



'Breaking Other People's Toys': Reflections on Teaching Critical Anthropology in Development Studies

Dr Natalie Djohari
Honorary Research fellow Manchester University and
Researcher at Substance Research Cooperative

Abstract

This paper explores the personal transformations of students learning critical anthropology on a Development Studies course. Students' personal projects intertwine with their disciplinary and professional choices. I show how learning that radically challenges the development paradigm may lead to internal personal conflicts and life-project crises. How should teachers of anthropology design and teach such courses and what is the impact on students and on the disciplines?

Introduction

In 2007, I found myself teaching anthropology on a Development Studies undergraduate degree in a UK university. The classes I taught that year almost exploded in a flood of student emotions, emotions that seemed to question and challenge the possibility for cross-disciplinary communication. The students' strong personal reactions ranged from intense introspection, frustration, disillusionment, and personal withdrawal, to defensive mocking, the rejection of anthropological inquiry and subsequent non-attendance. While I had encountered some similar reactions in the past, these were infrequent and related only to the occasional student. But here was a course that seemed to affect the majority of students, to the extent that there appeared to be a visible 'breaking' of what were once, keen, enthusiastic, and passionate students. As a result, I asked myself what was happening there? Why these particular students? Why now? And, why such an emotive reaction? In this paper, I engage with these questions through reflection on teaching and learning practices across disciplines. I focus, in particular, on the potentially powerful challenges that anthropology's critical and deconstructing practices may pose to students' self-identification and self-worth, particularly in fields where they are very strongly self-invested both as people and professionals.

Development Studies is an increasingly attractive option for students who desire to engage with some of the most pressing issues of our time. The challenge, however, is to put together a successful Development programme that can meet student needs *and* provide comprehensive grounding in the contradictions of development practice. Many of the pedagogical difficulties emerge because of the interdisciplinary nature of Development Studies. Subsequent discussions have therefore reflected on how to incorporate different disciplinary perspectives into development courses without stripping away too much of the disciplinary backgrounds needed to make debates meaningful (Silvey 2002); and how to balance a growing emphasis on case studies and problem orientated teaching with a need to offer theories however internally conflicted or critiqued they may have become (Cameron *et al* 1980). But while attention has been granted to the content of development courses, particularly in light of the growing professionalism of development practice (Quadir 2007), much less has been asked of the impact of interdisciplinary teaching on students themselves. Anthropology in particular brings with it a transformative impact that goes well beyond the transmission of knowledge that Development Studies students are mostly unprepared for.

For Coleman and Simpson (2004) anthropology is about engaging in a dialogue between the self and the other. Learning is therefore 'part of a wider life course. The student experience of university involves the partial

objectification of self and de-objectification of knowledge, and this is a dual process in which knowledge is both an academic currency and a means to understand oneself (Coleman and Simpson 2004:25). Indeed, given the difficulties of adequately communicating anthropology's role in terms of career development, students often take the subject as a means to reflect on their own lives and in the process develop new ways of seeing the world (Coleman and Simpson 2004:24). A novel expression of this can be found in the creation of the Facebook group 'Anthropology Has Warped My Brain' where wall posts from its 4000 members include comments such as 'We will never enjoy old-fashioned tourism anymore!' to 'Anthropology - it changed me from being a participant in my culture to an observer!'. But while such transformations can be part of the course within anthropology, the results are not always welcome and can leave some feeling like 'strangers in their own homes, unable to integrate themselves into former ways of life' (Coleman and Simpson 2004:30). Understanding the potential impact of anthropological teaching and learning on student selves is therefore an important consideration for interdisciplinary teaching, and as I found, is of particular concern when engaging Development students who invest a great deal of themselves into this particular choice of subject.

It is quite common when tutors get together to bemoan the ways in which students appear not to care about their studies beyond the practical concern of attaining good grades, particularly when we are often presented with inconsistent attendance, and incomplete reading assignments. As a consequence, it becomes a secondary issue to consider the extent to which the courses students take are tied into the way they construct themselves as moral beings and their narratives about their 'social roles'. However, as we increasingly find ourselves teaching across disciplinary boundaries, developing an understanding of the relationship between students and their choice of subject as well as their learning experiences can be critical to the successful communication of anthropological knowledge.

