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Flipping the Microscope:

Peer Education, Race, and Fieldwork in a South African Travel Course

Scott London and Kristen Klaaren

Introduction

This chapter explores the experience of a group of young South African university students who served as peer educators on an American January-term travel course to Johannesburg. This peer education program was designed to create an experiential learning opportunity for American students, and we were surprised to discover the significant impact on the peer educators themselves. Hired to work as "cultural consultants" to help the Americans have an immersive anthropological fieldwork experience, the course structure inadvertently carved out a space in which the relationship was flipped, enabling the peers to benefit in unforeseen ways from their own participant-observation with the students from the United States. Rather than a unilateral learning process emulating conventional fieldwork, the two diverse groups of young adults co-created their own local cultural territory in which they could explore each other's local knowledge concerning race and other topics.

The chief surprise was how much the South Africans valued this opportunity beyond the simple job description they were hired to fill. This unexpected outcome prompted us to investigate how the peer education model benefitted young South Africans, and how these benefits might be expanded. The findings presented here come from open-ended interviews conducted with eight out of twenty of the peer educators who worked with 60 American students over three different travel courses.

The interviews indicate that these young South Africans placed a high value on building personal connections with the Americans students, and that along the way they became keen observers of American culture and custom. The peers were earnest about introducing the students to South Africa, finding the process both exhilarating and exasperating. They relished the opportunity to make new discoveries about their own country, and valued processing their experiences with both the Americans and their fellow peers. The relationships among the diverse peer educators was particularly significant, as most had never before befriended or discussed history and politics with a South African of a different race. This points to the possibilities of using peer education to promote dialogue on issues of race in South Africa.

The interview responses fall roughly into three categories: 1) ethnographic perspectives on American culture and customs, 2) insights into the effectiveness of the peer education model, and 3) reflections on the value of the program for the peer educators themselves. In each instance, issues of race twine around the peers' experiences with the American students and with each other.

International Peer Education as Fieldwork

Short-term international travel courses present a distinctive learning opportunity for students interested in discovering a new culture. Spending time in a foreign country provides opportunities for engaged study unavailable in a classroom back home. Personal encounters with people, sites, and sounds add a rich experiential core to the learning process. But the richness of the experience may depend on skirting a number of pitfalls, not least the limitations of a brief visit framed by tourism. Anthropology professors, in particular, may feel compelled to set the bar low for fostering participant-observation experiences when the standard for ethnographic fieldwork is typically months or years, not weeks. In courses that travel to less industrialized or affluent societies, preoccupation with comfort or safety on the part of students—and a lack of interest on the part of local people in sharing everyday life with transient strangers—may make significant ethnographic encounters unlikely. These were the challenges we had in mind when we decided to experiment with a peer education model. We hoped that bringing American and South African students together might provide a cross-cultural "short-cut," enabling them to establish rapport in a concentrated period and to experience South Africa side-by-side (Klaaren, London, and Klaaren 2006).

Structure of the Peer Education Model and the Travel Course

All the students were enrolled in two introductory-level courses: a cultural anthropology course titled *Gender, Law, and Social Transformation in South Africa* and a social psychology course titled *Race, Privilege, and Social Transformation in South Africa*. During the first week on campus in the United States, the students met six hours per day, two hours for each of the courses and an additional two hours on the history and culture of South Africa. During the following three weeks in South Africa, there was no formal classroom instruction and the two courses were effectively merged. While gender continued to be studied through assignments and activities, race was the dominant topic in formal and informal discussion.

The peer educators met the American students at Wits University the day after arrival in Johannesburg. The daily schedule was heavy, and the peers accompanied the students for all trips, tours, and lectures. The peers were scheduled to accompany the students from nine a.m. to five p.m. but usually elected to spend evenings and days off with them as well. The peer educators saw many of these activities as exciting learning opportunities, some of which were otherwise out of reach for logistical or financial reasons. The peers reported being stimulated by the chance to process these experiences along with the American students, comparing notes, answering questions, engaging in lengthy discussions afterwards over meals or drinks.

