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Much Ado about Mutton: An interview with Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington

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Much Ado about Mutton

Interview with Drs. Deborah Gewertz
and Frederick Errington

Conducted by Rebecca Lane and Christine Smith
4 April 2009

dC: The topic of our next issue is "Consuming Cultures." What do you think that term means? How do you interpret it? It can be taken a number of different ways. How do you study consuming cultures within your work?

Frederick Errington: It's a very general term. It is about how consumption creates identities; it is about recognizing relationships of power and asymmetry through following commodity chains. How things get from place to place reveals a lot about how important interactions in the world are structured around material items, and by attending to those items—who produces them and who consumes them—you can understand a very, very major component of contemporary globalism. Various people in anthropology are saying that the commodity's back, and there's a lot of focus on consumption and production. So, in certain ways, it's a delightfully broad term, one that does focus attention on a major aspect of globalization, which is how material objects, ideas, styles and so forth get around and bring people into a whole range of relationships. It may be that in pursuing commodity chains, anthropologists end up knowing a lot less about the particulars of this process than anyone along the various points on the chain, but, overall, we probably learn more about the whole process than any single actor does, as we look at the whole chain. What we do is try to reveal connections and asymmetries.

*Deborah Gewertz is a G. Henry Whitcomb Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology-Sociology at Amherst College. Frederick Errington is a Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, Emeritus, at Trinity College. Together in their book, *Cheap Meat: Flap Food Nations in the Pacific Islands*, they explore the controversy caused by the sale and vast consumption of fatty cuts of lamb in Tonga, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea.*

dC: And you, Dr. Gewertz?

Deborah Gewertz: All of the above. We're obviously working on a product which is consumed, and on the simplest level, consuming cultures for us means eating things that other people produce elsewhere. That's the bottom line. It has been, as Fred said, a significant interest in anthropology for the last while to trace commodity chains. Many people in so many other fields have argued that capitalism has triumphed, and we are all going to become homogenized. But what anthropologists have discovered is the way in which products are "qualified" and "requalified." The term qualification comes from the work of the French social theorist, Michel Callon, and his colleagues; when they look at products moving, they look at the ways in which the products get reconfigured and utilized within the local sociocultural context, and that leads lots of folks to speak about a process called "glocalization": it's not just globalism, it's globally flowing products which then become locally instantiated, and to understand the process of globalization you have to recognize that it's really the process of glocalization. Part of it is telling a commodity story, doing a commodity biography, which is, in fact, what we're doing with these lamb flaps. The story reveals a huge amount about the nature of international relationships. As Fred said, the story of this commodity, as it flows from place to place, is one that most people engaged in production, distribution, and consumption of it know parts of. But it's our job as anthropologists to tell it more completely than anyone along the chain can tell it. So, bottom line, people are consuming lamb flaps and we're interested. Some people have said that they are bad products, that they are fatty products, that, perhaps, make people fat. So they're of interest precisely because they are so contested. The whole chain is contested, and contains within it a history of contested social and political relationships. Lamb flaps help us reveal, they help us see these relationships.

FE: There are all sorts of things obviously that move around and get consumed. But, I think that some foodstuffs in particular are especially interesting because they are consumed in an intimate way, so a number of the issues about health and quality become acute. When an object is faulty in particular ways and we consume it, then it becomes a matter of really pretty direct concern. So, consuming something contaminated with salmonella means getting sick immediately.

DG: This raises the concern with trust. You may not be familiar with Anthony Giddens, who writes about how modernity is a context in which people have to accept into their lives products of which they really have no intimate understanding. The products arrive from somewhere. You don't know from where they are arriving. You don't even know what they are, necessarily. And yet you have to make them your own. Part of that process is trusting these products that are coming into our lives, products which we have not ourselves produced. We have not grown them in our gardens. We have only some vague idea of who's made them, somewhere else. As anthropologists, we're interested in what happens when trust breaks down. When people say, "Oh my god, what are we taking into our lives – into ourselves?" The story of lamb flaps is the story of both trust and trust breaking down. So let's leave it at that because we can go on and on and you'll never get to your second question.

dC: Well, that was actually another one of our questions, because KFC comes up. KFC—and other fast food—is also consumed in the Pacific Islands, but it isn't questioned as much as lamb flaps. Why are these branded foods not as scrutinized?

