THE ETHICS OF ENGAGING STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS IN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Michael A. Di Giovine, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Anthropology, West Chester University (USA)
Director, WCU Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology
michael@michaeldigiovine.com
www.wcupa.edu/museum
ANT 375: ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD SCHOOL
SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN PERUGIA, ITALY
HIGH IMPACT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES (GEORGE KUH, 2008)

- Deep approaches to learning that engage students holistically
  - Includes both acquiring information and understanding underlying contexts

- Shown to have higher outcomes
  - Making connections between material and real life
  - Self reflexivity

More than anything else, being an educated person means being able to see connections that allow one to make sense of the world and act within it in creative ways. Every one of the qualities I have described here—listening, reading, talking, writing, puzzle solving, truth seeking, seeing through other people's eyes, leading, working in a community—is finally about connecting.

HIGH IMPACT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES (GEORGE KUH, 2008)

• Components of high-impact educational practices
  • Demand students devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks
  • Substantive interaction with faculty and student peers
  • Students experience diversity; get out of their comfort zone
  • Frequent constructive feedback by faculty and peers
  • Connect what they are learning outside of the classroom, in different environments (especially the community)
  • Be included in faculty research
    • Helps to understand the craft of research and humanizes the instructor
ENGAGEMENT

noun  en·gage·ment  \in-ˈgāj-mənt\  emotional involvement or commitment
EMBODIMENT:
BODILY ENCOUNTERS WITH ALTERITY
REFLEXIVITY
GLOBAL CITIZENS / INTERNATIONALIZATION
WCU ACE SELF-ASSESSMENT (2019)

“Preparing our students to be global citizens is a key component of our mission and goals.”

- WCU President Chris Fiorentino

WCU students smelling truffles for the first time
Goal 2:

- Increase participation in, and access to, study abroad by 50% by 2021
- Create permanent funding model to cover costs of faculty leading programs.
THE GRAND TOUR: PRECURSOR

GRAND TOUR C. 1700S  CARL SPITZWIG, GRAND TOUR
THE GRAND TOUR: PRECURSOR

LORD BYRON AT COLOSSEUM

KEATS AT THE BATHS OF CARACALLA
JOHN DEWEY

“Democracy and Education
An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education
By JOHN DEWEY
The Macmillan Company 1916

The inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling.”
• Bundle of qualitative research methods that are the bread and butter of anthropological research
  • Participant observation
  • Conversational interviews
  • Kinship and oral history elicitation
  • Visual anthropology (filmmaking, photography)

• Deep engagement with host communities

• “Grasp and Render” the “imponderabilia of everyday life”
• Ideally situated because it is a form of research that greatly resembles travel
• Like Grand Tour, emerged in the colonial period
• Concerned with engaging with alterity to understand ourselves
STUDY ABROAD + ETHNOGRAPHY: "HIGH IMPACT" EDUCATION

- Focuses students’ gaze meaningfully on social characteristics
- Can engage people in conversations with locals
- Can immediately see how topical readings are applied on site
- Sheds light on professor’s research; “humanizes” professor
- Extended, reciprocal conversations with professor and among themselves that connect professor’s knowledge and research with students’ questions and interests
- Teaches valuable set of research methodology; “professionalizes” and makes them “marketable”
“SLOW” RESEARCH EVEN IN FAST TRAVEL

ETHNOGRAPHY
(ethno = people; graphy = writing)

- Must be fluent in the language of the people we study
- To study daily life over a long period of time (one to two years)
- To establish mutual trust with a full range of local people
- Usually stay in a specific location such as a village or a town

Writing about people

- Even though ideally ethnographer should live for years in a site, works well even on short “edu-tourism” trips
  - Teaches them to hone the gaze
  - Pushes them to interact / talk with people, which would otherwise take many months to do
- Needs to be managed correctly by the professor
THINKING ETHICALLY

• TRAINING: Do they have enough methodological training?
• TIMING: Do they have adequate time?
• ANALYSIS: Do they possess the right body of knowledge?
• BEHAVIOR: Do they know how to treat their subjects ethically?
• OUTCOMES: How do you treat their work?
• POSITIONALITY OF THE PROFESSOR: What is expected of you?
**PROCESS**

**Pre-trip**
- Meeting in April
  - Go over syllabus and topic of research. Get students thinking about their interests
  - Discuss ethics and the IRB.
  - Share professor’s accepted IRB protocol; explain CITI Training
  - Students have a deadline to complete online CITI training
- Second meeting in late April to discuss nuts-and-bolts of the trip
  - What to expect
  - What research visits are lined up based on their interests

**In-trip**

**Post-trip**

---

This is to certify that:

**Michael Di Giovine**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

- Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group)
- Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Course Learner Group)
- 2 - Refresher Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**West Chester University of Pennsylvania**

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify?wo01df82:15c2-4580-8a1a-387cfeaa5dd7d-29340708
PROCESS

Pre-trip  In-trip  Post-trip

• Syllabus front-loaded
  • Mix of excursions (touristy) and classes
  • Meet twice a day (morning excursion; afternoon topical class/discussion)
  • Classes include methodology training / topical discussions

• Model proper methods / anthropological approach
  • Ask questions of research subjects, even though I often know the answers and they often know me.
PROCESS

