

October 2020

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Kistler, Ashley (2020) "Learning Anthropology by Teaching Anthropology: A Case Study of Five Service-Learning Classes at Rollins College," *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 1 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/jces/vol13/iss1/9>

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Learning Anthropology by Teaching Anthropology: A Case Study of Five Service-Learning Classes at Rollins College

Ashley Kistler

Abstract

As an anthropologist, I strive to incorporate the principles of engaged ethnographic research into my teaching. This paper presents a case study of five service-learning projects conducted by anthropology students at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. I contrast the minimal impact of two unsuccessful projects focused on documenting participants' family lives with the great success of the later projects, in which my students taught anthropology-themed courses to older adult students. These projects were successful because they were mutually beneficial: They helped my students apply their knowledge outside of the classroom while providing opportunities for continuing education for older adults seeking to engage in academic debate. I argue that using the methods of collaborative ethnography can help scholars to design community engagement experiences that are more impactful for students and community partners alike.

Introduction

As an anthropologist, I strive to incorporate the principles of engaged ethnographic research into my teaching. After two service-learning projects I planned early in my academic career failed to have their intended impact, I evaluated how employing the methods of collaborative anthropology, which have guided my research in Guatemala for more than a decade, can prepare scholars and students to design community-based projects that are both meaningful and purposeful for all participants. By doing so, anthropologists can better assess and meet the needs of the communities they serve and enhance student learning outside of the classroom.

In this paper I examine how differences in the design, methods, and implementation of these projects changed their outcomes. I contrast the lack of community buy-in and minimal impact of two initial projects focused on documenting participants' family lives with the greater success of the later projects, in which my students taught free anthropology-themed courses to older adult students. In these projects, my students designed modified versions of the courses they took with

me, one on Maya history and culture and two on anthropology and the family, to teach to older adult learners. These projects helped my anthropology students apply their knowledge outside of the traditional classroom environment and understand course material in a more profound way. This article contributes to the growing body of literature on anthropology and community engagement by arguing that employing the methods of collaborative anthropology to design and implement community engagement projects helps scholars to design experiences that are mutually beneficial and that enhance student learning while satisfying a real and established community need. In addition, the comments from student evaluations that I examine here reveal that community engagement experiences enhance the teaching of anthropology today by helping students to learn and apply skills, such as public speaking, that they will use in their future careers. This article highlights that participation in community engagement projects underscores for students the value of ethnography and ethnographic skills in the real world beyond their college careers.

Community Engagement and Anthropology

Anthropology is a social science discipline that takes a holistic approach to studying the human culture and society and examines how cultural norms and practices shape the way that people perceive and interact with the world. Anthropology consists of four subdisciplines that take varied approaches to studying the human condition: ethnography, in which anthropologists work with contemporary communities to document and analyze cultural practice; archaeology, in which archaeologists examine the material remains of past human societies; biological anthropology, in which scholars study the human biological condition and its relation to culture and environment; and linguistic anthropology, which considers how language creates and reflects the cultural realities of its speakers. Participant observation, or the practice of learning about a community's way of life through total immersion and participation in it, is the hallmark of anthropological research.

Recent scholarly literature explores the relationship between community engagement and anthropology. Many works explore how integrating community engagement experiences into courses enhances the teaching of anthropology (Diamente & Wallace, 2004; Johnston, Harkavy, Barg, Gerber and Rulf, 2004; Keene & Colligan, 2004; Sanday & Janowitz, 2004; Hébert, 2008; Menzies & Butler, 2011) while others consider how ethnographic theory informs the practice of community engagement (Camacho, 2004; Keene & Colligan, 2004; McCabe, 2004; Simonelli, Earle & Story, 2004; Hathaway & Kuzin, 2007; Polin & Keene, 2010; Ruggiero, 2016). These works establish that incorporating community engagement work into anthropology courses helps students to apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to the communities in which they live and work. Hébert (2008) argues that service-learning projects transform the teaching of anthropology by helping students to explore the discipline's real-world applications. Diamente and Wallace (2004) conclude that by integrating service-learning projects focused on ecotourism into an ethnographic field school in Guatemala, they trained students not only in basic ethnographic skills, but also to be engaged anthropologists concerned with designing research projects that meet community needs. Johnston and others (2004) likewise show that the University of Pennsylvania's Urban Nutrition Initiative trained anthropology students in

ethnographic practice and civic engagement while working to promote healthy life choices. Others document similar experiences integrating community engagement experiences into their courses (Stearns, 1986; Everett, 1998; Marullo, 1998; Sanday & Jannowitz, 2004; Sanders, 2005; Nuñez & Chin, 2006). In their discussion of a collaborative project with members of the Gitxala nation in British Columbia, Menzies and Butler (2011, p. 169) state that, "...a service learning approach has the potential to facilitate the scholarly growth of more engaged and considerate students."

