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Invisible Caboclos and Vagabond Ethnographers

A Look at Ethnographic Engagement in Twenty-First-Century Amazonia

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INTRODUCTION

I had been awake for a while when I heard my research assistant Dal clapping, then pounding, on the door of our two-room, cinder-block dwelling, yelling, *Accorda! Accorda, aí!* ("Wake-up! Wake-up in there!") It was the wet season and I lingered in bed because it was only in the morning hours that my body heat finally dried out the thin foam mattress and I no longer had the feeling of sleeping on a damp sponge. I was reveling in those precious dry moments and wondering how we would ever find a caboclo community to work in when I heard Dal's shouts.

Dal and his wife Léia are Brazilian hippies or *malucos* (literally, "crazies") and also my unlikely research assistants. The hippy culture in the United States is now a thing of the past, but in Brazil it is still a vibrant, viable way of life. There is a national law in Brazil that allows artisans to sell their wares in any public space. Thus, hippies travel all over the country doing just that. They all have some sort of handicraft specialty and live day to day, selling their goods

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FIGURE 10.1.
Author (center) with Léia, Dal, and Jeosadak

in the public plazas around the country. I met Dal and Léia at the beginning of my journey in Manaus, a city of 1.6 million that sits just above where the inky Rio Negro and the turbulent Rio Solimões combine their forces to form the Amazon mainstream. It did not take long for our lives to become intertwined.

Scholars today recognize that the particular historical contexts of colonization and modernity in various locations around the world have produced different social and political frameworks or "alternative modernities" (Gaonkar 2001, 1). The context created by Brazilian modernity is one of these dynamic structures that creates the space for many kinds of experiences and understandings of the world: what can be recognized as plural ontologies (Whitehead 2009). These varied ontological frameworks give people with different experiences and understandings of Brazilian modernity the agency to adapt and innovate to create meaningful lives and find ways to survive in the face of their changing experiences of the world.

My dissertation fieldwork (2005) took me to Brazil to study the adaptations and ontological orientation of one particular group living at the margins

of Brazilian society: that of the mixed-heritage *ribeirinhos*, or caboclos, of the Brazilian Amazon along the middle Rio Negro near Barcelos.[1] However, in the end my research program became a collaborative effort between myself, a caboclo anthropologist, and Dal and Léia (the Brazilian hippy couple), whom I have labeled "vagabond ethnographers" because, in addition to traveling the country selling their wares, they make a living as cultural liaisons for tourists. The choice to live as a hippy in Brazil is another adaptation or innovation within the context of Brazilian modernity. These innovations produced by Brazil's hippy culture revealed yet another ontological orientation, and this experience forced me to try to understand what might be shared in the lived experiences of caboclos and hippies in the modernity shaped by the Brazilian state. In this chapter, I will describe the production of our ethnography and its implications for ethnographic methods.

Anthropology, more than most disciplines, has taken great pains to reflect on its own origins and practices. Although the reflexive process can often be painful, the net result has been fruitful. Through this process of self-reflection anthropologists have learned to be more aware of the importance of history in cross-cultural understandings and, in particular, how the effects of contact and colonization shape the lives of the people we study, as well as how our own cultural backgrounds cannot help but influence our understandings of others.

As scholars of humanity we now regularly seek to include the voices of those seldom or never heard before and agonize over how to properly represent those voices to others. In particular the relationship between the ethnographer and informant has been a point of some interest since the beginnings of the discipline. Kaufmann (2002) provides an excellent review of the many ways in which anthropologists have portrayed informants over time. These include minimizing their presence entirely, showing them as uncooperative or even prone to lying, and, more recently, describing them as victims of the ethnographers. Kaufmann discusses that even when informants are described by ethnographers as victims of invisibility, the same ethnographers have done little to right this perceived injustice. He notes, "Perhaps the most difficult way of coming to terms with informants is an honest reckoning of one's dependence on them" (2002, 233). He goes on to show that although many anthropologists have long recognized their dependence on informants and the important role they play in shaping the ethnographic product, it was not until recently that scholars openly acknowledged that anthropological knowledge is always a coproduction of all the various participants involved in a particular study (such as ethnographers, assistants, research agencies, and informants) (Schumaker 2001). Therefore, Kaufmann's intention is to "elevate the recognition of informants in fieldwork" (2002, 231). He describes his own field situation in Madagascar as one that was governed by informants who he characterizes as "resolute overseers" because they controlled and guided

his modes and sites of both participation and observation in the field. My intent here is allied with Kaufmann's as I reveal the roles of my hippy research assistants (who were also my overseers) and my caboclo informants (who also played an overseeing role) in the coproduction of anthropological knowledge. However, I also intend to show that an overt recognition of these kinds of collaborations has implications for anthropological practice.

Many of the chapters in this volume highlight two of the newest frontiers for ethnographic investigation: human engagement with virtual worlds, beings, and things and human sociality mediated by technology. As the editors Wesch and Whitehead have noted, these new frontiers require anthropologists to rethink the ethnographic engagement, begging the question, how do we research in a realm of human experience that we can only truly access through measured participation? In other words, how can we as anthropologists theorize our participation in the "posthuman" world of technologically enhanced and mediated societies (Whitehead 2009)?

