Small is Beautiful

The Federation of Small Anthropology Programs was founded in 1991 by Pat Rice (West Virginia U) and Frank Young (San Diego U) to support anthropologists in small programs of six or less. At that time, there were 148 small departments, as compared to 104 in medium-sized and 112 large-sized departments. The founders had hoped to make FOSAP a unit within the AAA, but the moratorium on units prompted them to seek committee status under the General Anthropology Division. The first business meeting was held in Chicago in 1991 and every year since then. The officers of the organization are a president or co-president (as now), a secretary-treasurer, a membership chair, and a web master. FOSAP publishes a fall and spring newsletter and maintains a web site.

FOSAP’s original purpose was both pedagogical and political. The founders recognized that anthropologists in small programs had difficulties and challenges not shared by those in larger dedicated departments of anthropology, and they wanted a forum in which to address those widely shared difficulties. Some of these issues included the problem of cohabiting with sister disciplines such as sociology, teaching (stretching) across the four sub-fields in a small department, maintaining viability and visibility within the larger institution, living with the multicultural movement, and a variety of curriculum matters. Over the years, FOSAP has sponsored or co-sponsored symposia on these and related topics and has published the papers from these symposia in the Newsletter. Since most people in small programs are at teaching institutions, an enduring topic of interest to FOSAP members has been the teaching of anthropology; symposia have featured the topics of innovative fieldwork assignments, new approaches to teaching ethnographic methods, and computer-assisted teaching and electronic software.

FOSAP’s mission has not changed significantly over time, but clearly the organization has had its greatest success in providing a forum for topics of concern and interest at the national meetings and through the Newsletter. The organization is dedicated to the goal of advancing anthropology and small programs within the changing climate of higher education. FOSAP will continue to address in a creative way the issues that arise in small programs and give great attention to the presentation of innovative pedagogy and courseware to support the teaching of anthropology. FOSAP aims to demonstrate both to the national organization and indirectly to the administrations of the colleges and universities which house small programs that “Small is Beautiful.”

Cate Cameron
FOSAP Co-President

President’s Corner

Small is Beautiful

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Bulletin of the Federation of Small Anthropology Programs
Vol. 8, No. 2 Spring / Fall 1999
FOSAP Sessions ‘99

The Complete Anthropologist: Strategies for Teaching the Four Fields (All by Yourself)

Thursday, November 18, 1999
10:15-12:00

Chair: Ann Maxwell Hill (Dickinson College)

Challenges to Creativity: Teaching the Four Sub-Fields in a One-Person Department
Frances E Mascia-Lees (Simon’s Rock College)

Nacirema Fieldwork: Experiential Learning in a Four-Field Intro Class
John M Coggeshall (Clemson University)

Experiencing Archaeology 101: Rudiments For a Liberal Studies Education
Michael F McDonald (Florida Gulf Coast)

Cops, Counselors, and Anthropologists; Strategies for the Incorporation of the Four Field Approach in a Non-Anthropology Curriculum
Chad E. Litton (Southeastern Oklahoma State University)

A Bag of Tricks and a Book of Strategies for Teaching Anthropology
Patricia C. Rice (West Virginia University)

Discussant: Daniel E. Moerman (University of Michigan-Dearborn)

Teaching the Anthropology of Music: How Musical is the Web
Catherine Mary Cameron (Cedar Crest College)

Cultural Anthropology on the Internet: Course Design, Developments, and Difficulties in Distance Learning.
Susan Stans (Florida Gulf Coast University), Erpin Zhu (Florida Gulf Coast University)

Combining CD, WEB and Internet Technologies to Teaching Ethnographic Field Research Methods
Manuel L. Carlos (CSU, Monterey Bay and UCSB), Juan Jose Gutierrez (CSU, Monterey Bay and University of Queretaro)

Caught in the WEB or Weaving Through It: A Totally WEB-Dependent Introductory Anthropology Course
Denise O’Brien (Temple University)

Taking in Anthropology Class Into the Electronic Bazaar
David F Lancy (Utah State University)

Virtual Skeletons in Three Dimensions
John W. Kappelman (University of Texas, Austin)

And the Carpets Even Fly! Taking an Anthropology Class into the Electronic Bazaar
David DeBry

Session II Panel Discussion

Moderator: David R Lancy (Utah State University)

Participants: David R. Lancy, Denise O’Brien, John Kantner, Manuel L. Carlos, Brian Schwimmer

Course WEB sites, WEB connectivity and Internet Assisted Teaching in Anthropology

Friday, November 19, 1999
Session I 8:00-11:45
Session II 12:15-1:30

Session I Online Demonstrations

Organizer/Chair: Manuel L. Carlos (CSU, Monterey Bay)

Point your browser to the new web site ..... http://www.fosap.org for more information on FOSAP
1. Meeting called to order by Ann Hill, Co-Chair of FOSAP

2. Patricia Rice representing the Executive Committee of GAD commented on declining opportunities of committees within GAD to get invited status for sessions they organize for the annual meetings. AAA has reduced the time allotted to 11 1/2 hours and, therefore, can no longer promise that every committee will get a panel with invited status. Much depends on the quality of the submission and whether it matches a AAA annual meeting theme.

3. FOSAP member attending the meeting introduced themselves. They were the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AFFILIATION</th>
<th>E-MAIL ADDRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betsy Baird</td>
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<td>Nancy Eberhardt</td>
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<td>John Gatewood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Grebinger</td>
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<td>Ann Hill</td>
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<td>Ellen Ingmanson</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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4. Minutes of the meeting of November 22, 1997 as published in the spring 1998 Newsletter were reviewed by Ann Hill, and approved.

5. The assembled members discussed, with favorable comments, the Invited Poster Session “Anthropology Courseware: Teaching with Electronic Media,” organized by Manuel Carlos for the 1998 Philadelphia meetings.

6. The assembled members discussed the favorable reception for FOSAP sessions on teaching methods over the past several years. There was general agreement to continue to propose sessions on teaching in the future. It was noted the COTA also sponsors such sessions.

7. The spring 1999 FOSAP Newsletter will publish the panel “Mad About Methods: Teaching the Ethnographic Approach to Undergraduates,” organized by Cate Cameron.

8. Betsy Baird reported on her work with the FOSAP membership/mailing list. It was unanimously agreed that the mailing list should be more complete and should retain information on professional interests. Betsy was elected as Membership Chair.

9. Sessions proposals for the 1999 annual meeting in Chicago were discussed:
   a) Manuel Carlos submitted a proposal through Ann Hill for the 1999 meeting on “Course WEB Sites, WEB Linkage, and Internet Assisted Teaching in Anthropology.” Peter Peregrine was put forward as a co-organizer.
   b) Bonnie Lloyd proposed a session on the creative synergy of interdisciplinary collaboration in programs where anthropologists share teaching responsibilities with colleagues in other disciplines such as sociology. It was agreed that Victoria Razak and Paul Grebinger should work with her in putting together a proposal.

10. Officers of FOSAP for 1998-1999 were elected as follows:
    - Ann Hill and Cate Cameron - Co-Chairs
    - Paul Grebinger - Secretary/Treasurer
    - Dan Moerman is serving as Web Master

11. Ann Hill asked for a volunteer to come forward as editor of the Newsletter. The assembled membership responded by asking Ann to continue in that role, but recommended she ask GAD for funding for secretarial support for the Newsletter.

Respectfully submitted - Paul Grebinger
MAD ABOUT METHODS:
TEACHING THE ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO UNDERGRADUATES

Ethnography as a Problem Solving

James D. Armstrong & Deborah R. Altamirano
(State University of New York at Plattsburgh)

INTRODUCTION

As teachers of cultural anthropology, we are firmly convinced that ethnographic research should play a central role in the education of undergraduate students. We take this position because we believe that students of anthropology should be exposed to what practitioners of our discipline actually do. Teachers of undergraduate anthropology should model the culture of our discipline in our classrooms and courses, and a central part of this modeling process is ethnographic research. Although we will focus primarily on the use of ethnography projects in qualitative methods courses, we believe that what we have to say has implications for their use in all courses. Before turning to a direct consideration of ethnographic projects in qualitative methods courses, we develop a pedagogical rationale for their inclusion in any cultural anthropology curriculum.

School activity in general is implicitly framed by one culture, the school, but attributed to another, the discipline(s). As Brown, Collins and Duguid put it, "Classroom activities are simply not the activities of practitioners, and would not be endorsed by the cultures to which they are attributed (1989:33)." In fact, many classrooms, much of the student activity generated by college courses, and much of the student-teacher interaction that results conveys an entirely false impression of what academic practitioners actually do. Brown, et. al., argue that students rarely have the chance to engage in relevant domain learning because the pervasive culture that students observe and participate in is school culture, and school culture may be antithetical to discipline culture. In a similar vein but focusing specifically on anthropology, George and Louise Spindler (1990:106) argue that students are not given the opportunity to understand the process or experience through which anthropologists arrive at their conclusions:

The single most significant obstacle, as we see it, to effective teaching and learning of anthropology is that the instructor too often draws generalizations about culturally relevant human behavior exclusively from his or her own professional repertoire. There is too little regard for the fact that beginning students do not go through any of the experiences the instructor has gone through to arrive at these generalizations ... So why should students get excited? Everything is known, finalized, certain but the student never finds out how it all became known ... What has been presented are abstractions--out of context in in terms of their intellectual or situational derivation.

Although we recognize that many teachers of anthropology are engaged in attempts to create classroom dynamics that avoid the schooling culture trap, there are pervasive elements of it present in the ways many of us teach and in the ways we organize our courses. There is a tendency for many of us to organize the classroom around the authority of the teacher. By doing so we stifle the free flow of ideas, while creating an atmosphere bereft of argumentation and negotiation about analyses, interpretations, and the adequacy of explanations that is common in our discipline. We give students a sterile, finalized view of the field, which puts the teacher into an authority position in charge of the truth. In doing so we silence students as valued participants in the creation of knowledge, making collaboration difficult.

Another element of schooling culture found in many of our classes is their subject/topic orientation. Often, if not usually, we organize our courses around topics, while in reality anthropology as a discipline is problem and issue driven. In our discipline, as in most academic disciplines, knowledge emerges from attempts by researchers to solve specific problems and puzzles for which there are often multiple, but not necessarily equally adequate, solutions. To organize courses or research around topics prevents students from learning how to ask appropriate research questions, and reduces their familiarity with the kinds of questions we ask and the ways we find answers to them.

School culture also tends to impede reflexivity in our students. Traditional course organizations and classroom settings do not encourage the kinds of self-reflection and reflexivity that anthropologists experience as part of doing ethnographic research. For many anthropologists these experiences have been self-defining and self-clarifying acts that enable us to recognize the embeddedness of our understanding in our own cultural system (Rosaldo 1989, DeVita 1991, Van Maanen 1988, among others). Unfortunately, the culture of schooling frequently belittles the value of such self-reflection by emphasizing an attitude toward teaching and learning that is "value free or value neutral." Although the schooling culture approach is not value free nor is it as objective as it pretends to be, by taking such a stance it devalues consciously value laden, self-oriented or culture conscious ways of knowing.
The point we are trying to make is that to create an anthropologically appropriate pedagogy requires three main features: problem centeredness, collaboration, and reflexivity (Robbins and Armstrong 1993; see Kutsche 1998 for a similar point of view). Clearly, a centerpiece of this project is the incorporation of ethnographic projects into the curriculum because these projects can simultaneously generate all three of these activities, while permitting students to directly experience what anthropologists do and how they do it. That is, ethnographic research or ethnographic-like research creates the lived experience of anthropologists and approximates important elements of our disciplinary culture, or at least it allows us to model important features of our disciplinary culture that are often absent in classes framed by the culture of schooling.