Development Studies in particular attracts students with more practical concerns, who are attracted less to learning *about* development from the position of academic observer, and more with learning how to *do* development. The expansion of international development work over the last two decades, both in the numbers of aid organisations and public coverage of their work, makes career opportunities a real possibility. Students can therefore be keen to take advantage of courses they feel will give them an edge in a competitive market that offers the possibility of 'exotic', interesting work that is morally sanctioned. These practical concerns can however be at odds with a significant body of anthropological literature that critiques the development enterprise. As anthropologists, we have spent many years in apologetic self-condemnation for our role in the construction of knowledge (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Indeed, one of the greatest anthropological contributions is the understanding of our own position and subjectivity (as authors, researchers, people and practitioners) within the matrix of power in knowledge production. But while we can be accused of suffering from an 'epistemological hypochondria' in our inability to take a position beyond relativist theories of knowledge (Wilson 2004), it has not stopped us taking our insights beyond the boundaries of our discipline and subjecting our disciplinary neighbours to the same critical 'gaze'. Development, medicine, human rights, and scientific practices are but a few subjects to have drawn anthropological attention in the form of critiques of their discourse and practice. However, as this body of criticism grows, we increasingly find ourselves teaching these critical perspectives *within* other disciplinary fields. While the stated aim of such anthropologically led courses is the positive contribution of a fresh anthropological perspective, in reality, we provide a critical evaluation of the 'problems,' 'biases' or 'delusions' of the host discipline as seen from 'our' vantage point. When we come bearing such 'gifts' it is not surprising that we often encounter resistance among our non-anthropology students. In these situations, the first challenge of teaching students of another discipline is how to avoid triggering their defensive barriers. Only then can the process of disciplinary cross-communication begin.

In cross disciplinary teaching, from the moment we arrive in the classroom we are the 'outsider.' With experience, we may develop techniques that attempt to play down these classroom disciplinary differences whilst still maintaining the 'otherness' of the anthropological perspective. Often this involves simple things such as the use of collective pronouns. 'What can "we" learn? How do these critiques change 'our' perspectives?' Such an approach attempts to draw students into what *appears* as a 'shared' learning process – one that includes the tutor/anthropologist in the 'voyage of discovery'.¹ But while this can be quite common to the challenge of teaching anthropology more generally, it becomes particularly poignant when teaching across disciplines - especially when the content taught is a radical critique.

Teaching Development Studies: the Course that 'Broke' Students

The Department of Development Studies at Sussex University has recently undergone restructuring, however during the years I was teaching from 2005-2009, it was an interdisciplinary department with courses being offered by lecturers and tutors employed both within its own department and from departments across politics, geography, sociology and anthropology. It was separate from the Institute of Development Studies which functions as an independent research unit apart from the University.

Influential anthropological work on development originating at Sussex, from authors such as Jock Stirrat (Head of the Development department at the time) and Ralph Grillo has been particularly critical of the discourses and practices of Development (see, for example, Stirrat and Grillo 1997; Stirrat and Henkle 1997), and certainly when I began my own undergraduate degree in anthropology at Sussex in the late 1990's, Sussex had a reputation for being particularly 'radical' in its criticism of the development enterprise. In contrast, students today have very little perception of the cultural shape of departments and this to a great extent reflects changes in staff, shifting development debates, as well as a changing university culture.

It is to be expected therefore that the anthropological contribution to the Development Studies courses would continue to draw on some of the critiques of development to emerge during the 1990's. Most notably, authors such as Escobar (1994), Ferguson (1990), Stirrat (2008), and Fairhead and Leach (1996), who engage with critiques of the production of knowledge and development practice, can be found across the undergraduate and postgraduate Development programmes as well as within anthropology. As a consequence, many courses have a critical perspective even though they may be orientated to the practical concerns of the development industry. Nonetheless, it appears that for these particular students, it was not until the first term of their second year as undergraduates that they were really forced to consider the ethnocentric foundations of the practice of Development.

The Culture and Development course I tutored on in autumn 2007 was a compulsory module for all Development students, including both single honour students (taking a degree in only one subject, in this case BA in Development Studies) and those taking it as part of combined degrees. Students therefore had quite varying disciplinary backgrounds. Of the 51 students I taught, 31.4 percent were straight Development students, another 17.6 percent International Relations and Development; 17.6 percent Anthropology and Development; 15.7 percent Economics and Development; and the rest were doing combined Development degrees with Politics; Geography; Sociology; Spanish; and a further 7.8 percent took the course as an options module in Business and Management.