FE: The branded food part is interesting, because companies will go to enormous efforts to protect their brand, which also gives consumers some leverage. If consumers can act in such a way to devalue a brand, then companies have to take notice. We talked about boycotts and "buycotts," and if those are effective at all, I think it is only when they concern items that are branded. You can get Coke's attention if you broadcast the fact that labor relations around Coke plants in Colombia may be affected by violence, or union organizers may be murdered, and then you can stage die-ins. There's a wonderful picture in Robert Foster's book about globalization. The picture shows the CEO of Coke speaking at Yale, and there's a bunch of students lying on the floor in front of his podium as if dead, with great spots of blood on their t-shirts.

DG: And the CEO doesn't like that because he wants to protect the Coke brand, which is worth 65 billion dollars. It's worth much more than the product. But lamb flaps are a different story. They're stigmatized, and by that we mean people know that those producing them do not eat them. They eschew them, feed them to their dogs. And the people consuming them in the Pacific Islands feel terribly ambivalent about wanting, liking, and eating that which they know the producers will not themselves eat. So, by taking into their bodies that which other people eschew as being not good enough—eating waste products coming from elsewhere—they suspect they are being rendered somehow second rate. They feel very ambivalently about liking these products. And yet the ambivalence, of course, involves the fact that they're tasty, they're filling, and they're cheap. You can feed a large family very well by boiling them up with tubers or rice. People do enjoy them. There is greasy repletion, but they also know that "others elsewhere" are not eating them. And they know that the "others elsewhere" are people with power, people who had been the colonial forces; it is *those* people who are sending what is deemed to be an inferior product to the formally colonized. Now KFC, in contrast, is not only a branded product, but it's a branded product which both white people and brown people eat, and everyone knows that.

FE: With these branded international products, you're plugging into an imagined community, which is a worldwide community of KFC eaters, and that's enhancing. It certainly is enhancing for Pacific Islanders, because they can imagine they are like people all over the world by virtue of the fact that they are consuming this product and appreciating it. But with lamb flaps, they are establishing themselves as a kind of niche—a discredited niche, a niche of inequality.

DG: So there is a continuum of three different kinds of products that are potentially "bad." "Bad, bad, bad" fatty foods that are implicated in ill health. On one end, there is the KFC and McDonald's, which we probably shouldn't eat, but which everybody—almost everybody—eats. There are class dimensions which we can get into about who's likely to eat them. But, white people and brown people, people in Australia and New Zealand, people on the Pacific Islands, all of these people eat the likes of KFC and McDonald's, and so it's equalizing—we're all part of a community of fast food eaters. We are eating modern foods. I might mention

that, if we study the way McDonald's is utilized in places like East Asia, we'll discover this it's really rather high class food there. And so there's no problem. These foods are not racialized; not stigmatized. Then, on the other end of the continuum, there are foods that are bad for you like *lardo* in Italy, which is really pig fat. Or like chitlins in the United States, and in the Pacific Islands, foods like *povi masima*, which is brined beef. It's salted, fatty, brisket of beef. Foods like *lardo* and *povi masima* are probably bad for people; they're fatty. But they have become transformed into a highly valued ethnic food—a food that marks "us" as a group. We are chitlin eaters or we are *lardo* eaters or we are *povi masima* eaters. It's part of our culture. And so value is added to those kinds of foods. And then there are flaps. And flaps are smack-dab in the middle of the scale. They have none of the value of foods that have been made indigenous, and they have none of the value of these universal branded foods. They're fundamentally ambiguous; they have an ambiguous materiality, and because of that they take all of the flack over international relationships, which KFC doesn't take. When those who colonize us also eat this stuff it has no negative symbolic salience. And *lardo* and *povi masima* have a very different set of symbolic dimensions, having to do with profound cultural identity. So if you want to make statements about being dumped on, which is having things dumped on you and being dumped on by people who should do better and know better, KFC is not going to work. And *lardo* and *povi masima* aren't going to work because they define who we are; we're actually choosing to identify ourselves with them. We know they may be bad for us, but they are part of who we've become.

