

STUDENT FIELDWORK AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES:
APPLYING ANTHROPOLOGY ON THE COLLEGE CAMPUS

James C. Pierson
Department of Anthropology
California State College, San Bernardino

Although a field research experience has long been considered a basic rite of passage for a professional cultural anthropologist, it is frequently absent from or not required in undergraduate anthropology programs. This is particularly true in departments with small staffs or in small communities, but undergraduate research is often problematic regardless of demographic figures (e.g., Fried 1972; Myers 1969). An instructor is subsequently often placed in the position of maintaining that such experiences are necessary to the development of one's anthropological perspective while only rarely giving students an opportunity for such an experience, even in a limited way.

The potential usefulness and importance of undergraduate field research are indicated, however, in several contexts. A number of works published during the past decade can aid the undergraduate planning or conducting fieldwork (e.g., Spradley and McCurdy 1972; Crane and Angrosino 1974; Spradley 1979, 1980), and some introductory texts include exercises that provide even non-majors with some participatory sense of anthropological field approaches (e.g., Hunter and Foley 1976). Brief fieldwork assignments focusing on topics within the "world of the student" integrated with general course materials are suggested as ways of making introductory cultural anthropology courses more meaningful and interesting to students (Bruner 1979). Courses on such topics as religion or urban anthropology may also provide students with opportunities to conduct brief and quite specific field research projects. Attitudes have likely changed little, however, from those of nearly two decades ago when the majority of instructors found introductory anthropology courses (and likely also topical ones) to provide enough materials for students to cover without also introducing problems of selecting, planning, conducting, and writing the results of research projects (Bruner and Spindler 1963).

Even when some departmental courses include field research options or assignments, it is unlikely that students majoring in anthropology are well-served or satisfied with their brief exposures to field research. It therefore seems that the most efficient and satisfactory ways to provide undergraduate students with some of the real flavor and experience of field research are through either an independent research project or a formal fieldwork course.

Despite the recent availability of the sources cited above that assist students (and sometimes the instructors) involved in such courses, it is noted elsewhere that there is little additional information focusing on the conduct and content of the fieldwork course itself (Levine, Gallimore, Weisner, and Turner 1980:39). In addition, some of the available sources tend to discuss courses designed for graduate students or advanced undergraduates with professional aspirations (e.g., Bennett 1960; Levine, Gallimore, Weisner, and Turner 1980) rather than courses aimed at generally inexperienced undergraduates. It is therefore on the latter that this paper focuses, giving an example of a fieldwork course in cultural anthropology at a relatively small state college (under thirty-five hundred full-time students, over ninety percent of whom commute to campus from their homes) with a small anthropology department (three full-time faculty members and twenty to twenty-five majors at any one time). The course has evolved into one that overcomes many of the problems of time and selection of manageable and comparable topics for students, while at the same time offering a potential service to the college community by applying the student research to a setting within that community. The purpose of the course is not necessarily to train potential professional anthropologists, but rather to provide students with an introduction to the background, methods and skills of cultural anthropological fieldwork. The remainder of this paper will examine the general potential problems of undergraduate fieldwork projects and courses, the attempts to avoid them in the above-described setting, and, finally, the results of one such "applied" project.

Recurring Problems

The recent availability of student-oriented guides to anthropological research overcomes many of the methodological problems encountered in an undergraduate research experience. A number of potential problems may remain, however; regardless of the type of course for which undergraduate field research takes place, several general problems are often present.

One of the most important is the time factor, even when a course is devoted entirely to the fieldwork effort, because topic selection often involves considerable preliminary research and contact. This is often compounded by attempts to correlate students' schedules with informants' available time. Time, in fact, may be considered a part of the general problem of selecting an appropriate topic for research. Some students have specific research ideas before enrolling in a course; others, however, require considerable time and effort to develop one. Although examples of other students' projects may be used to indicate the variety of available and feasible topics (e.g., Spradley and McCurdy 1972), the settings of some campuses may offer fewer possibilities than others do. In fact, a course that contains primarily students who commute to campus may encounter numerous time problems if students are unable to devote most of their time to studies and college life and activities.

