RETURNING TO THE FIELD: I'M OLDER AND THEY'RE WISER

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Several processes of change and of human development affect the process of fieldwork over time. The concerns, issues, interests, relationships, coping strategies, motivations, and even personality of a mature adult are not the same as those of a younger adult. Consequently, fieldwork conducted on Pollap Atoll in Micronesia in 1998–1999 differed from dissertation research conducted in the same place eighteen years earlier. Changes since 1980 in the Pollapese way of life, their relationships with outsiders, and their understandings of anthropology contributed to a different experience, as did my heightened sense of confidence, decreased anxiety, and increased faith in participant observation.

RETURNING TO THE FIELD occurs in a particular context involving the interweaving of several processes of change and human development. The discipline of anthropology itself changes over time, as theories wax and wane, and as new approaches to the conduct of field research surface; these influence how research questions are formulated and subsequently investigated. Obviously our field sites undergo social and cultural change over time, which also affects the fieldwork experience. Yet it's not just culture and anthropology that evolve over time: our friends and consultants in the field change and mature, as do we, and as do our relationships with those friends and consultants. Furthermore, studies of long-term fieldwork also indicate that our stance toward those friends and their way of life shifts over time: it is not uncommon for ethnographers to begin their careers as observers in the field and then move toward becoming more active participants, and in many cases outright advocates (Royce and Kemper 2002).

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Many studies in the past twenty years have analyzed the influence on fieldwork of ethnographers, personal aspects such as gender (Bell, Caplan, and Karim 1993; Golde 1986; Whitehead and Conaway 1986) and family situation (Butler and Turner 1987; Cassell 1987; Flinn, Marshall, and Armstrong 1998). We also need to recognize that a fieldworker's package of personal characteristics shifts, develops, and matures with time. The concerns, issues, interests, relationships, and coping strategies of a mature adult are not the same as those of the younger adult. We move through different stages of our careers and our family life, we develop new intellectual interests, we shift social roles, we adjust our sense of identity. Even our motivations for fieldwork may evolve with time. All contribute to shaping the fieldwork experience.

Mature adults are in a different developmental stage of the life cycle than youths,[1] and a number of studies indicate that adults at this later stage are typically at the peak of their careers and have often acquired more self-confidence, a heightened sense of control, more mature coping styles, more stability, and a stronger sense of well-being (Clark-Plaskie and Lachman 1999; Diehl, Coyle, and Labouvie-Vief 1996; Helson and Wink 1992; Mroczek and Kolarz 1998; Whitbourne and Connolly 1999). Research suggests that for many Americans "midlife is a time when people function particularly well relative to those who are younger or older" (Keyes and Ryff 1999:169). Thus it should have been no surprise to me—though it was—that fieldwork I conducted at midlife would contrast so dramatically with fieldwork I conducted as a young graduate student. Even in the absence of other changes, human developmental processes contribute to changes in how a mature adult experiences fieldwork compared with a young adult. An analysis of how these various processes of change and human development affect fieldwork over time can help illuminate the process of field research in general, providing us with a richer framework for understanding the various factors shaping our research and its products. And perhaps novice ethnographers may be able to avoid a few of the pitfalls of their predecessors and not have to wait twenty years to acquire at least some of the benefits of that experience.

I first went to Pollap Atoll in Micronesia in 1980 for dissertation research and then returned for another eleven months in 1998–1999. During my initial period of fieldwork in 1980, I had little thought about future field research on Pollap and certainly no long-term strategy for an ongoing or even intermittent commitment. That process simply evolved over time as I found myself looking for ways to continue my research with Pollapese. My experiences on Pollap in 1980 and 1998–1999 and decisions surrounding them were colored by other visits to Micronesia, both before 1980 and between the two trips to Pollap. My choice of research sites, questions, and even to a certain extent my methods have been affected over time by personal con-

cerns, previous experiences, and the state of the discipline of anthropology. Two years of Peace Corps experience in Micronesia before beginning graduate school gave rise to my choice of Pollap as a research site and shaped the questions I later wanted to ask; each subsequent decision was in turn influenced by earlier experiences. Once back on Pollap in 1998, I found that changes in me over time (changes I like to think of as growth), changes that had come to Pollap in the intervening years, and probably changes in anthropology as well resulted in a year far different from what I had anticipated or even hoped for. In some ways it was more demanding, yet in other ways more rewarding and less stressful.

