

LIFE IN DIS-PLACE: RE-SEARCHING PROCESSES OF IMAGINING WITH ENEWETAK-UJELANG PEOPLE

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The current article attempts to outline the way in which ongoing research with the Enewetak-Ujelang community and with other Marshall Islanders over a period of nearly three decades has required the author to reformulate taken-for-granted ideas about “culture,” “the field,” and “field research” as well as presuppositions about self/other and about ethnographic writing. Not only has the shape of “the field” shifted substantially during this time period, becoming much more multifaceted and multilocal, so too, the identity of the author has been recontoured many times over by members of Enewetak-Ujelang communities. Therefore, neither “field” nor “fieldworker” are ever the same since members of the community and the field researcher are continuously reformulating their ideas about each other. I argue that shared experiences—in this case, ongoing and extended periods of living life with members of the Enewetak-Ujelang community, engaging in their daily activities and pursuing their varied agendas—allow an anthropologist of the long term to speak and write with some legitimacy about the lives of others because their lives and the ethnographer’s life are of a piece. If the aim of anthropology is “to grasp the native’s point of view” (Malinowski 1922), this enigmatic quest can only be realized to the degree that the ethnographer has shared in the processes of mutual self-fashioning that make the practices of others “experience-near” fragments of one’s self.

IN A RECENT WORK, James Clifford writes about the way in which “The Field” (the location, both physical and motivational, for field research and writing) has become an ambivalent, multifaceted, multilocal space (Clifford 1997). He argues that while this has always been the case, it is now more true than ever. In part, of course, this has to do with the fact that the communities

that anthropologists work with often have become increasingly mobile, but equally, it relates to anthropologists' increased interest in the many semiotic residues and inspirational threads of material that come to be embedded in anthropological texts. Indeed, Clifford's own path leads him from a more general interest in the way in which anthropology has constructed its natives, its "objects" (Clifford 1983), to cognitive-spatial scenarios that are insinuated in this process.

The current article attempts to trace significant contextual changes that have contributed to shifts in my own research career with members of the Enewetak community and with other Marshall Islanders. Enewetak, in particular, presents an ideal landscape to investigate the way in which the field must be far more than a discrete physical location to be visited, a site separate from one's "real" place of residence. Years of displacement and exile resulting from World War II and the subsequent era of United States nuclear tests forced community members to construct senses of identity that transcend space. Over the past twenty-eight years, I have had the good fortune to be part of these refashionings, joining the community many times as they have sought to create dis-place-based identities on Ujelang, Enewetak, Majuro, Honolulu, the Big Island (Hawai'i), and elsewhere in the United States. These engagements suggest that the "field" and "fieldwork" are neither here nor there: they are elusive ideas, multiply situated and far more complex than typically described. Equally, both the community and their constructions of me have been refashioned many times over. While the field as a fixed location, the unchanging community of native residents, and the stable researcher with his research products are each comforting ideas, our comfort with them obscures their complexity. In my many years working with Marshall Islanders, each of these constructs might be understood more accurately as continuously negotiated symbolic arrangements shaped by the multitude of interactions and experiences I have shared with the people of Enewetak and those from other Marshall Islands locales.

In a related piece, I have elaborated on the way in which significant alterations in the Enewetak community's positioning of me as a fellow human had substantial effects on my understanding of the community. This included their shifting understandings of me as a young researcher—one of a tribe of anthropologists with whom they had interacted—yet, in their view, more easily classifiable as a Peace Corps, with whom they had frequent and continuous interaction from the mid-1960s until 1980. These understandings were further altered as I became an adopted member of the community and, eventually, a returning researcher accompanied by a family (Carucci 1997b).

These “era-depictions” of me by members of the Ujelang-Enewetak community, at some gross level, do typify people’s shifting understandings of my general relationship to the community. Nevertheless, they are an inadequate means of expressing the multifaceted and extremely varied ways in which particular residents, in specific interactions, talk about and classify me as a fellow human in meaningful ways generated by the circumstances of those particular interactions. Each of these shifting understandings is critical in relation to this article since I wish to argue that there is something uniquely valuable about the long-term, intensely involving, research method that many anthropologists use. Of course, many others have elaborated on the value of such research, from the contributors to *Long-Term Field Research in Social Anthropology* (Foster et al. 1979) to the authors represented in *Chronicle Cultures: Long-Term Field Research in Anthropology* (Kemper and Royce 2002).

As Royce and Kemper note, extended research allows a researcher to move away from the “fallacy of misplaced concreteness” (2002:xv). Extended research engenders experiences that encourage a broader view, one that allows the researcher to accentuate central events and separate them from transient, peripheral ones. Political motivations are commonly clarified the moment a researcher submits those contested motivations to the magnifying lens of multiple layers of shared experiences. Indeed, the very boundaries of community and culture are transformed as a long-term investigator is able to demonstrate how any social group re-invents itself through time (Royce and Kemper 2002:xvii–xxvii). Yet, just as critical as these advantages of long-term research, I suggest that an equally high value should be placed on becoming experientially inundated in the daily pursuits of local people. The “experience near,” “participant part” of “participant observation” is far more valuable than the “observation” part [Wikan 1991] precisely because it allows the researcher-as subject to come into view. As Marshall Islanders often say, only through *bed wōt*, “remaining with” (for an extended period of time), can one participate in a way that leads to shared meaningful interactions and understandings.¹

Combining multiple research encounters with experience near motivations lead one inevitably toward meta-contextualization. Indeed, it could be argued that this is one of the central productive processes of cultural understanding: by layering one contextual frame upon another, anthropologists as participants learn to form their own culturally sensitive, experience-near discriminations. As a correlate of such multi-layered, repetitive, experiences, returning to “the field” multiple times can only lead to much more reflexive and historically situated senses of local consciousnesses. Finally, by making moral commitments to the causes of local people, the entire observer/observed

dichotomy ruptures in ways that simultaneously complicate and enrich the research experience. These complicating enrichments, if allowed to play out their course, require researchers to give up their feigned objectivity (see note 1). But, inasmuch as objectivity is fashioned by researchers for professional audiences in a foreign world, its “loss” can only result in greater mutual understanding (cf., Schepler-Hughes 1993).