Many of the contributors in this volume are blazing the trail in beginning to answer these questions, but I believe it is important to note that this questioning moment has wider implication for ethnographic research in general. Confronted with these new research frontiers, anthropologists have the opportunity to reconsider how to engage ethnographically with a rapidly changing world. Anthropology has come a long way from its myopic focus on small-scale societies that were often described as bounded cultural units existing outside of time. It is time, once again, to expand and refine our approach, this time in the direction of a posthuman anthropological approach (Whitehead 2009), one that not only is equipped to grapple with the relationship between humans and technology but also recognizes humans as part of a much larger system that includes relationships with animals, insects, microorganisms, and spirits, as well as people that are not always considered human by others (Whitehead 2009, forthcoming; Heckenberger, this volume).

This approach must also recognize that in our globalized world, the intersubjective relationships that produce meaning and understanding have changed in form and intensity. By form, I am referring to how intersubjective relationships may be created with or through technologies; with or through political or social structures; with or through animals, insects, or microorganisms; with or through supernatural realms; or, finally, with or through the many categories of people treated as marginal or subhuman in our globalized world (Heckenberger, this volume). In addition to the number of forms, the intensity of these relationships has also increased. In today's world, whether in the urban or rural spaces, one has a much greater chance than in the past of interacting with many people whose ontological frameworks vary widely, whether we are speaking of online or offline realities. Globalization has also created the cultural space in many parts of the world for so-called marginal

populations that survive based on their own ethnographic insights, such as Brazilian hippies. They are, in a sense, vagabond ethnographers who collect data on the cultural worlds that they move through and dwell in as a method for survival. It is for these reasons that a posthuman approach to anthropology must further theorize ethnographic participation whether the anthropological subjects are digitally mediated or live at the margins of the dominant society. Theorizing participation will give us a clearer understanding of how ethnographic knowledge is produced, revealing it as a shared product, an intersubjective product, not just of and about humans but of and about human interaction with all categories, in a way that does not privilege or overvalue the role of the anthropologist in its production. It is my hope that the ethnographic reflection that follows will help to illustrate this need or at least help to stimulate thought in this area.

STUDYING CABOCLOS

As a graduate student, I became interested in caboclo societies as the most populous yet understudied groups in Amazonia. Throughout its history, Amazonia has been a region of global interest because of its rich resources. The waxing and waning of extractive industries fueled by colonial and then national and international demand for diverse resources (including slave labor, rubber, lumber, tree oils and fibers, Brazil nuts, animal skins, and even aquarium fish) have set the rhythm of the Amazonian economy through the years. In Brazil, caboclos continue to labor in this system even as boom and bust cycles produce a highly irregular economic base. Historically, people living in caboclo societies have had to constantly adjust between two ways of life: everyday subsistence and engagement in various extractive activities that are not sustainable in the long run. Unfortunately, in spite of caboclos' lead role in the region's economy, scholars of Amazonia largely ignored them until recently in favor of studying the seemingly more authentic indigenous cultures. The scholars who did look at caboclo societies dismissed them as an adaptive response to colonial pressures and even a pathological social form just two steps away from complete assimilation (Wagley 1976 [1953]; Moran 1974; Parker 1985a, 1985b; Ross 1978).[2] It is in this sense that caboclos remain illegible as anthropological subjects. This illegibility has lead to invisibility for the caboclos as well. The Brazilian government often views Amazonia as a natural resource warehouse and rarely includes caboclos in development and conservation plans that continue to complicate their subsistence strategies in the region. Even the label "caboclo" can be marginalizing (Pace 1997; Harris 1998). It is most often pejorative when used by outsiders—almost as a linguistic tool for devaluing others. It is something akin to "redneck" in the United States; it can be used by insiders with pride, but used in the wrong way by an

outsider it could be a "fighting word." I retain it here because this is how the people with whom I worked self-identified.

Thus, I set out for a Malinowskian field experience, living with a small-scale society in a remote location, but it was not that straightforward because our world has become quite complicated. While waiting for my visa paperwork to clear in Manaus, I explored the city and met Dal and Léia while they were selling jewelry at the Praça de Polícia (Police Plaza). As I walked by the row of hippy salespeople, most of them paid me little attention but one guy yelled out in heavily accented English: "Hey, friend. Come take a look." He was a crazy-looking character in his early forties. He was balding, but the hair he did have was in long dreadlocks. His arms and shirtless torso were a canvas for a wide assortment of tattoos, and he sported a pair of drugstore reading glasses. He told me his name was Dal, and he was immediately glad to learn that I spoke Portuguese because he had already used up all the English he knew when he called me over. I bought several items from him, and he invited me to sit and talk with him while he customized the pieces I selected. I spent the rest of the afternoon talking with him between customers.

It took three weeks to get my visa issues resolved, and during that time I passed many afternoons sitting on the sidewalk and talking to my new hippy friends Dal, his wife Léia, and their three-year-old son Jeosadak. We got to know each other quite well, and Dal became interested in my research project. Dal is one of the most intriguing people I have ever met. He can talk himself into or out of any situation and really makes his living by talking to people. One of twenty-three children of a now-successful banana planter from the interior of São Paulo state, he has lived his life, as he puts it, *andando* ("walking") since he was thirteen years old. He knows Brazil inside out, or perhaps more accurately, from the bottom up. When I met him, he had already spent three years living in and around the Xingú National Park and another two years farming manioc in the Amazonian state of Acre. He was familiar with rural life in the Amazon and thoroughly enjoyed hunting and fishing.