But while their degree choices varied, many of these development students shared characteristics. They had started their university programmes following a summer (or longer) work experience in voluntary organisations abroad or in their countries of origin. They had travelled widely, and they also tended to have an impassioned, determined attitude to their studies, something not so obvious amongst straight anthropology students. Students choosing to study development studies often see it as a necessary part of their training for a future career in the development 'industry' and have invested themselves personally as well as professionally in development studies: they believe passionately, and often (at that level of study) uncritically, in the benefits and worth of international development practice.

The Culture and Development course focused on the contribution of an anthropological perspective to development studies. It was designed and lectured by Peter Leitchford to specifically provoke students into thinking more critically about the way in which 'culture' is used throughout the practices and discourses within the development field. The first week begins by challenging the ethnocentric bias in the idea of 'progress,' followed by a critique of the overly rigid, homogenising versions of 'culture' used within the development industry. The course continues via a deconstruction of key development themes such as gender, the environment, NGO culture, and human rights (the latter being a new addition that reflected the research interests of the two course tutors). Each week stripped bare development practice to reveal the internal inconsistencies and biases that so often lead to poor delivery. It is not an introduction to anthropology, but a critique of development practice through an anthropological lens. Overall it is a well-conceived course with accessible, thought provoking readings geared to spark intense discussions. As a result, I have found it to be one of the most enjoyable courses to teach on. The course is standard fare for university, encouraging students to reflect critically on the world around them and engage in challenging debates.

I was therefore quite dismayed to find that, as the course progressed, students started to become agitated. Most notably a handful struggled with the reflexive and relativising course content and stated they much preferred the clearer-cut theories of the parallel-running Political Economy course, and the hands-on analysis of data in the Measuring Development course. In one such case, when I asked a particularly capable student about his low attendance. He replied that he felt confident he would be able to write 'opinion' papers in the exam for my course. Consequently, he was concentrating more on making sure he fully grasped the theories and methodologies needed to successfully answer the 'more precise' questions on the other development courses.

For the majority of students however, while attendance was particularly good, the excited chatter of the first few weeks, was becoming replaced by growing dismay and shock at some of the practices within International Development. This soon gave way to disillusionment and pessimism. Most frequently, seminar reflections on the reading would begin with: 'this is just another case of people going in to do development work thinking they are better than the local people and misunderstanding everything'.

I became interested in this process and began to observe and pose questions where possible. It soon became clear that many students were struggling with the prolonged deconstruction of 'their' subject. The most despairing discussion came midway through the course in relation to a week on NGO culture. The material covered a damning report into the chaos of the response to the refugee crisis accompanying the Rwandan genocide. It highlighted that good intentions are not only not enough, but can also actively be detrimental to refugee welfare. When students explored behind-the-scene activities (that go on once the media cameras have left), their final grip on the moral 'justice' of 'development' became fully unravelled. While subsequent literature illustrated a complexity that needed addressing rather than an outright rejection of development practice, students only saw the negatives.

This overly negative focus was detrimental to their understanding of texts and, each week, I found myself consciously trying to stress the possible positive applications. This is contrary to my usual teaching practice, where I believe it is the role of students as a seminar group to reflect on readings and suggest what can be learned from them in relation to more positive future practice. But so negative was their outlook, that discussions seldom moved beyond a despairing 'there is nothing that can be done', 'we shouldn't be involved in "development", and thinking we know the answers to other people's problems'. I therefore often felt obliged to suggest one or two examples of how to overcome the obstacles raised by the literature. For those who had embraced the most extreme negating position, Escobar's (1994) critique rejecting 'Development' in its current form came as a welcome relief in the last week of the course. In the case of some students, however, I felt this was an unsatisfactory conclusion: I was not convinced that they had fully explored all possibilities before coming to reject development because they had become too negatively focused early on.

Possibly the most difficult article on the course was Montgomery's (2001) work on child prostitution. In one seminar group, I was met by complete silence. When I asked them why they were not discussing as they usually did, one of the students said he was nervous to speak because he did not want to be seen to be agreeing with paedophilia. The article is far from encouraging this, but week after week of relativist critique seemed to cause a paralysis in the ability of some students to discuss and reconcile what they had been learning about the limits of intervening in complex global issues with their own moral position. The key thing was breaking that dam, convincing students that it was OK for there not to be an answer, and that they could hold both moral convictions and embrace academic critiques.

