



## Teaching Anthropology Today

Professor Simon Coleman  
University of Toronto

### Abstract

This autobiographical paper, given as a conference keynote, explores the ways in which, as anthropologists, we assess and study the role of teaching in our discipline, and how to think about these questions ethnographically.

### Introduction

There was something of an irony in my having 'Teaching Anthropology Today' as my topic for this paper at a time when I was hardly doing any conventional teaching at all except for supervising PhD students. But that absence of teaching was significant to me because it raised one of the questions I wanted to examine: What difference does it make *not* to teach? In other words, does teaching as a practice play a significant part in constituting who we are as anthropologists? Do the classroom and other sites of pedagogical encounter reproduce – shape – the discipline not only in the sense of creating new anthropologists, but also in the re-constitution of people who have already been in the discipline for some time?

My main theme, however, is to do with the ways in which we as anthropologists should both assess and study the role of teaching in our discipline. Might teaching contain some of our greatest opportunities but also expose considerable contradictions and ambivalences in our perceptions of ourselves? And are there ways in which we can think about these questions ethnographically?

I do not pretend to give definitive answers to my own questions. But ultimately, my argument is going to be that we have often maintained too limited – actually, too un-anthropological – a view of what teaching is and how we should try to understand it as a cultural practice. In assessing teaching, on those occasions when we have done so, we have often used tools given to us by others – the questionnaire, the National Student Survey, the generic benchmark. Or, even when we have decided to be self-consciously ethnographic, we have confined our view too closely to the classroom itself, the site of most focussed pedagogical interaction. But how do we also trace the effects of teaching anthropology in the families, the work lives, the self-perceptions of teachers and learners? How are such traces manifested as people apparently enter the discipline and then seemingly leave it, assuming that such points of entry and exit are actually identifiable? After all, in their initial description of the conference for which this paper was written, Dimitrina Spencer, David Mills and Robert Parkin<sup>1</sup> referred to teaching as passing on an anthropological *habitus*; but is such a *habitus*, once acquired, easily shed even as we enter new institutional worlds away from the university?

I hope that these questions encourage us to examine teaching anew and with a broader perspective than that which we usually employ when planning -- or bemoaning -- workloads. In the next section, therefore, I juxtapose two visual metaphors that have recently been applied to anthropology, and which I intend to draw on in expanding our view of the discipline as a practice.

### From a Mirror to a Magnifying Glass

I start this section by invoking a paper by Michael Herzfeld in the *Journal of Anthropological Research* (2001), called 'Performing Comparisons: Ethnography, Globetrotting, and the Spaces of Social Knowledge'. In a piece that explores the significance of the subject position and personal research trajectory of the ethnographer, Herzfeld

argues (I think plausibly) that ethnography consists of a combination of comparison and reflexivity, a consideration of the Other in relation to the Self, and that: 'In the pursuit of a social intimacy that can generate cultural understanding, ethnographers see themselves in a growing variety of local mirrors' (2001: 260). He adds (p.261-2) that the very triviality of anthropology's basic material – its very ubiquity and ordinariness, the fact that it is often so commonplace that it is not considered worthy of comment – provides the clearest indications of its importance.

Classic tropes of locality, reflexivity and the everyday come together here in Herzfeld's depiction of what we do. But while Herzfeld focuses on both fieldwork and writing in this piece – the two constituent parts of ethnography in his terms -- it seems to me that much of what he says should be applied to the *teaching* of ethnography as well. After all, time spent in the classroom is in a sense the most quotidian of our activities; teaching for most of us is an activity that is far from trivial and yet is pretty ubiquitous, and one that has scarcely prompted sufficient comment from practitioners of our discipline. Laszlo Kurti (2004:x) recently cited Ulf Hannerz's spoken comments from the 1996 European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) conference in Barcelona to the effect that we know much about what we do in the field, but virtually nothing about our own scholarship in the classroom, and the situation has not changed very much since the mid-1990s. Surely teaching also contains its own vital forms of comparisons and reflexivities, those two constituting activities of our discipline in Herzfeld's terms, as we bring our and others' work and experiences together in oral, visual, embodied and written form? If ever we explicitly 'perform comparisons' it is in teaching itself, as we re-voice our ethnography but also the ethnographies of our colleagues in ways that usually contain a meta-message about what anthropology as a whole either is or should be. As Alberto Corsin Jimenez puts it, ethnography itself is constantly re-instantiated – re-authored – as a knowledge-practice in the teacher-student relationship (Corsin 2004:159), and therefore so is anthropology.