STUDENT ETHNOGRAPHY

Before we evaluate what we think works and what doesn't, we will digress for a moment to describe our perspective on the essence of good student ethnography. Because we use student projects to inform this paper, clarification concerning our expectations and standards is important. Not all student ethnographies accomplish what we are looking for. Often they fail on one or several grounds, and their failures or inadequacies are illustrative of what is wrong with the way we teach, the projects we assign, and the way our students have been taught before they come to us. A good ethnography, first and foremost, has a reason to exist. That is, the reader understands clearly and early in the paper that the paper serves a specific and significant purpose. It answers a question, solves a problem that is of interest and significance to anthropologists. Second, (although maybe not second in level of significance) the focus of the paper is clearly defined. The reader knows what group, event, network, or organization is being studied, how it is bounded, and also how these boundaries may be fluid. It is preferable, but not always necessary, that some details about the structure of the focus group is included. Third, the method of collecting data should be specified and this method should be appropriate to the problem as set forth in the paper. Fourth, the author analyzes and interprets the data collected in a way that is clearly specified to the reader. The reader should be able to assess whether the author’s analysis, interpretation and conclusions follow from the data. Finally, the authors should give some indication that they understand how their position and biases relative to the problem and focus of research affects their understanding. However, the ethnography should not be more about the authors’ reflexive insight than about the subject of study. Before we ask students to work on their own projects, we have them read and discuss several ethnographies with these criteria in mind.

In sum, in designing projects for our students and in assisting them in designing their own projects we establish the following set of guidelines for students to follow:

1. Student-designed projects must have a clear focus—they respond to a key question the student wishes to investigate.

2. Student projects must be “do-able” in the sense that students can identify a location/group/organization in which to situate their research.

3. Students must specify their methods of data collection and these methods, in consultation with the faculty, are found appropriate to the problem set forth in their project proposal.

4. Students analyze and interpret their data collected in a way that is clearly conveyed to the reader.

5. Students show that their conclusions follow the data.

6. Finally, students reflect on their biases and assumptions regarding their role as a research and convey their reflexive insight to the reader.

Once we have established our guidelines for “good” ethnography, the challenge is to have students actually conduct research that resembles our good ethnography criteria. Unfortunately, you can't just tell your students to go out and do ethnography and expect it to have the optimum effect or even to make for a good learning experience for most students. Perhaps the greatest barrier to ethnographic success for our students is their inability to discover the anthropologically appropriate problems that can be answered in the research contexts that they choose (or their failure to ask the appropriate questions of those contexts). Our feeling about this problem is that students have not been prepared to ask questions. Their schooling has tended to focus on answering questions posed for them by teachers at all levels who are captives of the subject/topic approach to teaching. Thus, students don't realize that they might have a significant question and they have little practice at formulating and refining appropriate questions. Unfortunately, methods courses usually focus primarily on techniques for gathering data, and, as a consequence, we often short shrift the issues that our methods are intended to address, while in non-methods courses, we rarely ask our students to engage in ethnographic research. Furthermore, even when students are asked to read something of relevance to their particular ethnographic research interest, they often miss the problem the article or book is addressing or fail to see its relevance for their project.

We each approach this problem by providing students with an initial question or problem to address. Armstrong, for example, assigns a classroom ethnography project in which students are asked to observe, describe, and analyze the culture of a college classroom in which they are students. As part of the preparation for this assignment, he assigns an article about student resistance in high-school classrooms that employs ethnographic methods (Alpert 1990) and an article that critiques the culture of college classrooms (Robbins and Armstrong 1993). Inevitably, although it sometimes requires a bit of prodding for individual students, the students write reasonably good ethnographies almost all of which are focused on the means of resistance employed by college students, especially in large lecture halls. Altamirano uses a project in which students must investigate cultural concepts of space use.
In three-person groups, students work as teams of “ethno-
architects.” Their task is to design housing for a family from
another culture (which is determined for them) which must be
compatible with their client’s needs and cultural concepts of
space use. This means that students must use their
anthropological expertise to decide what ethnographic
information they need to know; they must employ their research
skills to know where to find the information they need; they
must use their skills in cooperation and collaboration to
incorporate the materials collected from each team member;
they must use their organizational and analytical skills to
consolidate their findings; and they must use their writing skills
to pull together the information and prepare a comprehensive
final design report. They struggle with it but given a clear
purpose and the benefit of collaboration, students have
produced some excellent projects.

Still, our main objection to these projects is students
don't experience that "moment of defamiliarization" where their
mundane experience with schooling loses its air of naturalness
and becomes a site for the "exploration of cultural sense"
(Katriel 1991:2). In order to encourage the experience and the
exhilaration of discovery and insight the design of the project,
the site to be explored, the question to be asked, and the way
the research goes about answering the question must be left up
to the student. Unfortunately, that takes us right back to where
we began. How can we design ethnographic projects and teach
students to do ethnography in which problem solving is at the
center of their experience?

In the methods class that we both currently teach we
focus primarily on “doing ethnography,” while putting question
asking/problem solving at the center of the project. In each of
our courses, students must develop their own final projects in
which they define the purpose, formulate and refine their key
research question, determine their methods of research, conduct
their research, analyze their findings, and present their
ethnography to the class. [Note: This course fulfills the college-
wide upper division writing requirement and the anthropology
curriculum methods requirement. It is the only upper division
course that all majors must complete. Much of our concern for
the design of the course focuses on making it a writing
intensive experience that imparts skills that will be useful both
within and outside the academic setting in careers that are
predominately "non-anthropological." Rarely does a non-major
enroll in this course. Although most of our majors are oriented
toward sociocultural anthropology, some
are more interested in archaeology and biophysical
anthropology. For these students, qualitative and ethnographic
methods seem less germane to their interests. Keeping this in
mind, we have put much effort into the idea that the skills
learned (both research and writing) will be transferable to
domains outside of academic sociocultural anthropology.] Our
Teaching of methods in the course is anchored in using these
methods in the ethnographic project. The project is organized
in a step-by-step manner following Fetterman (1998) that
requires students to engage in a series of smaller assignments
aimed at producing data and writing that will be useful in the
compilation of the final written version of their ethnography.

One means by which we try to force students to ask
questions is to have them first select a group, event or activity
to study. After securing permission to study the group, students
make a proposal to us that describes their project and requires
them to specify the question(s) their research will be answering.
They receive feedback from us on their proposal, including
relevant anthropological research related to their
problem/question/area of interest. For example, if a student
were to decide to focus on a suite in his or her dormitory as the
site to be studied, we would suggest that he/she read Moffatt’s
Coming of Age in New Jersey (1989) as a model of the kinds
of issues or questions that might be asked about dormitory life
and social organization. But even with this attention to
question asking/problem solving, students have difficulty
formulating good questions and unquestionably the biggest
problem they have in the early stages of research is the
development of a problem focus.

This problem continues to plague some students
throughout the entire process and some are not successful at
developing a significant problem in the course of research.
Generally, these students fail to produce a finished project or
submit an ethnography that is primarily descriptive,
lacking in insightful analysis, and flawed by anemic
interpretation. Sometimes those who fail to find a problem
engage in what might be described as hyper-reflexive
description. In these cases students dedicate most of their
energy to describing what happened to them emotionally and
intellectually while engaged in trying to study someone else.
For them, anthropology has become a type of folk
psychotherapy. In reviewing the projects that have been
submitted in this course over the last few years an interesting
pattern emerges with regards to problem focus. Students who
select sites, events, or groups with which they already have a
great deal of familiarity seem to have the most difficulty
finding a question to motivate their research. [Note: In the last
two years only one student whose project focused on other
students received a grade higher than B (out of fourteen
students), while three students whose research focused on non-
student groups received A grades (out of fourteen). Similarly,
six students who studied other students, failed to complete their
projects during the term of the semester, while only two
students who focused on non-student groups failed to complete
their projects.] They are so embedded in what they are
studying, it is so familiar to them, that what is going on in this
area of their experience is not problematic. In fact, much of
their research is flawed by the assumption that they know how
their informants will respond to their questions, while their
informants assume that the researchers know how they will
answer the researcher’s questions. This is most likely to occur
when students study activities, sites, or organizations focused
around their own age group on the campus where they are
students. Students like to study that with which they are
familiar because it seems easier and less threatening to do so.
All of our students need to learn to "manufacture distance" to
achieve critical awareness" of things with which they have a high degree of familiarity (McCracken 1988:23). This is especially difficult for students studying other students. Even though we discourage studying groups that are familiar to students, we don't prohibit it. There is something to be learned by the difficulty of distancing oneself from the research context. Furthermore, many students lack the confidence to engage in research with relative strangers to whom they are unconnected. It is easier to ask your friends to be scrutinized than to go to a local school and ask if you can observe a hot breakfast program.

Another barrier to the production of a good student ethnography is time constraint placed on students by the fifteen week semester. This time period is barely enough to find a site, formulate a problem, do some participant-observation, and then write a short ethnography. And, we should remember that these students are simultaneously engaged in at least four other courses that ideally put further constraints on the time that they can dedicate to ethnographic research. This creates a somewhat artificial situation for students. They don't have time to "wallow" in their data, to intimately familiarize themselves with all the ways it can be organized, interrogated, and presented. The absence of a “wallowing” period limits the time they have to formulate questions about what they have uncovered. It prevents insight that sometimes comes as a result of distance from the site of study. It limits their access to other sources of questions and comparisons that might help them make sense out of their experience. It reduces the potential for reflexive and reflective insight that emanates (usually late at night) from trying to write an ethnography.

For some readers our emphasis on reflexivity may seem out of place. After all ethnography should be about the others we try to understand, not about ourselves. Most of us probably read ethnographies to learn about other people, not about the writers of those ethnographies. Nonetheless, the process of doing ethnography is usually an intensely reflexive experience in at least three ways. There is the obvious reflexivity that many anthropologists have written about recently, in which we make discoveries about ourselves as a consequence of the field experience. John Honigmann suggested that fieldwork itself was a form of psychoanalysis. [Note: personal communication to Richard Robbins.] He was acutely aware that research experiences force self-analysis and an examination of personal beliefs and values. Malinowski’s diary (1967) is, perhaps, one of the more vivid examples of the self-analysis inspired by fieldwork. At a different level, ethnographic research, acts as mirrors which reflect the "sociocultural" self to the engaged researcher (deRoche and deRoche 1990). This cultural self awareness is a critically valuable experience for our students who have grown up with individualistic world views that, for all intents and purposes, exclude culture and society as variables in determining their behavior (Armstrong 1998). Thus, ethnographic research becomes a process whereby students actually discover that much of their behavior (not just exotic others’ behavior) is cultural, not merely the product of individual decisions.