While students struggled with their internal conflicts in seminars, in my office hours their concerns often turned to the future of their degree course. Typical discussions would begin with dismay: 'I never knew Development was like this'. This would be followed by fears about what other courses within their development program were going to be like. In particular, some students worried that they would be unsatisfied with courses focusing more on the practical methods, that is, on 'doing' Development. They feared that such a course would not be unpacking practices with sufficient critique. Some even asked if it was too late to change options, and indeed, on one occasion, a student successfully changed into anthropology against my recommendation.

I would perhaps have taken this response entirely personally were it not for the other tutor on the course having exactly the same experience. Across several seminars, the more students engaged with the literature and the critical discussions it inspired, the more profoundly disillusioned they became. Worse still, those students who had been amongst the most committed to careers in Development and had been most eager to learn, were the ones most affected. As their seminar tutor, I could not help but feel partly responsible for what felt like the 'breaking' of once keen and passionate students. My office hours and seminars were spent in attempts to re-inspire students and to help them see a way out of the negative tunnel they had become trapped in.

One case in particular stands out, because it gave me a deeper insight into what was going on. I had previously taught this student in her first year and found her to be a bright, eager, and vocal contributor to seminar discussions. But as this course progressed she seemed to become increasingly withdrawn. She confided at one point that sometimes she was reluctant to speak because she had developed such a negative view of development. She felt she could no longer contribute anything positive and worried that other class members were becoming impatient with her growing pessimism. In an attempt to challenge some of her self-censorship and also in an attempt to understand more clearly what was happening, I asked her to write about what she had experienced. Her testimony gives voice to an inner turmoil that I believe was shared by other students on the course, even though idiosyncratic backgrounds inevitably affected the degree to which the course affected and manifested in each student.

A Student's Perspective

I grew up in a home where it was common to find yourself in the middle of a debate over injustice or politics. My father, having travelled for his job, influenced our minds in seeing the world in a bigger picture [...] I have been aware and have critically discussed many of the problems that the 'world' encounters now. I took a keen interest in these issues since I

was sixteen: the images from the Darfur refugee camps on the BBC news; the USA invading Iraq declaring the war, and the coverage of Live 8 with Bob Geldof were not far from my mind. So many marches possible, so many concerts to save people, so many humanitarian organisations there to help, it seemed like a good and possible idea of 'Helping' well, the media made it out like it was. Although throughout that period of my life, I knew of the problems surrounding the Aid system (multilateral and unilateral), the problems within the UN, and the certain misrepresentation of the humanitarian organisations [...] I thought that with my 'privileges', I could help the people in need out there and going to the University of Sussex I thought it could give me answers, and future plans and aspirations.

With a group of friends we even made a pact of creating our own humanitarian organisation after University, with one doing a degree in Politics, me in Development and Anthropology, and the last doing a thorough degree in Anthropology. Our paths were clear and we had things to look up to. But since then, my 'hope' has slowly diminished, somehow coming to a point of no return. Stupidly, it looks like I have believed in Father Christmas and that, since I stepped into University, I have found out that he 'obviously' didn't exist. [...] The whole process, the language used in development and our thoughts surrounding the field are wrong; they are shadowed by the murky past. The feeling of 'helping' is fundamentally erroneous... Although I am still perplexed, there has been a fundamental change in my views.

University is meant to do that, but I never would have thought that I would think so negatively about development.

It was certainly never my intention when I began teaching to make a student feel this way, and I consequently felt a great burden of responsibility for not only this case but many others like it. This student's very frank and open disclosure drew my attention to an important yet often overlooked aspect of teaching: the recognition of how student selves are invested in the courses they study, and how the choice of a degree can therefore be entangled in the project of self-making. This student's statement makes explicit how Development as a discourse and a field of contemporary practice becomes incorporated into student lives. Here it forms a key component in the student's future aspirations, her sense of position and direction in the world.

International Development is rooted in ideas of morality and benevolence, attracting students who wish to 'make a difference' in the world. The origins of such a mission is not hard to find. Development fills a space in today's society; it is part of a moral, righteous crusade found in politics and the media and a moral call to 'save' the other. Gordon Brown illustrates this in his 2005 speech regarding the 'make poverty history' campaign: 'Let this be the generation of whom it is said we had the vision the courage and the moral strength to do the right thing, to make poverty history' (BBC News 2005).