In addition to daily field note requirements, the students had several small research assignments that did not have to involve the peer educators but often did, including ethnographic interviews, participant-observation exercises, and a current events project. Students and peers also formed blended groups to participate in topical dialogue groups. Structured activities consisted of almost daily lectures and panels by South African academics and activists, including Constitutional Court Justice Edwin Cameron. A variety of topics included the struggle for equality during the Apartheid era, the South African constitution, gender-based violence, the HIV/AIDS crisis, and LGBTQ issues. Field trips included visits to three townships, the Apartheid Museum, the Constitutional Court, the theatre, and Pilanesberg National Park for a safari.

Unstructured time was cited as particularly valuable by both peers and students, not least because it helped them to process together the sights and sounds they had absorbed, and to decompress after a long day. The bed and breakfast in the Melville neighborhood in Johannesburg and an array of restaurants, bars, and clubs provided abundant leisure spaces. Two of the most memorable events were large dinner parties in the homes of colleagues that turned unexpectedly into group explorations of lived experience under Apartheid, as South Africans of different ages and races shared their stories or those of their parents and grandparents as the American students looked on.

The first set of peer educators were hired through interviews at Wits University in Johannesburg. In subsequent years, hiring was done through referrals, with some peers coming from other universities as well. The peers were paid (from the travel course fees paid by the American students) commensurate with the salary paid to undergraduate research assistants at Wits University, as well as a stipend for food and travel. Hiring was done with an eye toward diversity, and most peer educators identified as black or white, as well as highlighting other identities (for example, some of the peers took pains to share the significance of other identities, such as Zulu or Afrikaner).

Reimagining Ethnography/Reinventing the Local

We argue that the peer education model is valuable for fostering ethnographic encounters and teaching anthropological methods, even though the actual experience of undergraduates on a brief travel course diverges from the work of professional anthropologists in myriad ways. Among these is the fact that the typical trappings of the anthropologist in the field are missing. The intrepid researcher is replaced with the class trip. Instead of the long-term immersion of the individual of one culture into the group life of another, we have two collections of people engaged in shifting subgroups as they roam together through a landscape of class activities. At the same time, this unusual configuration poses some intriguing questions about how we imagine the ethnographic encounter must be, and where it must take place.

We found that bringing together two groups of young people from different cultures into their own joint space creates the possibility of new kinds of cross-cultural learning. Rather than a static trading of facts across a divide, the sharing of knowledge was often chaotic and at times synergistic—discussions of race, for instance, ebbed and flowed over cultural commonalities and differences both within and between groups. Racism and oppression were denied, asserted, and debated amid shifting definitions and cultural assumptions from two sets of national experience. Do such interactions constitute ethnographic fieldwork? What is the meaning of a "field site" if these interactions happen on-the-go, in a mobile space co-created by students from two cultures?

These questions are embedded in challenges dating back decades, posed from within the discipline, to its most iconic image of a lone researcher traveling far in search of knowledge of exotic people (see, e.g., Clifford 1988, Marcus and Fischer 1986, Rosaldo 1989). These challenges have served anthropology well by putting old assumptions under a new light. A key example is the proper role of *informants* and their relationships with ethnographers. As anthropology seeks to take account of the power relations that shape societies and the interactions that constitute them, a top-down, *informant as knowledge commodity* model has become problematic, and relationships based on *dialogue* rather than extraction have become more common. Lassiter (2001) summarizes the turn toward a more "collaborative" and "reciprocal" approach to working with informants as marked by a shift in metaphors from "'reading *over* the shoulders of natives' to 'reading *alongside* natives'" (2001, 138). Paul Rabinow (1977) describes the key role of *friends* in his fieldwork in Morocco, people who taught him about the culture through shared moments of clarity that were nonetheless limited by differences of perspective and imperfect communication. For Rabinow, ethnography is "intersubjective," the result of dialogue between two parties who must continually work to understand each other. Our short travel course model, while a very imperfect reflection of standard anthropological fieldwork, places students from different cultures alongside each other, giving them a chance to befriend one another and to "read" each other's cultures over the din on a noisy bus.

