

## SAS Newsletter

### ANNOUNCING THE 2018 SAS 53RD ANNUAL MEETING

2018 53RD ANNUAL MEETING SOUTHERN ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY (SAS) Downtown Marriott, Chattanooga, TN

All sessions and events held on Friday and Saturday: **April 20-21,  
2018**

**FINAL ABSTRACT DEADLINE: MARCH 10, 2018**

Send Abstracts by email attachment to:

Drs. Betty J. Duggan ([bdugganj@hotmail.com](mailto:bdugganj@hotmail.com)) and Lyn Miles ([Lyn-Miles@utc.edu](mailto:Lyn-Miles@utc.edu)). For Annual Meeting details, registration, hotel and forms go to SAS website (<http://southernanthro.org>).

### KEYNOTE SPEAKER

DR. ANN KINGSOLVER

**TOPIC: METHODOLOGIES OF CONNEC-  
TION: ANTHROPOLOGY'S EVERYDAY  
POSSIBILITIES**

Ann Kingsolver, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Kentucky, is a cultural anthropologist whose ethnographic research for over 30 years has focused on how people in rural areas make sense of global capitalist logic and policies in relation to livelihoods and identities. She started that work in her hometown in Kentucky, as work in tobacco and textiles was shifting to other regions, and then did fieldwork in Mexico and Sri Lanka. Most recently, she has been organizing and participating in comparative conversations across global mountain regions. Her books and co-edited volumes include: *NAFTA Stories: Fears and Hopes in Mexico and the U.S.* (2001); *Tobacco Town Futures: Global Encounters in Rural Kentucky* (2011); *More than Class: Studying Power in U.S. Workplaces* (1998); *The Gender of Globalization: Women Navigating Cultural and Economic Marginalities* (2007); *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Anthropology* (2017); *Appalachia in Context: Place Matters* (2018); and, *Global Mountain Regions: Conversations Toward the Future* (fall, 2018).



*Southern Anthropological Society*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Announcements.....	2
Notes From the President..	3
2017 Annual Meeting .....	5
2016 Annual Meeting .....	7
2016 Undergraduate Paper Winner.....	11
Zora Neale Hurston Award .....	23
Proceedings/ SA.....	24
James Mooney Award.....	25
2016 Mooney Award Recipi- ents .....	26
2016 Student Paper Awards.....	28
SAS Members' Recent Publi- cations.....	29
Student Book Reviews and Teaching tips.....	30

SAS SPOTLIGHT ON INNOVATION  
SESSION AND SPEAKER

**Disasters, Displacement, and Human Rights Program University of Tennessee, Department of Anthropology**

The DDHR promotes holistic training, collaborative research, rigorous theoretical approaches, and applied/engaged work on historical and contemporary problems broadly associated with human rights concepts and norms. Through innovative, inter-subdisciplinary work in cultural, biological/forensic and archaeological anthropology it contributes to the development of anthropology as a science, as an art, and as a tool for improving the human condition. An undergraduate concentration in DDHR and a Graduate Certificate is available for degree and non-degree graduate students in any discipline.

**Dr. Tricia Redeker Hepner** is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Disasters, Displacement, and Human Rights (DDHR) Program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She works broadly on issues of conflict, migration, and human rights, especially with refugees and asylum seekers from Eritrea in North America, Europe and Africa.



Chattanooga, TN

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**NOMINATIONS FOR SAS OFFICERS AND APPOINTMENTS**

Please send nominations of someone else or yourself for the offices and appointments listed below. Send these and any questions to President Betty Duggan at [bdugganj@hotmail.com](mailto:bdugganj@hotmail.com), copying to Past President and Councilor Robbie Ethridge at [rethridg@olemiss.edu](mailto:rethridg@olemiss.edu). In nomination include position, nominee's name, title, contact information, and a brief paragraph (150 words or less) about the person's professional interests, contributions and/or previous SAS involvement, if any. **DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS: March 10, 2018.**

Nominations for Officers:

President (2018-2020)

President-Elect (2018-2020)

Secretary-Treasurer (2018-2023)

Councilor (2018-2021) (one opening)

Nominations for Appointments:

Photographer (documenting annual meetings, beginning 2018)

Zora Neal Hurston Prize Committee Member (one opening, beginning 2018)

Graduate Student Representative to Board (2018-2020) (first-time offered)



*Southern Anthropological Society*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF SAS PUBLICATIONS AND CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

By Betty J. Duggan (MOIFA, UTC)

Since the call to establish the Southern Anthropological Society in 1965 and its first annual meeting in 1966, publications have been a vital part of this professional organization's mission and legacy. Today, the SAS Proceedings, *Southern Anthropologist* journal, and SAS E-Newsletter, offer different opportunities for scholars, other professionals, and students at different career stages to publish their research and/or discuss current projects. SAS also recognizes annually the best ethnography about Southern cultures and/or themes, past or present, published by an academic press, with the James Mooney Award.

Read on for a bit of history about each publication, and whom to contact about current publication guidelines for each. Historic information is derived from the author's research in several digital interviews that are part of a larger SAS oral history project conducted by Michael Angrosino (USF) and his graduate students for the 1996 annual meeting, a project funded in part by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, as well as the SAS website.

The SAS Proceedings is now in its 51st year of academic press publication. According to Michael Angrosino (USF), Erma Honigmann (UNC) was the first editor, and the late Charles Hudson said that these first one or two volumes were mimeographed for distribution (any copies out there?). From 1967 through 2007, the series was published by the University of Georgia Press. General Editors during the UGA years included: Charles Hudson (UGA), Mary Helms (UNCG), Michael Angrosino (USF), and Chris Toomey (USC). Beginning in 2008, Newfound Press, digital imprint of the University of Tennessee Library System, took over as publisher, with the late Robert Shanafelt (GSU) serving as General Editor. Following his death, Heidi Altman (GSU) took over as Acting General Editor (2013-2014). Currently, we have four Proceedings volumes in various stages of development (see p. 24). *Reinventing and Reinvesting in the Local for Our Common Good*, edited by Brian Hoey (MU), from the 2016 annual meeting, goes into production this fall.

From the outset, selection of theme, invited authors, and volume editing of each Proceedings was accomplished by the Keynote Symposia Chair(s) of the preceding annual meeting. Originally, founders chose this format following the American Ethnological Society's example, selecting an academic department to host and organize each meeting, which, at the same time, garnered an edited volume publication for one or more of its faculty. In later years, the academic affiliation of the Keynote Chair/Proceeding Editor sometimes varied from the host institution. Recently, some Proceedings' chapters have been developed from papers selected from annual meeting presenters by the meeting's Pro-



Betty J. Duggan (MOIFA, UTC),  
President

### CURRENT OFFICERS & CHAIRS

- President: Betty J. Duggan (MOIFA, UTC)
- Past President: Robbie Ethridge (UMiss)
- Secretary-Treasurer: Brandon D. Lundy (KSU)
- Councillors: Robbie Ethridge (U of Miss), Abby Wightman (MBU), Vincent Melomo (WPU) *Southern Anthropologist*
- Editors: Julian Murchison (EMU), Matthew Samson (DC)
- Newsletter Editor and Social Media Manager: Matthew Richard (VSU)
- Newsletter Editorial Assistant: Ashlie Prain (VSU)
- Archivists: Daniel W. Ingersoll (SMCM), Carrie B. Douglass (UVA)
- Endowment Fund: Max White (PC), Robbie Ethridge (U of Miss)
- Mooney Award Coordinator: Daniel W. Ingersoll (SMCM)
- Zora Neal Hurston Prize Chair: Lisa Lefler (WCU)
- Student Paper Competition Chair: Matthew Richard (VSU)
- Student Paper Competition Chair: Vincent Melomo (WPU)



**EDITORS NOTE:**

There was a lot of news to catch up on, and we hope that future issues will be more concise, and that they will arrive on schedule.

gram Chair/Proceedings Editor. Today, creative proposals for hosting a future annual meeting and developing a related Proceedings volume should be submitted at any time to the current SAS President by an individual(s) from an institution or collaborating institutions for consideration by the SAS officers and Board. The Southern Anthropologist was established in the first years of SAS as well, with the purpose of providing a juried publication outlet for professors and their graduate students.

The SAS archive is missing issues from 1973-1983, so please contact us if you have paper copies for these years that we can digitize. Also, SA issues published online from 2004-2014 do not list the editor(s), so unacknowledged editors please speak up. Identified SA editors include: Malcom Web (LSU, ca. 1972), Michael Angrosino (USF, ca. 1970s), Pat Lerch (1984-1987), Gif Nickerson (NCSU, 1987-1994), David Johnson (NCATSU, 1994-2003), and from 2015-present, Julian Murchison (EMU) and Matt Samson (DC). Available issues of SA from 1972-1917 can be accessed on the SAS website.

Around 1977, when Michael Angrosino was Southern Anthropologist editor, the annual Student Paper Competition was instituted, with winning graduate and undergraduate student papers published in SA as part of each award. Sometime after this, the now-familiar SAS logo was adopted and first graced SA covers, after a membership-wide contest. Current editors, Julian Murchison (EMU) and Matt Samson (DC) welcome essays, book and film reviews, and research notes that broaden anthropological knowledge in all sub-disciplines and their applied forms, as well as themed collections of articles by Guest Editors in cooperation with the SA Editors, especially ones developed from organized conference sessions. See the SAS website for details about submissions and deadlines.

In 2006, the first SAS E-Newsletter was published. Heidi Altman (GSU) became its first editor (2006-2008), after working with several other SAS members to establish this new communication, reporting, and publication outlet for SAS. Its subsequent editors include: Margret Huber (UMW, 2009-2010), Brandon Lundy (VSU, 2011-2015), and now, Matthew Richard (VSU, 2017), who is also the first Social Media Manager for SAS. With this 2017 Fall issue, it is hoped with several new features the Newsletter's content will be expanded again, to encourage more membership news, project reporting, examples of teaching and research project results, and suggestions from faculty and students. Everyone, please take advantage of these new communication and writing opportunities for both the E-Newsletter and SAS' Facebook website.

While the James Mooney Book Prize is not a SAS venue for publication, it was first instituted in the late 1960s as a PhD dissertation manuscript prize, judged by a standing SAS committee. As such, it provided a modest monetary award to assist the winner in transforming her or his work into an acceptable publication for the University of Tennessee Press. This type of review and publication process proved too well-received and too arduous, and was re-



placed in a few years by SAS' James Mooney Award as we know it. We are still looking to identify the early manuscript prize winners and their publications. Neither have all the subsequent Mooney Award Coordinators have been identified yet, but for many years Daryl White (SC) served in this capacity. Each summer, the Mooney Award's Coordinator, currently Dan Ingersoll (SMCM), solicits nominations from a broad array of academic presses (as well as nominations from individuals) for a recent book published book (two years eligibility) that best employs anthropological/ethnographic methods and analysis in the study of cultures in the South and/or Southern themes, past and present. This distinguished publication award is coveted widely by anthropologists, other scholars, and winners include several former and current SAS members. See the SAS website for rules, submission details, and a list of past winners. (Hint from this author: serving on the Mooney Award Committee is an equally coveted, intellectually stimulating, periodically time-challenging, and "just plain fun" experience.)

## 2017 ANNUAL MEETING



**Kaniqua L. Robinson (USF) Poster Session**



**As always, the 2017 meeting featured many captivating sessions.**

## REPORT OF 2017 ANNUAL MEETING BY MARJORIE SNIPES (UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA)

Fall 2017  
Volume E10, Issue 2

The 52nd Annual Meetings of the Southern Anthropological Society were held in Carrollton, GA from Thursday, March 23 through Saturday, March 25, 2017. Coordinated by Marjorie Snipes (University of West Georgia), Betty Duggan (UT-Chattanooga and Museum of International Folk Art Santa Fe) and Brandon Lundy (Kennesaw State University), there were 68 academic papers from a mixture of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty and two poster exhibits.