Dissertation Fieldwork

I chose Micronesia as a field site when pursuing my dissertation research because of earlier experiences as a Peace Corps volunteer from 1974 to 1976, though I wasn't on Pollap at the time. Instead, I lived on Namonuito Atoll, which lies north of the Western Islands, where Pollap is located. My husband and I taught English as a second language at a secondary school for students from Namonuito, the Westerns, and a few other islands. As a result I became interested in issues of education, its impact on change, the role of kinship in the midst of change, and how the more traditional islands were coping with those changes. I became particularly interested in learning more about the Western Islands as I listened to people speak of them as the most "traditional" in the area (which was Truk District at the time and later Chuuk State, part of the Federated States of Micronesia). The acting principal was from Pollap (which was then spelled Pulap), and he readily and consistently captivated me with stories of his home island. I should also admit that another factor influencing my decision was that some of my favorite students were from Pollap. I was further intrigued when I had a chance to briefly visit some of the Western Islands, though not the atoll of Pollap itself. By the time I left the Peace Corps, I had decided that if at all possible, Pollap was the site I wanted for my dissertation research in order to pursue some of the questions I'd become interested in while teaching on Namonuito.

In a graduate school seminar on preparing for fieldwork, I felt as though I were approaching my research backwards, however. I already had a site in mind and some issues that intrigued me related to that site. But this contrasted with the model presented in the seminar of beginning with a research question and then selecting the site most suited to answering that question. Moreover, at the time I did not recognize my choice as the beginning of a long-term relationship with Micronesia; I only knew that I wanted to return to Micronesia for my research and that I hoped it would be Pollap in particular.

I was successful in doing so. Accompanied by my husband and my son, who was about a year and a half old when we arrived, I spent most of 1980 conducting dissertation research. I lived about nine months on Pollap with both husband and son, and then with just my son for a few more months with Pollap migrants on Weno (then known as Moen), the main island of Chuuk.[2] Some aspects of our arrival on Pollap were akin to going "back to the field" even then, since we were returning to a general area we were familiar with, and since many of our former students had become young adults on Pollap by 1980. We'd been gone less than four years, so their memories of us were still fresh. In addition, the island community as a whole seemed pleased that I had chosen Pollap rather than our Peace Corps site of Namonuito. They also appeared impressed with the fact that we'd brought our son to their island, which they interpreted as a sign that we trusted them and their way of life.

Otherwise, most of my memories as well as my journal entries dwell on stress and anxiety. I was shy and insecure, and at some level, I realized my whole future was at stake with the project I was undertaking.[3] Until I returned to Pollap in 1998, I had never recognized how much the pressure to produce a good dissertation had contributed to my anxiety. Nor did I realize how little faith I'd had in eventually getting valuable data through "hanging out" or just participating in activities as opportunities presented themselves. I certainly participated in community life, but whenever possible in1980, I seemed to focus on interviews instead, a method that probably contributed to stress because I felt so timid. None of this did I fully realize until I was able to return.

Returning

It was eighteen years before I returned, in part because Pollap seemed to be so inaccessible. The only access was via ships that followed no reliable schedule, which meant that it could be several months from one trip to the next. I could pursue questions of migration and other topics, however, among Pollapese living on Weno, and that's the strategy I pursued in the summer of 1986 and again in 1989. Depending on who was in town at the time, I was able to rekindle some relationships and at least hear news of other people and learn about changes and developments back on the island. Several summer sessions of fieldwork among Carolinians on Saipan also brought me into contact with Pollapese. Like Howard and Rensel (this volume) and unlike Barker (this volume), I had not originally anticipated developing long-term relationships with certain Pollapese. It was not until I had my first chance to return to Chuuk in 1986 that I even realized how much I valued the friendships I had

made and how much I yearned to develop them further. I had secured a tenure-track teaching position, with ongoing research as one of the expectations. Returning at least intermittently to Micronesia clearly seemed feasible.

Eventually I was able to indulge the longing to return to Pollap itself and to have more than a few summer months for research. I decided to return to Pollap for a year's sabbatical leave during the 1998–1999 academic year. Accessibility was then just a minor problem, since I had a year rather than only a few weeks or a summer. I very much wanted the chance to get to know people on Pollap again, learn more about women's lives, deepen my understandings and my relationships if possible, and hone my language skills. Perhaps even more important, however, I had remarried, and I hoped my husband could experience Pollap firsthand. Like Alan Howard (this volume), my reasons for returning had personal considerations that came into play. Yes, I had a research agenda, but what mattered perhaps even more was that I be able to return to Pollap, reconnect with friends I'd made, and introduce my husband to a place and way of life that had played such a major role in my personal and professional life.