Since a primary goal of an undergraduate fieldwork course is to provide students with at least some sense of the professional field experience in a condensed time period, the selection of topics most profitably emphasizes patterned events within that time period (Mandelbaum 1963). Such events can then be approached, analyzed, and written about as systematically as possible. Ideally, these research situations are found as close as possible to the college campus. It is suggested that "the best term projects carried on entirely at school would appear to be those that approach most closely the kinds of research and writing carried on by professional anthropologists" (French 1963:176), but such research is often a part of an instructor's own professional research, giving students little opportunity to develop personal interests and projects.

A problem that confronts anyone doing sociocultural research is an early reluctance to approach strange people and situations to solicit information. Developing confidence in one's approach is an important result of the first fieldwork experience, but this does not lessen the reluctance of even the most motivated and interested students when they are beginning the research. In fact, the anticipation of these situations very likely affects some students' attitudes about even taking fieldwork courses or other courses that require some active research.

The problems just mentioned affect the ease with which students can select topics and conduct research. A related difficulty involves what should be a primary concern of the instructor of the undergraduate fieldwork course. Since students are likely to have had little, if any, experience in

planning or conducting fieldwork, it is essential that guidance and supervision be available throughout the project. In a one-to-one situation, such as an independent study, this presents few problems although it may become very time consuming. In a fieldwork course, it is important that students also be able to discuss problems, successes, and suggestions with each other based on individual experiences.¹ This interaction may be difficult or only tangentially relevant if students are conducting the very different projects that will likely result from unrestricted personal selection. Some selection is important to the students' interest, motivation, and eventual sense of accomplishment, but at least some early suggestions and continuing guidance seem important. At the graduate and advanced undergraduate levels, a variety of brief exercises completed by all class members are demonstrably useful ways to teach and refine the students' mechanical and analytical skills (Bennett 1960; Levine, Gallimore, Weisner, and Turner 1980). In some situations, it is suggested that students select different components of the same topic or situation for individual projects. The general setting of a boy scout troop, for example, is considered useful because it offers not only a topic that can be segmented into individual ones with each student at least generally familiar with other students' research projects, but it is also an organization with many rules and recurring patterns of behavior (Robinson 1969). In short, a common project seems to be useful for a number of reasons for an introductory fieldwork course although the scout troop and many other similar organizations may still precipitate problems of time and continual access to the situations being studied. It is therefore suggested here and demonstrated below that relatively similar projects are available on most college campuses, and that these projects will be welcomed in most cases as potentially useful sources of information.²

The Topic and Setting

California State College, San Bernardino, has a fluctuating full-time student population of between three thousand and thirty-five hundred persons. Less than ten percent of these students live on campus, and most of the rest commute from their permanent homes. In recent years, there have been more students enrolling in evening and night courses than in day courses, primarily as a result of interest in programs in business administration, education, nursing, and other directly job-related fields. Many students work at least part-time, the average student's age is mid to upper twenties, the majority have families, and as many as a third of the students receive some sort of veterans'

benefits. The campus is located at the northern edge of a city of just over one-hundred thousand residents, making it somewhat distant from almost every student's home. In addition, most campus buildings require several minutes of walking to reach from parking lots because of anticipated expansion when the college was designed.

These demographic and physical characteristics create a number of major and minor problems. One of the latter is the scheduling of a cultural anthropology field course that will attract and benefit as many students as possible. The entire campus community is affected by similar problems of scheduling courses and activities at convenient times with regard to students' employment and domestic obligations. Since some student fees and other state funds are reserved for "student activities," and a number of full-time administrative positions are concerned with them, the provision of useful and popular activities is a major concern of the campus' administration. During the 1975-76 academic year, the campus Office of Institutional Research was requested by representatives of the Office for Student Activities to conduct a broad survey of student interest and opinion regarding existing and potential student activities. Existing activities ranged from weekly popular films to intramural athletics, clubs, and a series of annual events. Since the college participates in no intercollegiate athletics, most activities encourage widespread participation.

