

Engaging Undergraduate Students in Collaborative Research: The Challenge of Combining Teaching with Practice

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Abstract

This paper explores the various dimensions of incorporating applied anthropology into teaching through classroom and field experiences. The context for this discussion is my developing program of research on tourism in the Cree communities of Northern Quebec, where I worked as a consultant for ten years before taking a teaching position. This paper explores the positive aspects of involving undergraduate students in applied research, including the impact on their skills and understandings. It also looks at the challenges of combining teaching with practice, from the pedagogical to the logistical. Finally, I discuss how the added dimension of collaborative research further complicates the combination of teaching and practice, while creating new opportunities for exploring important methodological and ethical issues. [engaged learning, undergraduate research, field courses, tourism, collaborative research]

Introduction

As many teachers and practitioners of applied anthropology know, collaborative forms of research are often complex and demanding. Engaging students in one's research is also a challenge, especially at the undergraduate level. To combine the two while being an effective teacher is not for the faint of heart. This article describes my experiences during my first four years teaching only undergraduate students at a mid-sized public university in a department where I am the sole faculty member teaching cultural anthropology. Like Roberts (2001), I am attempting what might optimistically be called an "incremental implementation" of an applied anthropology curriculum, including research opportunities, for our students. I am also a former consulting anthropologist who had a decade of experience in applied research before taking a teaching job. In responding to the questions raised by the editor of this special issue regarding what our research practice does for our teaching, and what our teaching does for our practice, I draw upon both parts of my career.

To understand how my practice has influenced my teaching, and vice versa, it might help to know how I became an applied anthropologist, and later a teacher. In the first instance, I was a latecomer to the field of anthropology. Having completed a B.S. in geosciences at Penn State in the mid-1980s, I had something of a revelatory experience the following year while driving around the U.S. in an old Chevy Suburban, hiking and camping in

national parks and reading books like *A Sand County Almanac* (Leopold 1949) and *The Population Bomb* (Ehrlich 1968). My environmental awareness was nurtured in the back of that Suburban, and on the trails of Yosemite, Redwoods, Zion, Arches, and other national parks and works of nature. I then entered an environmental science graduate program at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, where I worked as an intern on an environmental education project in Ahmedabad, India. I spent eight months in that dense, dusty city, learning at least as much about myself as about Indian environmental issues. The main thing I gained was an appreciation of the role of human beings in environmental problems. Hence was born my interest in anthropology, and in particular environmental and applied anthropology.

Around this time (the early 1990s), the Quebec Cree were engaged in a very public battle over Quebec's plans to dam the Great Whale River. Following completion of my master's thesis at SUNY, I ended up as a cultural anthropology doctoral student next door at Syracuse University, studying the Cree from an environmental anthropology perspective. In 1993 I went to McGill University for one year as a visiting research student in the Anthropology of Development program. This was the point at which my own education moved from the theories and case studies of the classroom to the real world of people, politics, and the transformative power of anthropological

knowledge. I worked under Colin Scott, who had studied in James Bay since the 1970s, and in the spring of 1994 I was hired as his assistant on a project to collect Cree testimony on the impacts of the La Grande Hydroelectric Complex, the first phase of the James Bay Project. The stories we collected, of rivers dammed, family hunting territories flooded, and new roads that brought sport hunters to the land and drugs and alcohol into the Cree communities, had a powerful effect on my own social and political consciousness (Scott and Ettenger 1994). Although I did not know it at the time, it was from that point that I became committed to the ideals of applied or action anthropology. What I did know is that I felt a sense of profound injustice when sitting across the table from an old man talking about how the land he loved was now underwater or an old woman telling about her sons who were now working in the community and spending their pay on beer and video poker in the dingy bars of Val d'Or during weekend road trips. My knowledge of Cree culture and the complexity of their social challenges has expanded since that time, but I am still interested in understanding and, when possible, assisting in the transition they are making from their traditional lifestyle to a new reality (see Ettenger 2004b and 2005 for an analysis of change in Cree society and the role anthropologists have played in this transition).