Of course these propositions rest on certain understandings of the anthropological project that are not shared by all anthropologists. Such understandings are, however, largely shared by those who take Malinowski’s dictum to heart: viz. that the anthropological aim is to “grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world” (1922:25). Equally embedded in this perspective is Geertz’ more recent understanding of the anthropological endeavor as a semiotic project, an endeavor at once about and implicated in the production of intersubjective meanings (Geertz 1973). And should we be tempted (as anthropologists often are) to jump incautiously from the intersubjective to the apparently objective, Lacan suggests that the alienation of the subject from his/her desire to act in the world in an unmediated experiential manner is, itself, prevented by the enabling possibilities of language and culture. Therefore, anthropology must move well beyond its complicity in objectifying the objects of its own production as “the language of” or “the culture of.” Meanings are only separated from “feelings” by European dichotomies of an entirely cultural order (Wikan 1991). And one does not think-feel in an abstract, objective, way.²

The entire ethnoscience experiment in anthropology clearly demonstrated that, in an important sense, Malinowski’s project, while laudable, was also unattainable since the bridge between the ethnographer’s interpretations and the native’s interpretations was uncrossable. Nevertheless, this far from invalidates the potentials of the anthropological attempt to “get at” the native point of view. Since meaning and practice are inextricably intertwined, Wikan (rightly, I believe) takes us down the path of the *experience near*; the same path, I would argue, that each of us traverses in our own enculturation. In following Wikan’s lead, anthropologists are led (as was Malinowski, in some degree) “off the verandah” and directly into the experiential realities of life in another culture. For this reason, long term and return research, is not only desirable: it is directly correlated with anthropologists’ ability to align their own experiences as closely as possible with that of “the natives” and, therefore, to empathize and understand through “feel-thinking.” Any other form of understanding takes anthropology away from Malinowski’s notion of what the discipline was all about.

Peggy Trawick, in interpreting Lacan, notes that “meaning, the seeming goal and source of language, has no stability. It . . . is a matter of relations,

arbitrary and contingent, always shifting. Meaning . . . this “other of the other” . . . can never be captured or appropriated” (1990:145). And yet, if one takes Malinowski’s dictum to heart too literally, is this not the aim of anthropology, to capture and appropriate the “other”? For Lacan, this search for the (re)integration of self and other is pan-human, doubly embedded in the separation from one’s own mother at birth and in the psyche of each of us as symbolic creatures (Lemaire 1977). Thus, much of the blaming discourse that has “othered” anthropologists and anthropology for creating “others” only to fulfill a (slightly) repressed desire to appropriate and control “them” is hardly unique to anthropology (cf., Rosaldo 1993, and O’Rourke’s *Cannibal Tours* 1987). If we follow Lacan’s lead, all academic endeavors, indeed, all human representational activities, endlessly chase their own other/self images in pursuit of unfulfilled desire (see Lindstrom 1993 for a Lacanian take on Cargo Cult).

If meaning can only be posited, never captured or appropriated, however, I believe there are distinctions in the modes of knowing and modes of depiction that can differentiate the levels of satisfaction/fulfillment in a person’s attempts to comprehend. And, for ethnographic research, that which separates the near total self projection that many associate with nineteenth-century armchair anthropology from the most insightful forms of ethnographic inquiry, relate to the levels of (inter)personal experience and to “experience-nearness.” Such experiential insight cannot be obtained in lieu of long-term, repetitive, inundation in the lives of others (though not guaranteed by these factors). Such co-self fashioning Schutz calls “growing older together” (Schutz 1967:103). I can speak/write only with my own voice. Only through extensively sharing experience with others, can my voice be made to resonate/reverberate in tones that, in frequency and contour, evoke the dilemmas and desires of those of who, through shared time, talk, labor, and love, have become a part of me. For this same reason, the *way* in which the field experience is authored is critical, since texts are primary artifacts that link representations in multifaceted ways with authors, and inscribed meanings with derivational contexts. Certainly, the ultimate aim of the anthropological project should not be thought of as a form of “ventriloquy.” Nevertheless, for many genres of anthropological discourse and writing, I believe it is important for an anthropologist to be very explicit about the precise ways in which the representations that s/he tosses about in conversation, or inscribes in a text, are related back to specific interactive research contexts in which those representations are rooted. Every good ethnographer must triangulate statements about meaning in this manner, since so much of the hocus pocus of ethnography occurs in the space between what was experienced and what comes to be inscribed (often multiply, and in different ways for

different audiences).³ Even in these ideal contextually sensitized conditions, texts are authored and meanings fashioned. The text never “captures” an experience. Nevertheless, if ethnographers were to adhere to the dictum of triangulation, the logic of why a particular set of representations came to be inscribed and, thereby, overdetermined in a text would be apparent to readers of that text. If the worlds of others necessarily escape captivity, an experienced ethnographic author need not be left solely with the detritus of desire. The reflexive accounting of an ethnographer saturated with years of the experience-near, can tell a story that, while reflecting his/her particular methods and intents, has the possibility of demonstrating mutual empathic understanding in writing of the intertwined character of thoughts and feelings and the experiential processes of “coming to know” (however little one ever may know).

Situating Selves and Others

To return to Ujelang and Enewetak people’s shifting understandings of me over the years, it is generically legitimate to say that, early on, many people asked about or introduced me using a Peace Corps designation. This was particularly true of those who had not come to know me well. With Peace Corps of roughly my age moving on and off island every few months, this classification made sense. Later on, many would say “Oh, he is the offspring of Biola” (my mother by adoption), when introducing me to others who were not long-standing residents. When others would say “He is really an Ujelang (or Enewetak) person,” that classification was, most often, an alternate way of noting that I was adopted by a member of the community. But each time someone attributed a local identity to me, the meaning depended on specific elements of the context of use. The speech situations in which such comments were made share the fact that the local speaker always addressed someone far less familiar with the situation, but the “he is one of us” message also meant very different things when, as in one case, the speaker was addressing a local student returning from college and, as in others, when the speaker was addressing a foreign, white, government official. Equally, there are other very different understandings of my identity that coexist with the above. Yet, even though they are less common, they are classifications just as critical as the above. For example, on one occasion, a huge argument erupted with the husband of one of my sister’s daughter’s when he wanted to use my Swiss Army knife to work on a model canoe. While I indicated he could use the knife at my house, I refused to let him take it home, having recently sacrificed three such knives when they had been “borrowed” and, at the time, having no backup pocket knives.⁴ In the argument, he depicted me as “very

haughty” and “the worst of white people (Americans).” (Being stuck up, or haughty, is a common Marshallese classification of Americans’ nonsharing demeanor.) *In this context*, haughtiness and being the worst white person served as effective contestations of the otherwise common public situations in which Ujelang people claimed me as one of their own based, in part, on my generosity. As a pedagogical statement, it pointed out that for Ujelang people there was *never* a condition when selfishness and hoarding was acceptable among close relatives (even though it did not mean that such activities never took place among close relatives).