Furthermore, a reflexive approach predisposes students to realize that researchers are themselves sociocultural beings whose opinions and conceptions are anchored in culture. Thus, the ethnographies students produce, the interpretations and analyses they make, can be understood by the student as part of or inside, rather than above or outside, the cultural systems that condition their production. From our perspective, then, reflexivity is centrally tied to the problem solving dynamic because it forces students to ask questions about the nature of their own understanding of what they are observing. From the onset of the research project we require that students consider and write about their position vis-à-vis those whom they study. We ask them to act as "instruments," applying a broad range of their own experiences and imagination (McCracken 1988:18). In this way we hope to engage them immediately in the kind of reflexive experience that generates questions not so much about themselves as individuals but about themselves as culture beings and as researchers who are part of the scene and affected by their relationship to the others that are participating in it. As beginning anthropologists, this is an essential first step in understanding the culture of a discipline in which knowledge is negotiated and generalizations are not the final positions of experts.

To this point we have said little about the collaborative aspects of the ethnographic approach we are advocating. Few of the projects that students engage in tend to be collaborative; rather the classroom is the site for collaboration. On a regular basis in class we engage in discussions about the progress of student projects. During this time student share what they are doing and how they are doing with regards to their own research. Because they are the experts on their projects, they generally feel confident in explaining what's going on. At the same time, because other students are going through similar experiences, they all have something to contribute to each others’ projects. We find that these discussion sessions equalize the classroom setting. Our identity in the classroom as teacher/authority changes into one of advisor and guide who is in the position to make suggestions, like the other participants in the class. We share tales of our field experience with student-researchers who have their own valuable experiences to share with each other. Students report that they find invaluable the opportunity to discuss their projects with and received feedback from their fellow students while they are in the process of conducting their research. In course evaluations students frequently mention the discussion sessions as the best part of the class and students often suggest that we talk about their projects more often.

**CONCLUSION**

All of us would find humor in the idea of a basketball coach trying to coach a team by lecturing about how to play, teaching plays only on the chalkboard, and skills only through abstract descriptions. We would find it strange if the starting line-up was selected on the basis of who scored highest on an essay test asking the players to describe the two-hand chest pass. We would all expect this team to get creamed in its first game against any team that learned basketball by playing. So
why aren't we laughing at the way we usually teach? Our classrooms and our courses should be the sites of activity that model discipline culture, that expose students to the field of anthropology by engaging in domain relevant experiences.

One, if not the central, domain-centered activity of sociocultural anthropology is ethnographic research. Therefore, we have argued that ethnographic research projects should occupy a central place in many of our courses, especially methods courses. And, we have stressed that these ethnographic projects should incorporate the problem solving dynamic that is key to the research that most anthropologists do. In teaching ethnography as problem solving we have encountered deficiencies that students bring to this enterprise. Chief among these is our students' lack of familiarity with formulating questions and seeing the anthropologically relevant problems in the sites they choose to study. Our response to students' lack of preparation in this area is to follow a step-by-step approach that front-loads problem solving, while simultaneously stressing reflexivity and classroom collaboration around the issues of our students' own projects.

Still, we are not completely satisfied with what we are doing. Some of the problems that students have with ethnographic projects, especially difficulties in defining their problems, are not strictly the result of their lack of preparedness. These difficulties stem from the adequacy of our model of ethnographic research which is flawed by the constraints of the traditional classroom setting and the college-wide requirements that mandate taking four to five classes a semester. Students don't have the time required to really define a problem, to completely immerse themselves in the object of their study, to wallow totally in their data, to find imaginative and creative ways of interpreting what they have uncovered. There isn't enough time in a semester to do this and other course demands further exacerbate this problem for students. Nonetheless, we are committed to the problem centered ethnographic project as one of the best ways of creating the lived experience of anthropology for our students.

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Ethnographic Methods as Performance

Dan Bauer (Lafayette College)

For as long as I have taught the ethnographic methods course at Lafayette, I have emphasized learning by doing. During the past two years we have added another dimension. The course has become one in which students are involved in a series of performances. These small team-based performances culminate in larger performances at the end of the term. One of these performances is a publication. The second form of performance is more directly public, than "publication," at least as a pertains to the students' "public"—an ethnographic video festival. Publication takes the form of distribution of student group's ethnographic work in the departmental journal. An ethnographic video festival in the auditorium of the college's student center features each team's work. Let us begin by discussing why learning through performing is especially suited to learning ethnographic methods.

It is often asserted that ethnographic methods cannot be taught. Laura Bohannon (a.k.a. Eleanor Bowen, 1964) observed in Return to Laughter that the most important advice her Oxford professors gave her about doing field work was that she would "need more tables than she thought" and that she should buy inexpensive sneakers because the water would run out of them quickly, after she waded across
streams. We tend to see ethnographic methods as something for which we, as humans, are automatically well equipped. After all, as untrained children we all learned basic rules of our own cultures. At the opposite extreme some try to impose rigid rules of inquiry to this most human of endeavors, sometimes over "scientizing" it. In my view, a more productive course of action lies somewhere in the middle.

The metaphor for learning ethnographic methods which I have chosen is that of "dancing." With minimal effort we all learned to walk. With some training, and a series of Saturday night performances we may become some kind of dancers (in my case not much of a dancer). With strenuous training and numerous performances we may become professional dancers. The jitters before each performance usually enhances the quality of the dance. Dance has been chosen as a metaphor for a second reason. Dance is a social activity, involving an interplay with two or more people. It is my conviction that "Blackboard rules" are of no more use in ethnography then they are in dance, if they are not also performed in delicate interaction with others. Now let's turn to what Anthropology and Sociology 340 looks like.

Members of the seminar are divided into small teams (3 to 4 members each). The basis of selection is not, as we might imagine, ethnographic interests, but ethnographic talents. Members of the class discuss their strengths - the ability to notice seemingly irrelevant things, the ability to be highly organized, the possession of previous experience shooting video, the ability to write well, and even the ownership of a car. The teams are then assembled to create as full a complement of talents as possible. Their first task as a team is to choose a community from which to learn. The task itself is one which involves some rudimentary "ethnography." Students must actively inquire about one another's interests and develop effective working relationships among themselves -- skills which figure prominently in the ethnographic enterprise. Because the ethnographic work will be done in teams the course requires a special format.

All members of all teams meet at least once per week along with the instructor in a kind of staff meeting. Additionally, each team meets several times per week separately, and at least once with the instructor. The "staff meeting" performs two functions intellectual and emotional. It is a time when ethnographic tools (of use to all teams) can be discussed, and this is also a setting in one's hand. To my mind the trick is to shift the student perception of my role from that of instructor-judge to instructor-coach. In most coaching situations the "judge" is external; it is the scoreboard at the Lafayette-Lehigh game. The coach and the players share, unambiguously, at least one goal, to perform excellently before the community's eyes. This course's design emphasized the student and teacher's co-participation in turning out excellent ethnographies which will be seen (and perhaps judged) by the campus community, a jury of one's peers.

The Problem of Grading

Try as we might, at some level we are judges. Someone must give the grades. A simple, "I am not here to be fair; I am here to teach you something," will not serve the purpose. For most students the grade is important, indeed so important the it may get in the way of learning. As Sartre noted, "...the student may be so busy trying to look like a good student that there is nothing left for learning. Those students who are grade-oriented have a need to know what they must do to get the grade. Regular graded exercises may give the appearance of control and fairness, but at the cost of repeatedly emphasizing the role of judge. How do we move away from the courtroom image?

The image I have chosen is that of a research team and everyone's participation on it. The student is judged on the basis of how well she or he performed as a member of a research team. The fact is that in this model, we are members of a research team, and that includes myself. We are learning together. The journal articles teams report on are often one which I have not read. The weekly reports on their fieldwork is always new to me, as they are to the rest of the group. Expression of interest in what they are discovering is genuine. In the end the grades are subjective, but neither arbitrary nor unexpected. By the end of the term we have worked together so much that there is a high degree of shared understanding of what work and efforts are merely good, and what is excellent. The high degree with which I have interacted with teams insures that I have a good idea of who is taking ethnographic observation and analysis seriously and who is not. Team members know that I have fairly good knowledge of who has done what. Nevertheless, some mechanics of grading are necessary.

The mechanics of grading fall into two areas: response from the members of the teams themselves, and my evaluation of the projects. To ensure that my knowledge of each person's efforts is as accurate as possible, I ask each member of each team to write a brief statement of what part of the project was their responsibility and what they think other members of their team deserve credit for. Besides filling in any gaps in my knowledge, this practice reduces both showboating, and anxiety. Evaluation of each team's final products (ethnographies and videos) also requires some mechanics.

Everyone has a good sense of how well I think the project has been going from my comments in our weekly meetings. Remember, each of these meetings brings together only four or five people. At the project's end I write a formal evaluation, augmented with charts. Some of the questions I ask are:
- How well has the ethnography (video) given the reader (viewer) a feel for the life of the people the students are learning from?
- How well has the analysis addressed ethnographic and theoretical issues? Are the issues significant?
- Is the presentation persuasive?
- Do readers (viewers) understand what is being asserted?
- How well are assertions supported?
- How well has the ethnography (video) met production values?
  
In the end, the grade is not the important part of the experience. Final grades are discussed with students, but have never been challenged. Students take away a pride in what they have produced: taking home the journal and video to mom, using them as part of graduate school applications, going back to the community from which they have learned to show off what they have accomplished.

Some Examples

This semester's teams are working on five diverse topics. "The Carnie Life" emphasizes recruitment to the Carnie community, and the roles of succession and inheritance in an organization which has a moveable territory. "Cosmology and practice in holistic healing at Morning Star" examines how the concrete actions used in healing relate to balancing mind, body, and spirit for each of the various groups which meet in this setting. "Wicca in the 1990's" examines ways in which the practice of Wicca refracts current American cultural values. "The Witnesses of Jehovah" attempts to understand the cosmology which is often seen as separate from mainstream American culture, as well as to understand how it succeeds through employing many mainstream techniques. Finally, "AIDS: Forming a Community of Suffering" reverses usual ethnographic practice. Ethnographers generally study established communities ("villages" as Agar [1996] has called them). The AIDS team has been studying an effort to create a community of AIDS sufferers where those involved have heretofore been individual patients.

Videos created by this term's teams will be shown on Friday in the Limburg Theater of the Farinon Center at the College. The written ethnographies will go to press over the weekend. The most lasting product has been Resisting Assimilation: The Lebanese Community of Easton, Pennsylvania (1991) by White, Wilcox, Riffert, Spooner, Rossi, Spratt, Quillen, and Pegolo. Copies have been requested from as far away as Detroit and Australia. One member of this team went on to graduate school in Anthropology and Sociology.

The first Mosaic (1996) was in Steelton, PA, a local working-class community with extensive ethnic diversity, and the second Mosaic in the Fall of 1998 in Adams County, PA, a rapidly changing area with an increasing Latino population, consisting of both seasonal migrants and permanent residents. Adams County is nationally known for its 80 some odd apple orchards, fruit processing and packing plants, and the large and constantly increasing migrant population. For example, some of the small towns in the county now have Latinos making up 30-40% of their populations, a radical change over the last 20 years. This paper is about the Dickinson College student ethnographers and the Latinos in Adams County, but first a few words about the Steelton experience.

Steelton, an old steel mill town dating back to 1866, drew a diverse immigrant workforce from England, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Central and Eastern Europe, and Mexico during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; in addition, a large black population migrated from the south during this same time period. Job categories in the mill, residential neighborhoods, and the churches were all distinguished by race, ethnic groups, and class. Over the past 20 years, Steelton has been affected by rapid de-industrialization and a subsequent population decline.

