and who worked toward the expansion of gay rights and institutions ran these groups. Although Shokeid reports that the various gatherings did not assume the structure of support groups, the style of discourse at these meetings displayed a therapeutic approach. The author attributes this to the "therapeutic culture in America," spawned by the long tradition and success of Freudian psychoanalytic theories. We note here as well that Shokeid draws heavily on Robert Putnam's work on social capital, Bowling Alone (2000). It is work that emphasizes that the existential conditions of modern urban living in the US have weakened what were once very strong community bonds and organizations. Yet we see in Shokeid's chapter that, at the same time, and in point of fact, voluntary organizations that cater to specific communities continue to fortify certain ties. The Greenwich Village Center provided safe spaces for gay social gatherings that allowed for community-building in the course of discussions about existential issues while also helping to found and advance the development of a gamut of important institutions in New York City.

In the second half of the chapter, Shokeid contrasts the nature and scope of gay voluntary associations in New York with those in Israel. He contemplates developments in US society and culture that circulate and impact other parts of the Euro-American world, and he considers the expansion of gay voluntary associations to be no exception. Israel, a country that orients itself both toward the "modern" democratic world and the more conservative Jewish mainstream, embarked on its journey toward gay liberation at a much slower pace. Shokeid points out that homosexuality remained a criminal offense in Israel until 1988, and that gay Israeli men still occupy a conflicted position in Israel. They aspire, Shokeid argues, to become a part of the "Western" gay community, yet they also confront unrelenting pressures from traditional religious and family-oriented norms and values in Israel. Before 1983, when Uzi Even, a prominent chemistry professor publicly came out and spoke about the "demedicalization and depathologizing" of homosexuality at a meeting of the Knesset Committee on Social Affairs, gay life was essentially invisible. Even's speech in the Knesset helped to usher in the era of advancement and the promotion of equality. Yet despite this progress, Shokeid observes, efforts made by gay institutions in Israel to engage gay men in voluntary associations based on the US model have been unsuccessful. Unlike the Greenwich Village experiences, it is professionals in Israel who ensure that biweekly meetings are held, counseling and medical services are offered, and lecturers and events are facilitated.

One of the most poignant observations Shokeid makes here is that, although the Israeli gay community has adopted discourse and descriptive terms typical of the American gay community, their narratives reflect disparate cultural codes: "the Americans expressing the individuals' solitary heroic journey, as against the Israelis striving to present themselves as participants in a collective battle." The fact that gay voluntary associations are more limited in Israel than in the US should come as no surprise, as this is also true of many other types of associational organizations in Israeli society. The therapeutic model that has formed the basis of gay life in the US simply does not translate well within Israeli societal perceptions of therapy and its discourse. Shokeid asserts that the circulation of the US therapeutic model has run into obstacles in other societies that hold a similar disregard for this approach. In this way, Moshe Shokeid's "Observing US Gay Organizations and Voluntary Associations: An Outsider's Exposition" not only sheds light on self-help groups and organizations in the US, but also compels us to (1) revisit gay (and LGBTQ) scholarship and the way it tends to frame the topic as on or around "identity," and (2) revisit older scholarship on voluntary associations as hallmarks of US society.

In each of these chapters, one learns how the ethnographer's understanding of a topic has been made richer over the course of their long-term research in the US, and in each case the topic under investigation itself becomes ever more complex because each contributor made the most of being (normally and over many years) an outsider in the US, and an ethnographer of the US. We also note that these colleagues come from specific countries, arguably countries with established anthropological communities with broad field experience and in which English is a language people either speak at home or learn early in school.

All of those who have contributed to this volume express a critical reflexivity that exposes their complex relationship to the US. Most have spent an extensive period of time in the US as students, teachers, and researchers, and thus their identities vis-à-vis the US are more complicated than a strict insider/outsider, native/foreigner dichotomy would suppose. The production of knowledge they are engaged in should not be cast so simply as an "outsider" perspective on the US and, yet, their perspectives cannot be understood as representative of all Swedes/Canadians/Israelis/Japanese.

To round out the picture we paint here—of very good anthropological work on the US being done by these few colleagues outside the US—we also include three other essays that contextualize the pattern, the challenges, and the points made in these essays, as well as in the struggle to alter expectations both at "home" and "abroad." Geoffrey White's essay is an excellent exploration of the papers included here. Keiko Ikeda's essay is a troubling account of her own struggles both in the US and in Japan, struggles with people's expectations that she is a specialist on Japan when she is, in fact, a specialist on the US. Jane Desmond writes about the efforts of the International Forum for US Studies and the International American Studies Association to counter a very tacit, largely unnoticed pattern in which US scholars (especially in American Studies) privilege scholarship produced in the US even when many thousands of scholars outside the US (though not in anthropology) make a point of studying the US. The contradictions raised by juxtaposing perceptions and practices, proclamations and de facto exclusions, collusions, and complicity make this volume a necessary, if troubling, one.

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Note

 Some panels exploring aspects of this issue have taken place in recent years in both anthropological and international American Studies circles. One was the Central States Anthropology Association Annual Meetings at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2009. The second was the American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings in New Orleans in 2010. The third was the Canadian Association for American Studies in 2013. A fourth setting was the sixth World Congress of the International American Studies Association, held in Szczesin, Poland, also in 2013. And a fifth setting was the May 2014 Inter-Congress of the IUAES (International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences) held jointly with JASCA (the Japanese Association of Social and Cultural Anthropology). Invited and/or participating in one or more of these were Jane C. Desmond (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, US), Virginia Dominguez (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, US), Christina Garsten (University of Stockholm, Sweden), Jasmin Habib (University of Waterloo, Canada), Dieter Haller (University of Dortmund, Germany), Ulf Hannerz (University of Stockholm, Sweden), Keiko Ikeda (Doshisha University, Japan), Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (University of Brasilia, Brazil), Limor Samimian-Darash (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel), Roger Sanjek (City University of New York, US), Moshe Shokeid (University of Tel Aviv, Israel), and Helena Wulff (University of Stockholm, Sweden).

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