The issue of the *location* in fieldwork has also come under scrutiny, as the standard model of distant travel gives way to a less rigidly territorial conception of where ethnography needs to take place. In the first chapter of their edited volume *Anthropological Locations* (1997), Gupta and Ferguson identify the "contradiction" in a discipline still wed to a methodology that dictates long-term fieldwork in a single location, yet also determined to "give up its old ideas of territorially fixed communities and stable, localized cultures, and to apprehend an interconnected world in which people, objects, and ideas are rapidly shifting and refuse to stay in place" (1997, 4). This challenge to conventional, clearly-bounded field sites enables fieldwork as a method to adapt to new conditions and technologies that reflect a more interconnected and globalized world (see, e.g., Hannerz 2003 on multi-site ethnography, and Modan 2016 on fieldwork using new media). Yet this shift risks a loss of focus on anthropology's distinctive ability to explore the local worlds where most people live. This is perhaps no more apparent than in the realm of "engaged anthropology," in which anthropological methods are put to the task of solving human problems (see Low and Merry 2010). In this instance, painting a portrait of a bounded community of people who share a set of cultural values and interests—even if it is partial and contingent—can be useful, especially if it conveys the understanding that the people themselves are eager to share as active participants in the research. Wagner (this volume), for example, details the benefits of using fieldwork to gather and interpret local knowledge relevant to a power line project in Appalachia. Here, community members themselves train to conduct ethnographic interviews, becoming both subjects and producers of research that empowers local participation in the decision-making process. This form of local engagement, moreover, need not preclude insights from consideration of external processes. Indeed, theorizing about location and fieldwork may point to the ongoing need for pliable definitions that can be tooled with particular projects in mind.

As we moved around the city, this culturally and racially diverse group of students and peers carved out their own shifting terrain through dialogue and shared experience. We believe there is value in describing this in spatial terms because the engagement unfolded in spaces that never felt wholly South African or American, but were rather a reflection of the ongoing "intersubjective" interactions among all these young people. Our research shows that a key result was a sense of engagement and learning on both sides of the equation. In her work on engaged anthropology in Appalachia, Wagner demonstrates how collaboration among community members, student researchers, and anthropologists can foster reciprocity and a mutual feeling of having gained something satisfying and special from the experience. While our course was less problem-driven in an explicitly political sense, the issues of race and racism were a focal point for a lot of closely engaged discussion, from which both groups report gaining a great deal of knowledge and insight.

We are unaware of other research on using peer education as the foundation of an international travel course. But engaged anthropology has formed the backbone of a growing number of travel courses that emphasize research experience and international service learning (see, e.g., Crabtree 2013, Nickols et al. 2013; for a discussion of an international service learning project through the prism of engaged and activist anthropology, see Goldstein 2012). We believe that the peer education model could be easily adapted for travel courses built around service learning projects.

Peer Educators' Ethnographic Perspectives on Americans in South Africa

A primary role of the peer educators was to help to create an experience of doing ethnographic fieldwork in a very brief period of time. Although we did not anticipate how the peers themselves would view their time with the Americans, anthropological fieldwork as a rule carries the potential for a richly reciprocal learning process. It should come as no surprise that the peer educators—intelligent and thoughtful university students self-selected to participate—would be eager to build rapport and learn from their American peers. Their curiosity, fueled by pop culture images and common comparisons between the United States and South Africa, encouraged close engagement with the students. The peers observed closely as the young Americans grappled with culture shock and ethnocentrism, and their response was a mix of compassion and exasperation.