The Mosaic students examined how Steelton residents were struggling to maintain their multicultural identities, the strength of their families, the vitality of their community, and their religious faith in the face of hard times. After spending six weeks on campus studying the political economy of de-industrialization, memoir and narrative, community studies, ethnography and oral history, students spent seven weeks doing intensive fieldwork in Steelton. Interacting across race, class, gender, generational, age and religious lines, the Dickinson students and the Steelton community engaged each other in the union halls and classrooms, in churches and cafes, at the mill and in the cemeteries as they explored questions of mutual interest: how does one make a living, raise a family, go to school, sustain faith, and relate to others in the mid-1990s in a small town in America.

In the Steelton experience, the process was an interactive, self-reflective one. While conducting fieldwork, the students were working out their understandings of what was going on not only in the Steelton...
community but within themselves and their community at Dickinson as well. As they were studying another community, they were also exploring their own identities and expanded the boundaries of the college community.

Students, faculty and community members came to realize that the most challenging and enriching experiences developed in relationships with others who were both different and similar to themselves. The socio-historical and cultural study was not about the "other" but about relationships and how they are affected by racism, classism, sexism and by structural factors as well as by personalities and emotions. Steelton, the students realized, is one community where many peoples coexist. Although there are divisions and conflicts, diversity and unity are not in fundamental opposition.

With the Steelton experience in mind, the 1998 Mosaic in Adams County was to be both similar to and at the same time quite different from Steelton. Nevertheless, the lessons learned in Steelton were quite important in terms of how undergraduates are prepared and how they become involved in community research, as ethnographers, archivists and oral historians. First, Steelton was a single, limited and clearly defined community, while Adams County is a larger region with numerous communities. The Latino population consists of both seasonal migrants and permanent residents spread across many communities and numerous migrant labor camps. In addition to Latinos, there are also Haitian and Jamaican farm laborers, but the Latinos are the most numerous, and about 90% came from Mexico, primarily from the state of Michoacán. Mosaic, the classroom training period for the students was almost equal to the time spent in the community, six and seven weeks, respectively. For Adams County, however, we decided to get the students into the field sooner and limit the classroom preparation to just two weeks. Then, the students were placed in internships with agencies and organizations that provided services to both the permanent and migrant Latino residents of Adams County. Our students were at their internships by the beginning of the third week of the 1998 Fall semester and were able to begin making observations, carry out interviews and do oral histories soon thereafter.

As the preparation for the fieldwork included examining the role of the ethnographer, introduction of self, the ethics of fieldwork, how to structure and ask questions, how to make observations, keeping detailed notes and a journal, how to review and analyze data, drawing conclusions and writing reports. In retrospect, the pre-field training seems like a blur, and it was not until we were in the field that learning took place through actually doing ethnography. In part, this was the reason we shortened the preparation period and decided it was more important to get "out there" as quickly as possible.

Once the students were in the "field" and began to make contacts through their internships, we accompanied them on some of the interviews and began giving advice on style, type of questions, etc. We also had them turn in their journals every two weeks for comments and suggestions. Through our own experiences as anthropologists, we know that some have a real knack for doing ethnography while others have to work hard at making contact, gaining acceptance and collecting data. Our students were no exception, and as it turned out, several were quite good, made numerous contacts that benefitted the entire group, especially those who were much more reluctant if not downright apprehensive.

The Table 1 below shows the types of internships by organization, activities and the number of students in each. Ten out of the eighteen students were involved with some form of education, ranging from high school equivalency programs (GED) to Headstart for children and Evenstart to assist adults to cope with life in the United States.

### Table 1: Internship Organizations and Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dickinson</td>
<td>Human Services Citizenship/recruit</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Headstart/Evenstart</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health Services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DesignCore Migrant Housing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult Education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ten or More</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Planning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpreting</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
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<td>Coordinator</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

After about two weeks into the internships, each of the 18 students in the Mosaic designed and carried out individual research projects. In some cases these were directly tied or closely related to their internships with a migrant social service organization. At first, many were unsure of what should be their focus and a few simply had no idea how to develop and carry out “ethnographic” research; it did not take long for most to catch on and start doing it.

As the semester went on, each project was refined and the focus became more clearly formulated. Mostly, this came about as
the students found through experience who would talk with them and what kinds of data they could readily collect. Of course, some were able to go through this process with relative ease while others had continual problems with research goals and data collection. Table 2 summarizes the final projects.

**Table 2: Research Projects: Methods and Principal Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Methods Used/Type of Data Collected</th>
<th>Principal Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Migrants: Realizing the American Dream?</td>
<td>In depth interviews, key informants and oral histories to collect information on expectations, incomes</td>
<td>Income from migratory labor not as high as expected, but much more than in Mexico; orchard owners not as exploitative as expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hispanic Population: Discrimination and Racism</td>
<td>Interviews with both Anglo and Hispanic residents of York Springs, PA</td>
<td>Anglos are reluctant to speak about the Hispanics, but when they do, all ill and problems in the community are blamed on them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lincoln Intermediate Unit: Social Services for Migrants</td>
<td>Active participation in child care for migrant families and interviews with Hispanics and service providers</td>
<td>Extremely difficult to work and go to school to qualify for better jobs. Human Services became a gathering place for Latinos and the Center has a history of hiring graduates as teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Challenge of Living in the United States: The Role of Education for Hispanic Migrants</td>
<td>Participant in GED and ESL courses, interviews with students and teachers</td>
<td>The two organizations are radically different in philosophy and how they work with migrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Social Services: A Comparison of Two Providers</td>
<td>Interviews with providers and clients; observation of service provision</td>
<td>Hispanics are more drawn to evangelical Protestant practices that the traditional Catholic mass. Evangelical churches seem to provide a center for meeting, socializing and making contacts with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Residents in Adams County, PA: Keeping in Touch with Home</td>
<td>Interviews with migrant orchard workers</td>
<td>Radically different views of student's educational needs and problems were voiced by students and their teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where and How Do Migrants Practice Religion?</td>
<td>Observation of religious services, interviews with Hispanic worshipers and pastors/priests</td>
<td>Extremely difficult to work and go to school to qualify for better jobs. Human Services became a gathering place for Latinos and the Center has a history of hiring graduates as teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating Hispanic Migrants/Teachers' Perspectives</td>
<td>Participation in child care, classroom observation, and interviews with students and teachers</td>
<td>Extremely difficult to work and go to school to qualify for better jobs. Human Services became a gathering place for Latinos and the Center has a history of hiring graduates as teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Catholic Church's Struggle to Keep the Faithful from Becoming Protestants</td>
<td>Interviews with priests and parishioners</td>
<td>Extremely difficult to work and go to school to qualify for better jobs. Human Services became a gathering place for Latinos and the Center has a history of hiring graduates as teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Growing Hispanic Community in York Springs, PA</td>
<td>Interviews with Anglo and Hispanic residents, town officials</td>
<td>Extremely difficult to work and go to school to qualify for better jobs. Human Services became a gathering place for Latinos and the Center has a history of hiring graduates as teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In conclusion, setting up and running an ethnographic “experience” for undergraduates is a challenge, especially with severe time constraints, but having each student do a limited and carefully defined project can produce a composite picture of a much larger reality. I think that undergraduates can learn quickly, and as mentioned before, some showed considerable potential for becoming excellent field researchers. We found that the Latinos were much more open and willing to talk and socialize with the students than were the Anglo residents of many of the small communities; in some cases there was open hostility. Many of the Latinos said this was the first time anyone had spoken with them and showed any interest in what they were doing, how they were feeling and were interested in what their lives are really like.

Although the apple harvest season ended in the beginning of November and some migrants have gone back to Mexico or to Florida for the citrus harvest, many have remained to work pruning apple trees or to look for work in local factories. Also, the permanent population is increasing. As part of the Mosaic, the students made an exhibit showing their internships, research project findings, numerous photographs and historical materials. This exhibition was held on the Dickinson College Campus in December, 1998, and both Latinos and Anglos from Adams County attended. Currently, the exhibit is located at Human Services in Gettysburg, PA, giving a large number participants an opportunity to see the products and conclusions reached by our students.
Triangulating to the Point of Insanity: The Use of Lived Experience in the Construction of Reflexive Ethnography

Margi Nowak (Puget Sound)

Who of us does not remember reading, or at least hearing reference to, the richly described explorations of Victor Turner into the semantic world of Ndembu ritual symbolism? Recalling those essays might also bring back the memory that two of them, included in The Ritual Process, feature not only textual description but also numerous photographs of individual Ndembu people for whom these "rituals of affliction" are being performed.

While I, as an anthropology graduate student in the 70's, paid great attention to Turner's well-crafted exegesis of "what was going on" in those photographs, I must admit that at the time I first read these essays, I gave scant attention to the people who were pictured on those pages, standing in holes dug in the earth, holding white pullets, having water sprinkled or powdered clay blown on them. I had not yet, at the time, heard much about, let alone integrated into my work, the principles of reflexive anthropology, which might have prompted me to see those human faces in the photographs as worried mothers, anxious husbands, and concerned family members - reminding me then of my own culture's expectations concerning threatening or even potentially deadly problems involving social relationships. Moreover, in the 1970's I was unmarried, had never given birth nor provided intense levels of care to a beloved child, nor had I yet served as the anchor relative to a dying parent. I was, in short, academically as well as experientially unable to "see" in those photographs anything other than Ndembu men and women who were illustrating key moments of Turner's interpretations of specific Ndembu rituals designed to address "some crisis" in their lives.

Flash-forward to the late 1990's. Not only has reflexive anthropology now been a part of my research and teaching for years, but I, like those frozen-in-time Ndembu people in the photographs, was now badly in need of a socially supportive "ritual of affliction" myself as I attempted to deal simultaneously with a university teaching career while caring for family, children, a mother with Alzheimer's Disease and a father dying of Parkinson's Disease. Lacking any access to native healers like the Ndembu diviner or doctor of Turner's essays, I devised my own plan for maximizing dangerously low energy levels: I revised the syllabus for my introductory anthropology course to incorporate a heavy and deliberate focus on gerontological issues. While the selection of such a theme was most definitely motivated by my urgent need to consolidate the time I was spending on preparations of all sorts (for my classes, as well as for the advocacy I was doing on behalf of my parents), I soon discovered that such a choice also brought with it certain pedagogical benefits as well.

Constructing a course around the lived experience of the course presenter is, of course, hardly a novel undertaking for fieldwork-sharing anthropologists, and anthropologically exploring the world of the elderly in US society has likewise already been done, and quite masterfully, by anthropologists such Barbara Myerhoff. But putting the two concerns together at a time of personal crisis -- namely, the impending death of a parent -- added an intense dose of experientially grounded reflexivity to the endeavor. For me, as well as for the students who would take this course an introductory anthropology class with a mini-fieldwork component involving a focus on end-of-life realities, strategies, and experiences - the ethnographic subject and object of investigation here would be a deeply personal one. For this reason, right from the start of this project I sought to articulate, for myself as well as for students, the issues of epistemology and professional ethics that seemed so relevant here. By no means did I want this course to lose its anthropological moorings and drift out into the open sea of self-indulgent, "talk-show" ramblings. An explicit acknowledgment of the importance of "boundaries" was thus imperative: boundaries of privacy as well as boundaries and implications of disciplinary methodology. Hence the first task of my syllabus became that of attempting to teach my students "how to see" - that is, how to delineate, perceive, record, and acknowledge data reflexively.