The event, whose Conference Theme was "Ethnocentrism in Its Many Guises," was held at the Courtyard Marriott in downtown Carrollton and included two keynote events:

A Keynote Address by Christine Kovic (University of Houston– Clear Lake), whose talk, "Borders and Bridges: Anthropology, Human Rights, and Migration" addressed the expanding number of deaths and dan-

gers immigrants face from entrance into Mexico at Chiapas, all along the "migrant railway" to South Texas, where there is a large number of unidentified human remains.

A Special Presentation by Ms. Eunice Cho, LLC (attorney, Southern Poverty Law Center, Atlanta Field Office) who spoke on challenges immigrants face right now under the Trump Administration - the discussion of unequal federal justice being applied across states and the current focus on removing illegal immigrants.



Betty Duggan (MOIFA, UTC) Christine Kovic (UHCL), Eunice Cho (SPLC), and Marjorie Snipes



Marjorie Snipes (UWG), Christine Kovic (UHCL), and Ms. Eunice Cho (SPLC)

## 2018 ANNUAL CONFERENCE CALL FOR PANEL

Hi, SAS Members, Shelly Yankovskyy and Matthew Richard, both of Valdosta State University, would like to assemble a panel on the "Epidemic of Anxiety among Gen Z'ers" at the forthcoming SAS Annual Meeting in Chattanooga next Spring. Shelly will approach the topic from an Ethno-medical angle, and I will approach it from an Ethno-psychological angle. We would like to invite anyone who's interested in this topic to contact us about joining our panel. Send your ideas to me or Shelly at [mjrichar@valdosta.edu](mailto:mjrichar@valdosta.edu) or [sayankovskyy@valdosta.edu](mailto:sayankovskyy@valdosta.edu). Thanks!



## 2016 ANNUAL MEETING

Fall 2017  
Volume E10, Issue 2

### REPORT FROM THE CONFERENCE AND PROGRAM CHAIR OF THE 2016 SAS CONFERENCE

It was a pleasure to welcome both old and new friends and colleagues in the Southern Anthropological Society and many others from the Tri-State community to the 51st Annual Meetings of the SAS, which I hosted in Huntington, West Virginia—home to Marshall University—from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2016. These are exhilarating times for Huntington and Marshall.

While the state of West Virginia faces numerous challenges born of economic restructuring and, most recently, devastating floods, we choose to face these trials by reinventing our local through recognizing the value of collective heritage with an eye for how to

*“Outstanding research presented on diverse topics including: creating diverse, integrative communities; youth leadership; addiction; social enterprise and the local food economy; historic preservation; and more!”*



**Brian A. Hoey (MU)**

#### CONFERENCE AND PROGRAM CHAIR SAS 2016

Brian Hoey (MU) received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Michigan in 2002. In the fall of 2007, he became an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Marshall University.

consciously and purposefully create a prosperous future by reinvesting in the shared quality of life of our community here in Huntington. The conference was born of this effort.

This vision was invoked in our choice of a landmark, local bridge for our conference posters. Among other things, we saw our coming together for the two days of this conference—and beyond—as a bridging between what are too often practically separated domains in many communities when it comes to what really matters. That is to say, the institution of higher education and its larger community. As a professional academic, I endeavored to challenge my colleagues within and outside my disciplinary home of anthropology to envision ways that engaged scholarship can contribute directly and significantly to improving the common good within communities where we live and work. I believe that many of our sessions exemplified an effort to undertake such engagement. Anthropologists have long been committed to public social science that supports our understanding of local-level processes of change—something highlighted to great effect by our Keynote Speaker, Dr. Melinda Wagner. Perhaps the most publically recognized anthropologist of all time, Margret Mead—who worked in many different cultural contexts around the world during the mid-Twentieth Century—lends a succinct statement to capture my ongoing sense of possibility by saying, simply, that we should “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

#### Conference Highlights

Among the conference program highlights, attendees had the opportunity to engage in and enjoy the following events:



*Caption describing picture or graphic*

An extraordinary, inspiring keynote address from Dr. Melinda Wagner, Professor Emeritus of Radford University, on “Celebrating the Local” through our work as anthropologists, reminded us what makes us relevant at a time when so many of our programs are threatened. The audience enjoyed Wagner’s speech while partaking of a fabulous banquet and a donated full keg of [Mountain State Brewing’s](#) “Almost Heaven” amber ale. Doesn’t get much better than that! If you were not there, what were you thinking?



**Melinda Wagner (RU,  
Professor Emeritus)**

- Outstanding research presented on diverse topics including: creating diverse, integrative communities; youth leadership; addiction; social enterprise and the local food economy; historic preservation; and more!
- Workshops and panels on topics ranging from service learning and other pedagogical subjects aimed to reinvigorate the work of all attendees in and out of the classroom, as well as local food hubs, historical preservation in a local, state, and federal regulatory environment, “smart growth” through application of social science-based evidence, and emerging water crises.
- An art exhibit prepared by [Marshall University College of Arts and Media](#) capstone students that spoke to the conference theme. This was a really wonderful addition to our program that generated a great deal of interest and attention from local media.
- Live music and creative performances over three days that each



**CONNECT**



**EXCHANGE**



**IMPACT**



expressed our conference theme in different ways—including a Welcome “After Party” on Thursday night featuring local band Big Rock and the Candy Ass Mountain Boys at the wonderful Black Sheep Burrito and Brews.

- An Exhibit Hall with eight exhibitors including Vanderbilt University Press, West Virginia University Press, and the University of Toronto Press.
- A group book signing by three [Marshall University Sociology and Anthropology](#) authors with recent book publication.
- Tours and fieldtrips highlighting local examples of reinvention and reinvestment in the local including:
  - [Marshall University Visual Arts Center](#)—town and gown united in a multi-million dollar renovation of a dilapidated but once glorious old building in the heart of downtown Huntington that brings new vitality to the city and a progressive incubator for new ideas.
  - [Keith Albee Theatre](#)—a 1928 Thomas Lamb masterpiece of the vaudeville era and one of the few remaining nationwide.
  - [Heritage Farm and Museum and Village](#)—a Smithsonian Affiliate focused on highlighting the achievements of Appalachians facing myriad challenges of living in what has often been hard times through their history.
- Huntington downtown renaissance—including stops to partake of special offerings—led by the Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- A downtown-wide, evening welcome by the community of Huntington to all SAS attendees in the form of a “Shop, Sip, and Stroll” celebration of our own local revitalization. Many stores had refreshments and great retail deals to offer our attendees.

#### Student-Interns Helped to Make It Happen

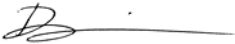
In order bring this all to fruition, I worked with six, extraordinary student-interns who envisioned this conference not as a cloistered gathering of academics—as is so often the case for such events—but rather as a dynamic meeting space that connects both academics and non-academics in an exchange of experiences, ideas, and plans that can lead us to have positive impact together in our communities. Throughout the semester, Heidi Denison, Jake Farley, Samantha Harvey, Alexis Kastigar, Hannah Smith, and Jocelyn Taylor had a behind the scenes experience learning how to host an academic conference. These students were an integral part of conference planning. From field trips and activities to advertising, they were actively involved in all aspects of conference planning. The interns felt that this experience allowed them to be engaged in academics in a way not possible in traditional classroom settings. They gained knowledge and experiences that will be beneficial in many future endeavors. In addition to their involvement in planning the conference, the students also presented individual works in a group-organized session so that they were, in fact, fully involved in the conference—both behind and on the stage. I sincerely hope that you take the time to learn more about their work on the conference as well as their ongoing research through the videos listed here:

- Practicum in Applied Academics and the Huntington 101 Project at <https://youtu.be/vbCpzKv5ZoU>
- The Ethnographic Storytelling Project 2016 at <https://youtu.be/RepivZBJFZw>

## By the Numbers

For SAS2016WV had a total of 21 sessions over two days broken up among 8 different time slots. There were a total of 46 papers in the program. In addition to paper sessions, there were a total of three workshops, four roundtables, four fieldtrips and tours, and a single poster session on which we had five posters presented. We also had two “installations” ongoing over all or most of the conference with one being the art exhibit and other what we referred to as an “ethnographic storytelling project,” which used storyboards to create both a video presentation and an exhibit of posters displayed in the lobby of the conference venue.

Total expenses incurred in preparing for and holding the 2016 conference were \$7,847. With expenses paid for by the College of Liberal Arts, the Honors College, and the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at Marshall University (as well as a corporate donation by Braskem), total expenses for which the SAS was responsible totaled \$5,148. Total revenues for the SAS totaled a near even \$8,000. Thus, the SAS was able to realize income on the conference of \$2,852. There were a total of 98 attendees over the two days—both paid and complimentary—many of whom were from the Tri-State area and neither members nor anthropologists. With the help of exceptional outreach to the local community, approximately 30 attendees fit this category—leaving total attendance of less than 70 by what I would characterize as ongoing or expected new SAS members. A total of 87 persons were listed as presenters (in some form) and/or as authors on papers. There were three listed who were unable to attend.



Brian A. Hoey, PhD, Professor  
Department of Sociology &  
Anthropology  
Marshall University

*Conference and Program Chair SAS 2016  
Proceedings Editor*

[www.brianhoey.com](http://www.brianhoey.com)



## 2016 ANNUAL MEETING

Continued...



### ABIGAIL SHEPHERD

Abigail Shepherd graduated summa cum laude with a B.S. in Psychology and a minor in Anthropology from Valdosta State University in 2016. She was an active member of the Anthropology Club, serving as secretary for a year. Abigail presented her original research concerning Alcoholics Anonymous at the 2016 SAS conference, winning the student paper competition. She plans to attend graduate school for Anthropology at Georgia State University starting in the Fall of 2018.

## 2016 UNDERGRADUATE WINNER PAPER

### Alcoholics Anonymous: The Formation and Reformation of Self

#### Abstract

I conducted ethnographic research on alcoholics and their struggle for recovery. My paper examines how cultural models of personhood acquired during a dysfunctional childhood mediate the self-worth of adult alcoholics. My data derive from narrative discourse contained in personal stories told during AA meetings as well as in the life-histories that I elicited from three informants. A few of the more important themes to emerge in my analysis of the data include feelings of being different, ideas of religious faith, and a desire for success. My informants all believe that they failed to meet society's expectations. Although my study relies upon a small, homogeneous sample, it is valuable for its focus on individuals, which is different from the usual focus on AA as an institution.

Keywords: Alcoholism, Alcoholics Anonymous, Cultural Models, Self-Formation, Personhood, Self-worth, Life-history, Personal Stories, Recovery, Societal Constraints

---

*“My informants all believe that they failed to meet society’s expectations.”*

---

# Alcoholics Anonymous: The Formation and Reformation of Self

Abigail Shepherd

Valdosta State University

## Introduction

*“I didn’t know how to be a good father, and I didn’t know how to be a good husband, and I didn’t know how to be a good friend. I didn’t even know how to treat people as human beings. I came home from work one Sunday, made my favorite drink, and sat in my favorite chair. My wife comes in the room holding Skylar, our baby daughter. She says, ‘Skylar and I have packed our bags, and were gonna go stay with Momma for a while’. I knew she was leaving, but I didn’t do what normal people do. I didn’t say hey I need to get my family back. I need to fix this. What can we do to straighten this out? You know what I’m thinking? Good! I’m glad you’re going! Cause I can drink all I want, and smoke my cigars in the house. I wasn’t in touch with reality anymore”*

The subjects of my ethnography are alcoholics struggling for recovery. These are people who suffer from an acute addiction to a substance that has brought destruction and pain into their lives. All have used alcohol, and sometimes other drugs, and this use has resulted in negative outcomes, such as incarceration, loss of job, and/or loss of relationships. Many times these painful and disastrous consequences were not enough to arrest the alcoholic’s drinking. Why? Many people think that alcoholics can simply quit if they wish to, or if the situation gets severe enough; however, it is not so easy. The physical and psychological dependency they develop is so strong that often they are powerless to stop on their own.

