

EDITORIAL NOTES FROM THE SPECIAL EDITOR

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This special issue on “Nature, the Environment and other Species,” contains several significant works that focus on Kentucky and Kentucky communities. We are excited about these works because they ground us and always call us to action on how our research can be used for improving communities and environmental quality within our state. This special issue begins with two companion pieces on food and agriculture in Kentucky. Lisa Conley, a doctoral candidate in the sociology program at the University of Kentucky, goes beyond some of the standard research on sustainable agriculture and the local foods movement, to explore traditional home food preservation and canning methods within two Appalachian counties, one of them her own home county. Using in-depth interview and observational methods, Conley shares her conversations with those women (mostly women) that still spend time engaged in a labor of love of tending their gardens, canning and preserving their own foods and providing sustenance for their families. She finds that a “local food narrative” is largely absent in these conversations but what she hears instead, in the voices of those she talked to, is a deep commitment for keeping and maintaining a way of doing things that has been shared across generations. Conley also hears in their voices a lament for this dying tradition. Many that she interviewed were worried and concerned that current generations are too busy, uninterested or too lazy to engage in the act of tending the soil and growing food. As Conley ends, the question becomes, how do we as researchers assist in the “preservation” of these local food traditions? Conley effectively notes that there is a “space for action” and she discusses the prospects for promoting mentoring partnerships to maintain and keep these home food traditions alive. She also notes the potential to develop “market niches” for locally grown and preserved food and imagines that commercial canning kitchens across Appalachia could provide local economic development and job opportunities for many communities within eastern Kentucky.

Alicia Fisher is also a doctoral candidate in the sociology program at the University of Kentucky, and her contribution also focuses on Kentucky food and agriculture. Fisher focuses on the Kentucky Proud Program, which was the result of the 2000 tobacco industry settlement with tobacco growing states and growers. In helping farmers transition out of tobacco, the Kentucky Legislature delegated that settlement funds, through Kentucky Proud, would be used to promote Kentucky agriculture and increase consumer awareness and purchase of agricultural products grown, raised and processed within the state. But, unlike many others who have studied the “locally grown movement,” Fisher focuses her attention on conventional farmers, in this case Kentucky tobacco growers, and examines their use of conventional farming methods (their use of pesticides and fertilizers) as well as their use of more sustainable farming inputs and practices as they transition out of tobacco. Fisher’s survey findings show that tobacco growers are still applying conventional farm inputs but that they are also engaging in several sustainable farming practices that include seed saving, planting of cover crops and crop rotation. Fisher ends by noting that since her survey was the first ever distributed to KY growers, under the KY Proud Program, these survey findings can at least serve as an important benchmark in evaluating future farm input decisions of KY growers as they continue to transition away from traditional crops and continue to diversify to fill new market niches and meet new consumer demands.

The third article on Kentucky follows a course of research that documents and catalogues the impacts of environmental disasters on communities. But unlike most disaster impact studies,

Shaunna Scott, Director of Graduate Studies in sociology at the University of Kentucky, takes a long-term view. Scott revisits Martin County, KY ten-years after a major coal waste impoundment breach there that released over 300 million gallons of coal sludge into area waterways. By interviewing key persons in the community and through an in-depth analysis of local news reporting before and after the disaster, Scott examines community perceptions on the impacts of the coal waste spill on local drinking water and also examines broader issues of public trust in local government and state and federal agencies. Although in the immediate aftermath of the spill, there was heightened concern over drinking water and some local organizing efforts around water quality and drinking water, Scott concludes that the disaster did not seem to have a long lasting impact on community perceptions and she attributes this, at least in part, to the fact that levels of trust in drinking water, local government and state and federal regulatory agencies was always low in Martin County, even prior to the spill event. According to Scott, it appears that the Martin County coal waste spill only enhanced and possibly accelerated trends that were already present in the community. Scott discusses the implications of these findings and makes a call for additional research that examines long-term adjustments of communities in the aftermath of disasters here, as well as in the developing world.

Benjamin Freed is an anthropologist at Eastern Kentucky University, who holds a specialty in primatology and primate conservation, and his work takes us to the protected areas surrounding Mt. d'Ambre in Madagascar. Using observational and vocalization methods to survey, locate and map the habitat range of two lemur species (crowned and Sanford's lemurs), Freed summarizes the results of his extensive fieldwork in the surrounding areas and interior of the Malagasy National Park surrounding Mt. d'Ambre. Interestingly, Freed finds both lemur species living closer to human populations and that this "edge effect," as it is known in the conservation and primate conservation literature, is typical of fragmented forests and landscapes. Yet Freed not only focuses his work on lemurs, but also on local human populations and finds that local traditions (fady) and taboos against hunting and trapping lemurs still persists among villagers in some areas surrounding Malagasy National Park. Freed concludes by encouraging similar conservation research here at home within our own Daniel Boone National Forest. He poses the important question, "how can local knowledge be used to protect wildlife here in our own national park?" Freed poses an important question for future research action among environmental sociologists, anthropologists and primatologists across our state.

Borrowing a format used by the international journal, *Society and Natural Resources*, for this special issue on the environment, the next three articles fall under our "'Insights and Applications'" section. That is, these three articles can be considered either research or theory notes insofar as they are mostly meant to provoke further theoretical discussion and possibly chart future research paths. The first note is by Ryan and Julie Sharp, faculty members in the Department of Recreation and Park Administration at Eastern Kentucky University and like Freed, the Sharps end their reflections on their past work at Cape Hatteras National Seashore and the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, with a call to action. They too encourage social scientists to study public attitudes and land use practices among local stakeholders and communities near the Daniel Boone National Forest. They argue that public land management and conservation practices must be informed by an understanding of the values and practices of local people with deep roots to the land, otherwise public land management efforts will remain rooted in controversy and local resistance.

Dan Shope, a faculty member in the sociology program at Murray State University, explores another disaster, the October 2011 disaster in Zanesville, Ohio that led to the 'shooting

death' of 49 dangerous exotic animals, 18 of which were on the endangered species list. Shope provides a compelling analysis of community and individual strain leading up to the "massacre." Shope poses an interesting theoretical insight that is worth further exploration insofar as he explores Terry Thompson's hoarding of exotic predators as part of a "post-industrial negotiation process," where Thompson (and his wife) took it upon themselves to stave off the ravages of habitat loss and species loss through harboring (hoarding) exotic animals. This framework may have merit in understanding seemingly insane actions by individuals and is worth further theoretical exploration and discussion, beyond this note.

Last, Mary Sheldon, an undergraduate student in the sociology program at Eastern Kentucky University, asks an essential question, "What happened to ecofeminism?" Sheldon provides an engaging summary of some of the history and current trends within this theoretical perspective and then embraces this tradition herself. Sheldon forcibly argues that patriarchy remains firmly rooted in organized religion, capitalist production and science and that patriarchy, continues to work through these structures unmitigated to further legitimize and promote the degradation of women, the environment and other species. Sheldon's call to action is for scholars to acknowledge the overriding presence of patriarchy, as it is infused through all social institutions, and to stop ignoring the fact that the earth, other species and women are perpetually treated as the "other" within this socio-cultural structure, and are left only to be subjugated, ruined and destroyed. For Sheldon, any efforts at developing a discourse of sustainability, environmental protection and conservation, requires that we acknowledge that women's rights and the rights of all non-human animals must be upheld. Admittedly, Sheldon's theory note already provoked much discussion and debate among its reviewers and even with our copy-editor. Hopefully, Sheldon's piece will spark even further dialogue and discussion among anthropologists and sociologists, as well as students of both disciplines, regarding the question, "what happened to ecofeminism?"

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