Increasingly, I have encountered students who have responded to this call personally. The 'time is now' rhetoric invests them with a sense of *personal* responsibility to 'do the right thing' and to 'be involved.' A sense of self as a responsible, decent person becomes tied into their chosen carer path. Development for these students is therefore akin to a 'calling' - invested with morality and responsibility. It may represent a displacement of a role once held by institutionalised religion: something to devote to - that stresses the possibility of 'doing good' in a time when so many tragedies over which we have little control are beamed directly into our homes.

In the student's testimony above, the second paragraph is particularly telling. This student's future plans, her role, her direction in the world appeared to be constructed around Development. What she lost in her engagement with the Culture and Development course was this sense of direction, the possibility of the future as she had imagined it. Not only had she lost this security, but she also faced an intense self-directed ridicule, her own naivety in believing in what she compares metaphorically to 'Father Christmas'.

This intense association between self and subject is nothing unusual but it may be especially evident with subjects students are treating as vocational. While it is true that undergraduate Development Studies at Sussex is still classically an 'academic' discipline, with no claim to practical training, many students arrive believing that their chosen course is a necessary step towards their desired careers in the Development industry. As a consequence, they can approach it very differently — they are looking for 'answers,' 'tools,' and 'strategies' that can help them do a better job. They are not expecting invitations to question their chosen career or to reflect on how it might be considered racist, ethnocentric, or over-privileged. It is having to critically evaluate the Development agenda itself, and, thus, their own life projects and that comes as the greatest shock.

What is interesting is that critiques of development have long identified the intense moral rhetoric involved. In particular Stirrat's (2008) work on how development workers view their selves and others within the industry illustrates how a personal moral commitment to a new version of 'the white man's burden' still motivates many workers. For these development 'missionaries,' development is 'a sacrifice of self in the pursuit of some greater goal' (Stirrat 2008:406). And yet, we have been slow to recognise the impact of such beliefs on our students, and how a consequent encounter with critiques of that very sentiment may cause problems in the classroom. It is possible that this oversight emerges from a disposition in our 'anthropological selves'.

As anthropologists, we are used to a compartmentalisation of our Selves. Through academia and fieldwork, we learn experiences of being both the observer and the participant, and of maintaining a voice and a gaze removed one step from our subject even as we engage bodily with it. Our attachment to such distancing corresponds well with the advice given to the student mentioned above, when she went to discuss her concerns with a department colleague. His response was that she needed a degree of distance; that 'we' should be able to critique a subject as academics and see it in all its flaws, yet still be able to support it on a personal or moral level. The student however remained unsatisfied because it was not the 'answer' she was looking for. Students arriving to university education do not necessarily set up this degree of separation. When faced with a range of degree choices, or subjects they have little experience of, it is often personal (even romanticised) factors that motivate their choices. As a consequence, a discipline like Development Studies is personal to many of them, there is no separation at this stage between academic discipline and moral life choice (assuming there ever is). When we call students to conduct a critical review of their subject we are therefore inevitably asking them to re-evaluate their Selves, their morality and their life choices.

As previously discussed, re-evaluating the Self is common to student experiences of studying anthropology, but there is a difference in this case. Firstly, what is taught here is not necessarily the study of another culture, which results in reflection of the students' own biases, but a much starker levelling of an ethnocentric charge to a discipline students 'believe in' and may have more intimately constructed their Self aroundⁱⁱ. And secondly, unlike anthropology students, they can take no comfort in a feeling of *inclusion* to the sudden 'awakening' to an anthropological perspective. They do not get to feel self-satisfied in the fact they have seen through the veil. Instead, anthropological critique can leave these students detached and separated from 'their' non-anthropological subjects. What now for the development student who believes everything they ever wanted to do was a lie? What does the prospect of another two years of development studies hold for them?