The organization Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) provides an environment where alcoholics who are ready to seek help can come to feel safe and welcomed in the company of others who know what they are going through. Wishing to understand why alcoholics drink and the suffering they have experienced throughout their lives, I attended AA meetings in Valdosta, Georgia. I chose AA because it provided me with a community of recovering alcoholics speaking openly about their personal experiences with alcoholism. In AA, some members are professed alcoholics who seek help on their own; others are ordered by the court to attend; and still others do so at the request of family members and friends. AA offers help through a twelve-step program, group meetings, and sponsorship among members. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

The AA groups I observed in Valdosta follow the rules and practices of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous closely. The Big Book was written by the founders of AA to establish the Twelve Steps for recovery, as well to elaborate the group’s beliefs, values, and norms. When I made the decision to attend AA meetings, I hoped that I would hear stories about reasons for drinking; that is, deep motivations stemming from experiences in childhood. However, this was not the case. The majority of discussion topics at the meetings I attended were drawn from teachings in the Big Book concerned with the Twelve Steps. The majority of meetings held, called “open discussion meetings,” are concerned with a topic pulled from AA literature, or spurred by a threat to a member’s sobriety. The conversation goes around the room, as those who wish to speak discuss their particular experiences with a specific step or aspect of recovery. AA culture discourages certain comments, such as those concerning the use of drugs other than alcohol, and rewards others, such as those concerning success in AA. Topics such as admission of powerless-

Alcoholics Anonymous: The Formation and Reformation of Self *continued...*

ness over alcohol, surrendering to a higher power, and maintaining sobriety are deemed worthy of discussion, but there is little talk about reasons for drinking.

I was disheartened; I thought I was not going to gain access to the life stories I needed to understand the emotions and deep motivations experienced by alcoholics. One Saturday night, however, I attended an AA speaker's meeting, and my concerns were allayed. At speakers' meetings an "old-timer," someone who has been in AA for roughly seven to ten years, tells his or her "drinking story," which is a general description of how one started drinking, the consequences of drinking, and, eventually, how AA has changed his or her life. I was excited to find some discussion of childhood and life experiences included in the drinking story. When analyzed, these narratives, along with information collected using life history methodology, enabled me to identify common themes among the different data sources, mutual experiences and emotions of the three informants in my study: one white male and two white females. The small and homogeneous sample size of this study can be explained by the single fact that there were fewer Caucasian women at meetings as compared to Caucasian men, even fewer African American men, and no African American women. Group meetings were dominated by Caucasian male experience and discourse, perhaps alienating the experience and emotions of women, both Caucasian and African American, and African American males. Most of the younger people who attended meetings while I was there did not return. Perhaps, they too felt alienated by the lack of discourse pertaining to their own experiences. The white, male homogeneity I observed at meetings may speak to a need for youth-only, women-only, or African American-only groups, as well as others, to help these populations feel comfortable in expressing their particular experience with alcoholism.

I am interested in studying alcoholics struggling for recovery because alcoholism, its causes and effects, need to be investigated and analyzed through both psychological and cultural lenses. Some researchers, and indeed, the founders of AA, postulate that alcoholism is a medical issue, and as such, should be viewed as having biological origins. Under this view, alcoholism is characterized as a "disease." I recognize that this is one way to understand and interpret the data collected here, but have instead chosen to focus on possible psychological and cultural explanations. Culture has a necessary effect on the ways that thoughts and emotions are constructed, and I believe there is an interesting link between childhood experiences, success, failure, and alcoholism in notions of American personhood. What experiences, emotions, and conceptions of self contribute to alcoholism? Why is alcoholism such a difficult addiction to break?

### **Background**

Anthropological literature concerning Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) addresses the function of personal storytelling on the path to recovery. Cain (1991) postulates that the personal drinking stories told at AA meetings, which are general descriptions of how one started drinking, the consequences, and eventually how AA has changed his or her life, follow a particular model, used to reinterpret and reorganize conceptions of self, other, past, and future. This is accomplished as members attend meetings and other group functions, engaging in interactions and discourse with long-time members, and also as they read AA literature, such as the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. They reformulate their own drinking story to match the propositions and beliefs of AA. They internalize appropriate behavior and values, and come to see the world in a different way, an AA way. This reformulation provides coherency and continuity of self and action. Indeed, personal stories are "...a cognitive tool, a mediating device for self-understanding" (Cain

1991, 215).

Swora (2001) also discusses the function of personal storytelling in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). She posits that drinking stories heal autobiographical memory and social relations. Autobiographical memory is socially and morally constructed using schemas, not facts. In the case of AA drinking stories, AA schemas are used. As a social process, the collective recalling of stories in AA can be described as a “community of memory,” containing shared history, hopes, fears, ideals, and practices. “Storytelling in AA is a commemorative practice, one that honors the storyteller not as an individual, but as an example of ‘how it works.’ Individual and collective memory are fused” (Swora 2001, 70). Participating in this “community of memory” facilitates healing by way of a framework for making sense of the past, present, and future. Memories are made useful and meaningful, instead of painful and shameful, because they are used to help those who still suffer.

Psychological research concerning Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) addresses various topics. Medina (2014) seeks to understand the paradox that exists in AA between surrender to a Higher Power and self-empowerment through accepting responsibility for one’s problems. She compiled six case studies of AA members with long-term sobriety. Key themes among the participants included a change in perception of self, others and the world, a deeper, more reciprocal connection with others than while drinking, taking ownership of one’s belief system, the ability to make decisions about one’s life, the ability to live in positive and beneficial ways to one’s self, dealing with life without drinking, realizing one’s own limitations, and feeling empowered when letting go of what cannot be controlled. Recovering alcoholics take responsibility for achieving sobriety by accepting the identity of alcoholic and by turning their lives over to their personal conception of a “higher power.” They accept their limitations, find the courage to live in the world as it is without alcohol, and forge an idiosyncratic understanding of sobriety. In this case, surrender is not the admittance of defeat, but a chance to begin afresh.

Another psychological study conducted on Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), by Hill and Leeming (2014), focuses on the public perception of alcoholism, and the effect this has on recovery. Alcoholism is perceived as a negative attribute by most, and this stigma can act as a barrier to recovery, creating “... self-stigma – the internalization of society’s negative views, leading to a loss of self-esteem” (Hill & Leeming 2014, 760). Interviews were conducted with six individuals participating in AA’s recovery program. The researchers found that their sample contested the construction of alcoholism as negative in the context of recovery, and instead saw it as “a mark of self-awareness... such that the current self was divorced from the previously unaware alcoholic self who was powerless over alcohol” (Hill & Leeming 2014, 763). AA helps facilitate the formulation of an alcoholic identity that is positive by emphasizing alcohol as the problem and separating the recovering alcoholic from the “self” that they experienced while drinking.

My study will take a unique approach. While the research described above focused on AA culture and the “drinking story” as a mechanism to facilitate recovery, I wish to investigate how dysfunctional family relationships preclude attaining the American idea of personhood. How do models of personhood internalized during childhood affect the emotions and self-worth of individuals who later developed alcoholism? What were they expected to do/become? How did they deviate from these standards? What affect did negative experiences and attachments formed in childhood have on functioning later in life? I will be analyzing the personal stories told at AA meetings and life history methodologies, but my approach does not view these as cultural models for AA. Rather, they are gateways into the understanding and experience of individuals with particular constructions of personhood and success. By examining this discourse, I will be able to deconstruct the cultural and personal models of alcoholics internalized in childhood to understand their emotions, self-experience, experience of others, and their motivations to drink.

## Theory

This study on recovering alcoholics is informed by psychodynamic theory. Psychodynamic theory seeks to understand how the organization of the human psyche effects thoughts, emotions, motivation, and

Alcoholics Anonymous: The Formation and Reformation of Self *continued...*

action. Relationships with others, experiences and emotional ties, shape thoughts, affects, and views of self. Through these interactions, especially those in childhood, the cultural models of a group are integrated into the personal models of individuals. McGinty (2006) defines personal models as, “internal structures of thought and feeling, through which people acquire and organize their understanding about themselves and the world” (9). It must be noted that the self is not a fixed entity, but emergent in interactions with various others, defined by Hollan (2000) as the “self-other matrix” (541). In each exchange, the internalized schemas of an individual, their self-understandings and expectations of the other, as well as situational factors, informed by varying social dynamics, interact to form a self-system that mediates thoughts, feelings, and actions.

This self-system provides a means of appraising the moment-by-moment sensory experiences through which one’s world is understood and interpreted, in turn influencing the lived experiences of individuals. According to Hollan (2012), psychoanalysis and phenomenology are complementary because “both groups are concerned with understanding how the world is conceptualized, felt, and experienced from the first person point of view” (48). But simply describing one’s life world is not enough; we must seek to understand how the life world is created and recreated. As Hollan (2012) states we must, “acknowledge not only the situating effects of the complex, variegated worlds into which people are ‘thrown’ and which their active engagements help constitute, but also the fact that the actors so thrown are not innocent blank slates to be written upon, but rather complexly evolved social animals, highly sensitive to their interpersonal behavioral environments, who throughout their lives formulate and revise a unique set implicit and explicit memories of past engagements that feed-forward into their experience of future events and engagements” (43-44).

Cultural influences and idiosyncratic experiences inscribe the “blank slates,” or psyches, of individuals, conferring their understandings of the world, which are then used to appraise themselves and others. The cultural models internalized during childhood define “proper” identities and imply pro-social behaviors. Achieving these culturally constructed behaviors becomes important to self-worth, as D’Andrade (1984) states, “the goals stipulated in the cultural meaning system are intrinsically rewarding; that is, through the process of socialization, individuals come to find achieving culturally prescribed goals and following cultural directives to be motivationally satisfying and to find not achieving such goals or following such directives to be anxiety producing” (98). When an individual does not act or think as expected, he or she is oftentimes classified as “abnormal,” because he did not measure up to the cultural standard. This can lead to stigmatization and alienation, which may result in feelings of worthlessness, anxiety, and shame.

To understand why alcoholics chose to drink, this study will look at the American folk psychology surrounding success and personhood. Personhood has been defined as “those critical attributes, capacities, and signs of ‘proper’ social persons that mark a moral character in a particular society” (Poole 1985: 184). What must an American achieve to be seen as a moral character and “proper” in American society? According to Fiske et al. (1998) the model of the ideal person in the United States includes the assumptions that the person,

“is a bounded, coherent, stable, autonomous, ‘free’ entity; ‘possesses’ a set of characteristic identifying attributes - preferences, motives, goals, attitudes, beliefs, and abilities, - that are the primary forces that enable, guide, or constrain actions; is oriented primarily toward independent ‘success’ and ‘achievement;’ formulates personal goals derived principally from these attributes

and orientations; evaluates life with reference to the achievement of these goals; makes (or should make) independent, more or less rational choices in pursuit of those goals; is largely in control of - and individually responsible for - 'personal' behavior and its outcomes; often regards relationships as competing with personal needs and regards group pressures as interfering with personal goals; strives first and foremost to feel good about the self" (920).

As stated above, these assumptions are applied by a large majority of Americans to appraise themselves and others, and have a necessary effect on self-worth. What happens to the emotions and self-understanding of those who do not meet these requirements? How does this self-understanding subsequently effect the experience of individuals as they move through childhood to adulthood? This study will analyze discourse in the forms of interview and personal narrative in an attempt to understand the psyches, and subsequently the phenomenologies, of members of local AA groups.

### **Data and Analysis**

This section is divided into themes that were prevalent in the data collected at both Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) speaker meetings and in life history methodologies of alcoholics. These themes reflect conceptions of God that are enculturated in childhood, feelings of difference, lack of love from caregivers, failure, and the emotions elicited by these experiences. These conceptions reflect the cultural models of personhood internalized by participants in this study, influence the emotions experienced by the individuals, and shed light on their deep motivations for the abuse of alcohol. At the end, the reconciliation of negative experiences and emotions is discussed.

### **Feelings of Difference and Lack of Love and Concern from Caregivers**

Two of the participants in this study expressed that they felt "different" growing up. They were "not normal;" they were told something was "wrong" with them. One expressed that she did not feel loved by her caregivers. The other, a man from Alabama named Tim who grew up in the sixties, described his experience of being "different."