Léia, Dal's wife, was twenty-four when I met her. She had been on the hippy road for about six years. She grew up in the city of São Paulo, graduated from high school, and started working at restaurant jobs. She said she had always been fascinated by the hippies who sold their crafts in the city plazas. She was quite shy at the time but eventually mustered enough courage to talk to some of the hippies. They encouraged her to hit the road, and finally one day she did with a friend of hers. They traveled for several months, barely making it until they met Dal in Rio de Janeiro just before Carnaval. Dal was in a bad state, drinking a lot and selling *lixo* ("garbage"), as he put it—just rocks, sticks, or other things he found—but because of his gift of gab he was able to make money. This infuriated Léia, who worked hard making her jewelry, but she was too shy to be a good salesperson. Dal said it took him seven days of

Carnaval to finally win over Léia, and they eventually hit the road together. Dal taught her well and no one could accuse Léia of being shy today. She is now a verbal force in her own right. Dal stopped drinking at Léia's request and gave up some of his other wild ways, and soon they had a son together. I was to find out that their lifestyle made both Dal and Léia natural ethnographers and excellent interviewers with a boisterous curiosity.

When I met them, Dal and his family had been in Manaus for almost four months, resting after biking a long segment of the Trans-Amazonian Highway; they were ready for a new adventure. Much of the jewelry Dal and Léia made and sold was fashioned from natural materials from the Amazonian region, such as palm fibers, seeds, fish scales, feathers, and animal teeth. Dal suggested that he and his family come along with me since they had never been up the Rio Negro before and they could collect raw materials they needed as we were visiting different villages. Despite my fondness for all three of them, I thought this was a horrible idea and one that would surely hurt the aims of my research, but at the same time, I did not want to suddenly abandon my new friends. I agonized over how to handle the situation for several days, finally telling Dal that I needed to speak frankly with him. I told him that we could travel up the Rio Negro (to my field site of Barcelos) together, but that I was affiliated with a university and I did not know what people might think if I showed up with a hippy family. Therefore, if things did not go well once we arrived in Barcelos, we would have to go our separate ways. He understood completely and agreed to those terms.

We took the next *recreio* (passenger ferry) to Barcelos and arrived at six in the morning after the second night of travel. The first night I spent in a hotel and Dal and family slept in the Praça de Prefeitura (Mayoral Plaza) of this small Amazonian town. I felt uncomfortable about that arrangement and had already seen on the boat trip how being with the malucos actually made it easier to meet people and start talking with them. It seemed that my original fears were unfounded. In the urban areas of Brazil most people are quite wary of hippies as they represent a marginal and illegible social category. Hippies may be helpful, friendly, and fun, but they can also be dangerous or unpredictable and are often associated with drugs and petty crime.[3] However, in the rural areas, people reacted to the hippies mainly with a great curiosity, increasing my chance of making local contacts. Thus, our second day in town, I told Dal I wanted him to be my official research assistant. He laughed, saying he knew nothing about research, but he would help me as he much as he could. He suggested that we try to rent a house in town for the time being. We went to the local radio station (Dal's idea) and had them announce that we were in the market for a house. Within an hour we had four houses to choose from. We settled on a two-room, government-built dwelling whose owner was a young single mother with two children. That same afternoon, she moved in with her mother and we moved into her house.

FIGURE 10.2.
Dal and Léia

We soon set about the main task of research: trying to find a riverine community whose residents would allow us to live with them for an extended period of time. We tried a number of approaches and day by day got to know more people in town who could give us some leads to the communities in the area. Dal convinced me to buy a seven-meter-long wooden canoe and a five-horsepower motor with a long propeller shaft, known locally as a *rabeta*. We tried to find a guide—someone who knew the area and knew people in the communities—but this proved difficult. Barcelos has grown a great deal in the last forty years because of the *piaba* (aquarium fish) and the *pesca esportiva* (sport-fishing) industries. Both industries are seasonal and can only be performed during the summer, or dry, season. Hence, the winter, or wet, season is a difficult time, especially for people in town, many of whom have little or no income during this time because their jobs are seasonal. The wet season is also a difficult time for some subsistence activities such as fishing because as the river floods, the fish spread out, and it can be difficult to find them day to day.

One would think that the off-season, with so many people unemployed, would be the best time to find a guide and even a cut-rate one, but many things about this area are counter-intuitive. The sport-fishermen who visit the area are relatively wealthy. On average they pay between US$4,000 and US$7,000 for a week of fishing for trophy peacock bass, known locally as *tucunaré* (*Chicla* sp.). Unfortunately, I was put into the same category as the sport-fishing tourists. As one of the town merchants said about me to one of my neighbors from the community on a trip back to town, “That gringo is just full of money. All you need to do is pick him up by the heels and give him a good shake.” This attitude was prevalent all over town. We were approached by many men who said they were guides, but none of them would lower their price—not even when we were supplying the canoe and motor. The small research stipend I had would not have lasted long at the price they were asking; throughout this time Dal was invaluable in seeing that I was not swindled. Eventually, we found a local man who was willing to work for the going daily rate for laborers, and with him, we made several short trips to communities with minimal success. Either people did not know what to make of us or hardly anyone was there in the community. It soon became obvious we needed someone to give us an introduction.