Perhaps it was not accidental that the means I hit upon to begin to convey this instruction derived inspiration from an activity I had happily shared with my father ten years earlier: backyard gardening. A 1980's PBS series entitled "Square Foot Gardening with Mel Bartholomew" provided the idea I had tested in my father's raisedbed vegetable garden a decade earlier and was now about to adapt for use with my students: measuring off a grid pattern consisting of precise one-foot squares, marking it off visibly with twine, planting seeds in each square with precise attention to quantity and position within the square, and above all, giving highly focused attention and care to "just this one square at a time". Minor modifications were made to the "square foot gardening" analogy for teaching the "how to delimit" aspect of doing ethnography: the four-feet long sections of rope each student was given lent themselves more easily to being tied in a circular form, and since the purpose of this initial exercise was only connected with zooming the lens of observation down to a micro-focus, I made no further attempt in this exercise to exploit the grid analogy at a more comprehensive level of observation.

What I told students about this preparatory activity was actually very little at first: they were released from the classroom to go outside and chose their place in the sun to "rope," and then simply asked to "write down what you noticed inside your rope boundary." Afterwards they recounted and shared their observations, and then I asked further questions, having in mind the link I was trying to develop being "paying highly focused attention to a delimited area." and researchers' much less consciously made decisions involving "what to record and recount." For example, among the questions I posed to them were the following:

- what position were you in when you made your observations?
for successful fieldwork!

then, were certainly highlighted as necessary starting points they might have been impatiently waiting for certain obvious nonverbal indications of polite respect, even when largely residential liberal arts institution), student listeners university where this exercise took place (a small, private, prevailing class background of the "typical" student at the questions) in those "mini-fieldwork" classes. True to the active listeners or listeners who also asked spontaneous their subsequent shared reflections on their role (as either presentations and responses to prepared as well as eager anthropologists might - during their informal give students an opportunity to listen and take notes - as reaching aim, of course, was far less concerned with the inert object of this first exercise (the interior of the ropes) than the subject of class exercises to come - real human beings, some of them elderly.

As the course progressed, the general theme of the assigned research project began to come into focus: an exploration of an individually selected aspect of life (e.g. demographic, technological, social, ideological and so on) which affects and is affected by the reality of "being elderly". Students were encouraged, but not required, to connect personally with at least one elderly person or caregiver (often a family member interviewed by phone), and all students were expected to prepare a set of questions which I would consolidate to present to the guest speakers who came to class.

These individuals, including two elderly residents and a non-elderly administrator for an assisted living facility, gave students an opportunity to listen and take notes - as eager anthropologists might - during their informal presentations and responses to prepared as well as spontaneous questions. For many students, this was a transformative experience made all the more meaningful by their subsequent shared reflections on their role (as either active listeners or listeners who also asked spontaneous questions) in those "mini-fieldwork" classes. True to the prevailing class background of the "typical" student at the university where this exercise took place (a small, private, largely residential liberal arts institution), student listeners and questioners consistently gave the elderly presenters obvious nonverbal indications of polite respect, even when they might have been impatiently waiting for certain monologues to change topics. Politeness and common sense, then, were certainly highlighted as necessary starting points for successful fieldwork!

In the classes that immediately followed these sessions, students also expressed their delighted surprise at the openness and frankness which the two elderly men showed in their willingness to answer questions not always posed to strangers, let alone "old people" (one student who was openly gay asked about the acceptability of same-sex apartment-sharing in the residential facility). While I had correctly presumed that the elderly speakers (who had been personally selected and invited by the facility administrator) would be, for most of my students, both "exotic!" (in their relative age) as well as "accessible" (coming from similar middle and upper-middle class backgrounds), even I was surprised by observation that we all noted: the topic of sex, for these particular individuals, at any rate, seemed to be far less private a matter than the issue of personal end-of-life finances.

Further reflections were elaborated again and again as the end of the semester approached, especially in connection with course readings dealing explicitly with epistemological and ethical concerns. As students examined their own answers to the retrospective question "What, if anything, would you do differently if you had another chance to interview the guest speakers?" they also struggled to articulate their reactions to what Harry Wolcott has called "the darker arts of fieldwork"-- namely, the ever-present possibility that "being anthropologically curious" about people's lives might also involve the potential for intellectual profiteering, informant deception and even betrayal.

Other lessons learned were less related to the fieldwork endeavor itself and more linked to these students' own personal lives. For the great majority of them, the world of the elderly is far removed from their everyday realm of awareness. For a minority of my students, however, the research topic did directly intersect with problematic concerns that were ongoing in the lives of their families at home. Finally, for a significant number of students, the sustained focus on gerontological topics brought home some frightening demographic realizations. As one young woman put it, I am the only daughter of two sets of divorced and remarried parents. Does this mean that I will be the primary caregiver for four different people at the end of their lives?"

As delighted as I was to hear my students puzzling on their own over questions that ultimately concerned social justice, I was also eager to underscore for them the epistemological, methodological, and ethical lessons I saw emerging from this semester's experience. On the one hand, some of these could easily be articulated within the broader framework of hermeneutic discourse, inviting speculations about the very nature of intersubjective interpretation and understanding. But for summing up this particular project - with all its personal meanings intertwined around the official task - the specialized jargon of interpretation theory (which I use quite comfortably in other contexts) somehow seemed inappropriate.

In the end, I decided to relate the whole experience to a simple affirmation of the limits of any social science research endeavor: namely, that the more any of us succeed in "learning more" about some topic, the more we must humbly recognize how impossible it is to get "the whole picture". On so many levels, this was, above all, the primary reflexive lesson that I had wanted to teach. Anthropologists spend only a fraction of their total lives with their informants (and in our greatly abridged minifieldwork project, actual time spent with "the anthropological other" was barely a few hours). Without denigrating the very real achievement most students did achieve with their final papers, I also wanted to be sure they kept alive the gentle wonder that so many of
them had expressed immediately after the elderly speakers came to our class, using their memories of that experience to support subsequent commitment to the ideals of non-hubristic intellectual honesty.

As for the initial impulse that had motivated me to teach this course in this particular way at that particular time in my life, this too became a subject for deeper reflection. All class visitors had come from the assisted living facility where both of my parents lived before my father was transferred to a hospice, and even the "square foot gardening" analogy I adapted for that first "learning to see" exercise occurred to me only because I had shared a similar experience with my father. In creating this course at a time of personal crisis in my life, I was thus drawing on interlinked associations some anthropological, others directly connected with the crisis at hand. No one sprinkled water or blew powdered clay on me, but insofar as this particular course drew so heavily upon the reality of my personal social networks, perhaps it can also be seen as a weak but still viable type of Turnerian "ritual of affliction", enabling the anthropologist at the center to triangulate to the point of sanity from the two vertices of disciplinary knowledge and personal reflectivity.

Rigor and Reporting in An Undergraduate Field Methods Course

John T. Omohundro (SUNY Potsdam)

Each fall I teach "Ethnographic Field Methods," an advanced anthropology course to a class of fifteen to twenty undergraduates, mostly anthropology majors. Compared to most other courses I teach, the field methods course has evolved to emphasize the themes of rigor—of a certain kind—and oral reporting. But reflecting on what I do in order to compose this essay has brought home to me the importance of context, too, for developing this or any course.

By rigor, I refer not to the usual meaning of working with tight controls and simple objectified variables so as to assure validity, but to thorough and accurate data collection. I concentrate on training students to have more respect for the information in which they are awash when "in the field." By reporting, I refer to communicating ethnographic discoveries, particularly through public speaking, in ways that highlight anthropology's advantage. Through multiple drafts or rehearsals, students revise their reports to make explicit their methods and highlight their works' significance.

This emphasis on rigor and reporting has not always been my goal, but has evolved over two dozen years of teaching the course. Meanwhile, since I began there are three goals which have endured. First, get the students "in the field" somehow, with the hope that something special, something different from their other coursework, will happen. I have always strived for that "aha" moment. Second, ethnography is intentionally (though not exclusively) a scientific enterprise. It uses time-tested, non-intuitive procedures which require discipline to execute well. Finally, ethnography is useful in many contexts, not only for academic contributions to knowledge, but toward solving problems in, for example, one's community or workplace.

I began this review of my field methods course aware that reporting and rigor had become important. But I also discovered that context had been very influential in shaping the course. Context refers to the influences on my course of events and trends in my anthropology department, my research career, my college, the discipline of anthropology, the field of post-secondary education, and most broadly, changes in society and students.

To present these themes of rigor, reporting, and context, I shall describe three field methods courses I have taught, in 1975, 1985, and recently (1998).

In 1975 I had just been hired by Potsdam College, largely to teach field methods, which was then a free elective for advanced majors. I was fresh out of graduate school and fairly ignorant of pedagogical methods. I thought like a doctoral student and assumed some of the same abilities and interests among my students. Consequently, I turned the ten students loose on the village of Potsdam, to do an ethnography of the village. The training I offered them attempted to include everything: theory, method (though very little on data collection techniques, like semi-structured interview protocols), qualitative and quantitative data analysis, reading about others' ethnographic experiences, and articles at all levels of abstraction about ethnography, ethics, epistemology, and so on. Recently back from eighteen months in the field myself, I mistakenly thought that undergraduate students would recognize "data" when they saw it. I had greatly underestimated the gulf between my understanding and theirs of what culture is. The more talented students were able to improvise their way into interesting scenes and make some sense of them, and no doubt what happened to most students in that course was special and different. But the classroom and scholarly components of the course were largely irrelevant to the field adventure.

Ten years later I had learned a great deal about teaching, thanks in part to good mentors among my colleagues and frequent opportunities for co-teaching, as well as to trial and error. I understood much better what undergraduates know and I understood a little bit about how they learn. I was struck how often anthropology major students on the verge of graduating were still clueless about how data was gathered and turned into writing about cultures and how often they had no firsthand experience in that process. Our college's renowned Crane School of Music offered a model for how to help students learn. In the music school, the student is the performer, the teacher the coach. Music students spend much time in drills, practice, and recitals. I decided that anthropology students too should drill, practice, and recite more and the teacher perform less.

By 1985, also, the department had revised the anthropology major. We were shifting to more experiential
learning. Statistics were now required, as was a practicum in which students engaged genuine raw data. My field methods course was now on a short list of options to fulfill that practicum.

By 1985 I was back in the field often myself—four trips in five years. The subject of fieldwork loomed larger in all my courses. But in the field methods course, I had learned not to toss the students into a community unprepared but to start more slowly and simply. We began, for example, with the early exercises in David E. Hunter's and MaryAnn B. Foley's workbook, Doing Anthropology (Harper-Row, 1976), which raise students' awareness of the basic acts of observing, remembering, recording, and reporting. They learn that selectivity is at work at every stage, as they confront the difficult hurdle of translating experience and perception into writing. I also used Michael Agar's Professional Stranger (2nd ed., Academic Press, 1996) because he discusses what to do first when arriving at the study scene. Agar also suggests a number of ways to narrow the focus as one develops some ideas of what is going on. Fieldwork proceeds in a funnel-like process, he writes: you begin at the wide end with an open mind and few controls, and you work toward the narrow, using ever more precise means of checking on your hunches. And when you report, Agar repeatedly insists, be explicit about your methods. Explicitness both makes you more disciplined and increases others' confidence in your results.