*"Growing up, I was one of those kids. In the first grade, my teacher told my Momma, 'Listen, there's something wrong with your son. He will never go to college. You should get him into a trade school.' I couldn't read! I was this fat kid too. I was a fat kid, couldn't read and write, something was wrong with me, and all the other kids made fun of me. When I was like thirteen years old, I decided I liked girls. Well, girls didn't like little fat boys, so I just quit eating. I got down to about 70 pounds, and then I became the most picked on kid in my school. From 9th grade on people hit me, laughed at me, pulled chairs out from under me. I was that little sickly kid who never felt like he ever fit in. Here I was, this little kid, something wrong with my thinking, and nobody knew what it was. I was always one step behind"*

This classification of "different" given to Tim by his teacher, and reinforced by his classmates, made him feel alienated. He wanted to find a way, ANY way, to fit in. This point will be returned to in a later section. Another AA member with one year of sobriety, a woman named Joan, from Georgia, who grew up in the seventies, describes the lack of love she felt from her parents in her life history interview.

Q: How was your relationship with your mother?

A: *It was rough. I lived for every other weekend that she was supposed to come get me because I could get away from my stepmother, but she would often call and say she couldn't because she was in the mental hospital for attempted suicide. She had repeated suicide attempts, more than 20, throughout my childhood. It crushed me that she didn't seem to care about me.*

Q: How was your relationship with your father?

A: *When he married my stepmom, she didn't want him to show us any attention. At the dinner table she would lean over and lick all over his ear knowing that it annoyed us. I started calling him my dad*

Alcoholics Anonymous: The Formation and Reformation of Self *continued...*

*daddy-do-da, and that was my special connection to him, but he scolded me for calling him that, which crushed me. I was always doing things to try and get attention from him... I never really felt loved by either one of my parents because they were too consumed by their own lives.*

As a child, Joan was not able to form a secure attachment with either of her caregivers, resulting in relationships characterized by anxiety. She was abused by her stepmother, and both her mother and father were too focused on their own lives to pay her much attention. She felt unloved and unwanted because her father would not intervene in the abuse she received, nor could she escape to her mother, who was dealing with her own psychological and substance abuse issues. This lack of attention and affection from her parents had a profound effect on Joan's sense of self-worth. Another female AA member, Kat who grew up in the early seventies, was diagnosed with alcoholism as a junior in high school. She might have received treatment at that time, but her mother would not accept the fact that her daughter had a problem:

*"I was meeting with the doctor, and he just casually asked 'Do you drink?' I thought well gosh, yes, but I only go to parties...with my friends. It's what everyone else is doing on Friday night. Then he started asking more questions, so I started talking to him, and when it came Saturday morning, that doctor wanted to speak with my mom... he says to her, 'I think that your daughter is an alcoholic.' He said that they had just opened a juvenile treatment center, and that they had done every test: brain tests, psychological examinations, all sorts of stuff on me, and suggested that I go. Then she, my mother, got indignantly angry. She started screaming at him. She insisted, 'There was a spot on her x-ray, there is something wrong with her brain,' and he said 'No there's nothing wrong with her brain, your daughter has a drinking problem.' She got even more indignant, she said 'Kat we're leaving'... As we're going down the elevator she looks at me and says 'I will buy you whatever you want, but you will never discuss this again. We'll go straight to the mall.' Literally. The story she told was that I had a cloudy spot on my brain, that there was nothing that could be done. That's how she explained my erratic behavior. I shopped, I bought everything I possibly could want that day. Within a short period of time, she talked my dad into buying me a new car. The only condition of all of this was that I wouldn't embarrass her; that I wouldn't tell anybody what the doctor had said to me."*

Kat's mother was more concerned about her image among family members and friends than getting her daughter help. The stigma against alcoholism in the seventies was strong, so instead of seeking treatment for her daughter, Kat's mother tried to use "retail therapy," buying excessive material items for her daughter, except this therapy did not work. Kat continued drinking into her thirties, and eventually her drinking went beyond just partying. The adults, teachers and parents, in Tim's, Joan's, and Kat's lives all made them feel different or unloved in some way. Another institution that had an impact on Tim's and Joan's self-worth was the church.

### **Conceptions of God**

In reviewing the data, Tim and Joan speak of the effect that conceptions of God, internalized during childhood, had on feelings of worth. The God described by both Tim and Joan was most likely conceptualized in what is called a "hellfire and brimstone" sermon, common to Baptist churches in the southeastern United States. These sermons present God as one who punishes

those who do not live by his rules, which seem impossible to live by, and even contrary to human nature. Tim describes his experience with religion as a child, and the effect it had on his conception of God for most of his life:

*“I was a child of the 60’s. All this love, and peace stuff is going on, and I’m growing up in the house of a Southern Baptist minister, and he is a King James Version Bible toting preacher... When I was growing up they didn’t have children’s church; they didn’t take us down to the basement when we were children. Oh no, we sat up in the sanctuary with all the other people getting the same sermon. I’ll tell ya something, all these people seemed to be loving it. Here I was; I formed my first conception of God in that church. And my conception of God was that he was Don Corleone. He was the godfather of a mafia family. That guy was my God, ya know? I mean everybody seemed to think that he loved them, and here I was, I thought I had it figured out. Here’s this God and he says he loves me, but he’ll torture me for eternity! That was the God of my understanding! You know something, I was really afraid of that God. This was my God for 46 years.”*

The effect that Tim’s understanding of God had later on in his life will be discussed in the next section. Joan expressed a similar experience growing up in the church. Her father’s stern religious beliefs, which dictated a kind of unattainable asceticism, left her feeling inadequate in the eyes of God, and she did not feel worthy of God’s love. She felt that she could not live up to the expectations of her father’s God.

Q: How did your father’s religious beliefs influence you?

A: *As a child raised in the church environment, I came away with the belief that I could never amount to the person the preacher was telling me I should be. From a young age I believed I would burn in hell because I could never follow the ideals that Christianity taught. We would have ten day revivals where we did feet washing, sat through sermons for four hours, couldn’t wear pants, and couldn’t swim with boys. It seemed like everything was a sin. That experience warped my perception of who God is, and I didn’t feel love from him either. I didn’t feel love from anywhere.*

Once again, Joan was experiencing a lack of love, now not only from her parents, but also from God. Her perception of who God was warped her self-perception. Not feeling love or feeling good enough, in the eyes of family, peers, adults, and even one’s “higher power” seemed to have an impact on the self-understanding and self-worth of children. They must do something to make up for their faults, to be seen as worthy in the eyes of society.

### **Wishing to Fit In and Achieve Success and Deep Motivations for Drinking**

As discussed in section three, success and achievement in American culture includes the achievement of personal goals. This may bring forth images of the so called “American Dream”: a good job, a large quantity of money, a house, a car, and a family. If one does not fit into this traditional view of success, he or she is often treated as a derelict or delinquent. Indeed, individuals are often held solely responsible for their behavior and its outcomes in American society. The data collected shows that the participants in this study tried to meet the standards of society because they wished to feel “normal” and achieve success in the eyes of others. Tim describes his first encounter with alcohol and the effect it had on his confidence and subsequent success.

*“When I was sixteen years old, I was in the basement of a friend of mine’s house... Well we’re down there smoking cigarettes. Vantage cigarettes too. I’m feeling like a bad kid; I’m fitting in now. We’re listening to 96 rock out of Atlanta. These are the days when Lynyrd Skynyrd was real. We were having a spiritual experience down there. ‘Bout that time he pulls out this tan bottle... Here I am 16, about to drink some coffee liquor... I’ll tell ya something. I don’t know what screw was lose, but after that drink it came together, just like that. I wasn’t that little scared kid anymore. Now, I could talk to the girls. I could call them on the phone, ‘Hey baby!’ Every time I drank after that, I always got drunk. I don’t know what social drinking is to this day. I drank to get drunk man, that’s what I did for 38 years. I*

Alcoholics Anonymous: The Formation and Reformation of Self *continued...*

*didn't know any other way. I had arrived... I went to college, and I don't know what happened, but all the sudden I became kinda smart. And I'm never sober. Alcohol was working for me! They actually gave me an award in college, the highest one in history, gave me the Tom Hern-don award in history at a college called West GA College. That first grade teacher said I wouldn't amount to a hill of beans! I mean, alcohol had brought me through. Graduated from college, had a pretty good GPA, and I went to law school...I passed the bar exam; don't know how I did, I was always drunk... The alcoholic life was my only normal life... I didn't know how to live sober. Didn't have a clue, and didn't really care to know"*

Drinking helped Tim to fit in, which he wanted more than anything. Alcohol made things “*come together*” for him. All of a sudden, he was not the “weird” kid anymore; he could interact with his peers with confidence, and he was not “that dumb kid” anymore, either. He made good grades and received awards. In his eyes, all of this was the work of alcohol; so, he was motivated to drink all the time. After law school he became a prosecutor and worked to make a name for himself:

*“They gave me nicknames when I was a prosecutor. They called me maximum Tim. Tenor Tim. Treacherous Tim. Mad dog Tim. And you don't get these names unless you earn them. I was kind of mean, just like that God of my understanding. I had become Don Corleone! I participated in my first death penalty case when I was 28 or 29. All I wanted was that headline. Maximum Tim wanted that headline. That guy was just like us. He had killed a woman in a blackout, went and buried her body, and I knew I had a case. That guy was an alcoholic and I could really use that to my advantage as a prosecutor. We got the death penalty, and I didn't give one iota for that fella. That's pretty much how I treated people. Always punishing”*

As discussed in the previous section, Tim viewed his God as a mafia figurehead to be feared, and when he gained power over the lives of others, he “became” this godfather figure. Tim used his new found confidence to gain prestige and power, and began judging others using the standards of the society into which he wished to fit. He viewed others as entirely responsible for their actions, and used their faults against them to advance his own agenda. The quote from Tim at the introduction of this research (Tim's happiness at his wife and baby's departure) shows how adamant he was about continuing to drink, and the quote above explains why. He did not want to lose the abilities he perceived alcohol to give him; he did not want to give up the respect and acceptance of society. He had become somebody.

On the other hand, Joan's deep motivations for drinking came from the abuse she received from her step mother and lack of love she felt from her mother and father as a child. She also did it to fit in and feel like a “big girl.”

Q: Why do you think you partied so much?

A: *That's what I was exposed to hanging out with an older sister. My mom forced her to take me with her when she went places so she wouldn't have to bother with me, so it was easy to get into that lifestyle... Drinking helped me to forget the trauma of my childhood. It was an escape, and I felt like I fit in doing what everyone else was doing. I remember thinking alcohol tasted disgusting, but I did it anyway because of the euphoric feeling it gave me. I was very aware of the fact that I was younger than the people I was hanging out with, and drinking made me feel like a big girl and not so young.*

A wish to fulfill the expectations of her father and her father's God made Joan eager to pursue a career and achieve success in the eyes of those who doubted her. Like Tim, she too wanted to make a name for herself.

Q: What goals and aspirations did you develop during this time?

A: *I've always had an innate drive to succeed. My scholastic goal at that time was to become a psychiatrist. I never wanted children or to get married, I just wanted to go to college and succeed. I've always had high aspirations for myself, which I think had to do with my wish to be recognized so I could say 'hey I am somebody.' I'm going to make something out of myself in spite of my history and in spite of people who thought I would amount to nothing. I felt like I had to prove my worth because the expectations of the adults in my life, and God I felt as well, had been very high.*

Tim and Joan were both incredibly driven, however, Kat spoke of no such direction. Instead, she speaks of her fear of being alone, and the effect this had on her drinking. If Kat's mother had accepted her daughter's label as an alcoholic and let her receive treatment, Kat may not have developed alcoholism that went beyond simple partying. After four kids and a failed, intensely physically abusive relationship, she began drinking for emotional reasons:

*"Drinking was what people did in that social circle. Didn't really think anything was really out of control, until I was... I was probably thirty; Mark, my son, had just been born, and his dad left. And um... when I was... okay, when I was horribly afraid of being alone and responsible for four kids, I drank just to quiet the fear."*

## **Failure**

Success, as for many Americans, was an important part of Tim's and Joan's need to prove that they could live up to the expectations of their society; that they could fulfill the "proper" models of personhood expected of them. This wish was not achieved in Joan's case, and Tim's success did not last long. Tim did well for a while in his role as a prosecutor, but eventually everything fell apart. His office came under investigation, and the results were not good.