The survey was scheduled to be administered to a broad range of classes during Spring, 1976. It was at this point that the interests of the Activities Office coincided with potential solutions to some of the problems regarding undergraduate field research courses in anthropology. The Department of Anthropology's course "Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology" was scheduled for the same quarter, and an Institutional Research employee who was aware of anthropology's in-depth research techniques felt that such studies might be profitable complements to the survey if any students were interested in conducting projects on campus. The 1976 class was therefore designed to give students the opportunity (but did not require them) to conduct research on a topic of personal choice within the broad category of organized student activities.

The Course and Selected Research Topics

The entire class focused on one general topic because only eight students were enrolled. Although the small class size made the overall project more manageable, twice as many

projects could easily have been developed within the same general topic. Small class size is not atypical for an undergraduate fieldwork course, regardless of the size of the university and department; it is certainly preferable, because individual attention is available to the inexperienced students.

The early class meetings emphasized readings of field methods guides and the experiences of professional fieldworkers, but they also included discussions of the general research project and the relevant activities and/or organizations that might be the foci of individual projects. The selection of topics thus combined readings considered appropriate or helpful to the level of the course (e.g., Edgerton and Langness 1974; Crane and Angrosino 1974; Spradley and McCurdy 1972)³ and attempted to correlate the students' projects with the questionnaire to be administered by the Office of Institutional Research. An early task was an attempt to identify the most significant activities and organizations. Since all members of the class had been on campus for at least one year, they were able to make numerous suggestions and the final selections of the topics for individual research. In addition, preliminary versions of the general questionnaire were evaluated by the class and returned to the Office of Institutional Research.

Based on course readings, time constraints, and the general goals of anthropological research, some limitations were placed by class members on the types of activities to be studied before specific ones were selected. The most important limitation was that the activities should occur regularly and at relatively short intervals. Daily or weekly events were useful, but an annual spring festival and its preparations, for example, were not because much of the planning had already taken place. The most fruitful topics seemed to be groups (organizations) or categories of students that were regularly present and therefore significant as well as readily accessible to the researchers. The nature of the general project (to determine the interest and involvement in campus activities), although not directly limiting to the selection of topics, did cause some activities to be eliminated because of their continuing success and widespread student participation.⁴ Other general projects were selected because of the class' hypotheses that a number of factors other than domestic and economic commitments, such as the physical features of the campus itself, strongly affect participation in campus activities.

The students therefore made informed selections of the most significant topics for study, with a final joint statement to be based on the results of individual projects. The

selections emphasized groups or topics that seemed to be potential problem areas with respect to student involvement; eight were finally selected. These were: (1) the campus Veterans' Club, because of the large number of students receiving veterans' benefits and the potential influence such numbers can create; (2) the involvement of night students in campus non-academic activities since this population includes a large number (even a majority) of students, many of whom may be missing both recreational and informative activities; (3) "special" students, which in this case includes students sixty years of age or older and physically handicapped students, for whom many campus activities seem to be of little use or interest; (4) formal organizations that are associated with an academic discipline or major (e.g., honors societies, the Sociology Club); (5) the college-sponsored child care center, operated off-campus because of current space limitations and included in the project because it apparently allows parents to not only attend classes but also participate in other campus activities; (6) the nearby off-campus bars that attempt to attract student business, to see if students might attend a similar place on campus since no such facilities existed there at that time; (7) a random selection of students to draw maps of their perceptions of the physical layout of the campus, since its spread-out nature is often suggested to negatively affect students' attitudes toward the college in general; and, finally, (8) a study of the organization and operation of the Office for Student Activities itself. Each student wrote a proposal establishing preliminary plans and goals for the topic selected for research.

Individual Projects: Results and Benefits

Five of the projects were completed by the end of the spring quarter and were included in the overall summary and Institutional Research report; preliminary results of two others were utilized, and one of these reports was completed during the fall quarter of the next academic year (for reasons noted below). The other report was not completed, and the eighth project never really got off the ground.