Over the next ten years, while completing my dissertation on Cree land use issues, I worked off and on as a research consultant for the Cree government. I conducted studies related to land use, resource management, environmental impacts, and cultural heritage preservation (Ettenger 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b). Professionally, I learned to bridge the gaps between research and policy, to think and act quickly while in the field, and to adapt to ever-changing circumstances. I also learned (not completely successfully) to accept the conditions that consulting brings: copious travel, often on short notice; less than ideal accommodations and food; firm deadlines for research products; and the financial uncertainty that comes with short-term projects. Despite these challenges, I found consulting to be a rewarding and intellectually stimulating way to make a living. Perhaps most rewarding was the belief that my

work was helping the Cree achieve important goals with respect to land rights, political sovereignty, cultural autonomy and economic self-determination. My life as a consultant in the Cree communities, working with regional and local Cree officials and interviewing real people about real problems, forged my identity as a researcher. Without these experiences—had what I learned been mainly from books and journals, had my research been mainly in libraries and archives, or had my fieldwork been focused on academic rather than applied questions—I would not be the researcher I am today.

Like many consultants, I remained engaged in academic circles through conferences, journals and other means. Occasionally, I also taught courses in anthropology and Native Studies. Partly as a result of this connection with wider debates, I became more interested in working collaboratively with communities and organizations, rather than simply applying my own expertise to a problem. This was also a reaction to growing concern among the Cree that they had become highly dependent on outside researchers while not building up their own expertise in certain areas, including social science research. Many younger Cree were searching for employment, and some wondered why outside consultants continued to come into the communities to do work that local people might be trained to do. Also, the imposition of outside ideas and theories on the Cree, and the taking of information and knowledge from them, were increasingly being treated with skepticism by Cree political leaders and activists alike. I grappled with some of these issues in my doctoral dissertation, which eventually became an examination of the way that local knowledge is used in political negotiations, and the role of anthropologists in that process (Ettenger 2004a).

Meanwhile, others who worked directly with the communities on a long-term basis, including archaeologist David Denton of the Cree Regional Authority, were insisting on collaborative approaches and building these into research projects. The Nadoshtin Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Program (ACHP), which Denton devised and with which I was involved from 2002 to 2005, is a case in point (Denton, Ettenger and Moses 2003). The ACHP involved

teams of young Cree researchers working with elders and some outside experts to document the prehistory and oral history of the Eastmain River near the new EM-1 reservoir. A Cree Program Coordinator and an Advisory Committee of elders and community representatives oversaw the multi-million dollar project. The collaborative structures and processes developed under the ACHP are continuing under new funding related to the EM1-A/Rupert Project, which involves the damming and diversion of the Rupert River. My work with the ACHP has substantially informed my thinking on what a truly collaborative research project looks like and the benefits of collaboration for those involved.

Developing a Program of Teaching and Research on Tourism

Consulting has its rewards, but financial stability and employment benefits are not among them; hence, in 2004 I decided to accept a job as Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Southern Maine (USM). USM is a mid-sized public institution with three campuses in the greater Portland and Lewiston-Auburn area. Its combined enrollment of roughly 11,000 makes it the largest school in the University of Maine system. I teach in the Department of Geography-Anthropology, a small department (six full-time faculty) that offers a combined major with concentrations in either discipline. As the only full-time cultural anthropologist, I am responsible for offering the bulk of our introductory, mid-level, and upper-level ethnographic and methods courses. Some of these now contain components focusing on my applied work. My main incorporation of research in teaching, however, is a summer field course that I have run for the past three years in northern Quebec, described below.

While full-time teaching creates definite limits on research time, I have tried to maintain an active research program in the Cree communities. The focus of this research in the past three years has been tourism, an area the Cree are exploring as they focus on local economic development. In an article published in 2005 I described Cree tourism as an area in which anthropologists should become more

involved because it holds both economic potential and the ability to support other priorities of the Cree communities, notably cultural heritage protection. That same year I initiated dialog with the Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association (COTA), an indigenous organization charged with developing this sector of the Cree economy. Initial conversations led to the development of a collaborative research program that, while still in its early stages, holds the potential to support COTA and the Cree while providing opportunities for students and researchers at USM.