Furthermore, my experiences back in 1980 shaped some of the questions I wanted to pursue and the methods I planned to use. I had vivid memories of anxieties about many of the interviews I pursued, especially those with men. Therefore, I wanted a project that involved women (an interest that had grown over the years) and one that would allow me to focus more of my energies on participating in activities rather than primarily conducting interviews. I also wanted to use some structured methods I'd learned at a National Science Foundation summer seminar.[4] Not only was I intrigued with their methodological and theoretical value, but I also saw these approaches as somehow less stressful and anxiety-creating than what I had done before. Perhaps I just had more confidence and experience, but soliciting free-listings and asking women to sort the results into piles appeared both useful and nonthreatening.

Even though I regularly had had news of the island and of people I had developed relationships with during my dissertation research, I had not been able to continue nurturing most of those relationships because the population of Pollapese migrants in the port town and on Saipan varied so much. Returning to Pollap after eighteen years would mean experiencing a number of changes. My "back to the field" experience doesn't fit neatly into either an "intermittent" return or a "regular" return category but has aspects of both. I had not been to the atoll for eighteen years, which puts my experience in the "intermittent" category, but I had maintained some connection with the community and had received at least some regular news. I had returned from time to time to "pieces" of the Pollap community, but not to the home atoll.

Change on Pollap

Changes since 1980 with the Pollapese way of life, including their relations with outsiders, certainly contributed to a different fieldwork experience and had an impact on my research and on local attitudes people held about me.[5] I was prepared for a certain degree of change, especially in material conditions, and I knew that many more young people were pursuing school and work off-island, especially on Guam and Saipan. Yet I have to admit that some of the changes saddened me. For example, the sailing canoes that had seemed so central to the Pollapese way of life and sense of identity in 1980 had practically disappeared. A single one remained, and the only time I saw it used was in connection with tourism. In the same vein, most of the dancing that was performed during my return visit was also connected with tourism. Social problems that Pollapese used to see as being confined to the port town were also looming larger on the island. These were problems such as young men fighting when they drink, which had not been a concern eighteen years earlier. Pollapese used to feel insulated from such problems; in the past these social ills had plagued other peoples in Chuuk but not them.

In general, Pollapese have a pragmatic attitude about much of their material culture. To the extent that they find something beneficial about outside items, they adopt them, while they often continue to use, adapt, or even readopt older ones. Most homesites in 1998–1999, for example, included what were viewed as "modern" as well as "traditional" structures. Most of the modern ones were concrete houses, which provide better shelter than thatch houses in the event of storms. They were hot, however, with the sun beating down on metal roofs, whereas the thatch houses were cool. The thatch ones tended to be close to the shore, where they could catch the breeze, and the modern ones were a bit inland, where they could provide more shelter from storms. Families with the money to buy and maintain motorboats (and keep them supplied with gas and oil) were also likely to have a small paddling canoe or two especially for when they ran out of gas or the motorboat broke down.

Although Pollapese were still proud of certain older practices, especially those connected with respect shown to senior siblings, they were more ambivalent about "tradition" than in earlier years. Many more islanders had been away at school or working off Pollap and even completely outside Chuuk on Guam, Saipan, Hawai'i, and the mainland United States. From the very beginning, I noticed far more concerns about outsiders looking down on them and perhaps seeing them as "primitive" and "dirty." In addition, community leaders were pushing development projects such as a desalinization pump. Islanders were in general much more aware of outsiders, other possibilities, and other attitudes about "tradition."

Pollapese had also had more experience with outsiders living on their island over the past eighteen years. Other Peace Corps volunteers had lived with them during that time, including several women. What had the most impact for me, however, was the fact that a Japanese anthropologist had been on Pollap several times since I had been there in 1980, and he worked with what sounded like a fair amount of grant money and a different research style. According to Pollapese, he paid people for old stories and medicinal recipes, he hired assistants to collect information such as names of plants, and he gave money to others for household assistance such as washing dishes. I had done none of that in 1980 and had no plans to do so in 1998–1999, at least not on a major scale.