FE: These have become repositories of cultural value. Something like *povi masima* is served at funerals, on special occasions. It's been qualified, to use Callon's term. There may be recognition that this food isn't good for you physically, but there's a general sense that it may be very good socially, because it is essential to creating ties of connection with community, ties which are valued and positive. And flaps really don't have that.

dC: Do you think lamb flaps could ever have that value?

DG: Well, we see it happening in Papua New Guinea a bit. Not in Tonga, not in Fiji. But we see that Papua New Guineans are beginning to say sentences like, "We are the flap eaters." It's a complex sentence to say, though, because flaps have only been relatively recently introduced. They were not for sale there until the 1970s, so there hasn't been very much time for them to get qualified and requalified. And, again, there is the degree to which lamb flaps have now become quite politicized. People know that they are other people's off-cuts, other people's waste products. It's in the news. This makes it hard for Papua New Guineans to make them their own, but we do see it happening a bit.

dC: I want to go back to just how this becomes a waste product. What makes it a waste product for the New Zealanders and Australians? Is its materiality, where it comes from on a lamb?

DG: It's a belly of a sheep or belly of a lamb—one or the other, depending on the age of the animal. New Zealand has a small population and it raises as many sheep as Australia. And thus it has no large domestic market for most of its sheep. New Zealand used to be considered the overseas farm of England. England bought most of New Zealand's sheep. The

English bought them in carcasses, frozen carcasses—the whole history of the freezing and getting big boats of frozen carcasses to England is very interesting. And then they would process the carcasses in England. At that point they would take the bellies, which were the fatty parts, and they would make sausages, or they would render them and use them in pet food. You might have noticed when you open up your bag of dog food and you smell a kind of rancid smell; that's fat that's been rendered and added. But then England joined the European Union and, as part of joining the European Union, England had to impose new trade relationships upon its trading partners. In the case of New Zealand, it gave a quota. It said we will buy from you. We guarantee you that we will buy 226 thousand tons of sheep meat from you each year. And that was generous. Australia got a much smaller quota. That has to do with relationships between Australia and Britain and New Zealand and Britain. All part of the story, as you can see – all part of the complex international relationships that get revealed when you tell the story of sheep bellies. New Zealand realized at that point that, if they were limited to 226 thousand tons, they should send 226 thousand tons of high quality, expensive cuts to England. And that's when they began not only to slaughter sheep in New Zealand, but to butcher sheep there before export. They would no longer just sell the carcasses, the whole things. So, New Zealand began butchering and sending 226 thousand tons of legs and loins, the cuts that bring a premium price. That left New Zealand with all of the cuts of low value, and amongst the lowest value cuts of the sheep were the bellies, because they were the fattiest. Freezers were clogged, and at one point New Zealand contemplated taking all of these low value cuts and putting them on ships and parking the ships in Antarctica—literally keeping them in Antarctica. What to do with these cuts that were clogging the freezers? And so people began to look for markets elsewhere. Markets they had never utilized before. Again, we're talking the '70s, which is not so long ago. They began looking for markets, and of course an obvious market for these low value cuts was the Pacific Islands, where people don't have much money. The Pacific Islands, where New Zealand and Australia have ties and where the economies were beginning to take off. Certainly in Papua New Guinea, indigenous people were beginning to earn money through the sale of coffee, which was expanding. Roads were being constructed and traders said, "Well, let's give this a try. Let's try to sell these low value cuts, these fatty cuts, to the Pacific Islands, where people perhaps can enjoy them. And then we can make some money." They had to find a market some place for these flaps and there were a lot of them. A sheep belly is about 9- 12 percent of the carcass, and about 3-5 per cent of the value of the sheep. The meat business is highly competitive, and you actually have to sell everything—every bit of the beast if you're going to break even. Now, that's what the traders tell you. We tend to think that they're right.