*"This DA's office I was working in came under heavy federal and GBI investigation. That is the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. They were investigating us! I mean, my God, I was Maximum Tim! I am the law! The first one they arrested was our investigator. They accused him of 100 accounts of fraud and theft. I felt like I was living in a chop-shop up there! Then they came for our DA, our district attorney. Here I was, his chief assistant DA, our political careers went down the tubes overnight. There was some drinking involved here, haha, and I'm gonna tell you something, those dudes are camping out at my door! FBI agents are camping at my door! I ran for it. I left. Maximum Tim quit. I went into private practice. I did this at my house, and my drinking really picked up"*

The name that Tim had made for himself did not earn him permanent prestige, as the malpractice of his colleagues, and perhaps even Tim himself, though he does not explicitly state this, led to the end of his political career. He started a private practice, but this ended in disaster because he was able to drink even more.

Joan's wish to become a psychiatrist was not fulfilled because she became pregnant her senior year of high school. Even though she did not want to have the baby, she was constrained by the expectations of her family and her father's God to do so.

Q: Did you continue with your education?

A: *No, and I had a full scholarship too. Back then you didn't go to college while pregnant; it was considered deviant behavior and not part of the status quo. Because of my family's values I felt like I had*

Alcoholics Anonymous: The Formation and Reformation of Self *continued...*

to have the baby even though I didn't want to. Three weeks after we got married my husband went into the military and abandoned me and the baby. We got divorced two years after he deployed overseas."

Joan's and Tim's failures reflect an inability to make rational steps towards, and ultimately achieve, goals, both requirements to be considered a proper person in American society. These failures lowered their self-worth, leading to excessive drinking and disastrous outcomes. In Kat's case, not having a healthy relationship with her husband, leading to her status as a single mother, was a failure in the eyes of American society. This led her to drink heavily. In several of her comments, Joan seems aware of the effect that her childhood experiences had on her understandings and actions, where Tim and Kat speak of the experiences as only part of their life stories. Even though they were not aware of such influences, Tim and Kat's actions can be understood by looking at the cultural expectation placed on them, childhood experiences, and the ways that they recovered.

#### Reconciliation

The pain and suffering experienced by Tim, Joan, and Kat throughout their lives and their battle with alcoholism finally ended when they entered the Twelve-Step Recovery Program of AA and started the process of healing from not only from their alcoholism, but from their feelings of estrangement and lack of love. Tim was finally able to find acceptance and love from his group in AA, even when his run in with the GBI (Georgia Bureau of Investigation) came back to haunt him.

*"The DA comes by one day and she's all red-faced, looks like she's been crying. I ask what's wrong, and she says you didn't hear? You've been indicted. And I was like, "What?! Indicted?! I'm two years sober for Christ's sake!" They put it on WALB before they ever told me about it! All my friends and neighbors knew! They suspended me from my job. AA didn't suspend me. They surrounded me, and they loved me. They were there for me all the way. They wanted to elect me as secretary of our district. You get indicted in AA they'll give you a promotion, haha"*

Joan, went through a process of reconciliation with God when she decided to stop drinking in her mid-30s. She was finally able to come to terms with her God and find the love she had been searching for all of her life, self-love:

Q: Were you still drinking and drugging heavily?

*A: No. After I left him [an abusive boyfriend] I decided to get help... I started attending twelve-step meetings, and I managed to string three, four, five months at a time without drinking. It was at these meetings that someone told me that I was powerless over alcohol, and that my solution was God. I recoiled like a viper because that word was not someone who had ever helped me. That all changed when I latched on to the program's teachings. That I could have a God of MY understanding, and not have the God of my father was an epiphany for me. It changed my world. I started delving into all things spiritual, not religious I might add. I began to build a relationship with my higher power. I was engulfed in New Age spirituality, and the concept that all paths lead to one. I began to meditate, do Buddhist chants, and started hanging around yoga circles. I loved everything metaphysical, and for the first time felt a spiritual*

connection to all that is.”

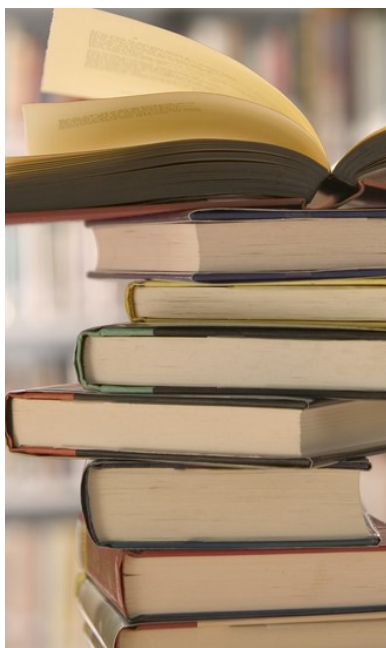
Kat describes her motivation to stop drinking, and the security she felt after entering AA.

*“One night, I went into a bar, and there wasn’t anything different that night than any other night...in the program they call it a moment of clarity... when I walked into the bathroom and looked into the mirror, the person I saw looking back wasn’t me. It was me, but I thought ‘What happened to the person who was going to do this and that?’ I came out and told my friends I was going home. They looked at me like, what do you mean you’re going home, its eleven ’o’clock. I said ‘I can’t do this anymore. I’m going home.’ I walked out of there crying, drove home, paced the house shaking. It was the idea that if I didn’t do this, I would lose my children. I was positive of that. So, I went to meetings; I listened... At my first meeting, a woman’s only meeting, they went around the room, and everyone introduced themselves, said they’re name and that they were an alcoholic, then the next person went. When it came to me I said my name, and that I was an alcoholic, and I cried. It felt like the first honest thing that I had said in so many years. I have never had a drink since I walked out of there. A little over twenty-six years now... Somewhere in that hour [an AA meeting] there was a split second of whatever it was, that I felt safe. I knew that if I could make it from there to the next lunchtime that I would be okay. I only had to make it from there to the next day”*

With the help of a sponsor and support from other members, Kat was finally able to achieve sobriety, and even married a man in the program. She was finally honest with herself about her identity as an alcoholic, something her mother had not allowed her to do as a teen. She was motivated to change because of the love she felt for her children, and because of a deep drive to do the things that she felt she should: work hard, have a family, and earn success in the eyes of others.

## **Conclusion**

The participants in this study all experienced some kind of disparagement between whom they were expected to be and who they really were. Because of their “otherness,” they were treated as failures, resulting in feelings of shame, doubt, loneliness, and low self-esteem. In the cases of Tim, his feeling of awkwardness was alleviated by alcohol, while in the case of Joan and Kat, alcohol was their escape from negative self-thought, lack of love, and loneliness. For a time, alcohol became part of their identities, something they needed to carry on in the world as it was, to live their daily lives. Eventually, the use of alcohol became too destructive, and they sought help. Their descriptions of recovery show that the main factor that resulted in healing was a resolution of the sadness and other negative emotions that had been spurred by an inability to measure up to the standards of society due, primarily, to dysfunctional early home lives. They could not achieve the ideal because it was not modeled by their own parents. Instead, these caregivers modeled dysfunction in such forms as anxiety, fear, doubt, and denial, which their children internalized. Healing came when these children turned adults finally learned to accept themselves for who they are.



## ZORA NEALE HURSTON AWARD

Fall 2017  
Volume E10, Issue 2

The **Zora Neale Hurston Award** acknowledges an anthropologist who has shown mentoring, service and scholarship within historically underserved populations of the South. Established in 2006, the Hurston Award recognizes those SAS members who have made exceptional contributions to anthropology and the public good by exemplifying the skills of the discipline for the benefit of others. This award is presented specifically to a senior scholar for their works in the form of scholarship, applied research, multi-media (book, film, articles), and/or organization and mobilization of people to provide meaningful services to communities.

**Zora Neale Hurston** (1/2/1891-1/28/1960) knew the adversity, pain and challenges that cut across issues of ethnicity, class, and gender. At a time when most African-Americans were denied entry into institutions of higher education and intellectual circles, Hurston's talent and drive gained her access. Born and reared in Florida, she studied folklore at Howard University and Barnard College (her institution of matriculation, B.A. 1928). From 1928-1932, she studied anthropology at Columbia University with Franz Boas. Ms. Hurston was a writer and leader in the Harlem Renaissance during the 1920's and 1930's. She was a member of American Folklore Society, American Anthropological Society, American Ethnological Society, and Zeta Phi Beta. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship, 1936 and 1938; Litt.D. from Morgan State College, 1939; Anisfield-Wolf Book Award in Race Relations, 1943; Howard University's Distinguished Alumni Award, 1943; Bethune-Cookman College Award for Education and Human Relations. She wrote seven novels of authentic black experience of her era, including *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and fifty articles, short stories and plays. Her work with Alan Lomax on folklore in the south is valued today. Alice Walk-

er claimed Hurston as a "literary ancestor" in the 1970's, and placed a tombstone on her unmarked grave which reads "Zora Neale Hurston, A Genius of the South". This award, in her honor, pays tribute to her many lasting contributions to anthropology and southern studies and is a testament to her enduring spirit, courage, and ability to make ethnographic work and folklore meaningful to the public.



**DEADLINE:** November 1 annually. Nomination guidelines available on SAS website. For questions contact:

**Dr. Lisa J. Lefler**

Chair, SAS Zora Neale Hurston Award

Chair, Culturally Based Native Health Programs

College of Health & Human Science  
Western Carolina University

Cullowhee, NC

Email: [l-lefler@email.wcu.edu](mailto:l-lefler@email.wcu.edu)

Phone: 828-227-2164



### FILM RECOMMENDATION:

SAS Video Recommendation, by Matthew Richard (Valdosta State University): “She Wants Independence. In Egypt That Can Be Dangerous.” Meet Esraa, a young Egyptian woman who yearns to be free of the rigid expectations imposed upon her by her culture. To challenge religious norms, however, is extremely risky. Yet she persists. This video has everything: fascinating constructions of hierarchy and emotion, constituting powerful constraints to agency and setting off intense negotiations of meaning between traditionalists and those fighting for liberation. A tremendous teaching and learning tool. (Approximately 21 minutes) <https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/middleeast/100000005015451/female-independence-in-egypt.html?playlistId=100000002500298&region=video-grid&version=video-grid-headline&contentCollection=Times+Video&contentPlacement=6&module=recent-videos&action=click&pgType=Multimedia&eventName=video-grid-click>

## STATUS OF SAS PROCEEDINGS SERIES/ VOLUMES

REPORTED BY: SAS President Betty J. Duggan (MOIFA, UTC)

After the 2017 annual meeting I contacted the director and technical editor of Newfound Press to gain a better understanding of our agreement with them. Subsequently, in spring and September, I had several emails and/or calls with the editors who have outstanding Proceedings volumes (2014-2017) to pass on Newfound instructions and contacts to them, to gauge where each editor stood, and to offer encouragement where needed and troubleshoot problems.

In the course of these communications, I found a very big gaff: the 50th anniversary, 2014 annual meeting Program Chair, Colleen Cherry O’Brien, said she had not been told that she was also to be editor of a related Proceeding, so had done nothing about it. She did point me to Beth Lovern (Piedmont College) and Arthur Murphy (UNCG), who assisted her with aspects of the meeting planning and program and graciously agreed to be co-editors. Wonderfully, they had kept notes about outstanding papers given at the meeting and contacts for participants, so they are now inviting authors. Yes, movement!

Thus, currently, we have four SAS Proceedings volumes in various stages of development:

*Reinventing and Reinvesting in the Local for Our Common Good*, edited by Brian Hoey (Marshall University) from the 2016 52nd annual meeting in Huntington, WVA, is entering the production phase this fall, with publication date tentatively slated for 2018.

*Four-Field Anthropology: Weaving Our Discipline with Community*, edited by Lisa Lefler (WCU) from the 2015th 51st annual meeting in Chero-

kee, NC, is nearing completion, with the production phase likely beginning Spring, 2018. Possible 2018 publication date, depending on press’ schedule?

*Ethnocentrism in Its Many Guises*, (working title from conference theme), edited by Marjorie Snipes (WGA) from the 2017 53rd annual meeting in Carrollton, GA, is in the early editing phase, and will enter production Spring, 2018. Publication date 2018 or 2019, depending on press’ schedule.