The work of the Japanese anthropologist and the increased awareness of outsiders had an impact on local attitudes about my research, including more detailed interest in what I was doing and a more knowledgeable understanding of the work of anthropologists. In 1980, I organized a community meeting to explain why I was on Pollap and what I was planning on doing, but I don't remember people having any questions or even much interest in the particular details. In 1998, however, there was a vast difference. Almost immediately I was asked to attend a council meeting, and its members asked me questions for hours. They were much more aware of what anthropologists do and of the interests of foreigners. Outside the council meeting, I also had more islanders asking me similar questions when I went visiting. A number of the questions were quite sophisticated, not just a vague "what are you doing here?" They were genuinely interested in the details of what I wanted to learn and why, and how I intended to proceed. In my journal from the day of the council meeting, I wrote that "I was particularly taken with questions about keeping their customs and contending with change and what the consequences could be—the questions of an anthropologist."

One particular question I hadn't anticipated had to do with why I was there *again*. Hadn't I learned everything the first time? Perhaps the Japanese anthropologist had made it clear that he'd come for different purposes each time. Islanders spoke of one visit of his to film an initiation ceremony for navigators, and they spoke of his bringing students another time. So, unlike my first visit in 1980, when I detected little interest in the details of my work, I spent considerable effort the second time explaining what I wanted to do, how I planned to do it, and how it was different from—though related to—what I had done before.

The stickiest issue, however, was about money. For quite some time on my return I was regularly asked if I would be paying people. I hadn't planned to, since I had only a small grant that paid for transportation and supplies such as paper, notebooks, and film. Nor had I brought much money with me.

I explained all of this the best that I could. In 1980 I had some grant money for paying people, which I had done in the form of food, coffee, shampoo, and the like. It seemed to be a culturally appropriate way of interacting, since giving and sharing such items were already a part of their way of life. At the time I was concerned that paying money for information would commercialize and distance relationships. In addition, I never explicitly spoke of giving money or a gift in exchange for information.

For my 1998–1999 return trip, I had already planned on volunteering to teach English classes at the elementary school (since teaching English as a second language had been my job in the Peace Corps) as at least a partial way of repaying the Pollapese for their hospitality, time, and data. My husband decided to teach as well. We also gave gifts, and as often as possible we provided other items when asked. In the end these all turned out to be good choices. Through my activities at school, I became well acquainted with the teachers, and many turned into wonderful informants. In fact, it was a relationship with one of them that led to an invitation to sit in on meetings of the traditional council, which was otherwise normally restricted only to men. Parents seemed to appreciate our efforts, and that helped to establish rapport with many of the adults on the island. But what mattered most to me is that Pollapese seemed to see value in what we were doing and interpreted our teaching efforts as a sign that we cared about them. I found this to be one of many activities that did not explicitly involve "collecting data" which nonetheless proved valuable in countless ways, not the least of which was *increased* access to data. In 1980, in contrast, I had been a bit leery of taking time with activities that did not appear to be directly related to my research.

Many more outsiders had visited Pollap over the years, and during 1998–1999 a fair number arrived while I was there. For example, a cruise ship and dive boat both called at the island. Some Koreans visited for short periods of time in connection with installing a desalinization pump and building a gym. A canoe from Hawai'i with a Micronesian navigator, Hawaiian students, and journalists arrived for a couple of days. Pollapese seemed much freer about discussing outsiders and making explicit comments. It had seemed to me back in 1980 that I had to probe to get information about former Peace Corps volunteers and the few other outsiders who had been there earlier. This second time, people freely told stories and made comparisons. One woman volunteered differences she'd noticed in me between my two visits, and by the end of the year, I even managed to feel comfortable with their comparisons of me to the Japanese anthropologist. We heard that people had enjoyed having us on the island and (as recorded in my field notes) "people realize that we don't have money the way [the Japanese anthropologist] does—and that the work at the school is equivalent to a lot of money."

Unexpected Differences

I arrived on Pollap in 1998 prepared for some changes in the way of life, in the look of the island, and in many of the people, and I had consciously prepared a different project and methods. Nonetheless, I was unprepared for *how* different the experience would be. Some changes that I had never really expected—though should have—turned out to be changes in me. I was eighteen years older, more confident, less shy, less worried about looking foolish—and my career was not at stake as it had been in 1980. These changes had an impact on my relationships with people and how I conducted my research, even beyond what I had already explicitly planned.