Dal turned out to be the best research assistant I could ask for. He did enough worrying for both of us. He wanted to ensure that we found a good site and wanted to make it happen as soon as possible. After several weeks, we were left with two choices of possible field sites. An American missionary in Barcelos traveled to an upriver community called Ponta da Terra every weekend, and he offered to take us there and introduce us to the community. I was a little uncomfortable with this situation because I did not want to be associated with a church for better or worse. Our second option was to go to

another community upriver. We met a local guide named Carlos, who was a friend of someone we trusted in town and his uncle was the president of this community. The community voted to let us come and stay, but we were going to be paying Carlos as our guide the whole time we were there. The community also voted to charge us for every photo that we took while there. Neither of these options seemed very promising, but the morning before we were supposed to head upriver with Carlos everything changed.

During our down time in Barcelos, I was teaching Dal and Léia English. They were keen to learn because English would help them sell their wares to *gringos* (foreign tourists), many of whom speak English regardless of their national origin. They were diligent students and each kept their own notebooks with words and phrases they were learning. The morning that we were planning to leave Dal pounded on the door. After rising early, he had taken his notebook with him to the edge of the river to study and to worry about our impending trip. While he sat on the high bank near the riverside gasoline station, a small, partially covered canoe powered by a rabeta pulled up along the bank. Its pilot was a small, weathered old man wearing a black felt hat popular among some of the river folk. Dal helped him land his canoe and immediately struck up a conversation with him. He assisted the old man up the steep, slippery bank of clay with his gas can, all the while winning him over with conversation. Dal soon found out that his name was Brasilino and that he was the seventy-nine-year-old founder of a small community five or six hours downriver called Lago Grande. Dal explained to Brasilino who he was, that he was working with me, and that we were trying to find a community where we could stay for a while. He then invited Brasilino to come to our house for breakfast and coffee. Brasilino accepted and soon Dal was at the door pounding and shouting to wake Léia and me.

By the time I crawled out from under my mosquito net and stepped into the main room, Léia had already let in the two men. It was then that I first met Brasilino Anício da Silva. As we shared coffee and biscuits with butter, I explained to Brasilino that my project was about people, people like himself, and that I wanted to understand what life was like in the rural communities and how they think about the past. He thought this was a great idea. I could learn about them and they could learn about me. Brasilino is a thinker and philosopher of sorts, exactly the type of person every ethnographer is looking for as an informant. He has an innate curiosity about other people and other places and spent his whole life traveling the Rio Negro and its tributaries. As Brasilino told me, "In each locality I go, I go observing. I am an observant fellow. What happens in the corner, I'm recording in my brain" (*Em cada localidade eu ando, eu ando observando, eu sou sujeito observante. O que acontece num canto eu tô gravando na minha mente*) (Wisniewski 2009, 74). Brasilino was aware of the many researchers who come to Amazonia but said they were always studying nature: plants, fish, animals, or birds. Not one of them ever

FIGURE 10.3.
Brasilino

wanted to know about the people. In this sense I see Brasilino as an amateur anthropologist. Brasilino immediately recognized that we would be involved in a multi-directional cultural exchange in which we would learn about each other. He saw our work as his work and saw our presence as having great value for his community. Brasilino encouraged all residents of his community to participate in our project, and after our first few interview sessions together, he began to set the research agenda, announcing to me the topics that he wished to talk about and also what he wanted to learn about my life. This was the beginning of our adventure into Brasilino's changing world.

In many ways, hippies share caboclos' illegibility and in some sense their invisibility. They are a part of the urban streetscape of most Brazilian cities, such as São Paulo, where they sell their wares in the city plazas during the day and often pass their nights on the city streets as one of several groups that are seen as marginal or even subhuman to members of the dominant society (see Heckenberger, this volume). Hippies reject work-a-day lives, forging their own anarchic way of life in the interstitial spaces. They are an illegible social category to much of the rest of society and are feared by many because of their liminal status. This liminality allows hippies to move freely between different segments of society and enhances their invisibility. For example, in the cities, the hippies are able to go into the *favelas*, or shanty towns, where the drug trade is centered and make their purchases fairly easily without being threatened by the drug traffickers or the police, who know they are not worth

hassling because they have no money. Thus, obtaining drugs is a service they often perform for tourists in exchange for money or drugs.

Much like caboclos, they have also been ignored by academics. To date (and perhaps to their advantage), no one has made them legible to others. Both hippy and caboclo lives are paradoxes of modernity. They are produced in part by the structure of the dominant society, but they are not fully integrated in it. They survive at the margins of society by "creative adaptation" (Gaonkar 2001, 18) and "audacious innovation" (Gow 1991, 298), and in this way they find protection in their invisibility and illegibility because to become visible and legible to others is to lose some of their autonomy (see Wesch, this volume).

Not long into my association with Dal and Léia it became clear that they survive less from their skill at handicrafts and more from their deep understanding of the various cultural worlds of Brazil and human behavior more generally. They seemed to easily adjust to any social situation and were incredibly respectful when the circumstances called for it. I am not the first anthropologist to recognize that Brazilian hippies make a living through their understanding of human behavior. In the only academic reference I have found on Brazilian hippies, Conrad Kottak (2005) reflects on how the hippy community near Arembepe, Bahia (a small fishing village on Brazil's Atlantic coast), was a new development that he encountered on his second field trip to the area in the 1970s. Kottak admits that he chose not to engage the hippies at that time because he saw them as rival anthropologists.