FE: One of the key aspects about meat is that it has to stay frozen. You can't just put it in a warehouse someplace. It takes freezer space, so it's expensive. You really do need to move it. So there's a certain imperative, not only to realize as much value as you can in the carcass, but to clear the way for more meat. So traders really do feel a kind of pressure on them to move it out.

DG: We worked with scientists who are trying to add value to lamb flaps. Huge efforts. They tell us that they can't use them in fast foods. They can't use lamb the way you can use chicken bits to make nuggets. If you tried to, you would get greasy globule things that just

won't fry up like chicken will. And many people don't like the aftertaste of lamb. I happen to love the aftertaste of lamb. But many people don't, and so there's not that much of a market. You just can't transform flaps the way you can transform chicken bits into other kinds of appealing things.

dC: If you could transform them would they lose their stigma? Could you make them into a different product, one that was more valued?

FE: Chicken McNuggets -- there's really no telling which part of the chicken that comes from. And I think it's actually from mechanically processed meat, which is bones and scraps pushed against a screen; a slurry comes out, which is reconstituted and molded, and with that kind of processing, then, where the nugget came from is completely lost. So, if lamb flaps could be used in that way, I think they would be destigmatized. They would be part of this currency of worldwide fast food, and the purveyors of flaps would dearly love for that to happen. It would make their life much easier and presumably return them higher profit. But right now it's such an identifiable piece of meat, and you can see it's a lot of fat and a rather little meat. It's not hard telling where it comes from. It is what it is. And there is a certain honesty about that. There are no particular secrets. But, it is without a doubt an extremely fatty cut of meat, which is why the Australian and New Zealanders, who have become slightly health conscious, don't want to touch this cut. It's just too much for them. They would rather have cuts which at least look better. Not necessarily terribly lean cuts, but ones less extreme than this one.

dC: Where does the trust issue come in with lamb flaps? It seems like they are so raw, just directly from the animal... So is there a trust issue there?

FE: I don't think there is necessarily the kind of trust issue we've been talking about earlier. There is the issue of asymmetry, though, and that's even, I think, more powerful. You don't need to worry if the meat has microbes or not, which may be hard to find out. All you know, and it's a very simple message, is that this is a product some people repudiate and other people eat. When it comes out of New Zealand and Australia, I don't think there are concerns as to whether this has been processed properly, or if it's filled with additives. It's all grass fed. It's a healthy product, except for the fact that it is a very, very fatty product. And since it's too fatty for the producers to eat, the stigma is just up front. The issues are simply ones of relative power and affluence.

dC: You talked earlier about glocalization, and here we're interested in Papua New Guinea. It seems from the book that there was a reliance on pigs primarily for social functions. They were part of the culture. But as these lamb flaps are coming in, could you speak to how that is sort of changing dynamics? How are these functions being carried out? Or what kind of new spaces are being created, for example, in the market places, now that women are selling pieces of lamb flap? Could you speak about those changes?

DG: We said earlier that, in Papua New Guinea, we see flaps being qualified in ways that they don't seem to be in Tonga and in Fiji; this is to say Papua New Guineans are beginning to make flaps their own, and incorporating them into important aspects of their socio-