*Proceedings* from the 2014 50th annual meeting in Athens, GA, is now being co-edited by Beth Lovern (Piedmont College) and Arthur Murphy (UNCG), who are selecting papers and issuing invitations for the publication. Clarification of editors occurred summer 2017 (see comments above).

## James Mooney Award

The purpose of the James Mooney Award is to recognize and thereby encourage distinguished anthropological scholarship on the South and Southerners. Presented annually, the award includes a \$500 cash prize and certificate of recognition to be presented to the winning author at an awards ceremony. In addition, an Honorable Mention Award includes a certificate of recognition. The winning presses will also receive certificates of recognition and will be granted free exhibit space at the Society's annual meeting and, for one year, free advertising space for the winning books in the *Southern Anthropologist*.

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be considered for the 2017 James Mooney Award (presented in 2018), a book must have been published in 2016 or 2017. The judges welcome works on the South or Southern peoples and cultures (past or present) in, of, or from the region. Books may be from any subfield of anthropology or from other disciplines so long as the primary perspective of the work is anthropological. Co-authored books may be nominated, but edited volumes may not. The nomination must clearly be for a single book, even if it builds on prior work by the author or others.

### NOMINATION AND SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Nominations for the 2017 James Mooney Award may be submitted by a press or an individual. The nomination should include a letter briefly describing the subject, identifying the anthropological significance of the work, and giving the name, address, and telephone number of the author. The letter of nomination should be accompanied by three copies of the book, one for each member of the selection committee. (In lieu of submitting book copies, individuals may submit a brief summary or review of the nominated book. The Mooney committee chair may then opt to seek copies from the publisher.)

An unsuccessful title may be re-submitted once. A book is eligible for nomination twice over a two-year window. To be considered for the 2017 James Mooney Award (presented in 2018) a book must have been published in 2016 or 2017. Titles should be submitted for consideration by October 1, 2017. Please send submissions to Daniel W. Ingersoll, the Mooney Award Press Coordinator, whose address is below. Books will be judged by a committee of anthropologists from different subfields in the discipline. The winner will be announced at the 2018 annual meeting of the SAS.

### CONTACT

Daniel W. Ingersoll, Jr., Mooney Award Press Coordinator (send books)

Professor of Anthropology, Emeritus, St. Mary's College of Maryland

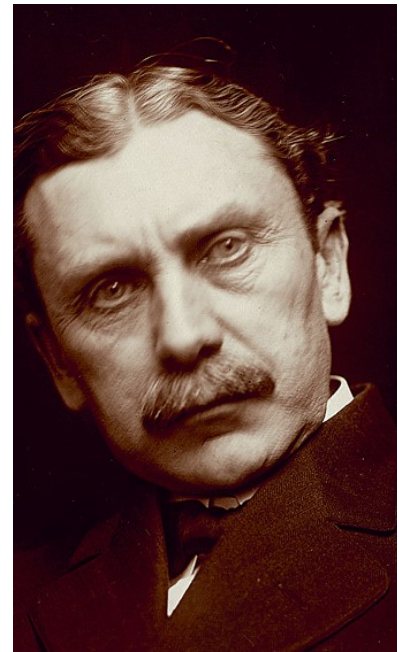
P.O. Box 5029

St. Mary's City, MD 20686

FedEx, UPS, etc.: 47715 Old Cove Road, St. Mary's City, Maryland 20686

Phone: 240-434-3689

Email: [dwingersoll@smcm.edu](mailto:dwingersoll@smcm.edu)



James Mooney  
Smithsonian Institution,  
Bureau of American Ethnology



## MOONEY AWARD RECIPIENT 2016



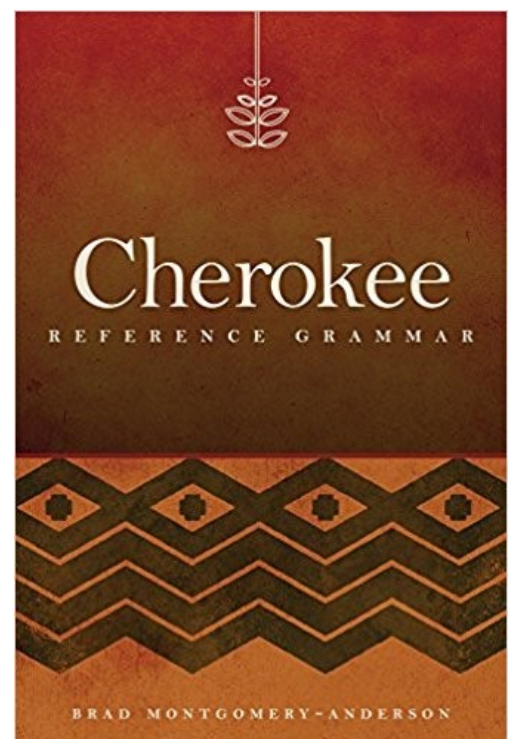
Brad Montgomery-Anderson (NSU)



The 2016 Mooney Award Winner was presented to Brad Montgomery-Anderson for his book, *Cherokee Reference Grammar*, published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

Montgomery-Anderson is an associate professor in the Cherokee and Indigenous Studies Department at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. He specializes in Cherokee language, Mayan languages, and language revitalization. A native of Boulder, Colorado, he obtained a Master's in Indigenous Studies and a PhD in linguistics from the University of Kansas. He is a regular presenter at the Linguistic Association of the Southwest, the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas, the International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation, and the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposia.

“Although the *Cherokee Reference Grammar* focuses on the dialect spoken by the Cherokees in Oklahoma—the Cherokee Nation and the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians— it provides the grammatical foundation upon which all the dialects are based. In his introduction, author Brad Montgomery-Anderson offers a brief account of Cherokee history and language revitalization initiatives, as well as instructions for using his grammar. The book then delves into an explanation of Cherokee pronunciation, orthography, parts of speech, and syntax.” - University of Oklahoma Press



ISBN-13: 978-0806146676

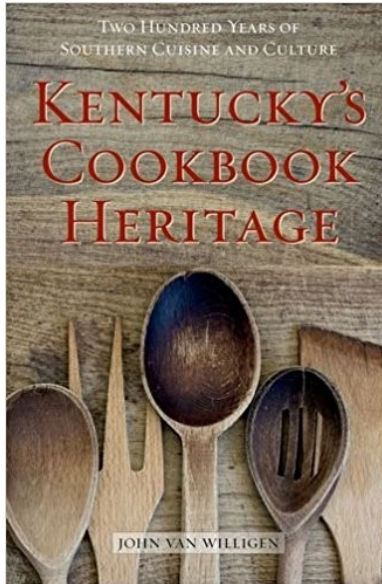
ISBN-10: 0806146672

## 2016 MOONEY AWARD HONORABLE MENTIONS

The Mooney Award runners up were John van Willigen's *Kentucky's Cookbook*, and Asa R. Randall's *Constructing Histories: Archaic Freshwater Shell Mounds and Social Landscapes of the St. Johns River, Florida*

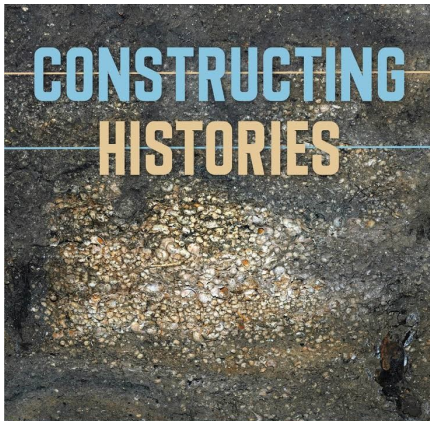
### *KENTUCKY'S COOKBOOK HERITAGE*

In *Kentucky's Cookbook Heritage*, John van Willigen explores the state's history through its changing food culture, beginning with Lettice Bryan's *The Kentucky Housewife* (originally published in 1839). Considered one of the earliest regional cookbooks, *The Kentucky Housewife* includes pre-Civil War recipes intended for use by a household staff rather than solitary cooks, along with instructions for serving the family. Van Willigen also shares the story of the original Aunt Jemima—the advertising persona of Nancy Green, born in Montgomery County, Kentucky—who was one of many African American voices in Kentucky culinary history.



### *CONSTRUCTING HISTORIES: ARCHAIC FRESHWATER SHELL MOUNDS AND SOCIAL LANDSCAPES OF THE ST. JOHNS RIVER, FLORIDA*

“Large accumulations of ancient shells on coastlines and riverbanks were long considered the result of garbage disposal during repeated food gatherings by early inhabitants of the southeastern United States. In this volume, Asa R. Randall presents the first new theoretical framework for examining such middens since Ripley Bullen's seminal work sixty years ago. He convincingly posits that these ancient "garbage dumps" were actually burial mounds, ceremonial gathering places, and often habitation spaces central to the histories and social geography of the hunter-gatherer societies who built them.



Archaic Freshwater Shell Mounds and Social Landscapes of the St. Johns River, Florida

Asa R. Randall

Synthesizing more than 150 years of shell mound investigations and modern remote sensing data, Randall rejects the long-standing ecological interpretation and redefines these sites as socially significant monuments that reveal previously unknown complexities about the hunter-gatherer societies of the Mount Taylor period (ca. 7400-4600 cal. B.P.). Affected by climate change and increased scales of social interaction, the region's inhabitants modified the landscape in surprising and meaningful ways. This pioneering volume presents an alternate history from which emerge rich details about the daily activities, ceremonies, and burial rituals of the archaic St. Johns River cultures.” - University Press of Florida



John van Willigen PhD is professor of anthropology at the University of Kentucky and the author of many books, including *Tobacco Culture: Farming Kentucky's Burley Belt and Food and Everyday Life on Kentucky Family Farms, 1920-1950*.



Asa R. Randall is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Florida. His research interests include:

- Archaic (10,000—3000 years ago) Communities of the Southeastern United States ;
- Hunter-Gatherer Complexity, Mobility, and Exchange ;
- Monumentality and Social History ;
- Paleohydrology and Social Changes, and Exchange ;
- Monumentality and Social History .



## 2017 STUDENT PAPER AWARD RECIPIENTS

**NOTE FROM STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION COMMITTEE: ABBY WIGHTMAN (CHAIR), VINNIE MELOMO, SCOTT LONDON**

For the 2017 annual meeting of the Society in Carrollton, Georgia, we had seven submissions for the student paper competition: three graduate and four undergraduate papers.

**BENJAMIN BRIDGES (ELON UNIVERSITY )**

Winner in the UNDERGRADUATE DIVISION of the ANNUAL STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION for the paper entitled “Navigating Globalization through Myth in Quechua Communities of Southern Peru.”

**YEJU CHOI (KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY)**

Winner in the GRADUATE DIVISION of the ANNUAL STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION for the paper entitled “The Examination of Reconciliation Movement in the Canadian Cultural Genocide.”

**CAROLINE NEW (DAVIDSON COLLEGE)**

Honorable Mention in the UNDERGRADUATE DIVISION of the ANNUAL STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION for the paper entitled “Scars That Shimmy and Sing: How Antankarana Historical Trauma is Communicated through the Salegy.” .

## SAS MEMBERS' RECENT PUBLICATIONS

*Navigating Souths: Transdisciplinary Explorations of a U.S. Region*

Edited by Michele Grigsby Coffey and Jodi Skipper

University of Texas

### Description:

The work of considering, imagining, and theorizing the U.S. South in regional, national, and global contexts is an intellectual project that has been going on for some time. Scholars in history, literature, and other disciplines have developed an advanced understanding of the historical, social, and cultural forces that have helped to shape the U.S. South. However, most of the debates on these subjects have taken place within specific academic disciplines, with few attempts to cross-engage.

*Navigating Souths* broadens these exchanges by facilitating transdisciplinary conversations about southern studies scholarship. The fourteen original essays in *Navigating Souths* articulate questions about the significances of the South as a theoretical and literal “home” base for social science and humanities researchers. They also examine challenges faced by researchers who identify as southern studies scholars, as well as by those who live and work in the regional South, and show how researchers have responded to these challenges. In doing so, this book project seeks to reframe the field of southern studies as it is currently being practiced by social science and humanities scholars and thus reshape historical and cultural conceptualizations of the region.