So teaching is both central but all too often ignored by us – it is a knowledge-practice that seems to have too little knowledge of itself. Adopting and adapting Herzfeld's visual metaphor, we might say that through teaching a mirror is turned explicitly and publicly on ourselves, but – and here of course is the rub – it is often directed with a deep ambivalence, as if we do not like looking too closely and too long in our reflection. David Mills, Dorle Dracklé and Iain Edgar have noted (2004:2) that teaching is often talked about by anthropologists through metaphors of binding and escaping; we need after all to 'free time' for research by 'buying ourselves out of teaching'. Such ambivalence invokes but is surely about more than our often-stated desire to be in culturally, and sometimes geographically, faraway fields. Perhaps in an age of creeping audit, teaching becomes overtly problematic because it reminds us of our frequently uncomfortable location in a pedagogical practice that critiques but is also deeply embedded within an institution of the state. In her piece on new accountabilities, Marilyn Strathern (2000:3) points out for instance that however far afield socio-cultural anthropologists have gone, throughout the twentieth century perpetuating what they did as 'anthropology' generally required their looping back into higher education and specifically into a university system. So part of the worry here may be that we reproduce a different and more disquieting kind of discipline as we teach 'our' discipline.

Another, connected worry may be related to anthropology's reproduction in sites of socio-economic and cultural privilege. In the UK many of our students have occupied relatively middle-class, affluent and ethnically homogeneous positions, and until recently have almost exclusively learned the disciplines in more elite universities (Hart 2004). Edmund Leach's decades-old claim that the class and family backgrounds of social anthropologists constituted a taboo subject remains largely true. Yet sites of teaching are places where the potential contradictions around the frequent anthropological embrace of cultural peripheries from positions of privilege become all too clear. I should come clean here and say that this was the issue that fired my interest in analysing the teaching of anthropology in the first place. My first lecturing job in the early 1990s meant moving from Cambridge to spending some of my time lecturing in Durham University's new campus at Stockton, in what was at the time a half-regenerated post-industrial landscape that was both proud and unsure of its neo-liberal principles – it was a place where Mrs Thatcher had famously been photographed picking up rubbish off some rather scabby looking grass. Undaunted, Teesside Development Corporation wanted the Stockton campus to be part of a kind of North-Eastern docklands, with the university campus sitting next to 'yuppie' apartments, tennis clubs, water-skiing facilities and no doubt the odd Porsche. Not many yuppies or Porsches came to the campus, as far as I could tell, but the University did very successfully start teaching anthropology – termed Human Sciences – to often mature, working class students. As a lecturer there, I and others became very keenly aware of the salience of Leach's taboo subject not only in the backgrounds of practitioners of the discipline, but also in the very constitution of the anthropology we were trying to teach: class-based assumptions located in the discipline's valorisation of particular kinds of mobility, of the merit in comparisons between worlds, were

frequently called into play but also into question in teacher-student relationships. Admittedly, Stockton in the 1990s represented a very particular kind of case, but it also I think presented in high relief something of the ideologically loaded nature of anthropological preconceptions about the discipline's own epistemological and political value.