These varied meanings and the practical activities in which they are embedded are virtually unlimited. Nevertheless, the more time one spends in the field, the broader the array of interactions one experiences, and the greater the likelihood that the anthropologist as author can construct accounts that depict experiences in ways that reflect the contexts in which they occur as well as their frequency.

If this is the advantage of lengthy research encounters, the superficially recurrent character of multiple encounters may have a down side as well. With a huge array of interactive contexts to use as points of reference, there also may be a greater tendency to fashion new accounts out of the normative. In other words, often the common aspects of varied interactions become the taken-for-granted theme of an ethnography, thereby obliterating the context-specific conditions that made a particular interaction meaningful. The ethnographic account, always a meta-expressive document, becomes further divorced from events in the field and moves ever more toward an ethnographer’s assessment of the superficially similar character of many different interactions. It represents the ethnographer in the act of creating culture by inscribing that which inevitably (always, typically) happens. Normative statements of this sort may be unavoidable. Even an experimental ethnography like *N!isa* (Shostak 1981), typified by lengthy transcriptions of N!isa’s talk, is far from straightforward. Initially, the normative sections seem to be cordoned off in separate introductory sections.⁵ Nevertheless, the transcriptions are also interpretive work. In these sections Shostak translates into the language of the consumer of the text and selectively decontextualizes quotations, moving them from their contexts of elicitation to newly contextualized settings that reflect Shostak’s own biases about what she takes to be generic similarities in women’s lives and in the supposedly universal course of the human life cycle. Once the unquestioned brokers of knowledge about other cultures, in recent years anthropologists (like Shostak, above) have begun to work much harder at defining a viable social location, a positioned stance (less presupposing, less patriarchal) where their voices still make sense. Given the shifting grounds of this pursuit, I believe

it is critical to be explicit about the distinctive types of meanings that are sandwiched together in any ethnographic account. The anthropological “tool kit” of literary devices is not often used to maximum advantage in order to discriminate “whose meanings,” or “meanings in relation to what.”

Re-turns to the Field(s) (Never the Same Me, Nor the Same Field)

If returns to the field are of extraordinary value, part of their value lies in the immediate disproof of early anthropological thinking about the unchanging nature of so-called primitive societies. Changes in culture and changes in social selves are continuous and while the specific social sites where change occurs are far from universal, both for societies and for social persona, the radical divide between Lévi-Strauss’ hot and cold societies (1962), as Sahlins was perhaps the first to point out (1976), was little more than ethnocentric projection. Elsewhere (Carucci 1997b), I have noted how substantially my own position within the Ujelang-Enewetak shifted through time. Even within the first two years, people came to see me differently, and interact differently with me as they re-situated me from Peace Corps like visitor/outsider, through numerous intermediate moments to adopted-by-Biola long-term resident, and eventually to potential future spouse of Jinet (different generation, different family, opposite half of the village). Five, fifteen, and twenty years later, these re-situated understandings of me by community members shifted even more, and as Ujelang and Enewetak people repositioned me, so my understandings of different elements of local experiences changed (Carucci 1997b). Now most Ujelang-Enewetak people interact with me as *jimma* (grandfather), *wüllepa* (mother’s older brother), or *rūkora* (mother’s younger brother), whereas twenty-five years ago I had several people who could call me “child,” and a plethora of older siblings. And, of course, expectations of how I should act and how others act in relation to me have shifted. But I have not been the sole persona to change. The entire fabric of Ujelang society was in equal flux, as was each social persona therein. In short, the whole idea of a “return,” like that of “the field,” becomes problematic. Even when returns are rapid, the “society” has reinvented itself. Each time I return to Enewetak, new social actors, new events, new social arrangements have appeared. While they bear definite historical connections with formerly encountered actors, events and alignments, they never take the concise forms one might have supposed in advance. Therefore, the social fields are every bit as new and transformed as the turns I must negotiate to place me in face-to-face encounters with my Ujelang-Enewetak family and friends. Social persona, constructed out of a nexus of interpersonal relationships and dependent on shifts of situation and life circumstance as well as social life,

are dynamic, all-too-often taking on the dimensions of cohesive individuals solely to fit projections of Eurocentric individuals.

The recent Enewetak magistrate and chief, Naptali, is a perfect example. Much as I have been repositioned within the community, so Naptali has shed the skins of multiply situated selves, and is now a radically different social persona than the Naptali I knew as a young field researcher in 1976. At that time Naptali's father, Ioanej was "the chief," the last of a long line of chiefs with substantial clout and power. Naptali's position as the future chief was far from secure. It was clear that if Ioanej' younger brother, Tom, outlived him, he would be the next chief, but the two elders were close in age and Tom's rule would not be long. Beyond that, however, chiefly inheritance paths were cloudy. An older sibling line of Ioanej father, at that time represented by the brother pair Apinar and Aduwo, were eager to claim chiefly rights. And Naptali's own older brother, while adopted by the chief of the Enjebi half of the community, Ebream, still had some chiefly claim. There were even those who contended that the community should go back to an earlier time in the nineteenth century when, by their self-empowering accounts, the chieftainship has passed along matriclan pathways, a route that would make Joseph the Enewetak successor. Demeanor was also a consideration. And Naptali, one of the *di nana* (ill-behaved ones) in 1976-1978—a smoking, drinking, nonchurch member—was not the epitome of a future community leader. His older brother-by-birth, however, was a far heavier drinker and an equally questionable future chief. Further clouding the lens, the older of the older line sibling pair, Apinar, was not a skilled orator. Aduwo, however, was a famed storyteller and outspoken purveyor of communal knowledge. Yet, unlike his brother Apinar, he smoked, drank and, in other ways contravened the teachings of the church.

Five years later, only one element of the scenario looked familiar: Ioanej was aging rapidly and Tom was in a position to succeed his older brother as chief. In other ways, the social scene was quite different. Aduwo had disappeared on a winter fishing trip with two of his sons (Americans would call them nephews), and the community had, after some time, held a memorial ceremony. And Naptali, now a member of the Enewetak-Ujelang Local Government Council, was attempting to reshape his persona by giving up smoking and drinking. He was talking about becoming a member of the church. Such patterns of social identity reformulation were not uncommon among men in early middle-age and, knowing that Tom's tenure as Enewetak chief would be short, Naptali had substantial reason to give up his rebellious ways.