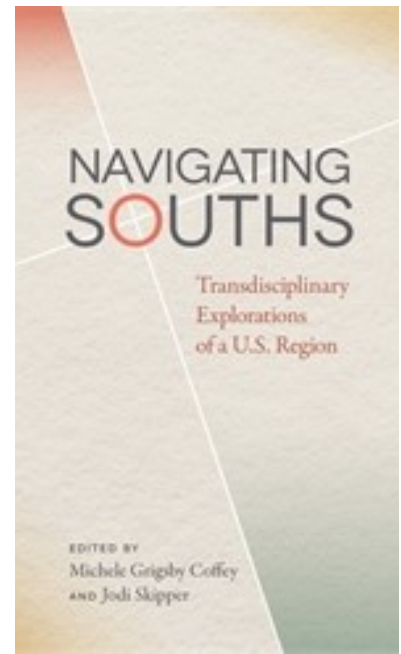
Jodi Skipper is assistant professor of anthropology and southern studies at the University of Mississippi. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Community Archaeology & Heritage*, the *Southern Quarterly*, the *Black Scholar*, *Community Development*, and *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*.

Michele Grigsby Coffey is an instructor of history at the University of Memphis. Her work has been published in the edited collection, *South Carolina Women: Their Lives and Times*, *Louisiana History*, and in the *Encyclopedia of U.S. Political History*.

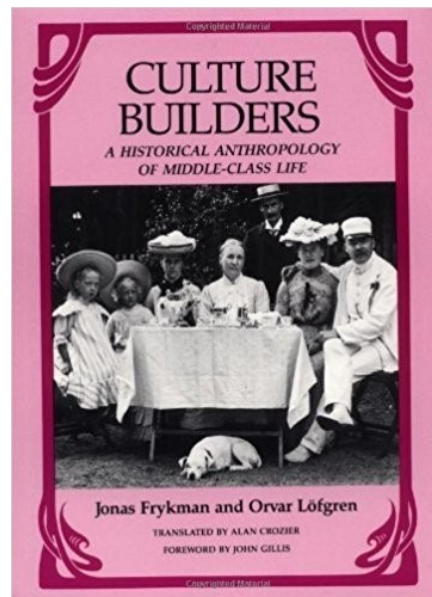


Jodi Skipper

Assistant Professor of Anthropology  
& Southern Studies  
Ph.D, University of Texas  
Historical Archaeology, Cultural  
Resource Management, Museum  
Studies, African Diaspora  
Lamar Hall 522 | 662-915-3468  
jskipper1@olemiss.edu



## STUDENT BOOK REVIEWS



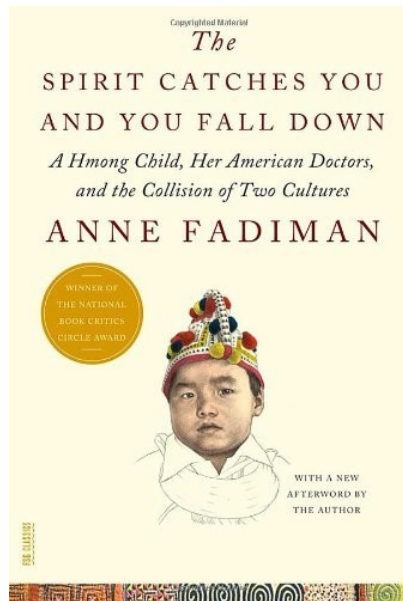
*Culture Builders: A Historical Anthropology of Middle-Class Life*, by Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987

### Cultural Tides

Who doesn't want to know why men wear neckties or why vests went out of fashion in formal wear? Who wouldn't like to find out why some forms of architecture or mannerisms are more popular than others? The common feature of all particular phenomena of life is its historical origin. Take an

intimate and informative look into our ever-changing world through a study of material and ideal history in Jonas Frykman's and Orvar Löfgren's *Culture Builders*. The book offers a survey of the rapidly transforming cultural landscapes of Swedish society beginning in the late nineteenth century. Employing a method of curation reminiscent of time-lapse photography, the authors guide readers through the Swedish experience as the world changes before their very eyes—and ours. Domains of meaning—time, space, social relations, nature, work, etiquette, sexuality—evolve continuously, pausing only occasionally in the still pictures painted for the reader by the authors. The Swedish family morphs from a loose assemblage of role-playing members focused on production into a loving, consumption-based unit with novel expectations and a rearranged hierarchy (Chap 3). The Swedish countryside transforms from a place of residence to a place of reverence (Chap 2). Even time itself is not safe from “progress,” as it is wrangled into the hands of the modern watch, the cycles of life and death now tamed into hours, minutes, and seconds (Chap 1). *Culture Builders* gives the reader an anatomy of sociocultural change. The skeleton is remarkably complete. Frykman and Löfgren invite us to discover what animates people's beliefs and drives society toward the future.

Drew Campbell, Valdosta State University



*The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*, by Anne Fadiman. New York: Noonday Press, 1998

In “The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down,” Anne Fadiman explores the consequences of a lack of cross-cultural knowledge in the case of Lia Lee, a Hmong child diagnosed with severe epilepsy, and her California doctors. Fadiman stresses to anthropologists and specialists in other fields the importance of understanding the complexities of cultures so that inter-cultural gaps in

knowledge and practice are minimized. In this particular case, Hmong culture conceptualizes illness differently, and the Western biomedical model of illness does not apply.

From their perspective, epilepsy—*quag dab peg*—occurs when a person’s soul flees her body and an evil spirit—a *dab*—steals her soul; thus, ‘the spirit catches you and you fall down’. Lia Lee’s case ends tragically, and Fadiman explores with great sensitivity and insight the utility of cultural knowledge. Had the Lees and their American doctors been more familiar with one another’s beliefs, they might have been able to take measures that could have improved Lia Lee’s health. What happened instead was a communications breakdown that eventually led to a Grand Mal seizure at the age of 4.

While her doctors proclaimed her effectively brain-dead after the seizure, Lia’s parents continued to care for her for the next 26 years in hopes that her soul would eventually return. This book highlights the practical applications of anthropology in the medical field, and suggests that anthropological thinking has value in many other settings as well, such as business, housing, and policing. With culturally sensitive training, experts in a variety of fields may gain knowledge that could prevent tragedies like Lia Lee’s.

Allyson Alvis, Valdosta State University

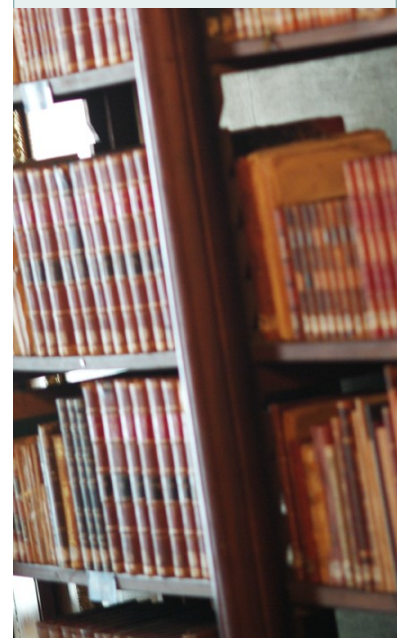
## RELATED CAREER TIPS FOR GRADUATES

Global Health Corps recruits and selects highly qualified applicants with diverse skill sets to work with high-impact organizations in year-long paid positions. During their fellowship year, fellows make a significant and measurable contribution to the placement organization and the target population.

GHCORPS.ORG

### Editor’s Note:

Readers may notice that the editors’ institution, Valdosta State University (VSU), is a bit over-represented in this issue of the newsletter. Indeed, the issue features a pair of book reviews and a teacher’s tip by SAS members affiliated with VSU. Our purpose in doing this is to demonstrate our vision for the newsletter. We’d like it to be a vehicle for members’—both “junior” and “senior”—who have something of interest to share with the SAS community—a great book, film, website or online video. We solicited contributions via the SAS Facebook page a few months ago, and WERE hopeful of gaining participation. But alas, nothing came of it. So, I asked VSU’s anthropologists to “break the ice.” We hope that our next issue will feature contributions from all across our Southern Anthropological Society community. Faculty, send us your creative teaching tips, and tell us about your recent publications (send us the abstracts). Send us a link to your favorite video along with a brief summary. Graduate students, write an advice column for undergraduates who are contemplating grad school (500 words). And Undergraduates, send us a 300-word critique of your favorite ethnographic books or films. And tell us what the various undergraduate Anthropology Clubs across the region are up to.



## INSTRUCTOR TEACHING TIPS

Teaching to the Right Side of the Brain to Elucidate

Anthropological Theory

By Matthew Richard

Valdosta State University

Making sense of Anthropological Theory is a challenge for both students and professors. The theoretical tracts that we employ to teach theory are dense and dry and, for the most part, not a whole lot of fun. These so-called “classics” are often intimidating to students—or at the very least, uninviting—and otherwise promising student careers may be aborted at this critical juncture. To help counteract that threat I have my students write and illustrate miniature comic books of a theorist of their choice during the semester. The idea comes from the two wonderful series devoted mainly to philosophers that have been on the market for many years now. These are the “Introducing” series and the “for Beginners” series (titles in the two series include, for example, “Introducing Derrida” and “Kierkegaard for Beginners”). In the interest of full disclosure I should confess that I purchased a copy of Foucault for Beginners (Fillingham 1993) when I began graduate school some years ago. At that time Foucault was beyond my grasp and I was feeling quite discouraged. But that little book was a life saver; it was just what I needed at that phase of my development. It provided the bare bones basics while judiciously leaving out any complicating ideas that might have only served to distract and/or confuse me even more. In short, Foucault for Beginners enabled me to discern and absorb the essential ideas of Foucault. Once familiar with the basics I was able to move on to more sophisticated applications of post-structuralism. The type of fundamental and nurturing introduction provided by these primers is exactly what I have in mind for my theory comic books.

But aside from a volume devoted to Levi-Strauss (Wiseman 1998) there are no anthropologists in either series. There is no “Introducing Boas,” no “Ruth Benedict for Beginners.” So in my theory class we create our own comic books, our very own “Idiots Guides to Anthropological Theory.” This assignment adds fun to the class even before a single panel is drawn. Students delight in the very peculiarity of the assignment. Most haven’t had crayons in their hands since they were in grammar school, and they take fiendish pleasure in bemoaning and belittling their own and their colleagues’ lack of artistic ability. All in good fun, of course. Just as often, however, there are discussions of strategy and design. In either case, there’s usually a bit of commotion in the air, which is a whole lot more salutary than the customary air of dread that is the hallmark of many theory classes. Indeed, experiencing this lightness, I often wish that we had made cartoons back when I was



studying Anthropological Theory. The assignment is worded as follows:

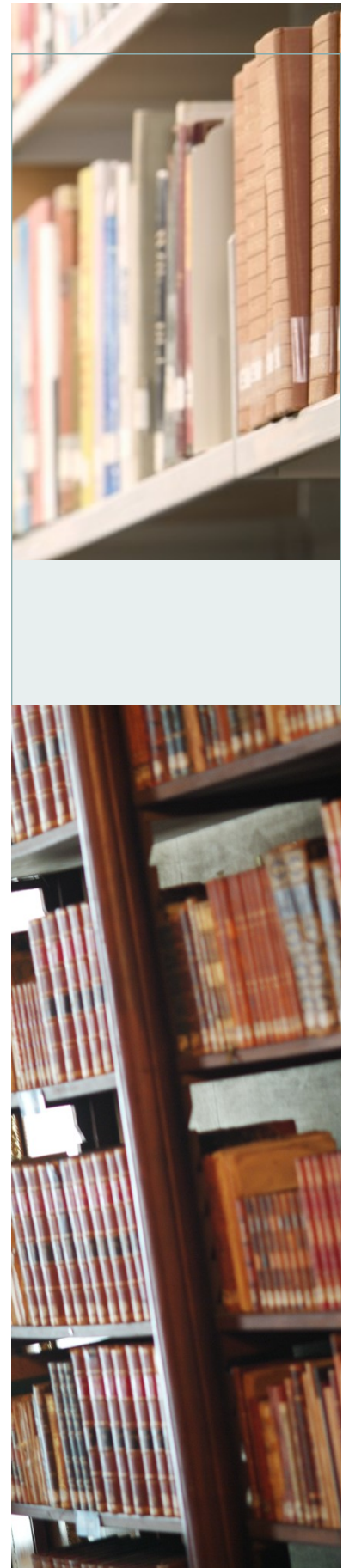
Create a five-page (20-panel) comic book on the theorist of your choice. It should feature biographical and intellectual details of the theorist: Where was s/he born and under what historical circumstances? Who or what were the major influences on his/her life? What were his/her key ideas and how did these diverge from those that preceded him/her? What clever quotes and unusual anecdotes come to mind when we think of him/her? You will gather photographs and other visuals—including your own illustrations—to aid your presentation. I have a ton

of biographies and dictionaries, even Malinowski's diary, in my office to assist you. The point of this endeavor is to simplify the oft-abstruse ideas of these theorists and to make your theorist accessible to everyone who reads your comic book.