cultural lives, into most major ritual exchanges. And the highland region of Papua New Guinea has been famous for its vast ritual exchanges of pigs. Thousands of pigs would be brought and exchanged: different social groups would be articulated, marriages would be formalized. Pigs were very important. In fact there is a movie, about a Papua New Guinean with a PhD. It's called *The Man with No Pigs*. He was a PhD, but he has no pigs! So he has no value when he goes back to his village. Now, a significant number of people are like the man with no pigs: they live in cities; they're doctors or lawyers; they're involved in modern life. Also, there are people who are not necessarily well-educated who are attracted to towns. Most all of these do want to maintain ties to their villages of origin, and they want to do that for various reasons. One, because they do identify themselves as being located. They have a cultural group. Papua New Guinea is incredibly diverse—there are 800 different languages there. Everybody is from somewhere and many try to maintain those ties. They are very important to them even if they don't live there anymore, and even if they don't want to live there anymore. They want to maintain ties, partly for identity issues and partly because land is becoming somewhat valuable—they don't want to be disconnected from their own land in case it becomes developed in commercial ways. So they want to maintain these relationships, but they don't have pigs. They do have money, some money, to maintain relationships through exchange, and that's how sociality is achieved. It's through the giving and receiving gifts. One of the ways they are now doing this is by going to ceremonies and bringing -- or sending, if they don't go themselves -- cartons of lamb flaps. Cartons of lamb flaps are not as good as pigs. There's no doubt about it, and sometimes they'll take money and they'll buy pigs. Not pigs that they've grown themselves, but pigs that they've purchased. But lamb flaps are beginning to work as a provisional substitute for pigs, at least as a sign that the relationship is important. In addition, there are all sorts of new relationships that are being established in Papua New Guinea that have to be maintained -- relationships through church groups or sports teams. And people living in towns will utilize flaps and have picnics, and this is how we first became involved with flaps. When we were working on a sugar plantation, we would go to church with people every Sunday. We were very promiscuous church goers -- we went to a different church every Sunday. We would make our way along this whole circle of churches and we got to know a lot of people. We would go to their picnics and we would say, "What could we bring?" And they would say, "Bring us flaps." At the mini supermarket, we'd see flaps and we had no idea what they were and we'd buy them and we'd bring them. That's how we got interested in flaps. So flaps are important or beginning to become important in Papua New Guinea, mostly for urban dwellers who want to maintain relationships with their villages of origin. And, they are important in new kinds of urban-based social relationships. People have begun to say, "Well, you know they can't take flaps away from us, because they've become part of our culture." Although they will say at the same time, "Oh, but flaps are waste products and the off-cuts that white people eschew. Pigs are much better." So there's ambivalence all around. Flaps have become significant, but significant with ambivalence.

dC: Can you clarify where the hubbub over flaps came from? Was it the Pacific Islanders realizing that they are waste products? Or was it more of a health issue coming from people who don't eat them, saying this meat is making you people fat?

DG: It was both. Epidemiologists, nutritionists know—everyone knows—there's a global

obesity problem. The problems of obesity are hypertension and diabetes and cardiovascular diseases of all kinds. A global problem of lifestyle diseases. And the thing about lifestyle diseases is ostensibly they can be cured if you change your lifestyle—if you can alter your lifestyle, then the diseases go away. Again this is a worldwide problem. More poor people suffer from lifestyle diseases than affluent others. More people suffer from them in the United States who are living in poor circumstances and urban contexts. Diabetes type two is out of sight in New York City. So it's a global problem that people have been working on, and people have been aware of it in the Pacific Islands too, aware that there's been a drastic change in lifestyle, certainly since World War II, if not more recently. People move to the cities, people stop agricultural labor. They start becoming dependent upon buying products that are imported from first world countries. There's been a change in where people live, a change in the way people work, a change in the way people eat. And all of that has caused, or at least has been implicated in, a real change in the health situations of people worldwide. In the Pacific Islands, flaps are only one part of this story. Again, it's a complex story of international relations. This whole complexity becomes located in the "flap about flaps." Because flaps look fatty. And when eaten too much, they are not healthy. So they become the focus for all of the debates swirling around. In fact, if flaps were banned from the Pacific Islands today, if there were no more flaps in the world, the health of Pacific Islanders probably would not drastically improve. It might improve a little -- though there is a debate about that. There are other products that are far more implicated in these horrible lifestyles diseases. Dependence on sugar, sodas, white bread, jams, processed foods of all kinds. But none of these bear the brunt of the debate, partly because, as we've said, white people eat them too. White people also are getting sick from their lifestyles. But in the Pacific Islands, the debate is focused on flaps because they are stigmatized food.

dC: You also bring up choice; that in New Zealand and Australia, the meat traders say, "It's their choice if they eat this." There's this acknowledgment that they are being dumped on, but they're choosing to eat it. Can you talk a little bit more about that? Is it implicated in sort of neoliberal theories about choice and the individual being responsible for his or herself?