By 1988, Tom, had also died and with Aduwo now out of consideration, Naptali had become the Enewetak chief. His elder brother was attempting

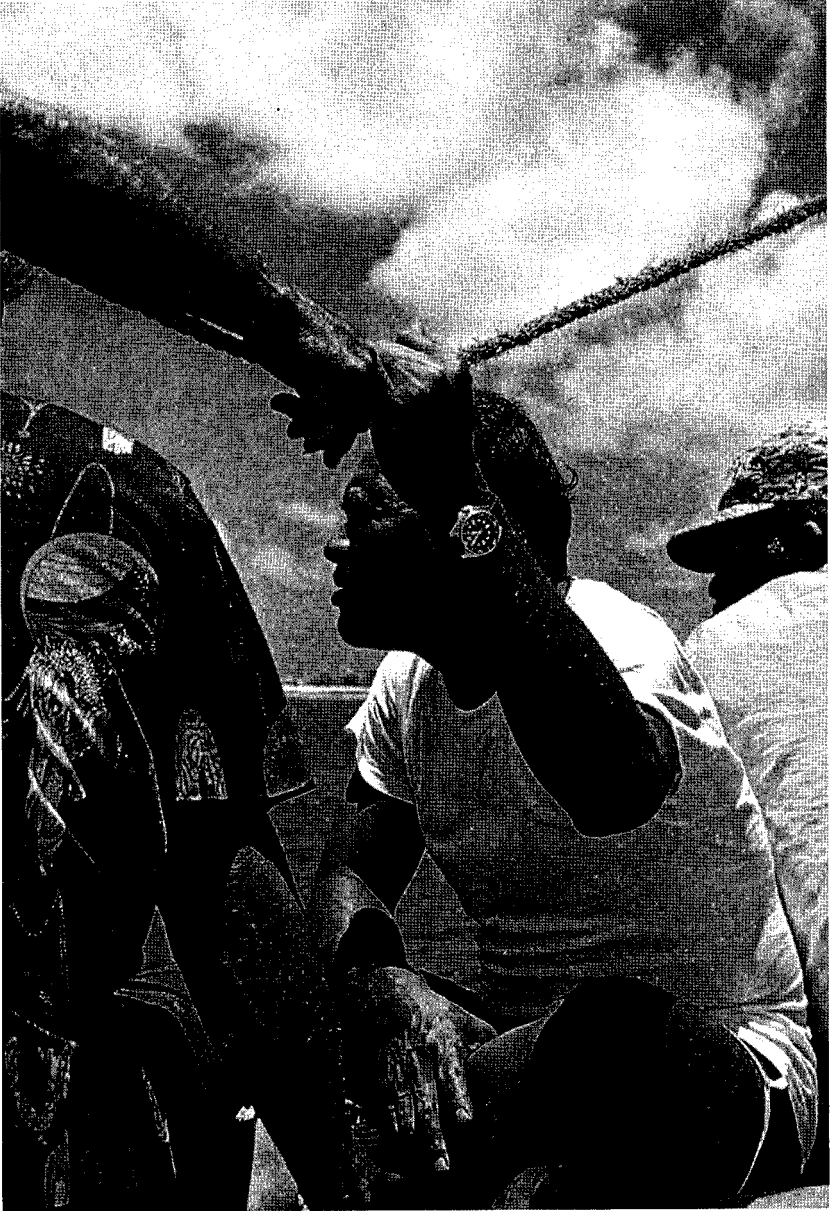


FIGURE 1: Naptali: prior to his years as magistrate/mayor, and chief.
(Photo by L. M. Carucci 1976)

to reformulate his own identity as well but was struggling to sever his long-standing relationship with alcoholic beverages. Naptali had succeeded in this endeavor and was now a deacon in the church. In the 1990s another quirk of fate took the life of the former magistrate, Hertej—once undefeatable on account of his vast network of relatives. The next election therefore returned the community to a circumstance familiar from some thirty-years earlier: the civil affairs of the community, now governed by a mayor (rather than magistrate), would be aligned with the once-sacred care of the atoll by a chief. The Enewetak chief, like his father and grandfather, was now also the mayor. From begging a fragment of cigarette at my doorstep when supplies ran low, from his criticism of council doctrine, from his joking with the daughters of his older sisters, Naptali had become a central figure on the atoll. As mayor and Enewetak chief his power was manifest (if not unquestioned). His humor now constrained, his voice having sacrificed critique for pronouncement, the alcohol and nicotine now winnowed from his veins by the repetitive incantation of biblical verse, he was a being of very different social contours.⁶

If this was the height of Naptali's power, it was not the last chapter in his career. Like many Marshall Islands chiefs and empowered officials, new sources of money from outside the Marshall Islands proved irresistible to Naptali (see Carucci 1997a). Failing to distribute these funds among commoners, Naptali began to lose favor in the community. In 2003 Naptali had definitely fallen from grace.⁷ Apinar, the guileless elder who earlier had been overlooked in the selection process, was now the chief of choice to represent the Enewetak half of the community in the legislature. While Naptali was still the magistrate, younger candidates planned to challenge the mayor in the coming election, claiming that they would not engage in the same diversion of funds that had plagued Naptali's reign. In private conversations on the Big Island, Naptali was criticized for not representing people's interests, indeed, for being so haughty that he would not even speak to Enewetak residents when he encountered them in a store.

While Naptali's discourses are still contextually contoured, the degree to which his performances are now much more uniform and constrained is striking. Social scrutiny of his demeanor is now strict and the importance of his position in the community is marked by the expectation of fixity, almost impotence. The result has been an increased incapacitation and, having interacted with him over some decades, in recent years a disappointment is evident in his demeanor. In looking back on his radically altered identity, I believe that, in spite of his days of substantial empowerment, he also has a certain nostalgia for the social freedoms of his own experiential past. Indeed, speaking with Naptali in 2003 it seemed that, at some subliminal

level, he would welcome not being in the spotlight. Ultimately, if this was his unspoken wish, it was a wish that was fulfilled. Naptali lost the mayoral election in November 2003 creating other contradictions, but moving him slightly off center stage.

None of these nuances of shifting self-fashioning would be evident without the multiple glimpses of Naptali's activities over a lengthy period of time. Such glimpses are enabled by multiple returns to the field.