Being eighteen years older, I did assume that I would be seen as more mature and therefore classified as an "adult." In my 1980 journal I discussed worries about being perceived as a mere "girl" instead of as a "woman" and not taken seriously. I wrote, for example, about an event during which I deliberately avoided sitting with some younger women for fear I'd be associated with the "girls." What I hadn't taken into account on my return was the fact that I *had* matured and grown in a number of ways, and those changes would affect the conduct of my research. I was far more willing to risk doing something that would make me look incompetent or foolish. One consequence was that I was much more comfortable participating in more activities. I'd been somewhat passive the first time, except in pursuing questions and interviews. Back then I watched, listened, and "hung out," but waited to be asked before engaging in most activities. On my return, however, I explicitly asked to help garden, hunt for octopus, assist with cooking, learn how to weave mats, make roofing panels and baskets, attend massage school. I wasn't very good at any of it, which had bothered me in 1980 but no longer seemed to matter. The islanders themselves didn't seem concerned with my incompetence either, except for worrying that I might cut myself or get sunburned.

My journals from 1980 are sprinkled with comments about feeling "overwhelmed," "nervous," or "shy," and keenly wanting "courage." Other comments reveal insecurities that, along with some of my shyness, had faded over the years. I worried in 1980, for example, that "I won't get decent information," and I wrote about being frustrated: "I want to be taken seriously. . . . I still felt [today] as though I were playacting . . . at being an anthropologist." Those feelings eased somewhat over time during my first fieldwork, but they still were a stark contrast with my return experience. I often wrote in my 1998–1999 journals about "rich," "full," and "exciting" days. Even toward the end of 1980, when I had become at least a little more comfortable, I wrote, "You have to learn how to poke your nose into other people's business in

order to be an anthropologist, and that may be what gives me my qualms" and "I think it's the formal interviews and planning for them that make me nervous." I hadn't changed so much in the intervening years that I never felt any uneasiness on my return, but eighteen years nonetheless made a significant difference. It seems odd now that I didn't anticipate the change, but my 1998–1999 journals are full of remarks about the unexpected differences between the two experiences and how much more I seemed to enjoy my return and its relative absence of stress.

It's not that I never felt uncomfortable. In a very early 1998 entry I wrote, "I feel overwhelmed—like I have to do this all over again! . . . The place has sure changed—nothing looks like it did before. . . . I need to give myself time. I have months and months." Yet except for intermittent complaints about bugs everywhere and children constantly asking me questions, such negative comments are rare and confined to the early days. Whereas in 1980 I seemed constantly nervous about going out to visit people and almost preferred working on my field notes, the opposite was the case on my return. One day I wrote, "When I finally couldn't stand typing and not getting out, I returned a *hepi* to P., visited with women resting from . . . work, talked with M., visited T. for some dance practice."

Another reason, however, that I hadn't often actively sought to participate in activities the first time was because I was obsessed with collecting data for my dissertation. To do that, I believed I had to be out asking focused questions that specifically related to my research question. I shouldn't waste time with other activities that seemed irrelevant. I even wrote in my journal that "I think I get discouraged when I don't spend a lot of time actively collecting data." When I was hanging out with people, just visiting without specific questions to ask, or participated in activities just because they were going on, I fretted that I wasn't taking notes on answers to particular questions clearly related to my research. Looking over my journals, I found I at least contemplated other strategies: "I'm wondering if it wouldn't be better—and easier—to make things lots less formal and much less like an interview—and just talking. I feel they are uncomfortable with me taking notes and formally asking if I can interview." Nonetheless, I still focused primarily on interviews. I didn't truly believe in the value of engaging in activities with others on the island simply to get to know them better or to keep myself open to unanticipated findings that could prove to be relevant. Although I participated in plenty of activities the first time, I was far more open to them during the 1998–1999 visit, in part because I was more comfortable seeking out such activities but also in part because I wasn't so obsessed with collecting data.

In addition, I found during my second visit that women specifically asked me to participate much more than they had the first time, and we received

many more visitors in our house. One factor could be that the islanders had had more contact with outsiders over the intervening years, including the Peace Corps volunteers and the other anthropologist, and more and more Pollapese had also been in contact with a wide range of outsiders by living on Guam and Saipan. In general, Pollapese had become familiar with American culture through movies and television videos, and through stories of those living in the United States, where some had even made successful lives for themselves. In sum, foreigners and Americans in particular had become far less intimidating, more ordinary, more comprehensible, and certainly more approachable.