I shall be returning to the Stockton experience below. Whether or not my enumeration of our reasons for ambivalence seems convincing, I hope that my standpoint is reinforced by Mills, Dracklé and Edgar when they argue that (2004:3): 'The research seminar is part of the disciplinary public sphere in a way that the classroom is not.' But if Herzfeld's reflexive visual metaphor invokes a *particular* form of reflexivity – ethnographers looking at themselves in a variety of local mirrors, as the self becomes reflected in and refracted by local culture – Mills *et al.* orientate us towards a rather different kind of knowing gaze, that of teaching in the university classroom as – potentially – (p.7-8) providing an 'ethnographic magnifying glass', and one that we can use to understand wider issues of higher education policy and institutional change. I take their image of the magnifying glass to imply a common anthropological trope, that of the part revealing a wider whole, of focussed interaction being able to expose issues that are significant at ever greater scales of analysis. And there is no doubt that they themselves show awareness of some of these larger themes, for instance of how the classroom cannot be insulated in Europe from current movements towards mass university systems, of changes in the technologies of teaching, of the globalisation of aspects of education, and so on. But my suggestion is that we need to think more about how the 'ethnographic magnifying glass' can be pointed not just at the classroom but also at a wider range of activities. How, we might ask, does quotidian teaching in the classroom influence quotidian practice elsewhere – in the bar, in the home, in the family? And how do we disinter the inchoately anthropological in the lives of people before they formally encounter the discipline in universities, or uncover its buried traces in their lives after they have finished their degree? I might say, as an anthropologist of religion, that to focus only on the classroom in trying to understand the teaching of anthropology as cultural practice is like trying to understand a church from its Sunday morning service: certainly revealing, but not enough.

From this perspective – in other words an attempt to understand quotidian anthropology within but also beyond the university – Jonathan Spencer, David Mills and Anne Jepson (2005) have pointed the way in their recent study of social anthropology doctoral students who had completed their studies between 1992 and 2003. They wanted to see what these students were doing after their doctorates. Of course many remained in academia but others could be located in international development organisations, high-tech companies, business, and so on, where the benefits and skills of having done fieldwork could be operationalised. But I think one of the most significant aspects of their study may also lie in the further questions it raises, and particularly a kind of mirroring of anthropology as performative action, as it is taught, tested in other institutional contexts, and brought back into the constitution of the discipline itself. It forces us to look beyond either the university or 'the field' to understand how our discipline can be reproduced and transformed in contexts not chosen by us as practitioners of the discipline. So now I want to extend my perspective, my own magnifying glass, to some of these alternative quotidian locations where anthropology can flourish or at least be unearthed. I am going to draw briefly on some of the main themes of my own work on the teaching, but more importantly the perception and appropriation, of the discipline by students. And I want to do so by plotting – or rather, sketching – a kind of trajectory of the discipline through the lives of the people before they enter university, as they study, and as they perhaps leave and take a job. I should add that in doing so I am not claiming that I am providing a satisfactory ethnography of teaching: rather, what I shall be doing for much of the time is revealing what I sadly do not know and have not done, though I hope also to indicate what I think an anthropology of and through the quotidian might be.

### **Anthropology in the Life Course – Or, the Social Life of Anthropology**

While travelling in the rainforest of Ecuador I met the son of a shaman who is an anthropologist. I had known about issues addressed by the subject but did not have a name for it until then.

That is a quote from a Sussex University student entering the university in 2005, and I am struck by its sense of stumbling through the wilderness until the encounter with anthropology takes place, almost by accident. It came in response to a survey carried out for a project that Paul Basu and I recently carried out, funded by C-SAP, looking into how to trace – and in effect teach – anthropology in pre-university contexts (Basu and Coleman 2007). One of the things we tried to find out was what our students knew of anthropology as they entered university, and what prompted them to take the subject in the first place. We found that the majority of students arrived in the Department of Anthropology at Sussex via a conventional A-Level route; but the majority could not even recall having heard anthropology being mentioned at school or college. (Incidentally I still remember telling my careers teacher at school around 1980 that I wanted to do anthropology at university, and his response

was: 'Surely you can do better than that?') A large number of students at Sussex admitted that the first time they had encountered the word 'anthropology' was actually when looking through university prospectuses or researching what degree subject to study; and many at the stage when they were surveyed were still rather hazy over what the subject actually was, even though they were committed to doing a degree in it. The impression obtained was indeed of a discipline stumbled upon in a prospectus or perhaps in a jungle, and in the Sussex case by a student body from a relatively privileged socio-economic milieu. But there was also something else that we found, exemplified in a couple of other quotes from students explaining why they were doing anthropology:

Travelling. My parents would take me to very different countries whilst growing up to see new things. They would teach me about religion, language, traditions and politics. I then discovered that this fell under the anthropology umbrella.

I sort of realised that things I'm interested in had a technical name and that they were all linked and it was anthropology.