It was a source of some amusement to other class members that the two projects causing the greatest problems of completion were the studies of the nearby bars and the Activities Office. The former was not completed for a variety of reasons, few of which related to the topic; the latter presented some initial problems because some Activities Office employees, including the people who had originally requested the general report, were dubious of some of the

researcher's questions. Since similar problems regularly occur in anthropological fieldwork and the Activities Office is definitely at the center of campus activities, the project still had the potential to provide useful experiences. Class members often expressed concern that the Activities Office wanted only the information that demonstrated its successes, but no substantiation of this developed. The "failure" of this individual project was due not to administrative obstructions (which existed but were overcome), but to the student's personal allotment of time.

The usefulness of the general approach taken in the class can be demonstrated by specifically examining the other studies and their general results. As in any sociocultural research, much of the selection of appropriate research methods and approaches was based on the nature of the population and situations under study. The six completed projects will therefore be discussed to indicate both the students' accomplishments and the specific fieldwork experiences encountered.

The study of the Veterans' Club, for example, was primarily an ethnohistorical study that examined a series of attempts by campus veterans' coordinators to provide recreational and "political" facilities and services for the numerous veterans on campus. The organization could wield considerable influence in campus affairs if activities and issues were developed to attract the large veteran and veteran-related population to its active membership. A basic goal of the coordinators as leaders of the club has therefore been to appeal to a diverse group of student-veterans and their families. Simply becoming better acquainted with that population has been a necessary part of the goal. This immense task is eased somewhat by the fact that full-time paid representatives of the Veterans' Administration are continuously on campus in a permanent office and can devote considerable time and resources to establishing contacts and organizing activities. These employees also provide the club with a continuity from one academic year to the next. These characteristics make the Veterans' Club quite different from most other campus organizations, and they are also significant components of an anthropological study. The student researcher was able to contact the paid coordinators at almost any time after the original contacts established the reasons for the study. The office could be used to develop new contacts, and numerous activities and projects also served as points of contact and assemblage. The researcher experienced the problems and successes of convincing people to act as informants, selecting a workable specific research topic within the general study of the or-

ganization, and coordinating research time with other people's work and study schedules. The time and access problems were largely overcome because of the nature of the organization, and the researcher was able to devote considerable time to the acquisition of information. The methods employed in the study included: the selection and use of particular informants for specific information; general interviews with a variety of veterans, administrators, and Veterans' Administration employees; observation of and participation in the planning and operation of such recreational activities as picnics and parties and such "political" activities as meetings with various general campus administrators to demonstrate the need for special consideration of veterans' eligibility requirements for the G.I. Bill; and observations and interviews specifically concerning the relationships among the Veterans' Club, the campus Veterans' Administration Office, and the Student Activities Office. In addition, the researcher examined documents, past copies of the campus newspaper, and the Veterans' Office newsletter to establish a long-range perspective of the organization's operation and goals.

The research on night students necessarily emphasized a somewhat random series of interviews and interactions because few places beyond small areas of beverage and snack machines existed on campus at that time to allow students to congregate before or after (or during) classes. The three locations containing machines became the researcher's primary points of original contact with other students. While utilizing observations of various congregations of students in each location as one technique, the researcher used an informal questionnaire to reach as many people as possible. Certain individuals who agreed to take part in extended discussions were contacted at later times. The formal activities that took place on campus at night, such as films, plays, concerts, and lectures, ironically were attended primarily by day students unless a night class was dismissed specifically to attend a lecture. Most night students worked during the daytime, and time on campus was occupied by attending classes or studying in the library; "free" time created by cutting or cancellation of classes was usually spent off campus.

Night students' almost complete lack of involvement, interest, and knowledge (e.g., a significant number of the students interviewed either did not read or were unaware of the campus newspaper, which is available throughout campus) regarding campus activities at that time might be lessened by the existence of a student union since Spring, 1978. For the most part, however, night students were found to come to campus for classes and little else, with jobs, families, and other personal interests precluding further cam-

pus involvements. In fact, a place to relax and obtain sandwiches and coffee, soft drinks or beer (as the union now provides) was one of the few items of general interest among the students contacted.

The researcher in this case was nevertheless readily able to observe and contact students each night that night classes were held, regularly making arrangements for further meetings at other times. The problems of time and accessibility were therefore not generally encountered. Although there was little opportunity to observe and participate in specifically patterned activities, the researcher was able to analyze general patterns of night student activity, make and develop contacts with informants, and conduct both general and in-depth interviews with informants. Based on these activities, generalizations about the backgrounds of night students and their academic and extracurricular activities and interests were possible.