> Anthropologists are widely thought of as unorthodox investigators of strange and mysterious people, willing to forgo the comforts of civilization for the romance of distant simplicity. Ethnographers are like professional hippies; the hippies were like amateur anthropologists. I wanted the amateur anthropologists to leave Arembepe. I wanted "my village" preserved for the real anthropologists—myself and my field team colleagues. However, realizing that I couldn't have my wish, I avoided the hippies and tried to discount their impact on village life. (2005, 27–28)

In my case, I engaged the hippies, and after some handwringing, I collaborated with them.

COLLABORATION

The community received us well and Dal, Léia, Jeosadak, and I entered the community as a family unit, sharing a small house that Brasilino arranged for us to live in. We settled into our new dwelling and began to fit ourselves into the rhythm of the community's daily life. Carlos, our next-door neighbor and current president of the community, called a meeting to introduce us to

everyone and for us to state our intentions. To open the meeting, Brasilino gave a beautiful speech about how we are all from the same world and that we need to accept and understand each other because we are all human beings. He also said that he was the one who invited us, and although we were the first researchers to come to the community, we probably would not be the last and all should be accepted as human beings and be given a chance. Dal gave a speech and I gave a speech, saying I only wanted to learn about their lives and they did not have to participate if they did not want to. Overall, we were received very well by the community as a whole, which I took as a good sign. A number of men approached me after the meeting and said they would be willing to give an interview whenever I wanted. I was encouraged and ready to learn about the caboclo way of life on the middle Rio Negro.

Once in the community, Dal and Léia facilitated interviews, took photographs, and shared their insights and experiences with me on a daily basis. Dal was good at engaging members of the community both young and old, male or female, but he was particularly good at drawing men into conversation about a range of topics. His skill as an interviewer certainly played a part, but he also drew from his experiences in other parts of Brazilian Amazonia. Dal's stories about hunting, fishing, and spirits of the forest and river from other places were always met with questions and other stories from the men and women of Lago Grande and soon everyone was talking with us. Our house was always the last to go to sleep because of all the social activity. People were also curious about the hippy lifestyle, and Dal and Léia were happy to oblige them with stories.

While in the village we were Brasilino's guests, but I wanted to give back to the community in ways that were equitable and reasonable based on my budgetary constraints. This issue was important to Dal and he helped me negotiate the difficult situation of who to help, when, and how much. He was certainly my overseer in this regard and he more than once threatened to leave if I did not follow his advice. Fortunately, his instincts in this area were expert, and I left feeling as if we had been as equitable and reasonable as possible, something I know I could not have achieved alone. Dal also helped me negotiate my purchases in town. We met a Spaniard who was married to a local girl and told us that some of the local merchants still try to swindle him because he is an outsider. Dal's vigilance ensured this did not happen to us.

Although Dal was in some ways the leader of our research team (Léia took to calling him General Dal), Léia's contributions were also invaluable. Léia ran our household, cooking, cleaning, and keeping general order. In the course of these activities, Léia spent the majority of her days socializing and working with the women from the village. Thus, she became my access point to the community's world of women, which would have been otherwise extremely difficult for me to know much about. In addition, I should not leave out the role of Jeosadak. Jeosadak and the toys he brought were popular among the

kids of the village and another reason why our house was always the center of activity day or night. In general, entering the community as a family unit made it easier to integrate ourselves into the daily routines of the village life. Finally, Dal and Léia supported me with their friendship and genuine care about my physical and mental well-being. They made it much easier to be in an alien environment thousands of miles from home for a long period of time.

One of the most valuable aspects of our collaboration was Dal and Léia's ability to contextualize the cultural information we were gathering. Because of their ethnographic experience in other parts of the Amazon and the rest of Brazil, they were able to help me sort out the many cultural connections that caboclos share with other Brazilians in a way that would have been difficult to do on my own. They were both fonts of knowledge about Brazilian national and regional culture. In addition, Dal could tell me about the caboclo societies he encountered in Acre and Mato Grosso and how their traditions and beliefs were both similar and different. Throughout the history of Brazilian Amazonian, waves of immigrants have left the drought-plagued Brazilian Northeast. These immigrants arrived with their own cultural traditions that have meshed with local belief systems. Dal and Léia have both spent a significant amount of time in the northeast and could recognize many of the traditions we encountered in the community that had roots in the northeast. For example, when a woman who was possessed by a *bôto* spirit (an enchanted pink river dolphin) was brought from a neighboring community to ours to be seen by the local healer, Dal and Léia had much commentary on spirit possession and the many forms it takes in other regions of Brazil such as the northeast.