When we assign fieldwork projects to undergraduates, are we contributing to their education or "unleashing the untrained"? Do students need to know theory before they are sent out to fieldwork? David McCurdy doesn't think theory is necessary (Conrad Kottak et alia, eds., The Teaching of Anthropology, Mayfield Pub. Co., 1997) and I agree. But that doesn't mean that student fieldwork is atheoretical: students have plenty of theories about human behavior, even if most don't derive from the anthropological canon. Agar (ibid., p. 38ff) proposes that the sine qua non of fieldwork is the triad of pattern search, massive overdetermination of that pattern, then abduction or grounded theory. These three have become the basic elements of the fieldwork "method" that I teach.

In 1975, I had sent students into our college town, which represented the more or less familiar, where they took too much for granted because they shared the culture with those they studied. In 1985 I sent students to encounter the exotic. Students were encouraged to venture into unfamiliar scenes or to meet recent immigrants from other countries. The advantage of the exotic is the awareness of difference, making the students more alert to detail. The disadvantage is the lack of context, given no time for a "survey of the literature" so the fieldworker would know something about Chinese or Lebanese culture, for example, prior to meeting a Chinese or Lebanese person. Nevertheless, the shock of the new still often generated that "aha" moment I was fishing for.

Because majors received their statistical training in another course, I dropped the quantitative methods from the "field methods" course. Because majors were required to take a course in method and theory in another course, I dropped method and theory as well. I focussed all student work toward generating that epiphany that we each must undergo about culture-in-behavior. The goal was for students to see that culture is the language which anthropologists use to describe human life (Agar, ibid., p. 238). I wanted students to see the forest in the trees, perhaps sometimes to see the ecosystem in the forest. Reporting was essential; students were challenged to translate their experiences into cultural terms —and to do so weekly, in class and on paper. Keeping field diaries helped them practice this translation.

Rigor was introduced in place of the emphasis on method and theory. I introduced the techniques by which data is collected, and we drilled on them, in class and in the field, like music students drill. Students worked through the exercises in Julia Crane's and Michael Angrosino's Field Projects in Anthropology (3rd ed., Waveland, 1992), plus mapped social networks and conducted focus groups (FIGURE 1 not reproduced). Small, short-term projects of a week or so utilizing a particular technique were assigned so there could be some closure, with time to reflect on the experience, play with the data, and to report formally to one's classmates.

Ten years later, in 1998, the department has again revised its curriculum, continuing the emphasis on practical experience but adding skills like writing and speaking, calculating and analysing. The program has been designed to cumulate more coherently by progressing through these skills and challenges, and it pays more attention to the application of anthropology in one's life and work. My field methods course is now an option on a short required "advanced, research-oriented" list. We are explicit (if ambitious) about our goals for the curriculum (FIGURE 2 not reproduced).

Also, the college has implemented a new general education program, emphasizing communication skills. I am teaching speaking skills in my courses to satisfy those general education requirements. The general education program is organized by epistemological approaches, or ways of knowing, so I teach ethnographic field methods as a special kind of scientific method for knowing.

Meanwhile, my own professional development as career counselor has proceeded apace, as I have begun to publish about careers for undergraduates. I now make explicit the connection between my courses and the students' lives after college. The field methods course draws attention to what can be done with the transferable knowledge and experience gained; it's an "ethnography for life" as well as pre-professional training (FIGURE 3 not reproduced).

Students still work through a series of increasingly more complex data-collection techniques from Crane and Angrosino, but the course is more problem-oriented, because many graduates will perform short-term projects in their occupations and communities (Agar, ibid., p. 249). There is still little attention to method or quantitative data analysis because that is central in another required course. I have shifted back to encouraging fieldwork among the familiar rather than the exotic, because in short projects entree and rapport can be achieved more quickly and the context is
better understood. This past semester students reported on bingo parlours, weight-lifting rooms, non-verbal language in bars, the operation of small museums, alternative rock concerts, the college maintenance staff, and on what constitutes as offensive public act, among other projects.

Of course, remerging with the study of the relatively-familiar are the problems of assuming too much and losing analytical independence when one is also a participant. So I emphasize what I have called rigor in student fieldwork: be explicit about method when you propose what you will do and when you report what you did; use language precisely, for example when you operationalize concepts; overdetermine your findings; create falsifiable tests of your hunches; and inspect your assumptions regularly.

Conclusion

Since 1975 the themes of rigor and reporting have incrementally crept to the center of my field methods course. I draw from this process an absolutist and a relativistic conclusion. All students need fieldwork to ground their anthropological education; on the other hand, exactly what course they should have is very context-dependent. The context of my own course has greatly influenced the shape it has taken over the last two dozen years. There have been revisions in my department curricula, especially away from area coverage and toward applications, research skills, and practical experience. There have been wide-ranging changes in the college's general education curriculum, emphasizing communication skills and epistemological modes. Anthropology as a discipline has had to address the postmodern critique and grapple with the rise of globalism, problematizing the older culture concept. And anthropologists have expanded their work to modern settings, interdisciplinary teams, and nonacademic employment.

Finally, my fieldwork methods have changed and I know more about how students learn. Looking back, I see that I have adapted to my environment-in-flux by altering the mix of key elements in the field methods course (FIGURE 4 not reproduced). In ten more years, when the time approaches for revisions in my department curricula, especially away from area coverage and toward applications, research skills, and practical experience. There have been wide-ranging changes in the college's general education curriculum, emphasizing communication skills and epistemological modes. Anthropology as a discipline has had to address the postmodern critique and grapple with the rise of globalism, problematizing the older culture concept. And anthropologists have expanded their work to modern settings, interdisciplinary teams, and nonacademic employment.

In this paper I will explicate some of the techniques and strategies I have found enhance student success. I have been teaching field methodology since 1972, and it has always been one of my favorite courses. First, I will set forth some goals for a fieldwork course. Second, I will discuss the structure and the content of the course. Finally, I will state particular difficulties students have had and some ways they might be addressed.

I. Goals for an undergraduate fieldwork course.

The fieldwork course is best conceived as a capstone course, coming in the last one or two semesters of the student's undergraduate education. By then the students are already conversant with the basic concepts and issues in cultural anthropology. They may be developing their own theoretical approach, or at least finding themselves more comfortable with one approach rather than another. The student has read a number of full-length ethnographies, covering a wide range of topics, geographical areas and theoretical perspectives and ethnographic writing styles. As instructors, we know that our students are still light years away from being highly skilled professional anthropologists, yet it is important to acknowledge they are no longer the neophytes they were a few semesters ago. By the senior year, a student majoring in anthropology has indeed made significant progress toward becoming a professional. Whether these students pursue advanced degrees in anthropology or not, they have knowledge and skills which will serve them throughout their lives.

The first goal of the fieldwork course is to serve as an opportunity for the students to execute and perfect the skills and techniques they have read about and tried out in a limited way. It is a time for organizing and reviewing skills, and cross-checking to make sure that there is a basic competence. They have studied methodology; now they practice methods. Second, this course can serve as an opportunity for reexamining methodology in its deepest sense, that is, as a way of thinking and analyzing. Scrutinizing one's assumptions about who the Other is and how one thinks about the Other, brings intellectual clarity and existential definition. Subsequently, the relationship between the anthropologist and the Other is regarded anew. In this paper, I will not attempt to address these deep anthropological concerns, but only note that they should be addressed in a significant way in the fieldwork course. Third, this course can serve as an opportunity for reflecting on concepts learned over the previous four or five semesters. In the earlier courses, instructors often have to teach at a very quick pace. There is so much to be learned and so little time to learn it. This capstone course can encourage the reflexivity for which there was no time in the earlier courses, thus opening up creative ways of doing, of thinking and of being.

Chary About Challenge: Strategies that Support the Undergraduate Fieldworker

Mary Schweitzer (Winthrop University)

The transformation of the STUDENT anthropologist into the student ANTHROPOLOGIST is a challenge for both the undergraduate and the instructor. The process is dynamic and occurs over several semesters, perhaps even several years. Field research in cultural anthropology, although not the solitary component in the process, is still very critical and unique. While the best efforts and intentions of the instructor do not ensure the progress or the success of the undergraduate in the field, the guidance of the instructor can certainly enhance the likelihood of the success of the student. In this paper I will explicate some of the techniques and strategies I have found enhance student success. I have been teaching field methodology since 1972, and it has always been one of my favorite courses. First, I will set forth some goals for a fieldwork course. Second, I will discuss the structure and the content of the course. Finally, I will state particular difficulties students have had and some ways they might be addressed.
A. Structure

My course is reading intensive early in the semester, and doing-intensive later in the semester, with significant overlap in the middle. In the beginning, fieldwork projects are simple and all are aimed toward their large research project, and will be incorporated into it. Students read intensively about methods and techniques. As the semester proceeds, the common readings dwindle in importance and their reading is library research, particularized by their individual investigations.

Early in the semester, I make a concerted effort to build rapport among the students, speaking about and to them explicitly as a community of learners and a community of scholars. One of the important ice breakers happens in the first week when I ask each student to brainstorm on his own and come up with a list of fifty fieldwork settings or situations. Then he is required to choose the ten most appealing ones and prioritize them. Often students offer some resistance and complain that the task is impossible. I stand firm. At our next class meeting, I ask each student to read her top ten, and at least fifteen addition fieldwork possibilities. The rest of the class is in awe as one student after the other reads her list, and it becomes evident that there is a wide range of possible fieldwork situations. Then I ask what new research situations they could think of now that they had not thought about previously. The flood gates are open and ideas explode from all parts of the room. By the end of the class, I articulate what they have already discovered: Together they have been able to think of many more possibilities than any one of them could do individually.

This lays the foundation for suggesting that throughout the semester, the students can be very helpful to one another if they can rely on and trust one another as colleagues. I close this class by stating that confidentiality is important in the fieldwork endeavor, and that while we will be talking more about this in the future, from this day forward I would like for them to maintain the confidentiality of one another's fieldwork. Thus, each student may speak freely in the classroom about his or her fieldwork without fear that such information will be carried outside of the classroom setting. This exercise unfailingly sets the stage for the spirit I wish to engender among the students.

Our semesters are fifteen weeks long. In the first week when I ask each student to brainstorm on his own and come up with a list of fifty fieldwork settings or situations. Then he is required to choose the ten most appealing ones and prioritize them. Often students offer some resistance and complain that the task is impossible. I stand firm. At our next class meeting, I ask each student to read her top ten, and at least fifteen addition fieldwork possibilities. The rest of the class is in awe as one student after the other reads her list, and it becomes evident that there is a wide range of possible fieldwork situations. Then I ask what new research situations they could think of now that they had not thought about previously. The flood gates are open and ideas explode from all parts of the room. By the end of the class, I articulate what they have already discovered: Together they have been able to think of many more possibilities than any one of them could do individually.

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Our semesters are fifteen weeks long. In the first week, students read and think intensively about places, persons, and activities that may provide the focus for their research, and do the brainstorming noted above. In the second week, I ask them to “case the joint” of one or more fieldwork sites. By the end of the second week, they commit themselves to a particular research site, and submit their research proposal to me. Participant observation begins at least by the third week and continues throughout the semester, becoming most intense in the middle third of the semester, and dwindling around the twelfth or thirteenth week.