COTA was established under the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, but did not really achieve momentum until the 2002 signing of the “New Relationship Agreement” between the Crees and the Province of Quebec (Ettenger 2004b, 2005). This agreement provided secure funding and institutional support for COTA and led to the hiring of an Executive Director, the election of a board of directors, and the development of a website, marketing campaign, and other activities. My work with COTA is designed to support their efforts at tourism development while also providing them with data, feedback, and analysis that should lead to more effective policies and practices in regional tourism. The other goal of the research program is to provide opportunities for undergraduates at USM to learn about, experience, and develop skills in applied anthropology research and methods. In addition to classroom courses that incorporate this research, I developed a summer field course that focuses on tourism and is specifically designed to support the ongoing research project with COTA.

In this special issue Editor Jean Scandlyn asks us to consider how our practice has influenced our teaching, both in and out of the classroom, and how our teaching has in turn affected our practice. In thinking about these questions, I realized that while I do not explicitly focus on my applied research in most of my classes, my *beliefs* about anthropological research—specifically, the belief that all such research should contribute not just to human knowledge, but also to the solution of human problems—pervade my teaching. These beliefs

affect everything from my choice of texts to the assignments I design and the research I expect students to do. The remainder of this article tries to address the questions raised by the editor while describing challenges I have faced in my attempts to combine teaching and practice within my own department and university.

Developing Applied Research Opportunities for Students

My initial job description stated that the department was searching for an applied anthropologist, but the reality of our small interdisciplinary department is that many basic courses need teaching and that is where I have focused my efforts. I have taught eight existing courses in the major over four academic years, most of them multiple times. No doubt this situation is familiar to other faculty in small departments struggling to meet the needs of majors and provide general education offerings. I mention it here only to illustrate that while I was brought in as an applied anthropologist, and in theory my colleagues are supportive of my goals in this area, the current reality in my department makes this nearly impossible to achieve. My approach has therefore been to incorporate my research practice into existing courses so that students can gain applied skills and experience while still meeting requirements for the major. I have brought examples of my work into nearly all of my courses, from an introductory cultural anthropology course to upper-level courses on ethnographic methods, anthropological theory, and public anthropology. These efforts introduce students to the main goals, methods and critiques of applied and collaborative research. A more substantial attempt to infuse research into teaching came in 2007 when I offered an upper-level course called *Indigenous Peoples and Tourism*. Students conducted a market survey in collaboration with COTA at two sportsman shows in Maine and met with COTA officials and community representatives at the shows. Other than the field course, described below, this class was the most substantial effort to date to combine my applied research and teaching at USM.

When I came into the department I saw an opportunity for an ethnographic field course for

students interested in cultural anthropology that would also meet the department's field course requirement. My first summer (2005) I took five students into the field, building upon past relationships and contacts in the Cree world. Four of these students took part in an archaeology field course supervised by a colleague and organized by the collaborative ACHP. By the next year I had established a relationship with COTA and met with their directors to discuss an applied ethnographic field course. They liked the idea of having students engage in tourism activities and then report on their experiences to COTA and the participating communities, and we agreed on a general format and itinerary for the field course.

In August of 2006 I took seven students to the field, visiting five communities over two weeks. We spent some time doing ecotourism activities, taking a short canoe camping trip with a middle-aged couple who are experienced tourism guides, and spending two days in a traditional fishing camp on the Rupert River. These experiences, and shorter visits to other communities, were described in a fifty-page report presented to COTA at a board meeting the following January. The reaction to the report, and especially to the involvement of students as tourists and researchers, was highly favorable, and led to us being invited back for a similar trip the following summer. In 2007 the trip was a week longer, involving four communities. We also visited two traditional gatherings, annual events held by several communities at historic village sites. These events are viewed as potential tourist attractions as they tend to focus on traditional foods and activities, which most tourists are seeking. A total of five female students took part, one of whom was from another Maine college. In terms of training and data collection, this course was better designed than that of the previous year. Students conducted interviews in the communities and engaged in participant observation at the gatherings. In terms of student satisfaction the course came up short, in part because the students were expecting to do what their predecessors did: canoe, camp, and engage in cultural activities. The gatherings were enjoyable, but are not highly structured. Other than

participating in a few craft workshops, most participants go there to relax and socialize with family and friends. Students were not sure how to react or what to do in these settings, either as tourists or as researchers, leading to a general sense of uncertainty about what we accomplished.