The wonderful thing about this assignment is that it works at several different levels. First, it exercises both sides of the brain, which makes for an unusual learning experience. The learning that takes place via the combination of critical exegesis and pictorial representation is truly penetrating and durable. Most readers only see the finished product, however, and they cannot imagine the number of intellectual decisions that have gone into the artistic renderings. Suffice it to say they are too numerous to count. Students start and restart; they draw and erase and draw and erase until the narrative is accurate, interesting, amusing, and convincing. In other words, the challenge of this exercise is every bit as formidable as that required of taking an exam or writing a term paper.

Second, the comics foster greater understanding by virtue of the imperative imposed upon students to simplify. This intellectual challenge is so unlike my usual evaluative procedure whereby I command students to be expansive: to write and write and write some more. The goal in such instances is to inculcate the habit and skill of amplification; to take as many pages as needed to interrogate and expose the subject thoroughly; to go into depth and to use anthropological tools to full effect in analyzing human action. What I hope to accomplish with these lengthy writing tasks is for students to "find their academic voices." I hope to help them master the key theoretical concepts by rehearsing and re-rehearsing explanations to the best of their ability. Lengthy rehearsals are preferable because they push students beyond their customary analytical limits and in so doing extend their intellectual scope. In this way, I also aim to boost my young anthropologists' confidence by confirming that they have a great deal, indeed, to say about the human condition. When students discover that they can routinely write fifteen pages on virtually any subject, they overcome the uneasiness that afflicts novices in all fields. They feel less and less like imposters and their self-esteem is enhanced. This marks a crucial breakthrough.

The cartoon assignment, however, does not afford students the luxury of unlimited space. Students are not allowed to ramble on and on until they achieve an epiphany, or until the number of accurate observations they register outnumbers the number of inaccurate ones. The goal of producing





an expansive and accurate analysis is turned upside down. The new goal is precision. As is the case with learning to amplify, learning to be concise poses a vexing challenge for students. To accomplish the necessary reduction while retaining as much epistemological significance as possible, the students have to understand the theorist very well. Indeed, it is arguable that they have to understand him or her to a greater depth than that which they have previously attained. For only by knowing their subject intimately can they achieve the economy of space necessary to execute the assignment effectively. They have very little “wiggle room.” They cannot afford ambiguity or inaccuracy, nor can they afford to prevaricate. Their grade depends on precision.

The various constraints produce wonderful results. The necessity to economize on space necessitates that students be creative in many ways, one of which occurs with language. Students make effective use of pun and irony as means to convey meaning, as is evident in the cartoon on Marvin Harris that accompanies this piece. Merely experimenting with double entendre, I contend, is edifying, for such word play often gives students novel insights into culture and society and history and geography. Spatial constraints also necessitate that students be creative with their drawings and this, too, produces unusual pedagogical benefits. For example, many of my students actually know the location of the Trobriand Islands because they included maps in their comics of Malinowski. Likewise, students learn where Yap and Truk and other famed anthropological field sites are located. In addition, students know much about the anthropological canon because they have included drawings of a particular theoretician’s bookshelves as a clever illustrative prop that accompanies their narrative. Yet another positive outcome results from students turning to offbeat bibliographic sources for this project. They may turn, for example, to the diary of Malinowski, to the letters of Margaret Mead, or to the essays of Clifford Geertz. They pride themselves on these creative efforts, and I often hear them speaking about their theorists to one another in possessive terms (as in “my theorist” and “your theorist”). All of this talk of creativity and fun in the classroom is real, and teaching Anthropological Theory is exciting and rewarding to me.

One final benefit of this exercise is that I continue to use my collection of comics year after year. That is, the comics assist me in teaching subsequent cohorts of theory students. I hand out copies of the best comics from my collection on the first day that we are to take up a new theory. We read the comics together as a class and the process of breaking down the ideas begins. We look for the continuities and discontinuities with prior theoreticians, and we debate whether or not the comic under

consideration is an effective representation of the particular theorist and how it could be improved. The comic does not have to be perfect for this particular use; I can use good or bad examples to equal effect. What is important is that we exercise the right side of the brain every now and then and give the left side a rest.

#### Bibliography

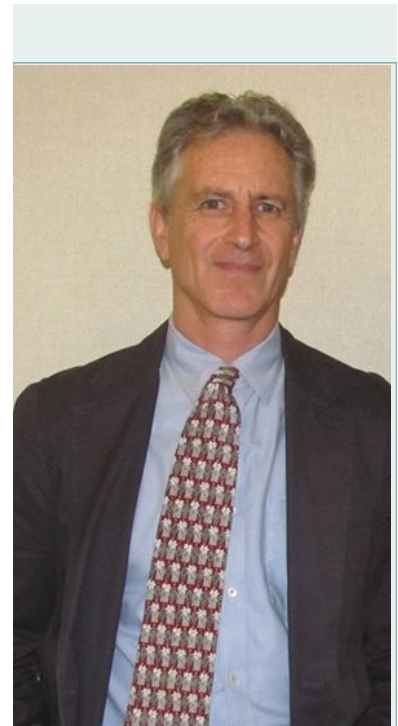
Fillingham, Lydia Allix

1993 Foucault for Beginners. New York, NY: Writers and Readers Publishers Inc.

Wiseman, Boris

1998 Introducing Levi-Strauss. Lanham, MD: Icon/Totem Books.

Matthew Richard PhD  
Associate Professor  
Valdosta State University  
229.333.5943  
mjrichar@valdosta.edu



Matthew Richard (VSU)



STUDENT ILLUSTRATION ASSIGNMENT

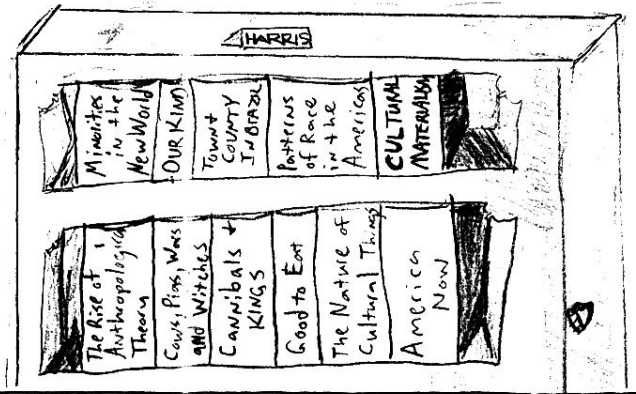
# MARVIN HARRIS

IN  
A  
POORLY  
DRAWN  
NUTSHELL

by  
Billy Esra II



HARRIS IS A WELL-READ Author AND THEORIST



Harris has been instrumental in advancing the theory of CULTURAL MATERIALISM



Although I did not invent cultural materialism, I am responsible for giving it its name.

Cultural Materialism distinguishes etic from emic perspectives and mental from behavioural domains, advocating infrastructural determinism

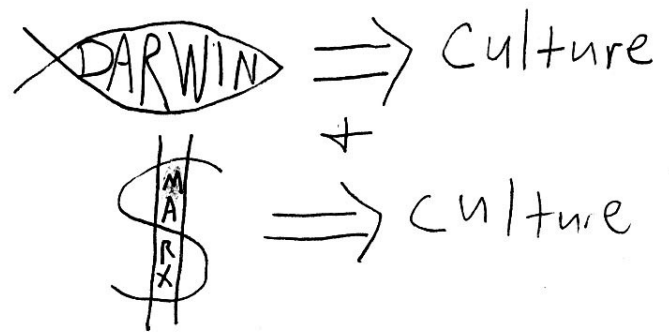


D

Infrastructural determinism is important b/c infrastructure is the primary interface between culture and nature and the place where people are obliged to start using culture to cope with nature in orderly ways.



Cultural Materialism is evolutionary and brings back Marx's materialism in a revised form.



One well known example of Cultural Materialism at its best is Harris's interpretation of India's sacred cow.



Harris says, India's cow is more functional alive than dead. "Much more likely the relationship between bovines and humans is symbiotic instead of competitive."



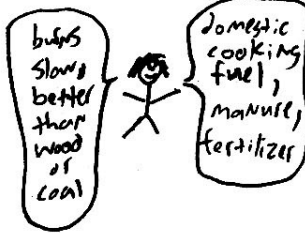
(Continued from page 37)

Harris asserts that one huge function of Indian cattle is a reason to keep them living is their dung.

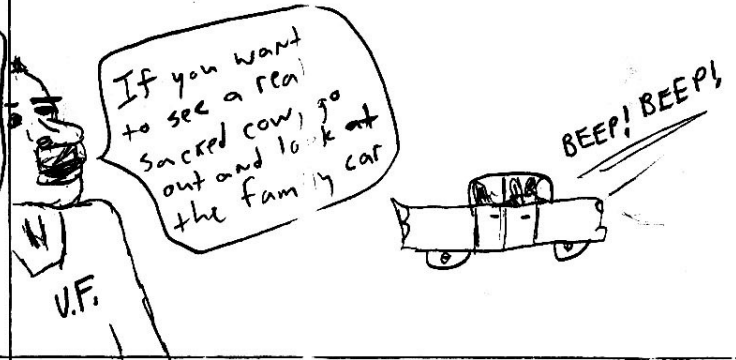
AMERICAN



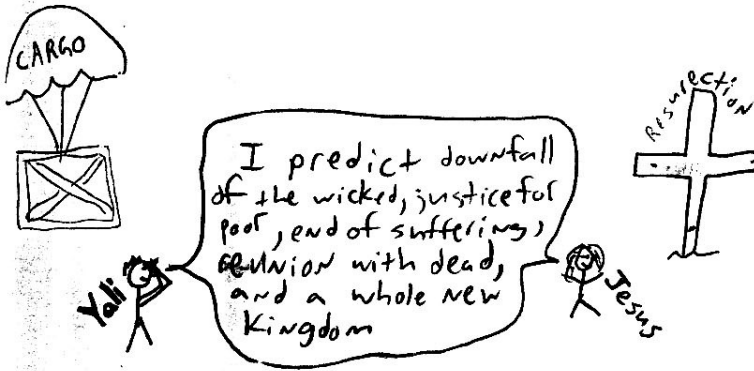
INDIAN



In Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches, Harris asserts that "more calories go up in useless heat and smoke during a single day of traffic jams in the U.S. than is wasted by all the cows of India during an entire year."



In this book, Harris also equates early Christian beliefs with cargo cults and identifies Jesus as a common military messiah.



Harris also implies that "genuine" witches were habitual trippers using a hallucinogenic ointments.



③

In Our Kind, Harris makes a revelation in "Why We Get Fat." Overeating is not a character defect, a longing to return to the womb, a substitute for sex, or a compensation for poverty. It is a flaw in natural selection.



It's not my fault. Natural selection never planned on the Quarter Pounder with cheese

Cultural Materialism has been one of the most powerful and enduring theoretical positions in modern American Anthropology. Wonder Why?



Harris has trained a life time of anthropologists at Columbia University and the University of Florida.



But his article discussed by the anthro nerds, left them a little let down.