Travel, a form of personal displacement, seems to be one catalyst towards the discipline, at least as it is viewed in retrospect. But the more interesting and perhaps less predictable element of what these students are saying is that in anthropology they recognise something that somehow makes sense for them, resonates with their lives, but which they had not known existed until relatively recently. Anthropology is presented as having been always already there in one's life, even if it did not have a name. I want to go back to this point when I talk about how such an observation might lead into pedagogical practice; but for the time being I want to move us along the anthropological trajectory or pathway into the university experience itself.

As we taught on the Stockton campus in the 1990s, combining that with work on the main campus at Durham and experiencing two very different cultures of learning, Bob Simpson and I started to wonder how anthropology as a reflexive form of knowledge might be appropriated by students within but also beyond the classroom, how it might be translated into contexts of practice out of which culture is more broadly fashioned. At Stockton the varied student body formed a context rather different to that of middle-class Sussex or Durham and therefore one where both the university experience and the experience of anthropology were being relocated in ways that we could not quite predict. In a paper called 'Unintended Consequences' (Coleman and Simpson 1999) we started to sketch out some of the ways in which we felt our students were indeed appropriating anthropology – as *habitus*, as knowledge, as discourse within but beyond university. The sense of geographical, social and cultural displacement provided by Stockton was for me a powerful form of displacing anthropology itself, as the teaching of it was located in very different career trajectories, family relations, and expectations of institutions, among the student body. A couple of examples that have stayed in my memory represent rather different experiences of the subject from two students who were very able in different ways. One middle-aged man both saw and saw through anthropology as indeed a deeply class-ridden discipline, whose occasional claims to exceptionality – to having escaped the bureaucratic and audit-ridden concerns of the university world – were self-deluding. Indeed, he came to see university as a prison, an institution that he had known earlier in his life. But in contrast there was the case of the middle-aged woman who perceived anthropology as liberation, who actually gave her teenage children ethnographies to read, hoping they would understand what she was going through and appreciate her sense that she was indeed becoming transformed as a person within her family unit.

Faced with what was clearly a variety of responses to the teaching of anthropology, and a variety that we had not anticipated, Bob and I tried to describe what we felt were three somewhat ideal typical and far from comprehensive orientations to the discipline. 'Instrumentalists' were often younger and middle class, seeing a degree in any discipline as a required part of the transition into adulthood and the means to progress into an unspecified career, almost certainly out of anthropology. 'Bricoleurs' consisted of a smaller group of middle-class students who enlisted their anthropology as part of a more ambitious project of self-building, often combining their academic interests with novel forms of therapy, spirituality and community work. Ethnography for such students was not merely a means to the end of writing a good essay; it could also be used for purposes probably undreamt of by the author, as if it could provide a direct gateway into 'other cultures' with the minimal interception of the ethnographer. For some of such students, indeed, academia with its associated 'rational' assumptions impeded their full appreciation of other, ideally non-Western, ways of life. 'Personal developers' tended to be the working-class, mature students, some of whom in Bernstein's terms (1971) were looking for a key to unlock the 'restricted codes' that had characterised their earlier educational and work experience. It is notable that a few of these students felt forced into compartmentalising their university experience, separating it from and sometimes not even mentioning it to people they met in other parts of their lives, while resenting the need for such silence in the face of an anticipated incredulity or incomprehension. They thus displayed some

significant similarities with working-class sociology students from the University of Abertay, Dundee, studied by Alex Law and others in a C-SAP report called 'Learning Sociology for Life' (2003). Law *et al.* found that student engagement with the discipline, often in the context of disrupted careers, could extend 'deep into the *habitus* to encompass personal lives, relationships, socio-cultural interests and political commitment' (2003:27).

In retrospect I think another important category would have been those who were alienated – intelligently so – by the whole system, such as the man I mentioned earlier who thought of studying anthropology at university as a kind of imprisonment. But what is indicated here more generally is the variety of ways in which students were exercising agency in their deployment of anthropological teaching, resulting in what one might call different ontologies of quotidian anthropology: as formal, generic knowledge; as embodied critique of 'the West'; as sometimes secret or shameful knowledge; as gateway to personal change and a modified *habitus*, with the potential to use ethnography of 'kinship' and 'the family' to transform one's own family relations. One question we might want to ask is whether anthropology as quotidian practice in these terms is itself anthropology as conventionally understood. There is also the question of whether such potentially fertile but sometimes dangerous disjunctions between home and university life should be made a theme of teaching itself, involving the need more explicitly to encourage or problematise multiple avenues of appropriation of the discipline.