Although almost everyone in the community contributed to our research project, it was our collaboration with Brasilino that was the key. After all, he was the one who invited us into his community, his world. Brasilino saw us as a positive force in his community and thought the longer we stayed the better. Once we were settled in the community, he went fishing for several weeks and then returned to check on how the research was progressing. He continued this pattern several times until it seemed that he was certain we were comfortable there and were not going to leave anytime soon. After those first few months, Brasilino began to set the research agenda, telling me each day what we were going to discuss and what other topics he thought we should cover in the near future. My point is that what I learned from Brasilino was what he wanted to tell me. He asserted his agency by overtly directing our collaboration, sending his own story into the world although through my filter and interpretation. Among other materials, Brasilino provided his own folk history of the economic cycles of Amazonas (the state in which he resides) covering span of 150 years, which provides a framework for understanding the caboclo experience of the boom and bust cycles of the extractive economy in the middle Rio Negro. Truly, this material is not mine and it is no longer

just Brasilino's, but it is a product of our intellectual engagement and interaction, of our intersubjectivity.

CABOCLOS AND HIPPIES IN THE SAME FRAME

My experience working with Brasilino and Dal and Léia helped me put caboclos and hippies together in the frame of Brazilian modernity by showing the commonalities between these two seemingly different ways of life on the margins of Brazilian society. Caboclo societies were historically constituted, in part a product of the forces of colonization and later globalization. The hippy way of life is a choice; one is not often born into it. But caboclo identity is quite fluid and many caboclos often move from life on the edge of the river, to the city (where they become just another of the urban poor), and then back to the edge of the river. Thus, one could say that on some level they both are chosen lifestyles.

According to Dal and Léia, the hippy movement in Brazil began in the late 1960s and was a product of American influence in Brazil. The Bahian musician Raul Seixas is credited with popularizing the movement. In the early 1970s, during the military dictatorship, he spent time in exile in the United States, where his wife was from. The hippy movement attracted many urban youths from São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, including many from wealthy families. However, today it appears to attract Brazilians from many different areas and social classes, and Brazil is a destination for hippies from other parts of South America as well.

A brief look at Dal's life story is instructive here. Dal grew up in the interior of São Paulo state, one of twenty-three children. When he was growing up, his family was quite poor, but his father was industrious and built a banana plantation from the ground up. Dal's father was a stern disciplinarian, but Dal credits his father with teaching him many hard lessons that continue to serve him well. When Dal was thirteen, he had the opportunity to try out for one of São Paulo's famous soccer schools. He was accepted as a student there, but Dal's father would not allow it. This is when Dal decided to hit the road (in 1975). He said it was rough at first, but he learned the hard way how to survive on the street. He returned home for a short period when he was sixteen but eventually left for good. Although he knows that his father's banana plantation became successful, he has never returned home again. Dal continues to travel all over Brazil and he also has spent time in Bolivia and Paraguay. In his hippy life, he has worked as a *garimpeiro* (gold miner) during the gold rush of the 1980s, bandit, and drug smuggler and spent four years in prison. These days he makes a living through his ability to understand and talk to anyone. He is the ultimate guide for the tours that are not in any tourist literature and a well-known character in the hippy world.[4]

For Dal, as for most Brazilian hippies, this lifestyle is a rejection of mainstream society. Many hippies refuse to vote, and thus they have no access to government social programs as voting is compulsory in Brazil. Dal is proud that he has never voted and that the Brazilian identification card that he possesses *foi comprado* ("was purchased").[5] Although there are some permanent hippy communities in different parts of Brazil, most hippies live highly mobile lifestyles, traveling from place to place and supporting themselves by selling their handicrafts in the public plazas of cities and towns they travel through. In many cities are relatively large transient communities of hippies. Some of them are resident hippies who live the lifestyle but do not travel. The majority, however, travel from place to place, spending a few weeks, several months, or even years in a place they find to their liking.[6] Hippies in each location help orient the newcomers, providing information such as the best places to sleep and work, as well as where to get free or cheap food and whether the police are hassling them. New arrivals share the news they have of other places and other hippies, a system referred to as *rádio ipi* ("hippy radio"). Thus, a sense of community and camaraderie forms among the hippies in each location.

What hippies and caboclos share is not only the way they have embraced a life on the margins of society but also an orientation to the present. One common theme in much of caboclo oral tradition is that of constantly changing circumstances in caboclo worlds (Lima and Alencar 2001; Harris 2009; Wisniewski 2009). Many narrative genres in caboclo oral tradition reflect this theme. One such genre I call "histories of goods." Brasilino and his contemporaries told me histories of various manufactured goods they had received over the years and how these goods had changed over time, such as the various light sources they used for spearfishing. Brasilino noted that when he first began to spearfish, they used an *iparonga*, which is a homemade diesel lantern made from a tin can and fashioned with a tin reflector behind the flame to direct the light source. He said that it worked just fine. Then came the first flashlight, one called Ray-O-Vac, which he said was of high quality. After Ray-O-Vac were several other brands; today the most common flashlights are of poor quality and come from China. However, most caboclos now employ a motorcycle headlamp powered by a car or motorcycle battery that can be recharged in town. Brasilino said that as the light sources improved in quality, the fish learned to adjust. When the iparonga was in use, the fish would rest close to the surface, but now that the motorcycle headlamp is common, the fisherman have to use longer spears because the fish rest much deeper in the water. This is just one example of the stories that emphasize the changing circumstances of the caboclos' world. Here we see that even the fish adapt to the changing technologies, just as caboclos must do to survive.