The project focusing on "special" students provided the researcher with a number of significant opportunities. The handicapped students were informally organized with an employee of the Activities Office responsible for meeting their interests and needs and insuring that federal and state requirements were being fulfilled. A number of the handicapped students were particularly interested in informing other students of these situations, so this part of the project focused on a generally active and responsive group of people. The part of the project dealing with students over sixty years of age, however, presented several problems. It also provided the researcher with some of the most valuable experiences--and frustrations--encountered by any class member. A number of frustrations centered on simply contacting the relevant students, for there is no one organization on campus to attract the older student. (This, in fact, was a basic reason for the selection of the topic.) Although computerized student records exist, these are protected by law unless students sign waivers at the time of registration. Most students do so for limited purposes, but specific permission for the Dean of Students is still necessary before names can be released for any reason. The bureaucratic red tape involved in obtaining this permission and subsequently the desired names caused a number of time-consuming delays but provided the student with important experiences in dealing with such necessary inconveniences and in devising alternative means of establishing contact (e.g., campus paper, word of mouth, direct approach), few of which were immediately successful. The older students who were eventually contacted were therefore dealt with individually through both brief formal questionnaires and informal interviews. In short, part of the project provided important experiences in overcoming preliminary problems

of research and contacting members of a largely invisible group. The project generally gave the student experience in designing and administering a formal questionnaire (to all informants because of the relatively small numbers), observing and participating in informal and formal meetings and activities of the handicapped group, and working with people from quite different backgrounds and interests than one's own. By focusing on two groups generally outside the "mainstream" of campus life, the researcher was able to examine the different reasons for their exclusion. The older students often considered the classroom attendance itself to be a pleasurable activity, and were rarely interested in the campus leisure-time activities; the handicapped students were very interested in such involvements, but were often excluded because of their physical differences and general problems of mobility. These differences also created differences in the researcher's access to the two populations. The handicapped students formed at least an informal group that could be regularly contacted, observed, and interacted with as a unit; the older students formed no such group, and provided different research problems and opportunities. The latter population therefore presented early problems of access and subsequent problems of time within the academic quarter; the former did not. The student researcher therefore experienced not only a variety of research populations, but also a variety of research methods, problems, and successes.

The research on clubs associated with academic majors developed from an interest in the importance of formal campus organizations. The general topic appeared too broad, and discipline-related clubs seemed to provide a common theme that other organizations did not. The study was not completed until the following academic year, primarily because the researcher became interested in the extent of continuity of membership and projects from one academic year to the next. Continuity was anticipated to be a major problem for the groups because students are usually involved in such organizations for only one or two years after majors have been selected rather than throughout their college careers as they might be in a special interest or religious group. The study subsequently took more time to complete than the course provided. The basic research, however, was completed within the course's time limits.

The researcher utilized a variety of methods to study the formal organizations, including participant-observation, informal interviews, questionnaires, and documentary research. Original contacts with the organizations, their leaders, and other members were easy to establish because of regular meetings. Since all formal organizational meetings

on campus are scheduled through the Activities Office to insure space and campus-wide publicity, meetings of different clubs did not conflict with each other or the researcher's time. General interviews were conducted with as many members of each club as possible (as well as with some non-members who were majors in the respective disciplines); in-depth interviews took place with the leaders, selected members of both sexes, and faculty advisors of each club. Various documents were consulted as a part of the research, including the campus rules for such organizations, the constitutions of the organizations and the early histories of the groups, if available. The researcher also participated in the meetings and activities of each group throughout the quarter. Access to the research topic and populations was therefore not a problem. Time became a problem only because the researcher chose to add a comparative dimension to the research by examining the same groups' compositions and activities during the first quarter of the next academic year.⁵