At Stockton, many of these themes were raised in a final-year option called 'Knowledge and Practice', designed to provide a bridge between university life and life elsewhere. Indeed, a further stage in Bob's and my work, funded by C-SAP, was to look at the fate of anthropology in the lives of our graduates as they entered varied worlds of work, family relations, mobility or stasis. We surveyed all of the Human Science graduates from Stockton from 1995-2002, asking what they were doing but also whether anthropology remained useful to them, and gained responses from 121 of them – between a quarter and a third (Simpson *et al.* 2004). I am not going to go into the results in detail, other than to say that we gained some striking examples of people taking their interpretation of anthropology in their own hands and in effect becoming teachers of the discipline in contexts far removed from any campus.

Michael, for instance, became a social worker who dealt with the children of asylum seekers, and found himself also dealing with the assumptions of his colleagues and those teaching his social work diploma.<sup>ii</sup> Indeed, he was in the process of setting up a workshop for his team in which issues of culture in relation to people's perceptions would be explored. Christine noted that one of her children was going to university to study anthropology as a result of the family discussions that took place while she herself was doing the degree. Danielle, a training manager, was interested in exploring the relations between what she called 'the participant observation stuff' and her current vocation – connections that had not been visible to her from the beginning of her university or work careers – and to her surprise found that she was becoming a passionate advocate for the discipline both in her work and outside it.<sup>iii</sup> Becky used the experience of a dissertation that involved working with local children on the theme of 'North American Indian culture' in developing an interest in creating links between anthropology and pre-university education – what she referred to as an 'anthropology for children concept'. Her first venture in this direction was an attempt to start a business making teepees for 'living in and playing in', funded by the Prince's Trust.

Now all of this is perhaps heartening but none of it is very surprising: of course resourceful and intelligent people do resourceful and intelligent things, and use what they have learned to do so. Looking at the September 2008 AAA Newsletter on anthropology and pedagogy I was intrigued to find some parallels with a piece by the Portuguese anthropologist Graca Indias Cordeiro (2008:9), where she describes the process of teaching employed adults in Lisbon, and asks a question also salient to the students themselves: Can a person with a bachelor's degree in anthropology be an anthropologist? If so, how? But surely what is surprising is that we as promulgators of a reflexive, comparative, fieldworking discipline know so little about such activities, and their potential influence. Why is it that we appear to care relatively little about what our teaching does, other than producing a certain proportion of future professionals in our own university-based discipline (see also Coleman 2010:806)? Our talk of context is still confined to the research field, but builds remarkably few bridges into exploring the lives of those people who may be discovering that anthropology, albeit unnamed, has always been part of their lives, or who are struggling to articulate ways in which it can remain salient – discoverable – in lives away from the classroom. To remain uninterested in such manifestations of our discipline is to accept that it is indeed largely a product of, and dependent on, the institution of the university.

Having articulated this rather questioning standpoint so far, I want in the latter part of this piece to suggest some of the ways in which I think we might (re-)discover anthropology ourselves, as teachers of the discipline, in

places that are more accessible to most of us than the rainforest in Ecuador, but which remain relatively unknown to us, or perhaps I should say unnoticed.

My first suggestion is a methodological one, and I think it follows from what I have been arguing so far. It is simply that we need to think of our tracing – our rediscovery – of anthropology as a particular kind of multi-sited ethnography. What do I mean by this? In crude terms, I mean to refer to Marcus's emphasis on the tracing of connections, dispersed relations, and the mistrust of locating subjects as they are found in so-called natural units of difference, such as cultures, communities, or indeed universities. If we can follow a commodity chain or a productive process, a plot or a metaphor, or the circulation of an idea (1995), so it seems to me that we can follow instantiations of quotidian anthropology not only as taught but as lived. In these terms anthropology becomes a knowledge-practice located within but also beyond the university.