The hippy philosophy is revealed in a number of phrases that Dal often used. As I fretted about various aspects of fieldwork and my personal life, Dal was always there with his counsel. Two of his favorite phrases are *tudo é*

passageiro ("everything is a passenger") and *tudo passa* ("everything passes"). Before we found Brasilino and moved to Lago Grande, Dal would reassure me that all of the hardships would be worth it, that before I knew it, I would be home thinking about all that had happened. Dal and Léia really seem to live life in this way. Much like caboclos, they do not dwell on the past but just keep moving forward. Two other phrases that Dal favored are also instructive. The first, *a vida é assim mesmo* ("life is really like that") is an expression used to remark on any possible situation that happens in life—good or bad. It is a commentary on life; life is sometimes great and sometimes extremely difficult. It is unpredictable and anything may happen; that is what lived experience reveals. The second, more colorful sentiment is *a vida é uma merda* ("life is a pile of shit"). This expression underscores the disappointments and difficulties of daily life in the modern world. Life is a pile of shit; thus, all one can do is make the best of it and always try to have a good time. These expressions serve as reminders that whatever happens, there is no point in dwelling on it. One has to keep living. Although these expressions differ from the historical tales that keep caboclos oriented in the present, they appear to serve the same purpose for hippies.

Scholars have begun to recognize how adaptable caboclo societies have had to be to survive the rapid change in the boom and bust extractive economy in the region (Adams et al. 2009; Harris 2009). In a manner analogous to caboclos, hippies are extremely adaptable and even seek out change and new experiences. Both hippies and caboclos live subsistence lifestyles; each day they wake up and find a way to get food and other items they need for survival. The difference is in the way they go about their subsistence. In the city, hippies are extracting their resources from tourists by selling their handicrafts or assisting them in other ways, perhaps as guides, or by begging or stealing if necessary. The recent arrival of tourism in the Rio Negro means that caboclos can now "extract" a resource that is the staple of the hippy economy.

In fact, Dal, Léia, and Brasilino regarded me as a tourist and a resource. For Dal and Léia I was the ultimate tourist to assist, because my visit was of long duration, but tourists have long been their business. Brasilino has been watching the slow trickle of tourists in the middle Rio Negro over the last fifteen years, and although he is well aware of their potential as a resource, I was the first one with whom he had a personal relationship. Some of the families living at Lago Grande have a number of children working in the tourist industry as sport-fishing guides, but these are only seasonal jobs for relatively few people. Thus, the caboclos have a lot of ambivalence about this form of tourism. Some of the young men dream of turning their community into a tourist camp and thought I might be their connection to a steady stream of foreign tourists. Even though the community was aware of tourism when we arrived, I am certain that through interactions with Dal and Léia, the community members realized what a useful resource tourists could be.

Brasilino is suspicious of tourists' motives, thinking they are looking for some valuable resource such as gold or minerals of which he and others are not aware.[7] However, he also sees their value as an extractive resource and knows well that there are both "good" and "bad" tourists. His sentiments are reflected in the following passage: "[T]he tourist, he has a lot of money. He has a lot of money. When he dedicates himself to be a tourist, it is because he has money given to him by the government, given by those that he helps, to the point that he can throw it away [laughing]. A tourist for example, let's see . . . they aren't of one type. There are many tourists that, let's say, are swindlers. Yes, there are and there are another type, there are good tourists" (Wisniewski 2009, 177). Brasilino adds that they come to the region looking for things or just on a trip to see what is here, often under the guise of *pesquisa* ("research"), but they always come with money to spend. That is Brasilino's definition of a tourist, and in this sense I was included in this category. Brasilino knows that some tourists spend a great deal of money to go on the sport-fishing trips, but he has no desire to do that kind of work. All of his life Brasilino has always preferred to work alone, and that is the way he wants to work with the tourist. He wants to tap into this resource in his own way. He realizes that he may not be able to recognize the gold or other minerals they may be looking for; thus, he does not want to prevent the tourists from meeting their goals. But as he told me, he does want to "participate a little bit." And he feels like the residents of the area deserve this. He is willing to do whatever is necessary to keep the tourists' secrets as long as they can help him and help his community. In a way, he is looking for a new patron. Brasilino told me that the caboclos in the area need some help, someone needs to "open their hands" for them, whether it is the government, the indigenous association, or, in this case, the tourist. Caboclos know how to work hard, but they need work to do, and here we can see that at age seventy-nine, Brasilino still has his eyes on any and all possibilities.

CONCLUSIONS

My experiences with caboclos and hippies made it clear to me that the processes of globalization and the technologies driving it have made it difficult to keep up the Malinowskian myth of anthropology, in which participant-observation is rendered as an objective enterprise and the professional anthropologist is a scientist collecting data. In our collaboration, Dal, Léia, Brasilino, and I had different motives, but our individual desires and proclivities brought us together in a shared experience that is the source of any ethnography produced by my hand (Whitehead 2009). All of us contributed our own cultural perspectives and brought unique ethnographic skills to bear in a cooperative effort. This cooperative effort reveals anthropological investigation as a prod-

uct of our intersubjectivity and a facilitation of cultural exchange rather than a product of scientific investigation.