Other recently published works explore how anthropological principles and ethnographic methods can be used to design service-learning projects that are culturally relevant and that meet established community needs (McCabe, 2004; Stewart & Webster, 2011). Keene and Colligan (2004) state that anthropology presents a model for the practice of community engagement from the extensive preparation anthropologists undertake before entering the field to anthropology's commitment to reflexivity and positionality. They state, "To think about our angle of observation, the voice we adopt when we speak—to be self-conscious about these things—is second nature to the practice of anthropology and something we build into the way we teach our students about how to do ethnography or field work" (Keene & Colligan 2004, p. 8). Camacho (2004) shows that ethnographic methods can enhance community engagement in several ways. First, anthropologists reflect on their own biases, limitations, and privilege prior to embarking on fieldwork to minimize power differentials of scholars and members of the communities in which they work. Next, anthropologists develop sustained and long-term collaborative relationships with communities and community organizations, something that practitioners of community engagement should also strive to do. Finally, ethnographic writing and storytelling provide an important avenue for students and others involved in community engagement to reflect on their experiences and community impact. Chapters included in Stewart and Webster's (2011) edited collection reveal that having a basic understanding of culture and cultural relativity helps participants in community engagement projects to assess the cultural dynamics in play in the communities with whom they work and accurately identify their needs. Hathaway and Kuzin (2007) likewise argue that training

in ethnographic research prepares scholars to undertake community engagement projects, since they are qualified to analyze the social problems present in the communities in which they work. Simonelli and others (2004) show that participant observation and ethnographic interview techniques are among the ethnographic methods that best enable scholars to design projects that are of mutual benefit for students and scholars and community partners.

While ethnographically grounded service-learning projects can make a difference in local and international communities by addressing important social issues, a “colonial” mentality often shapes the practice of community engagement and the discipline of anthropology. An asymmetry exists in the relationship between community partners and the researchers in these projects, as the perspectives of researchers are often prioritized over those of the community partners due to researchers’ access to funding, knowledge, and other resources (Camacho, 2004; Himley, 2004; Keene & Colligan, 2004; Simonelli et al., 2004; Menzies & Butler, 2011; Kistler, 2011; Mobley, 2011; Vaccaro, 2011). In many cases, researchers who believe that they know how to solve community problems design and implement projects with little to no community feedback and without considering how culture informs communities’ own perceptions of need. Community members may feel threatened, suspicious, or insecure about community engagement projects and this power imbalance causes the relationships between participants and the community to become tense or unwelcome.

Simonelli and others (2004) consider how power asymmetry and privilege shape service-learning projects in Zapatista communities in Mexico. Students arrived in Mexico expecting to serve the community through active involvement in some facet of local life. The Zapatistas, however, defined service in a different way. As a former rebel army in the process of becoming an autonomous political group, they found benefit in groups listening to their story and expressing their support. Though students had difficulty understanding this different notion of service at first, they ultimately had a more meaningful experience by learning about and working within the community’s self-identified needs.

Collaborative Anthropology

The methods of collaborative anthropology prove useful in identifying community need and

in designing culturally informed projects. Now well-established within the larger discipline of anthropology, collaborative ethnography strives to undertake projects that engage indigenous communities in the process of planning, implementing, analyzing, and disseminating the results of research. Together, anthropologists and members of the communities with whom they work identify areas of mutual interest and plan projects accordingly. While the specific trajectory and methods of collaborative ethnographic projects vary according to the norms of the communities involved, all collaborative ventures engage the voices of indigenous collaborators in their resulting cultural representations (Lassiter, 2005). Lassiter defines collaborative anthropology as:

an approach to ethnography that deliberately and explicitly emphasizes collaboration at every point in the ethnographic process, without veiling it—from project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and, especially, through the writing process. Collaborative ethnography invites commentary from our consultants and seeks to make that commentary overtly part of the ethnographic text as it develops. In turn, this negotiation is reintegrated back into the fieldwork process itself (p. 16).

Since traditional ethnographic writing is not always accessible to the indigenous communities with whom ethnographers work, many collaborative projects find creative ways to disseminate knowledge including songs or raps, or non-academic forms of writing (Butler, 2013; Hale & Stephen, 2013).

