

The spaces in-between

Anthropological engagements with
classifying, boundary making, and epistemological closure

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This issue marks the last of 2019, as well as the last of twenty-one issues to be published by the current editors since *MAT*'s inception in 2014. Beginning in January 2020, a new editorial collective at the University of Edinburgh will take the helm (<http://www.medanthrotheory.org/read/11416/mat-is-moving-to-edinburgh>). Those stepping down include Eileen Moyer and Vinh-Kim Nguyen (coeditors), Erin Martineau (managing editor), and Sarita Jarmack (editorial assistant). All of *MAT*'s current section editors will continue on, which means those who have manuscripts under review should experience few if any hiccoughs during the transition. Of course, those of us stepping down will continue answering our emails, and referring authors and others to the right people in Edinburgh, so business should continue as usual.

Both Erin and Sarita have been with the journal since the beginning. They have done an excellent job organizing the submission and the peer review processes, communicating with authors, copy editing, readying articles for publication, making sure our site looks amazing, and so much more. Starting an independent, open-access journal is a bit like (re)inventing the wheel because there is no publishing company to manage these many processes and procedures. The intellectual and affective labors required are extraordinary, and we are extremely grateful to both Erin and Sarita. Their efforts have made *MAT* into an aesthetically pleasing journal with high standards of science and civility. Similarly, we are extremely grateful to our Social Media Coordinator, Ann Thompson, and our Section Editors: Liz Cartwright (Photo Essays), Rita Henderson (Book Reviews), Martha Lincoln and Branwyn Poleykett (Think Piece coeditors), Rosie Sims (Dissertating), and Tom Widger (Interventions).

This issue is an extra thick one, filled with a varied selection of articles, think pieces, and photo essays. While it is not easy to find one theme running through it, there are a few dominant ones that circulate among the contributions. Reading through this issue's offerings, we were struck by the many ways that the authors have investigated not just the boundaries and borders of anthropological and global health knowledge but also how those boundaries are made up, transgressed, and expanded in everyday practice. In addition to the three peer-reviewed articles, three think pieces, and three photo essays that make up the regular issue, this issue also contains two special sections, both of which interrogate how ideas, people, and things are classified and 'made up' (Hacking 1986).

The first special section, coedited by Elsa Fan, Robert Lorway, and Matthew Thomann, brings together three think pieces, a commentary by Richard Parker, and an introduction by the editors to examine the many ways that the category 'men who have sex with men', or 'MSM', circulates and is made up within the context of global health interventions and spaces. Cal Biruk takes us to Malawi to examine how the category of MSM functions as a bureaucratic technology. Paul Boyce and Fabian Cataldo question the extent to which MSM is and can be commensurate with local sexual alterities in Kolkota and elsewhere, while also introducing the concept of 'MSM-ing', which they suggest is 'a codifying process in knowledge-making actions about sexual risk, health, and HIV'. Robert Lorway, drawing on his long-term ethnographic research in Namibia, invites readers to query the oft-made claim that categories, especially public health categories, only serve to conceal social complexity, offering us insights into the 'doing thing' that MSM becomes when it travels.

The second special section, coedited by Katharina Schramm and Claire Beaudevin, includes four think pieces, which continue with the theme of sorting, typing, and classifying. In their introduction to the special section, the coeditors pose a challenge to anthropologists: to consider the 'elephants in our ethnographic rooms', meaning anthropological epistemology, taking up matters of concealment, ordering, and positionality. Natassia F. Brenman takes up the challenge in her examination of the composite category 'Black and Minority Ethnic' (BME) as encountered in the context of her ethnographic research on mental health in the United Kingdom. Andrew McDowell takes us to India to examine the ways that the physicians he studied categorized people eligible for free tuberculosis tests through a system of triage that obscured the biopolitics of exclusion whilst aspiring toward standardization. In her think piece reflecting on who is (and is not) targeted by HIV interventions, Eileen Moyer asks how ethnographers contribute to the concealment of men and the middle class in global imaginaries of HIV risk, foregrounding how the state gets obscured by anthropological inquiries that fail to unpack 'the local'.

Combined, the two special sections illustrate a sustained ethnographic interest not only in how people get ‘made up’ but also into who and what get excluded as a consequence. They ask: what roles are played by various governmental and technical experts, including ethnographers, through various modes of categorization?

This theme continues in the pieces in our regular issue. In their article on what they call ‘epistemic prejudice’ in Mississippi, Kate M. Centellas, Emma Willoughby, and John J. Green ask us to consider how evidence, in their case, the decades-long success of community health clinics in the US South, gets ignored in wider scientific and policy discussions on innovation and knowledge production. Using a place-based argument that also takes race and class into consideration, they demonstrate how Mississippi is imagined as a place beyond the nation state, routinely compared with an African country in media, policy, and scientific debates.

Justin Dixon and Clare Chandler, in their article ‘Opening up fever, closing down medicines’, explore how new ways of classifying childhood fever are shaping clinical encounters, remaking understandings of malaria, antibiotic (over)use, and what constitutes ‘good care’. Anne Lia Cremers offers a close reading of boundary-making processes between biomedicine, faith healing, and traditional medicine in Gabon, where she researched the treatment-seeking practices of patients with tuberculosis. Proffering the concept of ‘conventional boundary making,’ she reminds us that – contrary to current trends in social theory – everything may not be fluid and multiple.

Perhaps challenging the category of ‘think piece’, the authors of the three think pieces found in the regular issue utilize diverse rhetorical strategies to make their points. Lauren Carruth, Sarah Chard, Heather A. Howard, Lenore Manderson, Emily Mendenhall, Emily Vasquez, and Emily Yates-Doerr combine forces to offer a clear-cut set of insights and concerns relating to emergent modes of diabetes subtyping. Fresh off a clinical assignment to vaccinate people against Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eugene T. Richardson riffs on the entrenched coloniality of global public health that he witnessed there, and questions public health modes of analysis that ignore history and context. Franziska Fay combines material from interviews and a photovoice project with young people in Zanzibar to question the category of ‘child protection’. And in an evocative ‘Interventions’ essay, drawing on an analytical framework from science and technology studies, Abigail H. Neely examines the interstices of global health and traditional healing as contained within a reused Lucozade bottle in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

The issue is rounded out with three photo essays, the first of which, curated by Wais Aria, Josephine de Freitas, Maggie Francis, and Andrew McNab, documents the successes of a men’s engagement project run in Afghanistan to increase women’s access to contraception.

Taking up the methodological limitations of doing ethnographic fieldwork of ‘green care’, or modes of therapy that incorporate nature, in the winter months in Finland, John Tredinnick-Rowe offers a series of photographs that reflect on light, latitude, and cold. Finally, Ian Lichtenstein takes us to hospital laboratories in the Ashanti region of Ghana where lab workers routinely make do with available tools and resources to effectively make medical diagnoses.