The peers and students were mismatched in more ways than one. Coming from families where their mothers and fathers had little access to higher education under Apartheid, these young South Africans conveyed a tenacious and grateful attitude toward being at university. In contrast, many of the Americans came from privileged and sheltered backgrounds and appeared generally less inclined to take their education seriously. From our perspective, the peers seemed more mature overall, and less parochial in their worldview. One result was that the peer educators typically saw more clearly when the students' behavior became problematic. Johannesburg holds many big city perils for the uninitiated, and the students' privileged assumption of security often led them to resist the peers' seasoned counsel. Describing people who they generally considered good friends, the peers nonetheless made critical note of an array of characteristics that they found in the students. Moments of ethnocentrism and cultural insensitivity live large in their anecdotes.

The peers describe instances of the students' ethnocentric responses with a mix of incredulity and indulgence. Evoking a caricature of Americans at a McDonalds's restaurant in a foreign country, Noma describes students reacting badly to the small portions.

> I remember one of them wanted a McDonald's. "I just want to have McDonald's!" And when she went there, it's like, "Oh my goodness! The size!" You're sitting there and you're thinking, "Well you wanted McDonald's, that's the size we have in South Africa.". . . But, it's just one of those experiences where you get that culture shock and you learn a lot from it. (Noma, black peer educator)

Ndaba speaks often of the students being "independent." Elsewhere in the interview, he suggests that this trait can be positive, but here he links it to arrogance and cultural insensitivity.

> They are very, very independent. They just, they want anything, they just go at it. I want this . . . why must we first have to think is it right? . . . Is it their culture? Is it really offensive if I do this? Also, another thing that I think I picked up, the pride with which they walked. You know you could see from a distance, they walk with such pride. . . . I always thought, maybe it's the Americans, you know all the time they're so independent, you walk like you owned the world. (Ndaba, black peer educator)

The drinking habits of the students were seen as generally problematic among the peers, although most members of both groups consumed alcohol together regularly in the evenings. Americans on travel courses over much of the world revel in lower drinking ages. But the students were seen by the peers as prone to excess, with vulnerability to crime or assault being the primary concern. Toka marvels over the abandon of the students in the evenings at bars and nightclubs.

> I mean they drink to be sloshed, like, you know, they say, oh, what's this expression that they use? They use, there's an expression, like, I know, they want to "pass out." I mean they take shots and have these competitions and they just take shots. And I think, I think at the end of the day, I realize it's . . . sort of the culture. I don't know whether it's American culture or youth culture . . . but I was shocked, you know, the amount of liquor they take in, and how proud they were for doing that. "Jeez, did you see that I was out?!" (Toka, black peer educator)

Several of the peers recalled an activity in which we paired a visit to the high-end Sandton Mall with one to the impoverished urban Alexandra Township just a few miles apart in order to highlight persistent economic inequalities. We were fortunate that day to have a tour guide who wanted to show us where he lived in a hostel in the township. The hostels are infamous for their role in the exploitation of migrant laborers who were kept near mines and factories but away from white residential areas. The students and peers filed off the bus and began looking around and talking with locals. But one of our white students refused to get off the bus, proclaiming, "You're not keeping us safe!" as she sobbed with her head on her seat. Some of the peer educators expressed sympathy and tried to reassure her. Others were simply puzzled by the way she read signs of poverty as indications of danger. One black male peer said that he felt personally offended, because she was essentially refusing to acknowledge his daily life, while ignoring his reassurance and refusing to acknowledge how her own privilege shaped her perceptions. Mieke expresses both her anger and her empathy, highlighting the opportunity for reflection that the incident provided.