The study of the child-care center provided one of the few opportunities to conduct extended participant-observation research in one setting. The researcher volunteered to assist at the newly-established center, not only to observe and take part in its activities but also to establish contacts with parents to see if the center increased parents' opportunities to participate in campus non-academic activities. The researcher obtained information on few students but nevertheless experienced a number of important situations, ranging from obtaining permission to conduct the research to attempts to retain an observer's perspective in a participatory position. By working in the center several hours a day during the quarter, the researcher became well-acquainted with the children, their parents, the center's staff, and the patterns of activity at the center. This participant-observation was complemented by informal discussions outside the center with all of the people involved. Since the center was new, the results of this study were significant contributions to plans for its future. In terms of research experiences, the study of the center provided ready access five days a week to all situations and all informants except parents, most of whom readily consented to additional discussions at other times.

The project requiring informants to produce a hand-drawn map of the college campus (a technique generally adapted from ones occasionally used by cultural geographers and some anthropologists) precipitated a number of interesting responses and generalizations although the latter probably had little "scientific" validity. The respondents were asked to draw, on a regular-sized sheet of typing paper, the

campus' boundaries and contents, naming all buildings and other points of interest and importance. Since the campus has few buildings but covers a large area, the researcher felt that an attempt to correlate extent of knowledge of the campus' physical characteristics with one's major (some disciplines make use of facilities in a variety of places on campus) and extent of participation in activities⁶ might produce some interesting correlations.⁷ Despite obtaining many interesting maps to peruse and developing generalizations on the above points, the researcher's primary benefits were methodological ones. In addition to the problems of making meaningful generalizations based on the use of a very random group of informants, the researcher found that even apparently simply sampling with fewer than one-hundred respondents necessitated computerized responses. The experiences of designing the project and asking people to respond were significant although the analyses and correlations took more time than the generalizations that were derived (e.g., few students, regardless of major, are completely familiar with the campus' physical layout) warranted. A less random sample, such as large numbers of students from a few selected majors, would have avoided several problems, but this approach was realized and used only during the late stages of research.

In addition to their individual projects, students had opportunities to develop ideas and generalizations for the general report based on the other projects. The completed project papers were all submitted to Institutional Research and Student Activities Office, as had been understood from the beginning of the project. The projects generally agreed with the overall survey's findings that a majority of students perceive the campus primarily as a place to attend classes, not as a potential recreation site. As just discussed, many more specific findings also resulted from the students' field research.

In terms of the course's basic goals, which were to provide the students with opportunities to experience field situations and develop methods and skills to deal with and analyze them, the project was successful in several ways. Specific methods and findings have just been briefly discussed, but the students had a number of common experiences. Each student, individually and as a member of a group, had the opportunity to formulate research problems and determine their relative importance. Each also had to contact potential informants and/or officials to explain the purposes and rationale of the research. After establishing these contacts, all students conducted interviews of various types, and these required the selection of significant topics for questionnaires or discussion, keeping and organizing notes, and, finally, analyzing the materials. The determination

of the extent of the researcher's role as a participant-observer was also part of the on-going research, but the nature and extent of this and other problems varied from one research setting to another. Each student had to make adjustments in the original research design and goals after the research had begun; such adjustments were generally possible because of the relatively easy access to the research populations. In almost every case, various barriers, whether bureaucratic or personal, were encountered and dealt with.

Evaluation was based on the extent to which students fulfilled the objectives stated in their original proposals, including their attempts to overcome problems; on this basis, the students were generally successful. Although the course was not intended to train professional anthropologists, each student gained some knowledge, experience, and skills in common with the professional researcher. By conducting the research on the college campus and avoiding or lessening many of the typical problems of undergraduate ethnographic research discussed above, the positive experiences were more accessible.

Undergraduate Fieldwork and Student Activities: A Summary

A fieldwork course emphasizing on-campus research provides a number of potential benefits, not the least of which is the information made available to the on-campus units, such as the Office of Institutional Research and the Office for Student Activities in the case just discussed. In that regard, the fieldwork class' projects provided in-depth examples of items briefly examined in the general survey questionnaire. While this and the opportunity to correlate one's own work with both other projects and the general survey were beneficial and rewarding to the students involved, such ideal situations may not occur frequently. There are nevertheless many patterned topics worth pursuing on any college campus and, likely, also many people willing to allow them to be studied and provide some assistance. In addition, general on-campus research can overcome several of the recurrent problems of undergraduate fieldwork courses discussed above.