In terms of balancing teaching and research during the field course, I am still trying to find the right mix between the needs of students, the expectations of the Cree communities, and my own research needs. Some field schools (e.g., Gmelch and Gmelch 1999; Grant et al. 1999; Stafford, Carpenter, and Taylor 2004) are mainly designed to provide students with methodological training and field experience, while others (e.g., Diamante and Wallace 2004; Iris 2004; Roberts 2004; Van Arsdale 2004) place community needs and research agendas either before or on par with methodological training. For an applied, collaborative research program like the one I am trying to develop, it is essential that the field course (and other student research) contribute to the larger goals of the project. To this end, I have tried to negotiate a role for students that is meaningful and logical both to them and to the communities. For the time being this involves students acting as users and evaluators of local tourism facilities and activities, and reporting their findings to the communities and to COTA. Eventually, if the field course expands in its scope (especially with respect to time in the field), this research goal may be expanded as well, with students working with individual communities or with COTA on collaboratively identified research needs.

Influence of Applied and Collaborative Research on Teaching

My background in and commitment to applied research and collaborative models have influenced my teaching in several ways. For one thing, being a consultant has given me a much greater appreciation of the need to be accurate, fair, and ideologically honest (if not exactly neutral) in my teaching. I have written about this in a previous article (Ettenger 2004b) in which I was critical of anthropological accounts of the Cree that continue to depict them as a monochromatic hunting society despite

profound changes in their economy and society over the past 30 years. My skepticism stems in part from what I perceive as the negative consequences of over-romanticizing indigenous cultures. The opportunity to engage with local and regional officials who are struggling with complex economic, social, and cultural challenges—as well as the time I have spent in the communities working with local residents—makes me highly critical of ideologically biased, simplistic, or inaccurate accounts of Cree society, many of which are based on limited experience or outdated information. Ironically, applied anthropologists are often seen as the *most* biased observers of cultures they describe due to the fact that they are often called upon to support their clients' claims. But honest appraisals of the social problems we study are often what we are paid to provide. We owe our students that same level of honesty as we address them in our classrooms or in the field. My interest in Cree tourism stems in part from my belief that it can support local goals and values without being tied uncritically to idealized depictions of past ways of life.

Collaborative approaches and methods also influence my teaching. Students benefit from being taught by someone who is not only familiar with the communities being studied, but actively engaged with them in collaborative research that provides a feedback loop for our potentially inaccurate or value-laden depictions of their ways of life. As Iris says, "Over the last two to three decades, the climate of research with indigenous populations has shifted, from one of unrestricted access and total academic independence to an environment that emphasizes responsiveness and accountability to both local communities as well as larger social and political units" (2004: 70). The first step in introducing collaborative methods and values to students comes through course readings, lectures and other materials, and in class discussion. Books and articles on collaborative (cf., Harrison 2001) and participatory research are discussed in at least three of my classes, including ethnographic methods. Even in introductory and mid-level courses I often refer to the nature of my relationships with the Cree and how this has affected my research. I also

explore issues such as indigenous peoples' relations with non-Natives and the state, which again reflect my experiences working as an applied research consultant for the Cree and other Native peoples.

One way to reinforce collaborative ideals is to invite officials and other community representatives to share their views directly with students. Several Cree have visited USM in the past three years, including COTA Executive Director Robin McGinley as well as some younger Cree who worked on the ACHP. McGinley, who visited in the spring of 2007, gave presentations and engaged in discussion in two courses, including an upper level seminar course for majors that I co-taught with the Provost who at that time was a geographer and member of my department. I note this because Robin's comments about research collaboration with indigenous communities helped inform the university's highest academic officer about an important aspect of my own research and a growing area of concern for applied practitioners. Inviting community partners into the classroom for discussion of critical issues also shows students that we respect these individuals' knowledge and experiences as equal to our own, and that they can play a meaningful role in the construction of scientific knowledge.