Island residents also perceived me as someone used to their food, their ways, and their language, which probably played a role as well. What particularly struck me is that fairly early on women asked if I was planning to dance with them when a party was scheduled that was to include dances as part of the entertainment. A couple of Peace Corps women had danced with them during the intervening years, which probably contributed to their belief that I, too, would be interested. At the time, I wrote in my journal, "So many women have been asking if I'm going to dance. I don't remember that the first time. Did I act differently this time—from the beginning—that set a different . . . type of pattern of relationships? . . . What about the role of my expectations? Different stakes? Decreased shyness? Increased age and all that comes with that?"

In the middle of my return visit, I was also asked if I wanted to accompany a group of women to a nearby island for a workshop. Much as I dread ocean travel because of seasickness, I nonetheless took advantage of the opportunity and attended. I had no specific questions I was seeking answers to and no interviews planned. I simply assumed that I would learn about women's lives and that I would hear talk about women and their role in the church, issues I had become interested in. And I was right. I don't believe I would have been asked to accompany such a group in 1980, and I know I would not have been assertive enough to ask permission to join them.

I also seem to have been inordinately serious the first time, whereas the second time I joked and teased quite frequently. I found not a single reference in my 1980 journals to joking (either doing so myself or being teased by someone else), and I have no memory of it. My 1998–1999 journals, however, are full of comments about joking, teasing, or being teased. I also wrote, "I don't remember joking or teasing people before. Was I really serious all the time? Does this mean my language is better? Or that I'm less shy?" This was probably both a cause and a consequence of closer relationships.

I also pursued opportunities as they arose more than I did the first time, when I was so worried about collecting data. I found in my 1980 journals

that I complained about how church activities occupied much of people's time, making it harder to arrange for interviews. On my return, however, I participated in those activities precisely because they were ones so many people took part in—and something I could do with them. I wanted to be busy, whether or not it yielded hard data. Without the pressure to produce a dissertation, I felt I had the luxury, in a sense, of taking the time to enjoy my year on the island. And in the end those activities pointed me in very valuable directions. I haven't compared pages of notes from the two trips, but I certainly had the sense during the second visit that I was constantly learning and indeed getting data. Granted, I had much more confidence that I would be successful and be able to publish results. Nonetheless, taking advantage of activities, events, and opportunities as they presented themselves—even when they didn't appear to be directly relevant to my research questions—eventually proved to be enormously productive. I wrote something in my journal unlike anything I'd ever written the first time: "Sometimes stuff just comes pouring in that I hadn't expected." This was a far cry from feeling that I was constantly hunting for data.

This casual attitude was possible for me in part because I knew my career was not at stake the way it had been in 1980. One of my goals in returning to Pollap was to have a pleasant experience, without the high degree of anxiety and insecurities of the first visit. And I wanted to feel more connected, deepen my earlier relationships, make new friends, participate in community activities. I had confidence after my years of experience that I would come away with "enough" data and that the data would be useful. I just didn't anticipate it would make such a difference. I found myself amazed as the first weeks and months went by that I wasn't experiencing the same anxieties as before. More confidence didn't account for it all. It truly made a difference that I had a secure job unthreatened by what happened while I was on Pollap—as opposed to my entire future depending on what happened with my dissertation research.

Ironically, I probably ended up with more useful data as a result of not so obsessively pursuing it. It was a far more enjoyable experience as a result. I only wished I'd known that the first time. My 1998–1999 journals are sprinkled with comments about having another "unexpected" day, or in other words, a "good" day. For example, "[This was] an unexpected day. I guess that's one of the fun things about being out here—and about not having structure—seeing what happens, taking things as they come." In 1980 I remember worrying about creating structure for my work and keeping up with interviews, but this time I took advantage of events as they happened. I was unexpectedly invited to a meeting of the traditional council, for example. I attended workshops local women attended, I went to church and to rosary,

and I went to Parish Council meetings. Indeed, I went to anything that came up, secure in the belief that I would learn something useful.

On the other hand, I often went visiting women or sat around with them after rosary or meetings just because I appreciated their company. Even though such behavior meant I could return home with more notes to record, I was nonetheless experiencing some of what Alan Howard and Jan Rensel elsewhere in this volume so eloquently describe about Rotuma: people and relationships coming into the foreground while culture and research questions recede to the background.