My second suggestion is one that I have already tried to put into practice, along with Paul Basu and with the help of both C-SAP and the RAI. Here, the aim has been less to track anthropology as multi-sited phenomenon and more to make it explicit – to help people to discover it as 'always already there'. The metaphor that Paul and I have been using here is to think of anthropology as a kind of Trojan Horse, and we have been working with Brighton museum and local schools in Brighton to devise a museum pack (2009) through which A-level students can discover the relevance of anthropology to subjects they are taking at school, whether these are Sociology, Geography, Religious Studies, and so on. Our method has been to work with A-level specifications and to identify various 'bridging concepts' that can be incorporated into a learning and teaching resource – belief, ethnicity, family, gender, identity and power. Each of these concepts can then be explored by the students themselves as they examine their reactions to, and discover more about, specific ethnographic objects in the museum, ranging from a West African amulet necklace to an American 'Barbie for President' doll, and the resource is also meant to be adaptable to other museums round the country through the development of what we call 'object lessons'. We do not know whether this will work, but it is worth mentioning here a practical issue, and one we found by looking at the reports from A-level examiners: that they were specifically looking for more cross-cultural comparisons in the case studies discussed by students in their submitted work.

My third suggestion is less of a suggestion and more a report of my own discovery of anthropology in an unexpected place, though again it is mediated by material culture. About two years ago I was asked by Stefano Santilli, a lecturer in Design at the University of Brighton, to talk to his 3-D Design students on the subject of ritual. I found that Stefano and his students were creating a 'Rituals Project', an annual event with students who start their degree programmes with two terms of exploratory workshop practice in wood, metal, ceramics and plastics, in order to develop a critical awareness of appropriate material qualities. Stefano's brief to students has been influenced in part by a question that echoes Balzac: 'How can we live decently?', and they are encouraged to think of collaborating across disciplines as they work. I gave a lecture on ritual to the students, focusing to some extent on the material aspects of ritual, and tried to move from the famous Nacirema example of pretending to look at a toothbrush as if one had never seen one before to reflecting on the new creation of the 'Burning of the Clocks' ritual that takes place on Brighton beach. I thought no more about the lecture until Stefano contacted me a few months later to discuss the results of the students' work, as they had reflected on the concept of domestic ritual in the context of changing identities and then converted such reflections into objects that were meant to promote both reflexivity and sustainability. He explained that one project, by Jo Westrop, transposed the domestic ritual of dining to the public piazza where workers might spill out at lunchtime to snack, often on their own. Using the technology of pop-up books, Jo designed a formally dressed table top to emphasise the value of a lunch break and, because it required two pairs of human legs to support the surface, prompted an invitation for company. A prominent 'candelabra' on the table top also referenced the socially significant rituals of lighting candles and fires.

Another student, Sam Lyon, made a study of tea drinking amongst friends and family, noting the wide range of equipment needed and the sequence of events enacted to achieve the prescribed colour. He photographed the specific tools that individual tea makers often relied on and how they interacted with these tools, and then sculpted a beaker in wood that was meant to develop personal marks of wear through repeated use; a leather strap on the saucer prevented freshly poured tea from being put down and from being neglected, requiring the drinker to pause for contemplation rather than resuming work.

Now we can debate the ironies – appreciated by Stefano and his students – of creating consumer goods in order to think about sustainability, but that is not my point. What I want to emphasise is how what we see here, in a diffuse sense, is anthropology teaching and ethnographic observation converted into a very different medium, a

kind of material bridge, leading not to texts but to specific objects, and moreover objects meant to promote reflections on the meaning and construction of context, ritual and the social. A particular take on anthropological ideas becomes materialised but also explicitly quotidianised in ways that we may or may not find convincing, but which I do not think we should ignore.