Most importantly, an on-campus project largely overcomes the problems of time and accessibility. Regardless of the topic, the students in the course discussed here were able to conduct research during almost any period of free time. The selection of manageable topics still created some

problems, but those topics considered most "relevant" were preselected by class members, and even the projects that were generally too broad (e.g., the map drawing) or in need of additional time (e.g., the discipline-related organizations) provided useful experiences and information. Although students had to interact with "strangers" in most cases, the on-campus setting seemed more comfortable for an initial fieldwork experience than would an attempt to contact informants and develop topics within the larger community. In reality, the comfort was probably largely illusory, but students obviously felt much less pressure than they originally anticipated. Each project was essentially non-threatening while still giving as much experience, both positive and negative, as possible.

The problems often encountered by an instructor in an undergraduate fieldwork course were also largely eliminated. Students were able to select essentially similar or uniform topics that could be discussed in class to the benefit of all other class members. Class meetings therefore became more than just sessions in which students exchanged examples of successes and failures; since all were working on the same general topic and were familiar with each other's specific topics, concrete suggestions and information were also regularly exchanged. This was important to the instructor because a discussion about either methods or data with one student was comprehensible and useful to others as well. In addition, students never felt that a personal project had little significance since it was contributing to a general project.

The perceived significance of one's own project was complemented by a sense of accomplishment in formulating, planning, conducting, and analyzing that same project. Although a general project theme was suggested, the selection of a specific topic was still the student's responsibility.⁸ This situation is somewhat more constraining than one in which students are given complete choice, but the constraints seemed beneficial in reducing problems of time, access, and stress, for example, rather than limiting.

Similar topics and projects are feasible on any college campus. Any college community, regardless of size, location, or composition of the student population, includes numerous institutions and patterned situations that can be compartmentalized into a series of individual projects.⁹ Even if numerous opportunities for undergraduate field research exist within an adjacent general community, the on-campus research setting seems to offer numerous benefits for at least the initial research endeavor. On smaller and more isolated campuses, these projects may be the only feasible way to

encourage undergraduate field research. More sophisticated and complex off-campus projects can be selected and conducted individually, but the general situation discussed in this paper is workable and useful for an introductory exposure to methods and practical ways to cope with a variety of problems.

Final Statements

The case described above was, by nature if not by definition, an exercise in applied anthropology because the projects' results became part of a report that could potentially precipitate changes. In conjunction with the general survey, the project reports were in fact carefully considered and utilized in evaluating and expanding student activities on campus. The lack of a real sense of campus community that was indicated in the questionnaire results was substantiated with some qualifications by the specific cases examined by the students in the fieldwork class. Since that time, the Activities Office and the new Student Union have made numerous contributions to campus life, both academic-related and recreational. The fieldwork projects, at the very least, played a role in indicating potential directions for new and existing programs.

NOTES

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¹ This has been referred to as a "uniformly valuable supervised experience" (Rapoport 1963:347).

² An introductory course at the University of Illinois that emphasizes "personal anthropology" through brief projects dealing with the students' immediate environment implicitly demonstrates the broad range of potential campus topics available for in-depth examination within a field course (Bruner 1979).

3 The more recent works mentioned above (e.g., Spradley 1979, 1980) greatly strengthen the potential reading list for such a course.

4 The general questionnaire allowed students to explain what they liked about these programs, so other research projects seemed more urgent.

5 Most of the clubs generally avoided problems of continuity by electing officials and planning early projects and activities for the next year before the end of the school year.

6 The respondents were also asked a number of general questions about these matters.

7 Some of the more interesting responses included the failure of several informants to include the library building, which not only contains the library itself but also includes classrooms in which more than half of the college's classes meet.

8 Although students were not required to work on an activities project, all chose to do so.

9 An instructor should be careful not to devise or allow students to devise individual projects that if not completed will greatly affect the general goals. In essence, a one-hundred percent completion rate is unrealistic to expect, and both general and specific projects should be designed with this truism in mind.

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