> I mean the hostels are historically so important in South Africa, and . . . the uprisings that happened . . . And I

> think that's part of my frustration with her as well, is I kind of wanted to say, not only are you not taking notice of what you might be saying to the peer educators, but also . . . don't you understand how monumental being allowed into this setting is? And that, I, I actually had to spend the rest of the afternoon kind of like making sure that I stayed away from her. . . . It just brought up a whole lot of emotions that I think I knew at the time were probably unfair . . . if you're 18 or 19 from a relatively sheltered background, that it is completely overwhelming, and then to a certain extent you are allowed to respond to that. I just kind of wanted to shake her and say like, "How dare you! This is the reality, not just of the people living here, but also some of the peer educators!" . . . the impact that it had on the peer educators. But at the same time that's not something that you can . . . can't prevent that. And it's probably good for everybody involved to have that experience. (Mieke, white peer educator)

Insights into the Effectiveness and Limitations of the Peer Education Model

Although the peer educators developed an astute set of critiques about the students' foibles, they nonetheless characterized them as eager participants in the peer education model. While the peers were aware of the various academic assignments the students had to complete—often with the peers' assistance—these were rarely mentioned in the interviews. The effectiveness of the course, in their view, resulted from the abundant time that peers and students spent together, and the rapport that flourished as a result. Dialogue on race is also cited repeatedly to illustrate the potency of interactions with the students.

The peers frequently connect structured activities to students asking questions, emphasizing that the real learning occurs in the interaction between peer and student. Nhlanhla references a visit to the Apartheid Museum, which prompted many students to ask about the success of the post-Apartheid era.

> "Oh, like we went to the Apartheid Museum and I mean, things were quite bad. But is it still so bad now?" You know, and, having to tell them our experiences. . . . Like I just feel like that was just so much more enlightening. (Nhlanhla, black peer educator).

Nhlanhla makes a similar comment about the many lectures that the peers and students attended together. In this instance, she asserts that her experience of segregation at her university is more salient than the lectures they attended.

> I go to Wits [University] . . . like I don't know how to explain this, but like in terms of segregation on campus? You know, it wasn't something we discussed in the lectures, but having like one of the students come up to me to ask me about that, it was so much more easier for me to sort of like explain to them that, you know, these kinds of things still do happen, even though it's not as bad as it used to be. . . . And it was so much easier for them to see . . . from my perspective than it was from a lecture. And even though we were in the lecture and everybody concentrates and like took notes. (Nhlanhla)

Nhlanhla illustrates the opportunity to learn from the lived experience of the peers in reference to her own township upbringing.

> But like . . . I feel like being with me and actually just sharing my experiences they actually, they learned a lot about what it, I mean, I was a young black girl from Soweto. And I don't know, I feel like they just got to see a very

> different side from everything that they sort of like know about people from the township or how we're supposed to be like. . . . I just feel like they learned a lot about South African experience. They learned a lot about, about what it was like us growing up in the township. (Nhlanhla)

Mieke credits the students with choosing to engage beyond the minimum requirements of the course, enabling them to benefit from the "space for dialogue."

> You know, they did the reading, they did your assignments, and, you know, we are fun to hang out with, and you know, that's where it ends. But, my overwhelming sense of that, that time that I spent with your students was there was so much space for dialogue, and . . . that even if there was just one of them who asked a question, like, at the end of the conversation there'd be six or seven people involved in it. And I think that people like talking about themselves. So, it does work well from that perspective because if the students are prepared to ask the questions, the peer educators will happily talk. (Mieke)

The dialogue was heavily dependent on the unstructured time that was woven into the busy schedule kept by the students and peers. As Comfort points out, even the long stretches on the bus provided meaningful learning opportunities.

> You know, you brought those students and then you also managed to get some South African students, and you know. Just getting them together, and let them flow and whatever happens, happens. That's what I was seeing. I mean where we were sitting in the bus, you know, notice that peer educators were . . . just sitting randomly in around the bus with all the students, just mingling and

> . . . I mean even for me, most of the learning actually took place . . . hanging out and chilling and doing all these things. (Comfort, Black peer educator)

Diversity within the peer educator group is cited frequently as a resource for teaching the students about the heterogeneity of South African culture and racial identity, and for opening up dialogue about race. Asanda highlights the opportunity to learn about differences among peers of different races, but also within racial groups.