Collaborative ethnography strives to minimize the power imbalance that exists between Western researchers and indigenous participants in traditional forms of ethnography, which subjugate local cultural perspectives to the authority of Western academics. By working as equals with indigenous colleagues, or with community partners in the case of community engagement projects, anthropologists involved in collaborative research work to overcome this imbalance and give agency to indigenous communities through ethnographic dialogue (Atalay, 2012). Addressing these power dynamics and the factors that shape them allows co-researchers to work together more cohesively.

Collaborative ethnographic projects can hold political significance for the communities that participate in them. For example, a collaborative project in Bolivia, the Taller de Historia Oral Andina, investigated a historical Aymara leader, Santos Marko T'ula, to help the local indigenous community contextualize their indigenous identity in the legacy of their past (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1997). In Guambía, Colombia, involvement in a collaborative ethnographic oral history project helped community members to legitimize their rights to ancestral land by documenting their community's historical claim to it (Vasco Uribe, 2002). In this project, anthropologist Vasco Uribe partnered with local activists from Guambía to examine local cultural and linguistic traditions and collaboratively develop a theoretical ethnographic research framework. While their initial goal was not to produce written ethnographic accounts of their project, they began to document their research in written form once they were asked to do so by local authorities, producing pamphlets and other documents in accordance with community interests. Similarly, Rappaport (2008) reflects on the internal dynamics of a collaborative project between anthropologists and members of local grassroots organizations on indigenous politics in Cauca, Colombia. In this instance, "indigenous team members participated in the project, not in the spirit of promoting ethnographic research for academic ends but with the express intention of harnessing the research experience to the goals of their organizations" (p. 10). Rappaport explains that the collaborators did not conduct their fieldwork together or write together; rather, they discussed and analyzed their research together during regular team meetings. Keeping the fieldwork and writing processes separate helped to overcome perceived power imbalances between the anthropologists and indigenous collaborators (Rappaport, 2008). Other essays document similar phenomena in other communities (Butler, 2013; Hale & Stephen, 2013; Perry & Rappaport, 2013).

An article by Menzies and Butler (2011) documents how the methods and principles of collaborative anthropology might inform and guide the community engagement in anthropology courses, exploring the University of British Columbia's commitment to community collaboration in its ethnographic field school. They write:

Our objective at the University of British Columbia has been to establish

and maintain ties with indigenous communities or organizations wishing to conduct research that records, enhances, and preserves their own cultural systems and social relations. This has entailed a detailed protocol of engagement that lays the ground rules for creating opportunities for respectful community-focused student research (p. 170).

In their work with the Gitxaala community, Menzies and Butler tied their students' community engagement to established community-based research projects focused on poverty in Prince Rupert and Lach Klan, British Columbia. Their primary goal was to use the Gitxaala cultural framework to work on social problems identified by the community. Using collaborative ethnographic methods to guide their work in this way, this field school not only provided valued service to the community, but also trained students to be engaged and ethical community-based researchers.

I have participated in a collaborative ethnographic project in my own research in the Q'eqchi'-Maya community of San Juan Chamelco, Guatemala since 2006. I have worked with a group of local activists, historians, and folklorists to investigate the story of Chamelco's town founder and cultural hero, Aj Poop B'atz', the indigenous leader who defended his community during the Spanish invasion in the early sixteenth century and who is recognized in contemporary discourse for his strategic decision to welcome the Spaniards to Chamelco in peace (Kistler, 2010, 2013, 2018). Though preserved for generations through oral history, the details of Aj Poop B'atz's life and history have been forgotten over time, due to widespread efforts in Guatemala to alienate the Maya from their own history as a form of oppression and marginalization. After community residents shared with me the need to collect more details of his life story, we worked together to collect oral histories and written documentation about Aj Poop B'atz', analyze his significance, and share the knowledge acquired through this process with the community. We worked with Chamelco's city council to establish an annual holiday honoring Aj Pop B'atz', organized an ethnohistoric symposium to celebrate the inaugural holiday, and wrote a children's book about Aj Pop B'atz', bilingual in Q'eqchi' and Spanish, for use in local schools. We delivered community presentations about the book, trained teachers on how to use it, and spoke with school authorities and children. Thus, the

principles of engaged and collaborative research have guided my research in Chamelco for more than a decade.