The Meaning of 'Balance' and Anthropology's Contribution

It is important to recognise how this intense self-scrutiny, this 'unmaking,' can affect students' learning. While, in this case, the students became reflective, disillusioned and withdrawn, in other cases (and on other courses), I have experienced more defensive reactions. Some students stop listening, or they reject anthropology as a whole, summarising that there is no value in its contribution without taking the opportunity to explore further. One case in particular comes to mind. Last year, I also taught on an anthropology kinship course that included Human Science students taking the course as an elective. At one point during the term, they were examining anthropological critique of genetics at the same time as completing another course *in* genetics. Responding to what they felt was an 'attack' on 'their' discipline (Human Science), the class became derisive of anthropology's contribution. Mockingly they pointed out that it appeared as if anthropologists just arrive after the 'real' work has been done, to tell people how they did it wrong. 'Where is the actual contribution of anthropology?' they ask, or: 'At least "we" are trying to "do something," even if "we" get it wrong sometimes.'

Development studies students may be particularly vulnerable to anthropological critique because Development as a moral discourse is being used to partially construct the way the self is conceived and projected. Hence a greater degree of self-investment may make a critique of development have a particularly personal resonance. Interestingly the most consistent demand from student feedback was for 'balance'. These are excerpts from teaching evaluation forms:

'While questioning is important, it was all quite negative.'

'A more all rounded provision of topics and material could be used as we all ended up quite cynical.'

'It would have been good to look at good development at least on one week.'

'As well as being critical there should be a positive aspect.'

But having reviewed the literature and themes of the course, which aimed at critical evaluation, I think these comments betray a student desire for something more 'constructive' coming from anthropology. Today students, at least in Development studies, seem to be looking for 'answers' and ideas they can put into practice. As a consequence, academic deconstruction or radical critique on its own can be unsatisfactory, and it is translated as negativity. Anthropologists (in particular) have been accused of having an overly critical voice which does not provide the 'grand answers' currently in demand. The question then is *should* we try to respond to students desire for a positive answer?

Certainly there are arguments to be made that trace this trend for 'answers' back to a lazy sense of learning: students having been spoon-fed answers rather than learning the skills of critical thought in increasingly exam-oriented syllabi. I suspect that with Development studies there is also a more general desire for answers out of a search for security and stability in quite complicated, uncertain times; a personal need for positive direction. The question then is how to respond while maintaining the integrity of our discipline? And more pressingly, should we respond? These questions

could be misleading. Indeed we do need to respond to students' expectations but the emphasis should be on illustrating that anthropological critique, the different perspective we offer, *is* constructive. What is occurring here therefore is a miscommunication of what anthropology *is*. In our response to students it would be unhelpful to separate criticism and deconstruction from applied, or more 'practical' anthropological approaches, since critique *is* anthropology's greatest contribution. And while it may be a radical contribution, it is no less unfit for a practical world.

Conclusion

As anthropologists we revel in self-criticism and questioning. Shedding light on preconceptions is perhaps the greatest joy anthropology offers - a moment of revelation: showing something considered complex to be simple; something thought obvious to be intricate; and practices seen as 'normal' suddenly appearing alien. We enjoy this revelatory moment as much, if not more, when it is focused on our own discipline. Sharing this with our students can be hugely gratifying. But this joy is not necessarily transferable if it appears as 'us' (Anthropology), criticising 'them' (Development).

To be able to successfully communicate, we therefore need to recognize the ways in which students, particularly in courses they are treating as vocational, are increasingly using their choice of discipline in self-affirmation. We need to recognise that when we are teaching we are not simply engaging with academic discourses and debates, but with structures of the learners' Selves. Only then can we attempt to counter defensive barriers and the emotive responses that blinker students into focusing only on the negatives. There is no doubt that while students continue to embrace the moral crusade of Development presented in the media and politics, they will suffer a personal crisis when it comes to re-evaluating these beliefs. Our role then is to be aware of this so we can be ready to teach accordingly, to support them to find their own way through to the other side.

Throughout the course we (the two tutors and lecturer) regularly discussed our emerging concerns and how students were reacting to particular readings. In the end, to find a more practical and constructive answer, we looked to incorporate more applied anthropology positions. We arranged a discussion panel that included doctoral students working in the area of development and post-development who had practical experience and could elaborate on ways of 'doing development' that responded to the challenge of previous critiques. Through Leutchford's contacts, we also invited an NGO, War on Want, to speak who we felt demonstrated an awareness of the problems associated with Development practice. War on Want is not a 'development' organisation but instead positions itself as a campaign organisation recognising poverty as political. It assists mobilising groups already in operation in other countries, it engages in education and lobbying campaigns, and it recognises that problems 'elsewhere' are intimately linked to power and politics 'here'. War on Want therefore serves as a good example of how it is still possible to respond to crisis across the globe in a way that is less likely to undermine local mobilisation and does not over-privilege a particularly Eurocentric ideal of 'progress'. I believe these presentations succeed in getting students to think about a potential future for development practice following the damning criticism they had heard throughout the term. The sessions were voluntary and came at the last week of term when student numbers tend to drop off, but we were all pleasantly surprised to find the sessions well attended, particularly by those who had developed some of the most negative perspectives.