Turns within the Field (The Field Turning into New Fields, into New Instantiations of Itself)

If multiple field encounters have led to a shift in the way Enewetak people have come to describe me and interact with me, the reasons lie as much in changes within the community as in the fact that I have returned multiple times to the Marshall Islands, or the fact that life cycle shifts have created inevitable changes in every person's ability to manipulate their social identities within the community. Substantial alterations in social organization have occurred as a result of the community's involuntary involvement in nuclear testing. Indeed, an extraordinarily complex politics has been created as local people have attempted to obtain a just settlement for the damages to their atoll as well as for the suffering they endured during their years in exile. These social organizational shifts clearly have engendered correlative changes in the way Enewetak people conceive of themselves. As the group's physical form has changed, as well as its members' desires and conceptions, so have my own interests and research foci. It is the course of these alterations that I would like to trace in the remainder of this article, a set of concerns that is not separate from the issues I have described previously, but certainly one that has been the direct result of having continued to do research with the same community, and with closely related Marshallese communities, for more than twenty-five years.⁸ While I use the term "research" perhaps too much in the classical scientific tradition set in the late 19th century by anthropological expeditions, or in the Malinowskiian remodeling of this tradition into extended stays with isolated groups of so-called primitive peoples, the kind of continual work I do in and with the Enewetak community, and with neighboring groups, is really a lifestyle. It is continuous and unbounded, not clearly separated out into "the field" as something opposed to the day-to-day. Part of my yearly routine includes time in Hawai'i and the Marshall Islands. It often includes time in Washington, D. C., Los Angeles, or Arkansas where I work with Enewetak people on issues of concern to them. At other times they ask me to work for them to help solve nutritional problems that have resulted from the era of nuclear testing.

In a multitude of circumstances, the lines between fieldwork and other work seem meaningless. To learn more about Marshallese is often indiscernible from learning more about myself. Today, as I check my e-mail in Montana, there is a note from an Enewetak woman with additional information about her ancestors. She is not responding to a survey of my design on kinship, but rather is using me as her primary consultant to find out more about her father's family. A few months ago, in 2003, I awoke to face my portable computer on the Big Island, to expand on some research notes from the previous day, and to complete a paper for publication. Beginning in the 1970s, technological advances began to allow for a blending together of the anthropologist as author and the anthropologist as field researcher. These technological changes enabled me to engage in interactions with my Marshallese relatives, note-taking on those events, writing about elements of that work, and e-mailing back and forth with editors about related publications all in the same day. Six months before that, with my family also in residence on the Big Island in 2002, I woke to take my daughter to a school function, after which my son and I provided help for our Marshallese relatives. We loaded our gifts of food into the car, transported ourselves and other (Marshallese) family members to church, attended a lengthy church service, and participated in an intensive songfest performance of the sort that occupies many Sunday evenings in the early part of the "Christmas" season. Perhaps that was a true "field day," but the next day I expanded on notes, practiced new songs in preparation for my own group's songfest rehearsal and searched for additional automobile parts that an Enewetak relative wanted me to pursue at the salvage yards in Hilo. By the end of the day, I had reported back to him about the parts, but our telephone conversation was dominated by a discussion of the latest argument within the community. A few days previously, this same man, accompanied by two others, were in our living room sharing fried rice after a day of stripping automobile parts from rusting cars in the salvage yards. I learned far more about important community events on Enewetak and in Majuro than I did about used car parts on that particular day. In circumstances like these, "in the field" and "out of the field" fail to have any meaning. I find myself both "at home" and "in the field" in multiple locations with very different referential parameters. With multiple extended turns to the field, and even more momentary ones, "the field" is neither a distinct place nor consistently differentiable practice; at most, it is perhaps distinguishable as a domain of consciousness that blends, nearly indistinguishably at times, into other parameters of my being.

This blurring between life and work, in part, may be due to shifting tools and conceptions of work in the United States. Equally, however, it has to do with the long term component of my work, with the fact that I have



FIGURES 2, 3, AND 4: While change has significant effects in all domains of life, Kūrijmōj —“Marshallese Christmas”— continues to provide a sense of meaningful identity for Ujelang/Enewetak people. (above: 1977: Ujelang Atoll; below: 2002: Hawai‘i, Hawai‘i; opposite page: Enewetak Atoll: 1982).



chosen to work with Enewetak people in particular, and other Marshallese with similar histories more generally, for a good part of my life. In so doing, the idea of the anthropologist as outsider, as a visiting alien, becomes more than slightly problematic. Indeed, the whole idea of my understanding of Marshallese culture as a thing that is “out there” somewhere, analyzable and documentable, rather than “in here,” an experiential part of my own consciousness, is equally problematic. As most Marshallese realize, the designata “*di palle*,” “white person,” “person with clothes,” “American,” and so on is simply not adequate to capture their classification of me, since our relationships are more convoluted and complex. At some level, as they say, “you are just a piece of Marshallese people.” And, in many senses, that is precisely how I experience Marshallese life, as a feeling, not just as a “thinking about.” Certainly, this does not mean that extended work in a community allows one to morph one’s own persona into that of another. It does, however, mean that the totality of shared experiences is extensive and grand. It does mean that interpretative frames and praxis routines that I use in everyday life have embedded in them elements of Enewetak and Ujelang frames and routines. If these are not separate worlds, distinct cultures, but intercultural activities typified by bricolage and pidgin, they are enacted everywhere as complex vectors of situated experience, not as degenerate admixtures of pure, rarified culture.

Of course, when I am physically on Enewetak, the Enewetak component of my identity is placed in vivid relief. I commonly speak in the Enewetak dialect of Marshallese from the break of dawn until I go to bed. Even then, I frequently dream in Marshallese. When traveling without my Montana family, all of my daily interactions on Enewetak are with local people, in local dialect, discussing issues of local concern. This is far different from my first interactions with the community when my language abilities and knowledge of local practices were rudimentary, and when primary attention to my own research interests created a product and experience that contrasts sharply with my work today.

Nowadays, my students and my family in Montana often suffer from the embeddedness of Enewetak-ness in me. In lectures, I commonly confuse “he” and “she” (or “his” and “her”) in a way that never occurred prior to Marshallese having become embedded in my subconscious (there are no comparable pronouns in Marshallese). And at home, my children are often trapped in hodgepodge socialization strategies with Marshallese exhortations interwoven into Mountain West expectations. Trawick (1990) uses the riverine metaphor of confluence to describe the continuous construction of culture and identity, a gradual intermixing of vital fluids of varied source. Often, however, I fear my interactions with my children will seem no more than

muddled moralizing trapped in the noncommittal space between American valuations of self-sufficient individuality and outer Marshall Islands stress on negotiated communal solidarities.