> You could chat to Rob and feel like, "I can relate a bit more to Rob," and chat to me like, and be like, "She's completely different!" . . . So you're not getting a sense of South African culture, but different cultures within South Africa. . . . But also there's an expectation that just because you are black and you are black, you should sort of understand each other. . . . Okay, I think actually did come up, because I had one of the students come up to me, he's like, "You're black and so-and-so is also black. But you're completely different. How come?" (Asanda, black peer educator)

According to Charles, dialogue on race did not come easily, but emerged as rapport expanded between the two groups.

> I would say they've learned a lot, basically because most of your students were white, right? And yeah, and we're black. And initially, there was this kind of resistance between us, but as they got used to us and we actually talked about the racial issue . . . So it actually opened their eyes. . . . And we talked more about it, even the discussions, even though we were just chilling around and yeah. It made them to be aware that racism is around and how . . . to actually confront those particular situations. And

> they even told the same thing that even in the USA, it is still happening. So, we kind of like on the same page and understood each other. (Charles, black peer educator)

Reflections on the Value of the Program for the Peer Educators

We were initially inattentive to the potential value of the course for the peers beyond their salary and curiosity about meeting a group of young Americans. As the peers began to help us understand the travel course as a two-way street, we saw that both groups valued many of the same things, not least personal connections with their age-mates. As the peers and students conducted joint participant-observation, the peers welcomed the chance to learn more about American culture, and to unlearn the many stereotypes they carried about Americans. Yet learning about South Africa and befriending South Africans of other races was in many cases a significant experience. In addition, spaces for dialogue about race and racism is a theme woven through many of the interviews. All these cases help demonstrate the profound impact that direct experience of “the Other” can have on understanding across perceived divides of identity (as Adams and Damron demonstrate in the case of community integration of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, this volume).

Despite the short period in the field, the quality of the time allowed for the start of many meaningful friendships. Ori notes that these took place between the two groups, but also among the peers.

> That you really did come out with friends, you did come out with relationships. That even though we were together for a very short period of time. Even within that short period of time . . . it’s . . . I really felt I could turn to a lot of the American students and to peer educators who

> I hadn't met before. And really treat them as very close friends. (Ori, white peer educator)

Noma describes her emotions at the end of the course, and also how the sense of connection helped the group overcome disagreements.

> I learned a lot and I cannot overemphasize that enough. And it was also an emotional experience. . . . And I really felt I connected with some of the students. . . . I was surprised. . . . I was actually crying at the airport and I couldn't believe I had that experience in such a short period of time that I connected. I was amazed with that myself, where we grew to know each other. We disagreed hectically. . . . But at the same time, you come back together again, and you pick up each other's conversations and you iron things out if there was any offense or anything like that. (Noma)

While the emphasis in the course was on the American students learning from the peers as a complement to the course content, peers described learning new things directly from the students as well. Asanda talks about interacting with one of the American students who was a lesbian, and the experience of having her own ideas challenged.

> I think, I think interacting with people who've got a completely different background from yours, it challenges some of your views about things . . . one of the people in the group was a lesbian, and I didn't know. And I had my certain views about it. And it so happened that the person was doing research on views about lesbians and gays in South Africa. And she had me make a comment . . . [but] she didn't tell me she was lesbian. . . . And she

> was just talking, and we're talking, and I was telling her how I feel. And, her questions kept challenging . . . So how come you think this way about this? And after she left, I thought about some of [these] things. (Asanda)

The peers valued learning about the United States from an "insider perspective," and welcomed the chance to be disabused of stereotypes, positive or negative. Charles describes realizing he idealized the United States a little too much.