Collaborative values are reinforced during my ethnographic field course, when communities have some control over the research we are conducting and how we carry it out. This can be disconcerting to students as they are generally unaccustomed to giving up control over their actions to anyone other than their instructor. I make it clear in each community whom we are working with and for, and in meetings with these individuals I often let them set the tone for the parameters of our visit. This might include negotiating the aims and products of our research, and letting their needs determine much of what we do. Students get to see how research goals, methods, and products are discussed and developed collaboratively rather than imposed on communities to reflect a researcher's needs or interests. This reinforces students' understandings and appreciation of concepts critical to collaborative and participatory research, such as ethics, control, and data ownership.

One challenge of collaborative research is the time it takes to develop relationships and the need for constant adjustment and clarification of research goals at home and in the field. Students may not be comfortable with such fluidity, especially during fieldwork. Already disoriented and unsure of themselves, students are faced with the added uncertainty of what we will find in each community and what we will do there. Some are looking to rapidly apply their basic research skills, and wish to be let loose with surveys in hand or other concrete tasks to perform. A quote from one student's reflective essay, written shortly after returning from the 2007 field course, illustrates this attitude:

It was difficult at times when I felt like we were not solving problems right away when we entered a community. I really wanted things to be black and white and to be able to identify what needed to be solved and how to go about solving it. It became clear very quickly that it was not that simple.

Each time we enter a community we have to invest time and energy in finding the right people, talking to them, and figuring out what we are going to do. This is quite different than the normal classroom-based research experience, or field courses with predetermined goals, methods, schedules, and outcomes in mind. But it is an important value to teach students, and one that can only be taught from within the framework of a collaborative research program grounded in practice.

One of the most challenging aspects of engaging students in collaborative research, for me at least, has been helping them understand how relationships with communities affect things like research access and methods. An example of this came during the 2007 field course while visiting a traditional gathering. An official concerned that a group of university students might be disturbing to residents told us that we shouldn't "go around bothering people with a lot of questions." He also described a group of students from the year before who upset residents through their late-night noise and antics. I took these comments as simple suggestions that we should follow general Cree rules for social behavior, which would permit

talking with people and asking questions (like any other visitor) but not recording conversations or taking notes — certainly not being rude or inconsiderate. For some students, however, these remarks were a pointed challenge to their presence at the gathering. As one student, also enrolled in the 2007 session, said later, “I found it very intimidating...when we were just starting out and we were explicitly warned not to bother people. I felt intrusive and I was very uncomfortable with the whole situation. All I wanted to do was hide in my sleeping bag!” In such a case students can let their natural fear and uncertainty overwhelm them. I suppose if something positive can be said, it is that no one from the communities ever told us that we were breaking an unwritten rule. Then again, the next group after us may have been warned not to act like those *other* Americans who were just here!

The Effect of Teaching on Research

How has being a full time university instructor affected my research practice? While it is still early in my teaching career, already there are some fundamental changes in my research that bear noting. Foremost among these, in practical terms, is the lack of time. Like most university faculty, my field research period has shifted almost exclusively to the summer months. This means that now I must give myself several months (or years) to complete a project, and it is almost impossible to take on work that is subject to other peoples’ deadlines or is a critical part of some larger process, such as a land claim. This effectively removes me from some of the most important and interesting projects with the Cree. During brief visits with former colleagues in the consulting world I am reminded of the types of projects with which I could be involved were it not for the constraints of the academic calendar. At the same time, of course, with teaching comes the possibility of financial stability and planning. Consulting and grants are not essential to maintain the type of research I am currently doing on tourism in the Cree communities. This is a benefit not only to me, but to the communities as well, as they do not have to pay consulting fees and expenses for my services. The field courses are paid for through student fees, which cover their costs as

well as mine. As a result, COTA and the participating communities receive useful products that would otherwise, if provided by consultants, cost them considerably more.