Blurred Boundaries

As noted, movements on the reverse side of this dialectic—changes in the contours of the Enewetak-Ujelang community—make “the field” an extremely problematic designation. At moments, such changes are monumental, but even when they are incremental, “the field” is always dynamic. *Dis-place*-ment was a critical feature of the Ujelang community at the time of my first extended stay, a period of living in exile that transformed the community from di Enewetak (the people of Enewetak) into Ujelang folks (Carucci 1992 and in press). This, of course, was a result of United States nuclear testing that destroyed and re-contoured much of the physical fabric of the place called Enewetak, remaking it into Eniwetok (Enni-wee-tak [and various other mispronounced variants]), a location occupied by the U.S. military and Department of Energy. For Enewetak people, life in exile on Ujelang began in 1947 and lasted for thirty-three years. The physical relocation of the community had numerous effects on the group’s structural fabric and human contours including long periods of isolation, famine, and additional hardships, but the consolation prize for having suffered isolation and impoverishment was increased cohesion and solidarity. As the most isolated community in the Marshall Islands, both geographically and culturally, visits by supply ships to Ujelang were infrequent and, inasmuch as these ships also provided the sole source of transport on and off of the atoll, local people had to become far more local than they might have desired. Mobility during the Japanese era that preceded the war appears to have been substantially greater. Certainly, movement of Enewetak people has increased exponentially since their return to Enewetak in 1980.

After World War II, however, U.S. colonial strategies re-created Micronesians in the American image of Pacific primitives: docile natives, kept at a distance from the world’s worries (though not far enough from nuclear tests that turned Northern Marshall Islander’s lives upside down),⁹ living simple lives by fishing, gathering, and animal husbandry on their isolated islands and atolls. Under these social conditions the boundaries of “Ujelang people” were, in most senses, easily defined. Long-term, local residents, were diUjelang (“people of Ujelang”). Former distinctions between northern islet dwellers on Enewetak, diEnjebi, and residents of the southern islets, diEnewetak, were reconfigured on Ujelang. Interactions occurred daily on this tiny atoll of exile, and mutual interaction created new cohesion. Those



FIGURE 5: “Lehri” (LMC) speaking with children on the lagoon side of Enewetak. (Photo by L. M. Carucci 1983)

from Pohnpei, Pingelap, and Ñatik who married in to the community and “stayed put” (*bed wōt*) on Ujelang during the years of hardship and isolation, came to be “Ujelang people” just like expatriate Enewetak people. Ujelang people who had married into the Enewetak community in prior years also

became part of the new cohesive group of diUjelang (though, they could never stop feeling that they were a little “more diUjelang” than other Ujelang residents of the post–World War II era).

If the isolationist and antidevelopment policies of the United States created the conditions for an inclusionary solidarity on Ujelang, it is far more difficult to say just where “the community” lies in the current day due to ever-changing, multidimensional residence choices and an equally diverse group of lifestyle choices. In short, the contours of the group are becoming more problematic for Enewetak people themselves than they once were. Some Enewetak people have grown up in Majuro, having visited Ujelang or Enewetak once or twice, if ever. The heads of these families were among the earliest Ujelang residents on Majuro, and performed a critical community function from the 1950s until the 1970s. Many were founding or early residents of “Ujelang Town,” a Small Islands land parcel given to Ujelang people to ease their suffering by a respected Majuro chief. For years, many of these expatriate Ujelang people maintained strong links to Ujelang by hosting an ever-more-voluminous stream of visitor relatives who came to the government center from Ujelang. When Ujelang people were repatriated to Enewetak in 1980, however, the value of Ujelang Town shifted. With outer island air service at least twice a month, short term visits in both directions became commonplace. Equally, however, an increasing number of marriages with Majuro people as well as rental arrangements with Majuro land heads has blurred the identity claims of the out-of-residence Ujelang-Enewetak group. Even though Ujelang Town remains overcrowded, many Enewetak people on Majuro do not even visit Ujelang Town during their time in the government center. For those who reside on Enewetak, living on the land, transforming it through work, and becoming one with the soil after death, are critical identity markers. In most cases, these criteria are not fulfilled by Enewetak people on Majuro.

In addition to the Majuro “Enewetak” group, a subcommunity of Enewetak people has established itself on the Big Island in Hawai‘i and as many as one-fourth of all Enewetak live there. As has long been the case for Enewetak people (Carucci 1993, 1999), a substantial component of local identity is interwoven with residence and with caring for the land. Given these indexical ties that posit a primary identity link between a people and a place (“the people of Ujelang”) many Enewetak residents in the Marshall Islands refer to Enewetak people on Hawai‘i as diKona “people of Kona,” “Hawai‘i people,” or “people of the Big Island.” The first Big Island residents departed from Enewetak in 1990. All of the current leaders of the Big Island community were born on Ujelang or Enewetak and most have spent at least a substantial part of their lives in the Marshall Islands. As yet there is little

question about their Enewetak-ness, though discourses are changing. Many children have been born on the Big Island, giving them U.S. citizenship. Others have died and been buried in Ka'u, embedding their substance in this newland. A large number also own homes in Hawai'i. The currently diversified discourses and altered practices will inevitably lead to a reconsideration of what it means to be an Enewetak person.

There are others with ties to Enewetak people who are much further on the fringe of community membership than the Enewetak residents of Majuro or the Big Island. Their only true measure of being an Enewetak-Ujelang person is that they receive a share of nuclear compensation funds. Not only are these members not resident on the atoll, they speak neither Marshallese nor an Enewetak dialect, have never participated in the day-to-day life of the community, and either never have visited the Marshall Islands or have visited for a few days two or three times in their lifetimes. In essence, they are nonmembers who receive compensation payments only out of the kindheartedness of core members of the community and out of their own lack of shame. Indeed, in my own estimate, Enewetak people need to give serious consideration to the underlying reasons for including these folks as community members, since the primary criteria for inclusion is American (blood quanta) rather than Marshallese.¹⁰ Through their inclusion, the community faces the same risk as Native American and Native Hawaiian groups: membership is defined not by performance (those who demonstrate community commitment through lived activity), but rather by an arbitrary Euro-American criteria unrelated to cultural integrity (one-sixteenth "native blood"). Most critically, in the Native American case, blood quanta has often become a mechanism through which cultures are legally recognized or declared comatose, even though measures of blood may be of no significance to local people as they define their own cultural viability.