> So long as you are living in America, therefore you have a brighter future. But that was not the case. They told me that there were a lot of like drug cases . . . maybe when it's high school. . . . I thought that this was the problem we were facing in South Africa or Africa in general. But they told me that they are actually experiencing that particular thing. (Charles)

In addition to obtaining new information, some stereotypes were dispelled through observation. Asanda and Comfort make similar comments about unlearning stereotypes through direct experience of the students.

> I was very anti-American. . . . But interacting with them . . . it helped me also correct my misconceptions about Americans because I just grouped all of them into that crowd. And I don't like them. But then you get to see . . . even if they are Americans, they are people. (Asanda)

> So it doesn't necessarily make me to sit down and one day I asked them questions and then they said, "No! We don't do that in the U.S." or "No, we're not like that." It was just through observing and just being with them that I was able to have some of the stereotypes actually be erased. (Comfort)

The opportunity to see new sights and sounds through the course enabled the peers to learn new things about South African society. Ori mentions a trip to Katlehong Township where he would ordinarily not go.

> Going to Katlehong, going to places, really also gave me a sense of, you know, wow! There is so much in this country that I'm overlooking. You know, and so much that I still have to explore. (Ori)

Asanda and Charles both describe the shock of seeing examples of South African poverty close-up.

> Especially with the visits to Soweto, to those places where you really see poverty, it, I think it opened up not just their eyes but our eyes. Because some things were a shocker for me too. (Asanda)
>
> Basically, I was suddenly travelling. I was kind of like embarrassed. Knowing people from outside expect you to know better about your culture . . . And I was not like that, I was like them, I was shocked as they were. And that particular thing made me to, to want to research more, and I did the research. (Charles)

For Noma, making new discoveries about South Africa activated her sense of patriotism.

> I mean, if I had to sum it all up, I would say it had made me patriotic. You know, where I was surprised with the amazement with certain things and made me appreciate the country more. (Noma)

Several of the peers described social taboos surrounding talking about race. Mieke notes an attitude that downplays the importance of dialogue about race.

> There's no dialogue happening in South Africa at the moment. . . . The overwhelming sense that you get is like, get on with it. You know, it's just sort like don't talk about it just do it. (Mieke)

In some instances, the course appears to have given the South African peers more room to discuss race vis-à-vis the students. Mieke describes how she sees group interaction among students and peers creating a new "safe space," suggesting that the presence of the Americans helped to displace some of the tensions that ordinarily suppress discussion.

> This sort of almost triangle of interactions of the black South African peers, the white South African peers, and the American students and how it, how the groups interacted . . . there's a strange dynamic of creating a safe space because although the South Africans were not that comfortable talking about the issues because there's the outsider, the outsiders are there. Suddenly, it's a safe space and you're happy to say things that you, you know, wouldn't necessarily talk about. (Mieke)

Dialogue about race in the context of South Africa's brutal history of racism is difficult to schedule. The strength of our model may lie in the fact that it is adaptive enough to stay out of the way and allow people to talk on their own terms. At one fortuitous dinner that included peers, students, and an array of South African colleagues and friends of different races, a large-group discussion began spontaneously, thanks to the generosity of the participants. A white university professor who had been active in the struggle against Apartheid talked about how alienated he now felt in a less "European" South Africa. One of the black peer educators talked about how far away Apartheid seemed to him personally, but how proud he felt of his older relatives who had been courageous in the resistance movement. Mieke's mother was also present, and Mieke heard her talk for the first time about being a member of the *Black Sash* movement—a group made up of white women who joined the struggle against Apartheid. In her interview, Mieke recalls her experience of the evening and what it was like to listen to her mother.