Becoming a teacher has made me restructure the time I spend doing research and the way I think about the life of a research project. As a consultant I worked with definite timelines and end goals, usually measured in months or weeks. I often juggled several projects at once, working on whatever problem had to be resolved at that moment. My schedule was determined by the needs of others, as were the goals of the project. As a teacher I must, and can afford to, take a longer view towards my research. Projects stretch out over the academic year, and then over several years, as issues develop and project goals emerge. While this is largely a result of the limitations of teaching, it is also, conveniently, a more natural model for collaborative research with communities. It allows for processing of ideas and information on both ends, which the communities appreciate. It involves making a commitment to a sustained research program that will likely involve dozens of students and multiple communities and responding to the evolving needs of the Cree with respect to tourism and related issues. There is also the aspect of return trips that is so important to maintaining ties with research communities, yet so hard to guarantee as a consulting anthropologist. While the students are different each time, we have been able to return to several Cree communities for the past three years, including the village where I did my early fieldwork. Communities feel respected by this loyalty, and students witness their instructor welcomed back into a community as a friend, which speaks well of the relationships that can develop over time between anthropologists and the communities in which they work.

Another way in which teaching has affected my research is that it has forced me to reconsider and modify my relationship with the Cree communities from one of an outside expert to that of a partner, facilitator, and learner. My knowledge of tourism was limited (and still is) compared to the expertise of people like Robin McGinley, so I was not selling myself to them as a tourism expert, unlike many consultants. The

resources I bring to bear on the issue are limited to myself, a few undergraduate students, and a bit of university support. This is quite different from a university researcher working with a large grant, for example, who can fund graduate students, organize workshops, hire local assistants or pay for someone's travel to conferences and meetings. This means that I must actually collaborate with the Cree as research partners, not impose a topic, agenda, or methods on them. As one example, I negotiate with COTA and interested communities each year about the goals of the field course, where we will go, and what we will do. I am also honest with them about what we have to offer, and humble enough to realize that I have more to learn from them than they do from me.

A final way that my research has been affected by my teaching is in my consideration of what the goals of my research are, what it should look like, and whom it should help. Because most of my students are new to ethnographic and applied research, my ambitions are limited in terms of the complexity and depth of what they and we produce. For the final report of the field course, for example, I have them focus on straightforward descriptions of our activities and observations. As a result, our research findings are rather basic—but this is just what many communities are looking for. They do not need a complex presentation of ideas and theories about tourism or an in-depth analysis of the experiences of other places; rather, they are typically looking for an easy-to-read presentation of what we found as visitors to help them in their economic planning and management. In short, thinking like a teacher has also helped me to develop a research program that is more relevant and responsive to the needs of the communities with which I am working.

That said, I am finding the same challenges that Wallace (2004) and others have identified with respect to developing collaborative research programs that involve students. This includes finding research topics that are both interesting to students and relevant to the needs of participating communities. Even when a general topic has been identified, like tourism development, there is a continual process of explanation, justification, and negotiation of

research goals and access to maintain the program. As Wallace has explained it for his own field school in Costa Rica:

At various times over the past few summers I have tried to engage local citizens, and municipal and commercial leaders, to see whether there was interest in encouraging me and my students to carry out targeted research focusing on specific issues of tourism growth and development.... The first year in town we received the key to the city of Quepos for our research reports on tourism, but since then there has been remarkably little interest in generating collaborative, applied research (Wallace 2004:35).

While it helps to know that others face similar challenges, it is discouraging to think that this may be a situation I face perennially. As a research consultant there was never a question of whether the work I did was wanted or useful; now, despite a collaborative approach, there is no guarantee that we will be invited or welcomed as researchers, or that our work will have any meaning or lasting effect in the communities. This is a hard pill to swallow for an applied anthropologist.

Weighing the Pros and Cons

Most articles about engaging undergraduate students in applied research are positive, albeit not without reservations. Some deal with the challenges of having students in the field, and describe travel risks, behavioral problems and other potential pitfalls (e.g., Diamante and Wallace 2004; Iris 2004b; Re Cruz 1996; Wallace 2004). Problems aside, for most of these authors the benefits of engaging students in research outweigh the negatives. Students and former students, for their part, generally have positive things to say about their engagement in applied research (c.f., Berman 2004; Hathaway and Kuzin 2007). While some offer criticisms and suggestions regarding their experiences, most see the opportunity to do actual field and applied research as undergraduates to be an important learning experience, and for many it is a formative part of their academic careers. While I respect the experiences of these faculty and students, I still have reservations and questions

regarding the overall value of engaging students in a program of applied research, especially one that involves close collaboration with a community or other research partner.