My own membership as an adopted member of the community is often asserted by long-standing Enewetak-Ujelang people by drawing contrasts with this non-Marshallese-speaking, nonresident, group. Indeed, further extending their virtually unlimited generosity, many have suggested that I should clearly receive a "a bite" (share) of compensation funds given the current mode of division. While I have declined, their suggestion of my inclusion supports my contention that it is shared, lived activity, not blood quanta, that is the measure of community membership. My own membership lies somewhere at the fringe of ordinary community members primarily because I spend a major part of each year as a professor in Montana. Not surprisingly, they suggest I should receive compensation benefits befitting a community member with increasing frequency during the times when I live in the community for the most extended periods of time. In their discourses,

living with, and in the same manner as, Enewetak-Ujelang residents, makes me as Enewetak-like as possible.¹¹ And, of course, this is but their telling me precisely what I am attempting to tell in this paper. While I speak only with my own voice, sharing experientially in the community for long periods of time over two and one half decades allows my voice to resonate with the increasingly varied voices of Enewetak people living very different lives.

Under Construction: Ongoing Experiments in Identity Formation

Life in the Big Island Marshallese community in Hawai'i provides important clues to coming shifts in the construction of identity. Even though current Enewetak residents of the Big Island unquestioningly refer to themselves as diEnewetak, their daily activities and relations to this land are considerably different than residents of Enewetak or Ujelang. In Hawai'i, people often work in hotels, small businesses, or for young Marshallese, at McDonald's. Others make a living performing day labor on coffee and macadamia nut farms or work clearing overgrown parcels of land. Following an original settler's lead, Enewetak-Ujelang people began to purchase land in Ocean View, Ka'u, in 1995, but they have not yet begun to speak of their fee-simple purchases with the same representations of attachment that they reserve for Ujelang and Enewetak. On the other hand, they say they are here for the long term, and they are working to embed elements of their identity in this new land (see Carucci 2002). Clearly, as the Big Island community continues to increase in size, it will develop a dynamic that will recount people's thinking about themselves, both on Enewetak, and in other locations where "Enewetak people" now live. For now, however, expatriate Marshallese work far harder at manufacturing continuities with the homeland than they do at stressing their differences from those who have chosen to remain on the lands of their ancestors. Equally, while complaints may be heard about those who do not reside on Enewetak but still receive the benefits of local residents, those who reside in the homeland continue to maintain rules of community membership that are near their limits of maximal inclusion. These flexible forms of constructing community allow ample opportunities for people to argue for their own place as a "person of Enewetak." While shifting discourses and altered practices will inevitably lead to a reconsideration of what it means to be an Enewetak person, it is my hope that community members will recognize the limitations of basing such claims solely on formal criteria like residence or blood. When they lived on Ujelang, people dreamed of how desirable life once was during their youth on Enewetak. Nearly thirty years later, on Enewetak and the Big Island alike, many adults speak in nostalgic terms about life on Ujelang (in spite of its hardships). If these sentiments are

renewed in years to come, in order to fulfill their most “heartfelt” desire¹², Ujelang-Enewetak people must fashion their own identities not out of measures of blood quanta, but rather out of the constituents of lifestyle that, in their own images of the past, make life on Ujelang (and a yet earlier life on Enewetak) so desirable. These are grounds familiar to anthropologists of the long term who can only through the perpetual sharing of lived existence, come to feel, and hence to know, the experience near.

Conclusion

In my attempt to situate accounts of Enewetak-Ujelang people and the shifting contours of what their varied classifications of me as an Enewetak person may mean, I have attempted to show that several interdependent, taken-for-granted, concepts of anthropological understanding are inadequate descriptive devices for ethnographic research that spatially spans continents and temporally spans decades. “Culture” itself suggests a bounded, monolithic thing and “the field” is, all too commonly, used to refer to that place where an exotic culture may be discovered. The ethnographer, often depicted as a space/time traveler engaged in field research, becomes the hero who reveals the true way of life of unknown and exoticized others. Yet, as much recent work has demonstrated, culture is dynamic and ever-emergent in lived social relationships, not a thing to be captured as the momentary fulfillment of unrequited desire. “It” shifts temporally, is internally multifaceted, and has multidimensional forms that are reinvented in new locations according to historically emergent conditions.

As manifest in experientially embedded relationships as well as in discourses/feelings and lived practices, cultural meanings cannot be detached from their constitutional settings. Capturing the ethos or world view of the other can never move beyond wish fulfillment. Experience-nearness, however, attained through sharing the life-conditions of others for years and decades under many differing circumstances, empowers ethnographers’ own voices by allowing them to speak of their own lives, their own views, and their own feelings from the depths of their respective beings. Commonalities of practice, shared life’s activities, and ways of doing and being, are precisely what Enewetak people capture in their inclusion of me, upon the many occasions they choose to do so, as a piece of their own collectivizing identities.

I wish to reiterate that in no sense do I begin with the naive assumption that I have, in fact, become the native and therefore, that I speak for all Enewetak people. I speak only for the transcultural person that I am, a persona that allows me to speak “from experience(s)” about what it is like to live an Ujelang-Enewetak existence for many years and, at the same time,

allows me to weave my authorial voice(s) into the documents I produce as an ethnographer. The dyadic (racialized) "othering" that an author like Trask uses to posit her own indigeneity in opposition to anthropological authors—in her case, Keesing and Linnekin (Trask 1991), seriously oversimplifies and obscures these intersubjective connections and authorial conventions. Posing as the metonymous voice of Hawaiian people in opposition to the colonialist, anthropological other, Trask conflates the differences that link her to specific Hawaiian settings and persons and separate her from a wide variety of others. While Trask's comments serve their own political purposes, and their own identity-fashioning aims, her rhetorical strategies are simply inadequate to account for the diversity of lived experiences or intertextual propositions and interpretations that typify human encounters in the current day. But, if dyadic opposition fails to allow Trask to capture the complex admixtures of identity that are typical of Pacific residents and researchers today, anthropologists need to listen closely to her advice about differential relations of power. All too often anthropologists rely upon the guise of objectivity as a false rationale to avoid personal involvement in the political struggles of local people. Nevertheless, as Rensel and Howard, like myself, have discovered, living with local people over the long-term necessarily requires political engagement. Ongoing, experience-near, work with other people provides neither a space to avoid conflicts within a local setting nor a position to avoid commitment to and advocacy of moral issues of concern to one's fellow community members. Each interpersonal encounter must now be negotiated with special acumen in order to seek resolutions and solutions to dilemmas in the border regions of varied cultural spaces that, out of long historical practice, have been kept separate and unequal by declarations of difference that have proven unjust, and have certainly outlived justification.

