**Translating theory into practice with Jennifer Hirsch**

At CAPI's Master Class on May 27th and 28th we had a thought provoking blend of theory and practice in Dr. Jennifer Hirsch's (Public Health, Columbia University) lecture on her decade long research into marriage and HIV among Mexican migrant workers in the USA. Hirsch shared her findings about marital monogamy and how it did not fit the social reality of most local households. Marital intimacy was defined by geographic closeness and the social impact of affairs being discovered rather than binary ethics of faithful vs. unfaithful. Migration between Mexico and the United States therefore increased the public health risk for the spouses of migrants where private extra-marital affair among men were the norm rather than the exception. But Hirsch did not just come to talk about her research, she also brought in questions of how revelations in the field can be applied to public practice, through policy, advocacy or framing of public opinion. Hirsch drew from the failures and success of her own research project to foster debate about what was the desired effect of research in general and how other researchers can successfully navigate from the theoretical to the political.

Hirsch talked about utilizing Meso-level Theory, which she defines in her article "Labor-migration, externalities and ethics: Theorizing the meso-level determinants of HIV vulnerability" *(Social Science and Medicine 2013)* as not micro or macro, based on the "sociologically-plausible" and modifiable through collective action. Meso-level theory, that is, a manageable and politically relevant theoretical basis with relevance limited by context is one of Hirsch's theories that I think will be relevant when I engage in my own field research on South-East Asian migrants and familial obligation. It could help frame a research question without relying on grand theories of culture or psychology, and instead with focus on the effects of local institutions and community norms on group behavior.

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**Thinking about digital technologies in research**

Although I work with digital technologies in my own research, 'digital anthropology' is not something I had really considered prior to the Migration and Mobility master class. Spend a moment thinking about the multitude of ways you communicate with family, with close friends, with acquaintances. Who are the people in your family and social networks? Around the world, and perhaps particularly in transnational families, the media and the rise of communicative technologies have changed the way we connect with each other. In exploring which technologies are used by transnational families and how these technologies are used, Dr. Heather Horst's (RMIT University) work in digital anthropology draws attention to the ways we think about personal communication and the ways relationships are created and maintained. As the master class worked through a process of mapping some of our own communicative ecologies, we had the opportunity to consider our own webs of personal relationships, with whom we communicate and through what platforms. This hands-on example also provided us with the opportunity to think about how methods that focus on or incorporate the use of communicative technologies could be applied in the field.

 Digital media and technology are part of the contexts in which we do research and are part of the ways in which we do research as anthropologists. Embracing technology also has the potential to inform innovative research methods that are relevant to communities as well as facilitating collaboration and

multi-sited work. Moving beyond the individual interview, through examples from her own research, Dr. Horst illustrated some of the techniques she has used to capture some of the more intimate details and decisions in participants lives- diary studies, portable kit studies, contact lists (from cell phones) and others. This master class reminded me what it is I love about research and about anthropology. Through the use of methods that are dynamic, that respond to social change, to community needs and to technological innovations as they emerge, anthropologists can work to push boundaries, to promote understanding and to empower the communities in which they work to engage with research in ways that can encourage policy change or lead to social action.

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