All anthropologists going into the field have to consider how they enter the society they wish to study and how they will position themselves within it in conventional ethnographic style. However, although I think most of us think a great deal about this before we get there, once we have the contacts and have some way of securing a field site we are content for the moment and do not always revisit this issue when we are examining our data back home. I realize that during the postmodern time in anthropology many of these issues were raised, but the emphasis then was on the question of how anthropologists should place themselves in their work. In my case, participation with the hippies as my research assistants shaped the way I accessed and interacted with the people from Lago Grande. In Kaufmann's terms, they played the role of my "overseers," but their influence went far beyond this to the point of true collaboration (2002, 231). This brings me to what Kaufmann calls the "what if" implication (2002, 251). What if I had not collaborated with Dal and Léia to find a field site? I may have gone to the local church, the American missionary, or through a contact with the government-run aquarium-fish bureau. No matter what the scenario, the experience (and the resulting ethnographic product) would have been quite different. I did not theorize my participation before it occurred. Nor can I propose some grand theory of it here, but upon reflection it becomes useful to think about how my association with the hippies influenced my positioning and perspective.

As we were to find out after living in Lago Grande for some time, it is one of the poorest communities in the area with the fewest resources. It is also very low on the local government's list of squeaky wheels. If I had sought the help of anyone of social standing in town, I would have never been positioned in Brasilino's community. Being with the marginal hippies led me to one of the marginal caboclo communities inhabited by exceptional people, who helped me create a picture of a society seldom seen. Studying with a more marginal community also gave me a better sense of the range of caboclo experience in this region. The collaboration with the hippies led me to a better understanding of the dynamics of Brazilian modernity by demonstrating what caboclos and hippies have in common as modern Brazilians. The time with the hippies also gave me a richer context for understanding what I experienced in Lago Grande.

As those engaging in the ethnography of digital worlds and virtual experiences are grappling with how to theorize their own participation, it seems useful for all anthropologists to take a moment to consider the same in their own work. We must not to be afraid of ethnographic engagement and collaboration with all kinds of subjects, whether digital or marginal, and we should learn how to understand our own involvement in the intersubjective production of ethnographic knowledge (Whitehead 2009). First, necessarily, comes

an awareness of our modes of participation and possibilities for observations. Rather than fear the hippies as marginal others or feel threatened by them as rival anthropologists, I chose to engage them as equals, and our collaboration with Brasilino (another ethnographer) produced a much richer ethnographic portrait than otherwise possible. This kind of collaboration is something anthropologists should embrace and celebrate. There are many kinds of collaborators and we should not ignore them, especially as we try to understand the many aspects of posthuman existence (Whitehead 2009). These collaborators may include marginal, vagabond, or amateur ethnographers such as Dal, Léia, and Brasilino, or when focusing on virtual worlds, they may be commentators from other disciplines with different kinds of experience, such as communications and media studies. It should be the strength of anthropologists to synthesize the data produced by different viewpoints; thus, we should not shy away from engaging them in the field or in academe. As many other academic disciplines are beginning to incorporate ethnography as a method, anthropologists need to lead the way not only in highlighting the collaborative, coproductive nature of ethnographic data but also in theorizing the kinds of participation that are most fruitful. I believe that these insights signal not the end of anthropology but a realization that the effects of globalization and the transition to a posthuman perspective demand that anthropologists work in a different paradigm. This paradigm must be rooted in the recognition that the human experience consists of more than just anthropology's traditional subjects and must also foster new ways of understanding human interaction in all its novel forms within an economically globalized but culturally fragmented and discontinuous world.

NOTES

1. The caboclos are a historical peasantry that emerged as the labor force for the extractive economy in the Brazilian Amazon beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, when Portuguese colonial policies encouraged miscegenation. Today, the label *caboclo* describes generally mixed-heritage Amazonians in Brazil who practice manioc-based horticulture, hunt, fish, gather, and supplement their subsistence activities with extractive activities that vary significantly by river system. Along the Rio Negro these activities include rubber tapping, logging, mining, live capture of aquarium fish, and collecting Brazil nuts, tree oils, or palm fibers.

2. See Nugent (1993) for an early critique of this approach to understanding caboclo lives.

3. During the course of my fieldwork, a national news story broke attributing a run of serial killings to a male hippy, adding to the hippies' reputations as unpredictable and dangerous characters.

4. After we left Lago Grande and the Rio Negro, I traveled with Dal and Léia (and Jeosadak) to Santarém, Pará, and we spent a day at Alter do Chão, a beautiful resort village on the Rio Tapajós. There was a small community of young hippies living there

on an island in the river. It was then that I realized that Dal is a hippy legend. The young hippies were awestruck when they found out who he was. They all had heard many stories about him and could hardly believe he was standing there in the flesh.

5. One needs an identity card for many things, including for taking interurban or interstate buses. Thus, it is practical even for hippies to get one, but they prefer to do so in a rebellious way.

6. For example, when I met them, Dal and Léia had been in Manaus for about three months, selling handicrafts on the Praça da Polícia (Police Plaza). They arrived in Manaus after spending four months bicycling part of the Trans-Amazonian Highway (known as BR). Before their bicycle trip, they were in the state of Bahia for the beach season, and before that they spent over a year farming manioc in a small town in the state of Acre. When we parted at the end of my field stay, they returned to Manaus to meet two Italian men they had guided the previous season in Bahia.

7. Brasilino told many stories about mysterious tourists who use the locals to take them into remote areas of the forest and go off alone for unknown purposes. He also reported that a group of Americans built a good school in one of the upstream villages as a front for a mining operation, smuggling out gold in hollow logs.

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