The need to protect relationships that one has worked hard to build and maintain should give any researcher or teacher pause before inviting novice anthropologists to join him or her in the field. The burden on communities of additional visitors, especially ones asking many questions, is just one factor to be considered. Students can test the boundaries of appropriate cultural behavior, often without knowing it, and may place themselves or others in awkward or even dangerous situations. And while students generally take away considerable knowledge from their first fieldwork experience, they can also leave with misperceptions, disappointments, and a sense of confusion, especially if the experience is too brief or unstructured. Negative encounters, at least as perceived by the students, are also a danger. Interactions with other students, the instructor, and community residents can all affect outcomes. Students can be inspired by their experience to become anthropologists, but they may just as easily be motivated to leave the discipline or not pursue further studies. I have seen all these results and more in just three years of field schools. These problems are significant enough to require careful analysis and consideration regarding the overall costs and benefits of engaging students in a field-based, collaborative research program.

Of course, my experiences are limited in a number of respects. The challenges I have faced are based on a handful of junior and senior undergraduate students, generally in their early twenties. Fewer than half are likely to pursue graduate studies or become practicing anthropologists. I am also fairly new to full time teaching and bringing students into my research. Consequently, the experiences and observations described are those of a novice teacher-practitioner still learning how to involve students effectively in applied research, and how to bring my own research into my teaching. And, of course, to say that one particular research site or project does not lend itself to a positive experience for students, or to meaningful data

collection, does not mean that this is a generalizable conclusion. Wallace (2004) describes going through several iterations of his own ethnographic field course, with initial disappointments followed by increasing levels of success and student satisfaction as the field sites, methods, and objectives changed.

Conclusions

Engaging undergraduate students in an applied, collaborative research program has proven to be highly challenging. In the most positive terms, students gain an appreciation of real-world problems while developing skills and confidence as field researchers. They get a better understanding of the complexity of communities and of the difficulties of doing research and generating knowledge. They also bring an added dimension to the field, creating new linkages and seeing things in different ways. On the downside, having students accompany one in the field can be difficult, frustrating, and ultimately disappointing. It means dealing with challenges in everything from logistics and data collection to emotional and interpersonal problems. The expectations of students may be unrealistic despite efforts to inform them beforehand of likely conditions and challenges. As novice fieldworkers they often do not have the tools to conduct research efficiently and evenly, and their presence means that I cannot be as effective a researcher either. I spend most of my time worrying about what *they* are learning rather than what *I* am learning. And there is constant concern about their safety, comfort, and satisfaction with the experience. Unfortunately, this worry does not always guarantee success in research, nor lead to students who want to pursue anthropology as a career.

In short, I am unconvinced that the benefits of engaging my students in applied research outweigh the negatives, at least for now. But I am willing to concede that it is still early in my efforts, and that I can improve my combination of teaching and practice in numerous ways. I look to more experienced colleagues who share their own experiences in print, at conferences, and in conversations. I also take note of what students say and to feedback from the communities. I expect that my former students

will report back to me in several years about how their experiences have affected them in the long run. I hope these reports are favorable, although I know some students will be engaged in careers that have little to do with their degrees or their work with me. Perhaps the other lessons that come with applied anthropological research, such as appreciating the complexity of cultures, applying concepts like relativism, or being flexible in the face of new situations, will help them in their lives. Possibly the most mundane lessons—such as learning how to get along in an RV full of other unhappy campers, how to use an overfilled outhouse without becoming sick, or how to do things for yourself when your teacher is too tired to do them for you—will be the ones that last.

Lest I leave on that sour note, let me say that I intend to continue trying to combine teaching with applied research, at least for now. I do see potential in engaging students in research, although I see this as benefiting the students more than the research. On the other hand, I am learning things now that I never would have learned without the element of teaching in my research. These lessons should help me become a better researcher, more attuned to the needs of the communities with which I work. Teaching while doing research means you must always be thinking about how someone else is seeing what you are seeing, and ensures that you consider the needs of others, be they students or community partners. That in itself makes for good research practice. ○

Notes

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