I did pursue the planned structured interviews but no longer fretted about daily life getting in the way: "More 'unexpecteds' today. I'm getting to like just seeing what happens, what materializes, even though it means *not* getting to interviews. I just assume there will be time." When possible, I visited women with a set of systematic questions. In addition to a census and collecting details about schooling and work histories for each household, I conducted three types of structured interviews. First, I asked a series of women for free-listings of "women's work." Using the most salient items, I then asked women to sort them into piles according to how similar or different they were and finally to rate the relative importance of the items. Aside from the methodological and theoretical value, I thought such structured interviews with their clear focus and specific activities would also be easier for me to conduct.

I was also more comfortable than the first time behaving more like Pollapese and acting as a member of the community in making both requests and contributions. Except for seeking eggs for my son's birthday cake in 1980, I don't remember requesting food, other goods, or even help with anything except for my research. When I was back on the island the second time, however, I noted in my journal a number of requests we made of our host family. I also made an explicit commitment to both a clan and father's clan, attended their meetings, and made the appropriate donations. When I had physical problems with my back, I asked for help finding someone for traditional massage treatment. In church I also made the requisite offerings—as an oldest daughter, for example, or as a person with a paying job.

At the same time, I didn't mind so much looking different, especially when it would enable my husband or me to play an active role in the community. For example, he and I both agreed to requests that each of us perform a musical act as part of the Christmas events. It meant that I would play a mountain dulcimer and my husband a hammered dulcimer—not exactly local instruments or local music. We would certainly stand out as non-Pollapese. But we were pleased at an opportunity to make a contribution. During Lent, when local people were visiting the sick, elderly, and housebound,

we, too, visited and performed small concerts of traditional American music. Not surprisingly, all those activities helped build relationships with people that made them far more comfortable with me. We visited and played music as a contribution to the community and for our personal satisfaction, not as part of a research strategy, but at the same time the strengthened, nurtured relationships were methodologically useful as well.

Listening to the discussion of others at the sessions of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania devoted to returning to the field, I began to consider the possible impact of changes in anthropology over the years, although I hadn't consciously considered the issue while in the field. With the neutral, objective observer revealed as a myth, was I perhaps more comfortable being "positioned" in 1998 than I had been in 1980? I was certainly more open to and interested in sharing what talents or abilities I had. I spent time helping with English classes in the elementary school, and I agreed to serve as liaison and translator when a cruise ship and tourists visited the island. This tendency — or urge — to contribute and to help appears to be a common experience among the contributors to this volume.

I also noticed I spent more time with elderly women. When I visited older women in 1980, I almost invariably asked a friend and key informant of my own age to accompany me. Having more confidence that comes with experience and age made me feel comfortable with older women during the second visit, and I visited two of them in particular quite regularly. Even when I visited for no particular reason, I usually left with new information or some new insight.

In general I was just plain happier. From early on in my stay, I had a sense of good relationships with people: "I feel a sense of connectedness." On a later date I wrote, "There were a couple of moments today when I had the sensation 'This is where I want to be right now.'" About halfway through, I even started having nightmares that I had already left Pollap and returned home. When I received mail, I felt uncomfortably jolted out of my Pollap life and frame of mind, whereas my 1980 journals reflect on how homesick letters made me feel. At one point during the second fieldwork session, I realized that this surprised me, because in many respects I'd left much more at home the second time than I had the first time. In 1998 I had left a job, anthropology program, house, and son back home (i.e., to worry about), none of which had been the case the first time. When I could have taken a boat off the island at about the time I'd originally hoped to do so toward the end of the academic year in 1999, I didn't—even though there was no definite alternative in the future before my airplane tickets expired. Quite simply, I wanted a little more time.

During my one difficult period on the island, I discovered that I had a local social-support network in place to help me cope. My college-age son

had planned to visit at Christmas, and I was close to panic when I learned he had not arrived in town on the airplane as scheduled. A number of women provided emotional support through that time, and several of them also provided material support such as a motorboat to transport me to a neighboring island and reach a ship going into town. Soon enough I discovered my son was fine, but I was nonetheless intensely disappointed that he wasn't going to be able to visit, and again women of the island rallied around me. I don't have a comparison with the first time, but that experience gave me the sense that I had developed more personal relationships than before, and with more women.