FE: Well, the traders just don't want to be involved in this issue, and I'm not sure it's fair to them to force their involvement. They say they have a living to make. They are giving fair value of a product which is healthful. It's healthful in terms of the fact that it's sanitary. It's not really poisonous; it's not adulterated. The animal is treated quite humanely. There aren't really many issues concerning animal welfare. The traders think it's just a narrow issue. You want it; you want to pay for it. Just a strictly economic issue. But it's not, and they think it's unfortunate that they are being unfairly challenged for their position, and it's a free market position. And on the receiving side, it's more complex. Currently, because of their economies, people don't have much choice. If they were more affluent they might choose a different kind of meat. It's very hard for many Pacific Islanders to say no to lamb flaps. This is why we and lots of other people think their governments should be allowed to say no for them. Or, in a really significant way, help them say no.

DG: As we said, the King of Tonga could have said no. The woman whom we spoke about, the 270 lb Tonga woman, who was a member of the Tongan elite, could say no. Because she

could change her diet. Because she had options. But the vast majority of people in Tonga and Papua New Guinea and Fiji really have limited choices. They can go back to villages—many of them—and start growing taro again. And doing that which their ancestors did. They'd be healthier, in some cases. I am not sure that they'd be healthier in the Papua New Guinea highlands if they did that but in some cases they would be healthier. But to do that is a very complex thing, because it involves the denial of modernist aspirations, which of course they have been inculturated with. Now you and I may be romantic about going back to the land, but actually in the tropics it's hard, hard work.

FE: In the coastal areas, it's extremely hard work. We would be just huffing and puffing and dripping with sweat by the time we even got to the gardens, much less before we started chopping things down or digging things up. It's not easy.

DG: Leaving the village has been long defined by missionaries, by western style education, as being something people should aspire to, so that they could make something of themselves. In Papua New Guinea, most kids don't go very far in school -- only a small percentage can go to high school and then to university. Others are considered failures, because they haven't gotten the education that can get them jobs in town to get money; the jobs that will allow them to remit, to allow their parents who may be back in the villages to buy things they want. And people do want things. Like kerosene and clothes, to say nothing of outboard motors, which make fishing a lot easier. Money is necessary for all of that, and that's not available in large amounts if you're growing your sweet potatoes in the highlands of New Guinea. There is a lure of modernity. These countries are all caught up in a modern world and it's very hard, given their place in the modern world -- which is by and large as poor third world countries -- for the vast majority of people living there to say no to products like lamb flaps.

FE: And especially products that really do tweak certain human predilections.

DG: We do have a predilection for fat.

FE: And we do have a predilection for sweet. Put sweet and fat together and we'll have snack food. And we all know that is hard to stop eating it.

DG: There's even some suggestion, although I don't know how to evaluate these kinds of claims, that combinations of sweet and fat can be addictive.

dC: That's what I've heard...sugar is addictive.

FE: I think bodies get set up in certain ways, with certain physiological expectations, and some people have argued that the junk food diet is so short in vital nutrients that the body really keeps signaling that we need more, we need more—in terms of getting these vital nutrients.

dC: It seems so complex, because if you do define the problem as that of health and over-nutrition, then your intervention would be to try to get people to stop eating. But what if the problem is not over-nutrition? It is so complex in different areas. How do you go about

finding solutions? It seems as though the problem can be defined in different ways.