**Pre-trip**
- Break into groups based on similar topics

**In-trip**
- Gradually give independent time to explore on their own
  - Break into groups based on similar topics
  - Conduct independent research
    - If there are linguistic issues, I help translate

**Post-trip**
**PROCESS**

**Pre-trip**
- Break into groups based on similar topics

**In-trip**
- Gradually give independent time to explore on their own
  - Break into groups based on similar topics
  - Conduct independent research
    - If there are linguistic issues, I help translate
    - They will start to forge their own relationships and engage in new experiences

**Post-trip**
BOTTLING WINE WITH LOCAL FARMER
PROCESS

Pre-trip

• Break into groups based on similar topics
• Gradually give independent time to explore on their own
  • Break into groups based on similar topics
  • Conduct independent research
    • If there are linguistic issues, I help translate
  • They will start to forge their own relationships and engage in new experiences
  • Some will even work with research subjects to gain insight

In-trip

Post-trip
PROCESS

Pre-trip

• Meetings on site (cafes, markets) in small groups to review fieldnotes and analyses

In-trip

Post-trip
PROCESS

- Oral Presentation and Written Essay as final assessment
THINKING ETHICALLY

• To what extent should we promise and hold students accountable for the knowledge gleaned?

• Trip is multidisciplinary, and doesn’t discriminate on which majors can participate

• Not all possess the same set of knowledge, or the knowledge-base of anthropological research, foodways, or Italian studies

• Students in health science and hard science disciplines often express nervousness at writing a paper outside of their disciplinary style (narrative, using first person, descriptive)
THINKING ETHICALLY

• Free labor: How do we adequately acknowledge the work of others?
  • Anthropology has had a history of minimizing the credit of less powerful collaborators (wives, “native informants”)

• Is earning credit (or a good grade) enough compensation?

• Do they deserve credit if their insights don’t make it into your final product?

• This is relevant for all undergraduate student research
PROCESS

Pre-trip

• Use research for other classes / capstone
• Encourage participation in Research Day
  • Student won 2nd place and cash prize in 2017
  • 5 students submitted research for Fall 2019

In-trip

Post-trip
PROCESS

Pre-trip
- Use research for other classes / capstone
- Encourage participation in Research Day
  - Student won 2nd place and cash prize in 2017
  - 5 students submitted research for Fall 2019
- Encourage participation in other conferences
  - Sorbonne, Umbra Institute Food Studies Conference, AAA, SfAA

In-trip

Post-trip

Former anthropology student Erica Walters presenting research from 2016 at the Sorbonne 2018
PROCESS

**Pre-trip**

- Use research for other classes / capstone
- Encourage participation in Research Day
  - Student won 2nd place and cash prize in 2017
  - 5 students submitted research for Fall 2019
- Encourage participation in other conferences
  - Sorbonne, Umbra Institute Food Studies Conference, AAA, SfAA
- Encourage publication by themselves in appropriate venues
  - West Chester Living Magazine, The Quad, undergraduate journals
- Co-author with professor

**In-trip**

**Post-trip**
POSITIONALITY OF THE PROFESSOR

• The nature of the job as a Study Abroad Leader means there are lots of hats to wear!
POSITIONALITY OF THE PROFESSOR

• The nature of the job as a Study Abroad Leader means there are lots of hats to wear!
  • Program Director (including “Provost”, Councilor, Translator, Parent, etc.)
    • Does the professor possess all of these skills?
    • Linguistic ability?
    • Knowledge of local infrastructure?
POSITIONALITY OF THE PROFESSOR

• The nature of the job as a Study Abroad Leader means there are lots of hats to wear!

  • Researcher
  • Teacher
  • Tour guide
POSITIONALITY OF THE PROFESSOR

• The nature of the job as a Study Abroad Leader means there are lots of hats to wear!
  • Tour guide
    • “Seducation” = different from education: inform or provoke?
    • Tourist yourself?
POSITIONALITY OF THE PROFESSOR

• The nature of the job as a Study Abroad Leader means there are lots of hats to wear!
  • Tour guide
    • “Seduction” = different from education: inform or provoke?
  • Tourist yourself?
POSITIONALITY OF THE PROFESSOR

• The nature of the job as a Study Abroad Leader means there are lots of hats to wear!
  • Tour guide
    • “Seduction” = different from education: inform or provoke?
    • Tourist yourself?
  • One of the group = erosion of professorial authority
POSITIONALITY OF THE PROFESSOR

- The nature of the job as a Study Abroad Leader means there are lots of hats to wear!
- Researcher vs. Professor
  - How do you weigh the cultivation of long-term relationships with research subjects with advocating for students in the short-term?
POSITIONALITY OF THE PROFESSOR

• The nature of the job as a Study Abroad Leader means there are lots of hats to wear!
  • Researcher vs. Professor
    • How do you weigh the cultivation of long-term relationships with research subjects with advocating for students in the short-term?
    • How do you clarify your relationship to your research subjects?
      • ...and your professorial relationship with your students to research subjects?

• How do you negotiate ETHNOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY?
  • Cultivation of a sense of closeness with different stakeholders in the ethnographic process. ... to be close but not too close to informants so as to remain objective.
  • ...but they might not understand that...
POSITIONALITY OF THE PROFESSOR

How do you negotiate ETHNOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY?

Students at the papal audience for 80,000 Padre Pio prayer group members.
Left: Photographing Pope Francis; Right: documenting pilgrims arriving the night before