Finally, I want to take some of these reflections back to the institutional life with which I started this lecture, that of the university, surely a strange place that in its modern form has a relatively short history. If what I have been advocating says something about applying an expanded ethnographic sensibility to the teaching and what we might call the diffusion of anthropology, and poses the question of whether anthropology as cosmology is dependent, in a rather Durkheimian way, on the particular institution that appear to support it, we also need to ask whether we should allow our teaching to be constituted by forms of measurement that profess to measure, and yet, at the same time, form what we do as teachers. If questionnaires and The National Student Survey (NSS) results influence university life, it is our duty as ethnographers to understand how and why they have potency: but should we not also be confident enough to develop and rely on a more ethnographic sensibility in our assessments of what we do? Let me give just one example: at Stockton one of the most revealing and yet troubling documents I had to mark was the ethnographic diary produced by students as they completed their second-year joint research projects. Some diaries were fascinating, some boring; but they opened a particular kind of magnifying glass to an anthropology whose instantiation in the classroom was just the tip of a much larger social, cultural and broadly auto-ethnographic iceberg, if I may bring these two metaphors together, and made me wonder what would happen and what might be revealed if the students were to keep an ethnographic diary of the whole of their experience in the field of studying anthropology at University. I am pretty certain it would be more useful than the odd NSS survey, though much more difficult to convert into the imagined and competing community of surveyed disciplines that we currently have to deal with.

So my general point here is that anthropology, and anthropology teaching, are rather bigger than we often permit them to be. This may be a message that we need to acknowledge, whether we like it or not. For instance the Bologna process is intended to diversify student recruitment, as well as introducing more interactive pedagogies. The Royal Anthropological Institute has also successfully guided the new Anthropology A-level through the minefield of exam boards, so that it has now become a new part of the academic landscape of the discipline in the UK. And again, I was recently at a meeting of an independent group of researchers, trained in anthropology but applying their expertise to research problems that were not defined by academics. The constant creation and recreation of our discipline within and beyond both the field and the classroom may well have numerous unintended consequences, and it is surely our duty to acknowledge and examine these consequences, and to accept that they are anthropology as well – despite, or perhaps precisely because, of their quotidian location in our lives.

Let me finish, then, with some further reflections on the question with which I began this article: Does teaching play a significant part in constituting who we are as anthropologists? My response, inevitably, is an ambivalent, or at least a divided, one. On the one hand, we need to change our perspective on teaching, to place it more in a reflexive spotlight (to use another visual metaphor), because the classroom is clearly one place where we constitute ourselves and help to constitute others as anthropologists. The field has, since the inception of the discipline, held a privileged status as initiator of ethnographic novices, not least because of its location as the middle point of the rite of passage that supposedly grants us membership to our profession. But I am arguing for an acknowledgement of a less dramatic, processual engagement with a shifting disciplinary *habitus*, formed more by chronic conversation (and self-presentation) through pedagogical encounters and less by dramatic conversion in the field. One implication of this argument is that it behoves us to engage more than we have done with literatures that examine education itself as a skill and a practice. On the other hand, I am also arguing for some attention to be taken away from both the classroom and the field, towards an appreciation of anthropology as ontology in daily life. ‘We’ (certified practitioners of whatever variety, students, and so on) can discover much about anthropology by looking in those places where it is least marked and most deeply implicit in our own, and not just informants’, everyday lives. It might be there when we talk to our children at the breakfast table about the church or the mosque at the end of the street, or when a student uses Mary Douglas to comprehend the seeming chaos of their student dorm. Many of us engage in anthropology precisely because it is always, in some sense, ‘there’: to adapt Clifford Geertz, ‘being there’ and ‘being here’ cannot easily be separated, and while the anthropologist is an author, anthropology can also help us to author our own lives. Teaching has an often vital part to play in this process of constantly discovering, and constituting, anthropology for ourselves and for others: and anthropology can be so much more than we usually allow ourselves to say, or to see.

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> The conference 'Teaching Anthropology Today', 9-10 September 2008, Keble College and the School of Anthropology, University of Oxford, was organised by Dimitrina Spencer, David Mills and Robert Parkin. An earlier version of this paper was given as the keynote speech at this conference. Thanks to the editors and audience for their comments on this paper.

<sup>ii</sup> For instance, that an Angolan child should be excluded from a trip to the local swimming baths on the grounds that Africans supposedly have lower bone density and thus do not float very well.



<sup>iii</sup> The degree was seen by her as being crucial to her personal development. Many of the skills imparted, such as the case study method, interviewing and the management of cultural differences were seen by her as essential to a psychotherapist's practice.