I'm not quite sure of all the reasons, but my pattern of relationships, especially close relationships, was quite different from the first time. I assumed that since I had spent time on the island before, I could more or less slip back into the old relationships. In 1980 I felt to a certain extent that I was treated as someone "returning" since I had been in the Peace Corps on a nearby island. I expected something similar in 1998, but it wasn't that simple. Two of the women that I had expected to reconnect with I managed to do so quite readily, perhaps because I sought them out when I heard they had returned to the island. A third woman, however, I initially thought wasn't on the island because I assumed that if she were, she would have approached me. As it turned out, she had been waiting for me to take the initiative. As soon as I did, our relationship picked up more or less where we had left it. Even though eighteen years had elapsed and we'd had only a few brief visits when one or the other had been in the port town and on Saipan, we easily fell into our previous relationships. All three spent a good part of the year off-island, though, and a number of other women whom I had barely known the first time became new friends. In the end, my network of relationships looked quite different from what it had been in 1980—and from what I had expected.

I was intrigued with the memories that some islanders had of me. I had expected them to remember my son, and some of the younger people in particular talked of playing with him or helping to care for him. That certainly helped my rapport. But some who had been children in 1980 and had since grown into young adults had memories of me as well, and they were memories that I didn't share, that I couldn't remember myself. In certain respects, I felt almost as though I was starting over, especially since it had been so long since my first visit. Those feelings were probably more on my part than theirs, since they kept talking of how I was "used to" Pollap and Pollapese (as opposed to my husband, for instance) and how I knew their language.

What I should have expected but didn't was the way relatives of people I'd had close relationships with treated me as a returning relative, even when I

hadn't known them well, if at all, the first time. The mother and the daughter of one friend treated me that way, as did the sister of the man I'd known since my Peace Corps days. In addition, a couple of young adults who had been elementary school children had strong memories of my son, had treated him as a younger brother, and thus considered me a relative as well.

Part of the explanation for a different quality of relationships—but only part of it—probably lies in changes I saw in women of about my age and a little younger. Years before, many of them had been very shy and quiet themselves. The women I became closest to the first time were either in the family I lived with or were among the more outgoing women. In 1998, however, the formerly quiet women were in their forties, not their twenties, and in full adulthood—and they had changed. One whom I had first known in the Peace Corps, I specifically commented on in my 1980 journal: "She still seems shy." By 1998 she had become a lively, boisterous, strong-willed mother of eight children and not the slightest bit shy. Her development perhaps paralleled mine, and her behavior seemed more culturally appropriate for older women on Pollap than for younger women. I wrote in my journal about three women in particular, "The seemingly so quiet and shy but bright students [from my Peace Corps days] . . . now seem self-confident—like they've bloomed." They were reaching the age at which older women tend to direct the younger women, and they are expected to play a larger role in planning and making decisions. These changes in women around my age probably also contributed to a very different experience for me.

Conclusion

This second lengthy field experience on Pollap differed from the first one through the confluence of several developmental processes, some of which go beyond historical changes in anthropology and in the Pacific. Certainly Pollapese have had considerably more experience with foreigners, especially Americans, and they have a better understanding of the work of anthropologists. Yet the changes that seemed to have had the most dramatic impact were the developmental processes that my friends and I had both undergone over the years, and the ways we differed at midlife compared with young adulthood.

For almost all young adults conducting dissertation fieldwork, it is true that much of their future is indeed at stake, and probably little can be done to relieve stress associated with those anxieties. Yet perhaps merely understanding that such anxiety may be inevitable can be a relief, and at least knowing one is not alone in such worries should be a comfort. That's certainly one reason I've written here of my own insecurities.

Unfortunately, though, I cannot magically package heightened self-confidence or years of maturation. I can only point out the value of old-fashioned participant observation. With all the emphasis on methods for collecting data (many of which I admittedly used to advantage both times), we need at the same time to remind researchers first venturing out into the field of the real value of "hanging out," pursuing activities as opportunities arise, and trusting that time invested in building rapport and making friends will indeed eventually result in valuable data.

NOTES

1. See, for example, classic works in this area by Erikson (1950) and Jung (1933).

2. For details on my fieldwork with and without family members, including the dissertation research, see Flinn 1998.

3. Ways I attempted to cope with shyness and some advantages of it are discussed in Flinn 2000.

4. For more details about these methods, see works by Weller and Romney (1988) and Bernard (1994:237–255).

5. Details about Pollap in the 1980s can be found in Flinn 1992.

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