Being human, students are great procrastinators. Procrastination is often forestalled by setting frequent deadlines for smaller assignments rather than having a few deadlines for huge assignments. At least for the first half of the semester, I have written assignments due every class period. In the middle third of the semester, field notes are due about once a week. In the last third of the semester, some field notes and some drafts are expected.

At the end of the twelfth week, students turn in a draft of their ethnography which is subject to peer review as well as to my review. These reviews or critiques are turned around quickly so that the students still have about one and one-half to two weeks to complete their ethnographies. The critiques cover the areas of ethnographic content, ethnographic methodology and ethnographic writing. I have attached a copy of the guidelines (Appendix A) for the critiques which I used for the class in the spring semester 1998.

B. Content

Through the years I have used many different texts. In the early years I had a text on anthropological theory and a text on anthropological methods and techniques. As a fledgling teacher, I even used Harris’ Rise of Anthropological Theory, and Pelto's Anthropological Research: The Structure of Inquiry, choosing these for no other reason than that I read both as a graduate student. The error of my ways soon became apparent. Not only did I find texts more appropriate for undergraduates, but I also limited the scope of the course. Using texts in the two areas of theory and method left students little time to do any fieldwork. So I dropped the text on anthropological theory and concentrated on methodology and techniques. One of my earliest texts was the first edition (1974) of Crane and Angrosino's Field Projects in Anthropology: A student Handbook. The second edition was published ten years later, in 1984. Along the way, I used ethnographies in which methods and techniques were clearly delineated. I also used the Spradley texts Participant Observation (1979) and The Ethnographic Interview (1980). In between there was a sprinkling of Michael Agar's The Professional Stranger: An informal Introduction to Ethnography (1980) and Speaking of Ethnography (1985). I quickly adopted Hammersley and Atkinson's first edition of Ethnography: Principles in Practice (1983). Most recently I have used a combination of Hammersley and Atkinson's second edition of Ethnography: Principles in Practice (1995) and Michrina and Richard's Person to Person: Fieldwork, Dialogue, and the Hermeneutic Method Paul Kutsche's Field Ethnography: A Manual for Doing Cultural Anthropology, published this year has many strengths. The first part of this text has several field assignments designed for introductory students. The second part is composed of student ethnographies which could function as models. Nevertheless, I have chosen not to use Kutsche's text because I feel it is more appropriate for students just coming into anthropology, rather than students near the completion of their major.

Between the two main texts I have chosen, students find the Michrina and Richard's text easier to read. I like this text for several reasons. The hermeneutic approach is intellectually attractive, though sometimes a bit tiresome. Hermeneutics encourage students to go beyond superficial
explication to a deep understanding. As the title, Person to Person, indicates, the dignity of the person is held in high esteem. There are constant reminders that the researcher is in dialogue with another person, and not just doing a project, or even worse, an experiment. The authors give special attention to issues of confidentiality, ethics and respect. There is a whole chapter on the personal and the interpersonal. Finally, there are three or four excellent exercises at the end of each chapter which can be assigned by the teacher and/or which will help the student see clearly how to use the information contained in the chapter. I usually assign one or two of the exercises as given in the text, or adapt them slightly to fit our situation, and have the students direct these exercises to their own fieldwork situations.

Hammersley and Atkinson’s text Ethnography: Principles in Practice is nearly twice as long, much more explicit and detailed, and has an excellent bibliography. Ethnography has an excellent 17-page chapter on documents, a topic totally ignored in Person to Person. A full 35-page chapter on the process of analysis also offers students some options not available in the Michrina and Richardson text which holds closely to the hermeneutic method. My most important reservation about the Hammersley and Atkinson text is in the area of ethics. Ethics is the last chapter of the text. Indeed one wonders if it is just an afterthought. The text elaborates on an example of covert research in the third chapter without ever commenting on the ethics of covert research. I find the ethical assumptions throughout the text questionable, at least for undergraduates. My remedy is a two-pronged approach. First, I tell the students in the first class that no one will be permitted to do covert research or any research on activities which are illegal or have widespread social disapproval in our society. I explain that such research may be undertaken in certain situations by professional anthropologists but they, the students, are in a learning situation, and I simply will not permit them to undertake such research. Second, I move the topic of ethics to the fifth or sixth week of the semester and focus on the AAA statement on ethics, with the Michrina and Richard’s text as context. This allows me to live more easily with my ethical self, and I get no grief from students when I am straightforward in setting limits for them.

Besides the combination of texts just discussed, the class as a whole also reads Marjorie Wolf’s A Thrice-told Tale. This is a triptych of presentations: a short story, fieldnotes and a professional journal articles. A commentary follows each presentation. All focus on the same incident which occurred in Taiwan in 1960 during the Wolfs’ research. The book’s subtitle is: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility. In the preface, Wolf states: Whether or not readers agree with my thoughts on some of these debates, I hope they will find the three texts around which they are organized useful pedagogical tools (Wolf 1992: vii). I am very grateful to Marjorie Wolf because her work has proven truly useful to my students for the past six years. Even students who cannot grasp the subtleties of the critiques in the commentaries, still get a much deeper sense for style and presentation than they would ever get just by reading about it.

II. Challenges and how they are addressed.

Probably the most common difficulty students have is becoming too personally involved in their research and overly identifying with people in the research setting. My worst case scenario of this occurred about twelve years ago when a student did research on a fringe, ecstatic religious group. The student became a member of the cult, wrote a short, fiery polemical work, and became a radical defender of that radical group. I had nightmares that the Jim Jones saga would be revisited in our quiet little Southern college town, spearheaded by my undergraduate student who did field research with the group. Nothing quite so dramatic happened, but awareness that field research might kindle radical action was definitely heightened. Now I screen the student’s choice of field research more carefully, and monitor their involvement more closely.

As already mentioned, I tell the students at the very beginning of the semester that they will not be permitted to do field research that is covert, ethically questionable, or of a nature that would meet widespread social disapproval. As a professional anthropologist I do not find social disapproval a salient criterion for judging the advisability of professional research. I do, however, consider it a major criterion for judging the advisability of student research.

Sometimes, students have difficulties in their field relations, especially with gatekeepers. Students are usually younger, less experienced, and have less social status than the gatekeepers. Still, I stress that the students should conduct themselves with the dignity of a professional and be straightforward at all times about their intentions and their work. This eliminates many problems before they even arise. Students are instructed to write out a concise statement explaining their research which they can read to gatekeepers and to anyone they approach for an interview or intend to observe for research purposes. The statement includes a declaration that the researcher wants to understand, not to judge the situation. The statement also includes a declaration of confidentiality, and solicits the consent of the gatekeeper, interviewee or person being observed. Students are warned not to proceed until this step is completed.

Another difficulty that students encounter is getting enough time and attention from busy, overworked people in the field situation. This is especially true of students who choose to do research in understaffed social service agencies and demanding business settings. As one student said, I constantly tried to network with people, and nobody had time. People were very cooperative once I could capture their attention, but they were also very, very busy. “Here, I think the best advice is patience and persistence. Furthermore, the student may be able to do some needed work for the agency or business, thus recognizing the gift of time others have given to them, and creating more of a balance or exchange. Busy, overworked people may find it more amenable to give
time to the student if the student gives time to the business or agency.

I encourage students to "give back" something also for ethical reasons, recognizing that reciprocity encourages equality. This "something" may be some kind of work, whether cleaning, providing transportation, doing office work reading stories to children, or the like. I recommend this be done under the direction of, or at least with the permission of, a supervisory person in the setting. There is a fine line between "giving back" and intervention. (Indeed, the postmodernists would undoubtedly make no distinction at all.) I believe that the students should not deliberately change the lives of the people. I also believe that the students should not jeopardize their professional research role by simply being dissolved into the setting. A student who ends up being a social worker or a business person becomes useless as an ethnographer. Nevertheless, the ethnographer should recognize that people in the research situation are freely giving time and energy to the student's research project. Equalizing the debt is an ethical issue.

There may be a multitude of unforeseeable smaller problems. A good safeguard for these, as well as the foregoing problems, is to have students check-in often, both with me and with classmates. I ask them to be very open with me, not only about what they are doing and their particular difficulties, but also what makes them uneasy. We all have different thresholds of tolerance for ambiguities, conflicts, isolation and closeness. What totally frustrates one student will hardly phase another. I remind the students that my presence in their fieldwork situations is not a physical presence, but a moral one, one that gives guidance, support, and a safe place to come. This reminder alone is often enough to challenge the student to take responsible action and appropriate ownership of their field research. Their level of self-confidence rises almost magically. It is similar to letting your forefinger merely touch the edge of the table if you are balancing on one foot. The instructor can be that stabilizer, even though he or she is not directly involved in the student's fieldwork.

The benefits to students are enormous. It gives them a sense for what it is to truly be an anthropologist. In my last class of nineteen students, three said that a definitive factor in their decision to pursue graduate study in anthropology was the fieldwork course. All of the students emphasized how much they learned, and how enjoyable the learning experience had been for them. I have attached some of the students' comments from the methods course I taught in the Spring semester 1998 (Appendix B).

Finally, I would like to add a few points of encouragement to instructors. Trust your experience as instructors. Do not be afraid to set reasonable boundaries, but also do not be afraid to give the students a long tether. Students are eager to demonstrate they are worthy of the trust that has been placed in them. It is very touching to see how professionally they can conduct themselves.

Works Cited


Appendix A
Guidelines for Critiques and Small Groups
Anthropology 341

Assignment: Read each paper and critique. The following points are suggested for your consideration.

Ethnographic content:
1. What general impression does the paper give?
2. Is there good, solid, substantial content?
3. Are there any areas of the paper that you did not understand?
4. Are there any areas of the paper that you want to, or need to, know more about?
5. Is the content both mentally challenging and accessible?

Ethnographic methodology:
1. Has the writer explained the field methods well?
2. Assess the field methodology.
3. Assess the library research.
4. Are there suggestions for enhancing methodology?

Ethnographic writing:
1. Is the ethnography well written? Explain.
2. Did the author handle well the following points: authorship, audience, topic?
3. Are there points of grammar, spelling, etc. which need to be corrected?
4. Do you have any further suggestions for the writer?
Construct your critiques any way you wish. The main, overriding question is: How can this paper be made better? Weak, innocuous, general comments do not help. Be specific and positively critical. Type your critiques and have two copies for April 8 (2 PM), one for the author and one for the instructor.

April 8: In small groups, each person receives the first draft of at least 10 pages of the other in his/her group. Please note: these drafts are due promptly at 2 PM on April 8. No excuses will be accepted.

April 13: The small groups will meet for critiques. Remember: THE AUTHOR DOES NOT SPEAK. At the end of the small group sessions, authors may use their colleagues critiques in any way they choose.

April 22: All ethnographies are due at 2 PM.

APPENDIX B

Students' Evaluations of the Methods Course, Spring 1998

1. Assignments
All of the assignments seemed to coincide with the ultimate goal of teaching the class to write the best ethnographies possible. The assignments were difficult, but appropriate for the class and all were informative. Our assignments were appropriate for the class. Some assignments were difficult, but they were difficult for a reason. Assignments were clear and not too difficult. Good assignments, --could have used a little more guidance. All of the papers and tests were appropriate and clearly defined. The difficulty level varied with our subject matter. Our final paper was fun to do! Assignments were appropriate to the overall objective of the course. No work was frivolous.