If long-term research requires us to rethink a whole set of anthropological conventions and research practices, as suggested above, it also implies concomitant shifts in representational methods. As selves social to the core (as Bourdieu contends) authors never write as disembodied beings. Whatever messages an ethnographer may wish to convey, each author's rhetoric and inscriptions are, inevitably, representations of themselves (also see Peirce 1931). Experience-nearness, thoroughly embedded in one's being over the long term, provides a method, indeed the *only* method, to approach Malinowski's visionary and enigmatic quest: to capture the other person's view of his/her world. In lieu of the possibility of being able to overcome the inexorable symbolic gap between self and other, representation and object, type and token, long-term research with its multiple re-"turns" to multifaceted "fields," provides the surest way of "standing" in a position from which context-bound, intersubjective, (under)stand-ings can be conveyed.

NOTES

1. On this point, I differ substantially from the perspective of Royce and Kemper. In trying to bridge between anthropologists who have returned to the field many times and multi-generational field projects the editors of *Chronicle Cultures* seek a stance in the artificial space between the “objective observer” and the subjective participant and participant/advocate. They note:

The ethnographers represented in part I are clear examples of a shift from observer to active partner and, in some instances and in some cases, to advocate. It is important here to remind ourselves that we never abandon the stance of observer; doing so robs our interpretations and recommendations of validity because they are then based on opinion and reaction. As Geertz (2000: 39) suggests, we are always seeing society as an object and experiencing it as a subject. (2002:xxii)

Royce and Kemper wish never to abandon the “objective” stance of the observer (which, I would argue is *different* from “seeing society as an object”). I begin from very different assumptions (though they can also be read into Geertz): that all knowledge and experience is intersubjective, and objectivity is a self-empowering myth that obscures the specific details of intersubjectively grounded knowledge. Given these assumptions, many returns to the field inexorably lead to the possibility of greater understanding, which itself requires positioned stances (see Howard and Rensel, this volume) and enables active partnerships.

2. Bourdieu has another way of addressing a slightly different perimeter of the same mind/body dichotomy in his contention that social practices cannot be divorced from symbolic forms (1977).

3. Silverstein and Urban remind us that texts are always “metadiscursive notion(s), useful to participants in a culture as a way of creating an image of a durable, shared culture immanent in or even undifferentiated from its ensemble of realized or even potential texts.” For this reason, they refer to transcriptions as “text-artifacts”—reminiscent “of museum specimens that can be transported back from the field and evaluated for their authenticity and cultural-aesthetic authoritativeness” (Silverstein and Urban 1996: 2–3).

4. Some said these knives had “disappeared”; others said I had “given them away.” No one contended they had been filched, an important point in relation to their interpretations of my actions.

5. A typical deep-interpretation section begins: “The !Kung have little privacy, either in the village or within the family dwelling. Parents and children sleep together, sharing their blankets, in small one-room huts that have no dividers or private sections. Adults try to keep children from noticing their sexual activity” (Shostak 1981:105). Yet each generalization, the quintessence of standard ethnographic interpretation, leaves the reader with other questions: “When do !Kung have privacy?” “Under what conditions?” “Would it be in the village or in the dwelling?” “Do !Kung ever meet in the bush?” And, on closer inspection, is the very idea of “privacy” a salient Ju//hoan category, something !Kung might try to seek

out, or is it Shostak's feeling about something that she desired to have in the field, a desire she sought to fill with limited success? My guess is that privacy is a category directed at her readers, aimed at causing them to question the cultural disjunctions Shostak felt, even though it is phrased as a "thing" that !Kung do not have but, themselves, desire.

6. This is not to say that traces of his former selves do not remain inscribed in his current demeanor, nor that, in various hidden ways, his earlier persona did not manifest elements of the leader he would become.

7. In a parallel move at the national level the high-ranked Rālik chief, Imata Kabua, had lost the election that would have allowed him to continue as president of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Many voters lost confidence in the president for reasons similar to Enewetak voters' distrust of Naptali.

8. My research visits during this lengthy period include twenty-five months on Ujelang Atoll with the exiled Enewetak-Ujelang people from 1976 to 1978, thirteen months on Enewetak in 1982–1983. Several months on Majuro, Kwajalein, and Enewetak in 1990–1991, an extended stay on Kwajalein in 1995, and numerous shorter visits (typically one to two months) to Enewetak, Ujelang, Rongelap, Bikini, Utdik, Majuro, and Kwajalein between 1990 and 2001. In 2002–2003, I spent approximately seven months living and working with Ujelang-Enewetak people as well as other Marshallese on the "Big Island" of Hawai'i. I returned to the Big Island in 2006 for another 2 months of research. My thanks to the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Host Nations Program on Kwajalein, the Pacific Health Research Institute, Montana State University Scholarship and Creativity Grants Committee, and the Enewetak-Ujelang Local Government Council for funding these research opportunities.

9. Enewetak people were psychologically traumatized as they watched the 1952 "Mike" test vaporize segments of their homeland. Rongelap and Utedik people both suffered devastating medical effects when the 1954 "Bravo" test on Bikini showered them with fallout. Bikini people, like their Enewetak cousins, also endured substantial suffering during their years in exile from their homeland.

10. Marshallese criteria include such things as: spending time with, helping, living with, working with/on, sharing, investing labor in, consuming products of, embedding one's own substance in, etc. Being "born to" is a qualifying criteria only if it is supported by other identity-solidifying symbols, such as those mentioned above.

11. While such statements are fairly frequent, nowadays, at a time when I typically reside on the atoll for about a month or two every couple of years, they were quite infrequent in the past, when I was in residence for a year or two. These are contextual issues, of course. In the past, after months of coresidence, "who" and "why" questions about my position in the community were pragmatically quite evident, and statements about my being a "true Ujelang-Enewetak person" typically were made by Enewetak people speaking with other Marshallese. The same is true today, though I have also heard established members of the community make such statements when speaking with young children. In part, the children do not share the long life's experience of mature youth and adults but, equally, changes have brought a much broader array of "others" into the community, most with

only fleeting associations. Essentially, young children are asking “why is this guy different from other ‘white, clothed beings’?”

12. I translate very roughly since, for Marshallese, desire and other feeling states rest in the throat rather than the heart.

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