In anthropology, my experience of teaching is that we offer many critical courses, but stop short of going on to show how our critical, self reflective content can have a positive application in 'the real world'. In Phillmore's experience of teaching anthropology in Newcastle's Sociology department, he found students became frustrated by anthropology's apparent inward, self reflection (2001). Illuminating how such introversion can contribute to the world is therefore important to communicating anthropology's relevance as a discipline. Nonetheless, we often leave it up to students to address this aspect themselves, to make sense of our tendency to deconstruct the world. Is it any wonder then that so often they charge anthropology with producing only critical deconstruction, and making no contributions to the 'real' problems of contemporary life? What we are witnessing in such statements is the relevance and positive contribution of anthropological knowledge getting 'lost in translation' when we teach in other disciplines. This can occur because courses may not offer practical orientations beyond introducing anthropological critiques, but more fundamentally, because students are reacting emotionally to a radical, cross-disciplinary critique that they often cannot help but take personally. If we could support them pedagogically and academically through the emotional repositioning under anthropology's critical 'gaze', then we could communicate the importance of anthropological knowledge far more successfully. After all, deconstruction can be constructive.

The following year I taught on the same course. In an attempt to tackle the possible problems head on, I spent a great deal of time in the beginning of the course inviting students to be more self-reflective and to acknowledge some of the ways in which they 'believe' in the Development process. Using myself as an example I spoke of my own desire to

'do good' in the world and how I accommodate this in my professional life. I also warned them that this course would take a critical look at that very sentiment. We discussed how in the process of looking at some of the most negative aspects of development, our main aim is ultimately to learn from past mistakes and try to keep sight of the positives. This process has been greatly supported by some of the previous year's students who had formed a society for War on Want, the NGO we had invited to talk the previous year. At the start of term, these students came to the first lecture to promote their society and forewarned the new intake that although they may get disillusioned, there are possibilities for positive contributions to the world.

I am pleased that my original students reinvigorated their passions for development, and that it is now a motivating passion that acknowledges, and hopefully takes heed of, some of the critiques of the Development industry. It is clear that introducing the NGO was obviously what the students profited from at that point in their learning process. But at the same time I fear we 'gave' them 'the answers' they were looking for, and that these answers are just as flawed as any other. This misgiving reflects my own misplaced desire: that I want students to be satisfied with critical evaluation, just as we are as academics. Instead, I might have to recognise that students are also looking for something to 'believe' in.

The challenges of teaching in Development studies is likely to increase as global issues become more pressing and financial concerns turn attention to courses with 'real' career development outcomes. This makes the successfully communication of anthropological critiques all the more important lest we lose our place in teaching within the Development field. As moral development discourses and crusade rhetoric becomes more prominent in the practices of Development, anthropology must make itself heard and listened to if we are to influence the practitioners of the future. As Stirrat explains:

development people are primarily 'doers' not reflectors. But the danger is that if they do not reflect on what drives them, what motivates them and the values that they are purveying to the world, they are in danger of producing precisely the opposite of what they are hoping to encourage (2008:421).

To successfully communicate what are increasingly important anthropological critiques of development practice, we need to recognise how student encounters with these criticisms can cause a defensive reaction that limits interdisciplinary understanding. Working to strengthen students' capacity for self-reflective learning is therefore crucial to the successful communication of anthropology not just within Development Studies, but also more widely, as a constructive, relevant discipline for the 21st century.

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Notes

ⁱ The idea of shared learning is somewhat problematic given the varied backgrounds of students and the ways in which differences do exist and do affect the ways in which student learn. We need to be wary of the trope of 'shared' learning lest it blinds us to how different student experiences and backgrounds are.

ⁱⁱ Indeed, there may be parallels here with the experiences of students with strong religious convictions taking anthropology courses.