2. Overall course Excellent!
Generally, the course was great. I enjoyed learning. Great class! I enjoyed the nature of this course and all that I learned. I think I grew a lot from this course. No words can express my satisfaction. This course has been one of my favorites ones here at Winthrop. I enjoyed it.

3. Grading
I liked the different ways in which we were graded. It gave us a way to show our knowledge and our strengths. Grading was fair and thorough. Tough but fair. Everything was fairly graded, thoroughly reviewed and promptly returned with comments and suggestions on ways to improve.

Class Schedule

Spring 1998
Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology
Anthropology 341: 10715
MW 2:00-3:15
Kinard 316

M. Schweitzer Bancroft 212
Office Hours: MWF
8:15-9:00
10:00-11:30
TR
11:00-11:45

Cultural Anthropology seeks to understand contemporary peoples throughout the world. Human life is necessarily complex and multifaceted. Dreams and hopes, formulated deep in the heart, shape behavior and find expression in the life context of the individual, in his or her relationship with others, and in the total fabric of the community. Understanding dreams and hopes does not come easily. We have access to others dreams only through their words and actions. Our task is to attend astutely to the words and actions of our fellow humans, risk interpretation and test those interpretations. In doing this, we have some clue about how others see themselves and their world. In this course we will learn fieldwork methodology, a way of attending astutely to the words and actions of others. Participant-observation is the principal technique of fieldwork. Students will not only study this technique but practice it as well. Students will learn other fieldwork techniques such as how to consult the literature, make proxemics studies, create maps or schemas. As new techniques are learned, they should be incorporated into the particular fieldwork project the student has chosen. Field notes will be kept throughout the course. By the end of the semester, each student will have completed a field work project and produced and ethnography.

Class Procedure: Class format is mainly discussion, with some lecture. There will be two or three examinations, a series of tasks that build and feed into the ethnography, and the final written ethnography. Points will be earned for the examinations, tasks and final ethnography.

8 tasks (10 points each) 80
Examination 50
Critiques 20
Final ethnography 70
Reports 5
Total 225


Appendix A

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8 tasks (10 points each) 80
Examination 50
Critiques 20
Final ethnography 70
Reports 5
Total 225


Class Schedule

Spring 1998

Anthropology 341:10715
January 14
Introduction
19 - 21 Hammersley Ch 1&2; Michrina Ch 3
Task due 1/21- list of 50 possible fieldwork sights, prioritized
26 - 28 Hammersley Ch 3&4; Michrina Ch 6
Task due 1/28 - research proposal

February 2 - 4
Hammersley Ch 5; Michrina Ch 4&5
4.1 and 5.2 will be done in class. Task due 2/4 - 4.4 and 4.5
9 - 11 Hammersley Ch 6 - 8; Michrina Ch 7
Task due 2/11 - 7.1 and 7.4
16 - 18 Hammersley Ch 9&10; Michrina Ch8&9
Task due 2/18 - 9.1 and 9.3
March 4
Examination
Let me begin my comments with a few questions: would this session have taken place 30 or even 20 years ago? Would we have been this concerned then about teaching field methods to undergraduates? And would this session have taken place 30 or even 20 years ago? If so, how might my colleagues' many good ideas have been transmitted to students? How might anthropology have been taught to undergraduates? Were we teaching methods courses? Were we teaching the methods of teaching methods? How might we transmit this special, particular knowledge, and is it possible to transmit it?; 3. The transformation of courses over time. The significant questions, teaching ethics and reciprocity I intend to weave through my comments.

1. "Learning while doing" Explicitly or implicitly all five papers address how the success of the undergraduate transition from student anthropologist to anthropology student comes only in and from actually conducting research, actually "doing" anthropology. All the five papers touch upon the fact that teaching field methods must happen within some boundaries. However, the question of where should we put these boundaries differ from paper to paper. How much do we screen student's projects? How much must we screen them? Mary Schweitzer is of the opinion that certain student projects tend to kindle radical action - and she gives a scary example of one of her students who became a zealous advocate of an extremist group while or after studying that group. I am sure that many of us, perhaps even most of us who have been teaching methods for a number of years have at one time or another encountered similarly startling, upsetting cases. Nevertheless, I cannot agree with monitoring student project selections as closely as Mary suggests. We know that anthropology indeed can lead to advocacy, community organizing, "social action," providing a selection of opportunities for either graduate work or careers. But what is wrong with that? I don't know about your experiences, but I find too many students apolitical, and not involved in much outside their immediate lives and private concerns. I would like to see Mary Schweitzer developing an analysis around the very themes of involvement and (over) involvement, both the student's and the instructors that is, as well as the ethics of these issues, and a further look at the instructor's gentle, yet hopefully effective guidance and prevention techniques.

John Oomohundro describes the ways his teaching changed both in format, contents, and structure over the years. James Armstrong and Deborah Aaltamirano examine ethnography as problem solving while concentrating on several of important pedagogical issues in teaching methods courses. Mary Schweitzer focuses on preparing students to go out and talk with people and mitigate the role of their involvement. Margi Nowak in her paper entitled "triangulating to the point of sanity: the use of lived experiences in the construction of reflexive ethnography courses" is looking at her life crisis and masterfully brades the various strands together in creating a very worthwhile course. And, miraculously, she does all that without being self-indulgent! Dan Bauer fascinating paper examines ethnographic methods as performance. Although differently emphasized in their papers, performances as articulated by Turner are important in both Dan Bauer and Margi Nowak's teaching method of methods.

I found it interesting that all of the papers deal with student’s projects locally, if not within the university or college then around the university in the local community. Of course we all have to contend with the limitations of our semester or quarter systems, our colleges or universities, the limitation of funds and time, giving grades, and so on. But still it is curious that none of the papers even remotely address taking students abroad, either to the instructor's "own field site," or to such field schools like, among others, Tim Wallace and Ozzie Werner organized through the years.

For me the main ideas, or the key themes of the papers to be discussed are as follow: 1. Learning while doing; 2. The methods of teaching methods (i.e. how do we transmit this special, particular knowledge, and is it possible to transmit it?); 3. The transformation of courses over time. The significant questions, teaching ethics and reciprocity I intend to weave through my comments.

Discussion/Comments

Eva V. Huseby-Darvas (University of Michigan-Dearborn)

Immediately after reading the four papers and the one detailed outline five of the participants sent me I knew that - as far as I was concerned - the timing of the session was all wrong. Why? Because I was just wrapping up yet an other methods course during the fall term of 1998 so it was way too late to "borrow" my colleagues' many good ideas. But next time I certainly will! I have been teaching a methods course, called "doing anthropology," on the Dearborn campus of the University of Michigan since 1986. I must repeat that I learned a lot from these papers and appreciate Cate's kind invitation to participate in this session as a discussant.

Let me begin my comments with a few questions: would this session have taken place 30 or even 20 years ago? Would we have been this concerned then about teaching methods to undergraduates? Would we have approached the issue like we are approaching it today? How are we going to teach methods in five, ten, fifteen years from today? Perhaps during the general audience discussion period we will touch on the issue of where have we been and where are we going to screen them? How much do we screen student's projects? How much must we screen them? Mary Schweitzer is of the opinion that certain student projects tend to kindle radical action - and she gives a scary example of one of her students who became a zealous advocate of an extremist group while or after studying that group. I am sure that many of us, perhaps even most of us who have been teaching methods for a number of years have at one time or another encountered similarly startling, upsetting cases. Nevertheless, I cannot agree with monitoring student project selections as closely as Mary suggests. We know that anthropology indeed can lead to advocacy, community organizing, "social action," providing a selection of opportunities for either graduate work or careers. But what is wrong with that? I don't know about your experiences, but I find too many students apolitical, and not involved in much outside their immediate lives and private concerns. I would like to see Mary Schweitzer developing an analysis around the very themes of involvement and (over) involvement, both the student's and the instructors that is, as well as the ethics of these issues, and a further look at the instructor's gentle, yet hopefully effective guidance and prevention techniques.
2. How do we transmit knowledge? All five papers discuss how we transmit, or try to transmit, the knowledge and skills for effective ethnography. While Mary Schweitzer sees the teaching fieldwork methods as the capstone of undergraduate education of anthropology students, Margi Nowak envisions the same as the cornerstone, indeed, practically the very first block. To various degrees each author deals with the philosophy of fieldwork (cultural systems versus person to person), each looks at the teaching of concrete skills. The pedagogy of school culture versus the culture of anthropology is emphasized clearly and provocatively both in Dan Bauer's paper, and also in the joint work of James Armstrong and Deborah Altamirano. The question of teaching ethics is another matter. For example, I don't recall that there was any mention of teaching ethics in John Omohundro's otherwise very fine paper. Mary Schweitzer starts teaching ethics in the fifth or sixth week of the semester, while some of the others start the semester with teaching about ethics, responsibilities to our hosts or interlocutors. Mary Schweitzer encourages her students to "give back" something, and she offers some excellent suggestions, that I particularly would like to borrow for my future methods classes. Giving transportation, actual help, will work very well both in new refugee communities and also many of the aged and aging immigrant communities where many of my students while taking "doing anthropology" work. While we are on the topic of how to teach ethics, let me say that three of the papers—Schweitzer's, Nowak's, and Bauer's—focus very closely yet somewhat differently on the questions of ethics and reciprocity of the anthropological venture. The ethics are really multifold; they not only what we owe to our hosts but also how we pay them back. Dan Bauer suggests that his students reciprocate with the video showings and similar public performances as well as community publications. Mary Schweitzer focuses on the ethics between students and teacher: how do we guide our students, what do we owe our students, how do we help them not to bite off more than they can chew. Margi Nowak even goes a leap further in her beautifully written paper: in addition to our hosts and students, what do we owe to ourselves, she asks, how can we bring into our teaching ourselves, our problems. (I must say that while I share with my students many of my professional concerns and do take them into my field sites, I never had the courage either to share with them my personal concerns or to design my methods courses to include some of those concerns. After reading Margi's paper, I will seriously try doing just that and I hope I will not lack the courage to do so).

3. Transformation over time how methods courses are taught and what are the important issues is yet another theme. This important issue is touched upon in each of the five papers I was fortunate to read. It is dealt with in great detail in the John Omohundro's outline (and presentation) in which he vividly describes how some of these changes took place in his teaching between the 1970s and the 1990s. He shows how his method courses evolved from what I read to be rather an objectivistic scientistic stance in which rigor, detail; quantitative studies were stressed essentially to what is an "understanding of understanding." He notes that he dropped teaching quantitative methodology. Rigor became less important, and the emphasis has shifted to what he calls an epistemological epiphany. In other words, over the span of about two decades, John both reconceptualized the "whats" and the "hows" of teaching ethnographic field methods. Today he is teaching a skills-oriented methods course that can be used in almost any carrier context and it nicely fits into an undergraduate curriculum.

In case you cannot tell: I enjoyed these five papers! Cate is to be commended for organizing this important session in which the participants explored how to give our students in methods courses the tools with which they can both challenge the society in which they and we live and at the same time give the students alternatives, different perspectives.