> That evening that we had dinner . . . where people had an opportunity to speak about their experiences . . . there was also, once that was over, there was just kind of mingling and hanging out and being able to go and follow-up on you know, "You said this, I found that really interesting." I thought that that evening was definitely something worth trying to, to recreate if possible . . . I mean, that was an amazing evening for me as well. Now I actually, because my mom spoke. And you know, we, there are very few opportunities where as a child you get to hear your parents speak in that kind of context. (Mieke)

Listening to the Peer Educators: Improvements to the Course

Recognizing the impact that a travel course with American students can have on peer educators, we now view the course as a reciprocal experience that needs to be planned with the needs of both groups of young people in mind. The peers' critiques and suggestions have proved helpful in this regard, and will shape future travel courses. These are the changes we hope to make:

1. Spend the first week of January-term in Johannesburg rather than on campus. This would add significantly to the cost of the course but would carry several benefits. We could introduce the

peers and students earlier in the process, and provide classroom-based preparation for both groups. The course could have a stronger comparative element, e.g., reviewing the history of race in both countries side-by-side.

2. Provide training for the peer educators with South African experts on inter-group facilitation. This would allow for more explicit focus on dialogues on race. It would also give both groups a skill set in facilitated dialogues that they can use beyond the bounds of the course.

3. Provide certification for the peer educators. After working very hard for three weeks, the peers made it clear that they had learned a lot but had no credential to show for it that might be useful for future employment or educational opportunities. Developing certificates in consultation with South African university authorities would enable us to fill this need.

Conclusion

Short-term international travel courses can achieve a range of worthwhile goals, from "tourism with books" to high quality cultural immersion in which locals and visitors feel respected and enriched. As we began to plan this course, our aspiration to reach for the latter felt tenuous. We bemoaned our own poor preparation to help students get more out of a visit to the Apartheid Museum than the fleeting sensations of horror and hope any American might feel passing through on vacation. Finding culturally appropriate, abundant, and safe ways for our students to engage in ethnographic activities seemed like a crapshoot, and certainly not something we could build a three-week course around. The value of a course in which we would provide a deep sense of the culture while also teaching field methods preoccupied us, yet felt elusive. Once the idea of South African peer educators dawned on us, we became more hopeful.

Now our imagined American students leaving a lecture from a South African scholar would have a South African undergraduate pondering the meaning—or griping about the tedium—at their side. Now there was a chance for real rapport to have a chance to build, making "in-depth ethnographic interviewing" worth teaching (for us) and worth attempting (for the students).

During the first days of the course we could see that amid the budding friendships and nearly endless conversations, key issues such as race were not following a simple pattern of "South Africans teach Americans about the enduring legacy of Apartheid." Instead, black and white South Africans and black and white Americans were engaging in complex discussions that involved a fair measure of conflict and frustration as well as insight and new understanding. Our perspective on the nature of the course began to shift when we first heard a black South African peer tell us this was the first time he had spoken with a white South African, and so we turned our attention more to the peers' experiences. As we began to listen to the peers elaborate on their own participant-observation with the Americans, we realized that it was inadequate to conceptualize the fieldwork experience as unidirectional. As we contemplated conducting research on the course, our interest expanded from pedagogical effectiveness for the students to questions about the benefits for the peers: What were they learning from the Americans about the United States? What skill sets were they developing that could be valuable beyond the bounds of the course? How was their own understanding of race and racism being challenged and expanded in unique ways through this experience? What features of a peer education model—such as international dialogue groups on race—could be applied in other contexts, perhaps with more wide-ranging results?

Lastly, we do not want to overstate the case for our insights into how anthropologists grapple with received notions about where "the field" is located and how ethnographic encounters ought to be structured. This is, after all, a three-week travel course. We have sought primarily to assess and recommend a pedagogical method for undergraduate international education. At the same time, viewing the peer education model in action has given us a chance to reflect on how the nature of ethnography changes when we start with the blending of members of two cultural groups, in contrast with more conventional approaches. Similarly, questions about *where* ethnography takes place may shift when cultural informants carve out their own distinct terrain separate (symbolically, and perhaps even geographically) from the dominant surroundings. Thus the "local" focus of anthropology may sometimes be less a function of where anthropologists travel to than of the spaces they create after they arrive.

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