DG: You would hope that smart anthropologists and epidemiologists working together in different contexts could come up with solutions that might not be uniform internationally, but directed to particular groups of people. I think the solution in a place like Papua New Guinea has to be different than a solution for a place like Tonga. There are some people who say that banning flaps is an important first step. But there are other people, epidemiologists, who say that banning flaps without an overall reduction in saturated fats wouldn't be very effective. And so what we actually need in places like Tonga may be a reduction in fats of all kinds, not just flap fat. And we need as well an overall reduction in calories consumed. According to a major epidemiologist, a very strongly anti-fat and anti-meat-eating epidemiologist, elimination of flaps from Tonga and Fiji, would not improve the health of Tongans and Fijians unless, as I've said, there is an overall reduction in saturated fats and an overall reduction in calories. And I think many feel that. But, again, look at flaps, flaps seem to be the culprit. Stop eating flaps, then you will stop being fat: that's probably not true in the end. The Fiji case, where they did ban flaps, indicates that isn't true, because the health of Fijians has continued to deteriorate since the ban in 2000.

dC: Do you think that the ban was a success, in the terms of that these people said no, that they don't want other people's scraps?

DG: I think it had important socio-cultural effects in Fiji. It didn't in fact improve the health of Fijians. But it may make Fijians more accepting of interventions which have to take place. Fiji is in a pretty bad state. People are working on what those interventions might be. It's clear that the ban on flaps didn't work the way they hoped it would work. It was more a symbolic gesture than anything else. Not an unimportant symbolic gesture -- one that says the government cares about us. The government is strong enough. It can defy colonial powers.

FE: Fiji thinks of itself as a much better place than Papua New Guinea. Unlike Papua New Guineans -- whose government is ineffectual -- Fijians can say, "Our government is able to take these decisive steps on behalf of the citizenry." And so I think some Fijians take some pride in being the first of the Pacific Island states to have the will to defy New Zealand in these particular matters.

dC: You talk about these different people coming together to sort of talk about a change. If a change is necessary, how that would it happen? Since you wrote the manuscript for this book, have you seen that happening? Have there been different actions being taken, where epidemiologists and anthropologists and politicians are coming together to say, "Okay. Perhaps we need a new solution besides just banning things outright."?

DG: The banning issue is still strong. Flaps have powerful symbolic value. People just can't give up the idea that banning them would be important. There have been meetings of Pacific region countries. Their health ministers, in talking about bans, recognize that these issues are difficult. The Pacific Island health ministers say, "Ban! We must ban, we must ban!" And the New Zealand health minister and the Australian health minister and the trade

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interests say "But, no, no, no, it won't work." Then Pacific Island health ministers counter and say, "Well, we're sick and you're dumping on us." And the other people say, "You may be sick, but we're not dumping on you. You just have to say no!" And they say, "Well, we can't!" And it just goes on and on and on. And no, we have not seen any real transformations in the nature of the debate, and partly because flaps are so bloody compelling. They are just obvious to everyone as a focus of the debate. And also because, what are you going to say to KFC? What are you going to say to white bread or jam companies? To the economy? It's really not just flaps that are being debated. Flaps are about all of these other things. And to some extent, they deflect attention from all of these other things. If you can focus on flaps, you don't have to worry about other aspects of the nature of the international relationships, which make flaps an issue. The flap about flaps is really a funny, maybe somewhat deleterious, displacement of what is really involved—which is these other issues, and how people in the Pacific Island region should live together.

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Family, Sex, Law

Sex and love work, family secrets, mail-order brides, marriage/sex/family in popular culture, postcolonial sex, law and marriage, and the medicalized family: *disClosure* no. 20 explores these and other issues dealing with family, sex, and law from a social theoretic perspective and through a variety of media including scholarly essays, poetry and visual art.

disClosure is an annual thematic publication dedicated to investigating and stimulating interest in new directions in contemporary social theory. By encouraging submissions from a variety of disciplinary, geographical, and theoretical perspectives and genres, the journal seeks to expand the nature of what is studied by the academy and how it is studied. In an effort to construct new approaches to form and content, we encourage submissions that employ innovative writing styles as well as formal scholarly work. *disClosure* annually publishes articles, art, creative writing, interviews, and book reviews.

disClosure interviews . . .

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