After reflecting on the shortcomings of my attempts to integrate community engagement experiences into my courses at Rollins, I realized that to make these projects more meaningful, impactful, and mutually beneficial, I needed to use these same principles that guide my research to inform my teaching. This paper summarizes my journey with an eye toward best practices of using collaborative research to enhance service-learning and civic engagement.

The Best of Intentions, Not-the-Best of Practice

During my first year as a faculty member at a liberal arts institution in 2007, I became taken with the idea of integrating the practices of service-learning into my courses. I had been hired as a sabbatical replacement on a one-year contract to teach introductory cultural and linguistic anthropology classes and a few upper-level seminar courses. A presentation on community engagement included during the new faculty orientation week in early August ignited a spark for me, as my own undergraduate career was immeasurably shaped by my involvement in a transformative community engagement experience.

During my first semester in college, I had volunteered at a local Hispanic community center, teaching free English-as-a-Second-Language courses to adult Latino immigrants living in the area. I did so first as a part of my coursework in the Spanish department but continued my involvement at the center throughout my four years in college, working to improve the center's curriculum and developing a lifelong commitment to community collaboration.

After hearing the new faculty orientation presentation on community engagement in the fall of 2007, I was inspired to find a way to integrate service-learning into my classes that year, since community engagement had been formative in my own life. I met with the directors of the Office of Community Engagement on our campus that fall and worked on designing a project for my spring semester course on the Anthropology of the Family. I met with their office a few times during the semester to follow up, as they identified community partners for my project and helped me think through the logistics of our project. Planning for the project was easy: We designed the project without me ever having to leave campus to meet with the partners myself. I never stopped to reflect

on the process we used to identify community partners, a step I now know to be of fundamental importance. When the spring semester started, my class eagerly embarked on this project, in which they met with members of the local community to create family portfolios to give to them. For these portfolios, students would document their family histories, create family trees, and compile stories about their family lives. The portfolios would help local families to preserve their histories for their younger generations. Students met with their partners weekly, at local older adult residences, soup kitchens, and other community venues. We often reflected on the project in class, and while my students got a lot out of their ethnographic experiences, they wondered if their community partners did as well. They noted the discomfort of some of the participants with whom they met and the indifference of others. While they learned from being able to relate the issues we discussed in class to real-world family contexts, they questioned if their partners felt the same way.

The following year, I began a tenure-track job at my current institution and sought to continue to design community engagement experiences for students.

I worked diligently with colleagues on my campus to plan a similar project to the one I'd done the year before at my previous institution in which students would work with older adults living in the area to create family portfolios, including family histories, family trees, and other stories. As the spring 2009 semester unfolded, I realized that while this project benefited my students by giving them a hands-on ethnographic experience, its benefit for the community was minimal. Students' weekly reports in class suggested that their regular visits to the residences to meet with partners put a strain on the limited resources of the senior care facilities and that some of the participants found it difficult to find time to meet with them on a regular basis while others found conversation about family life painful (Kistler, 2011). Our project had not had its intended impact because we had privileged our perception of community need as fact without taking the time to assess the community's own perception of need, just as the wide body of literature I cite previously suggests often happens with community engagement projects.

When I taught the same class a few years later during fall 2012, I made several changes to this project in hopes of improving its results. I met with the volunteer coordinator at a local older adult residence community to discuss how

we could ensure that this experience would be mutually beneficial and to plan opportunities for older adult participants to engage academically with our course material. In doing so, I hoped to overcome the asymmetry implicit in many community engagement projects (Camacho, 2004; Himley 2004; Keene & Colligan 2004; Simonelli et al. 2004; Kistler, 2011; Menzies & Butler, 2011; Mobley, 2011; Vaccaro, 2011) by working with the community to determine their actual and established needs rather than imposing my own vision on the project. While my students worked with residents to create family portfolios as they had before, we integrated a lifelong learning component into our work in which my students taught a mini-class on culture, politics, and family to our older adult partners. Instead of assigning students to a community partner, we held a mixer at the residence community in which students and community participants could form their own partnerships. In these ways we tried to build a reciprocal relationship that would be beneficial for all.

While the project went better than it had the first time, the portfolio component once again fell flat. As in past semesters, some students found it hard to connect with their older adult partners on a regular basis. Only a handful formed bonds with their partners. Students ended the semester concerned that their visits had put a strain on their partners' busy lives. Having failed a second time to achieve positive results with this project, I reevaluated the way I design community engagement experiences for students and analyzed my goals for such projects critically. I looked to collaborative anthropology for help.

Learning Anthropology by Teaching Anthropology

Since joining the faculty at Rollins, I had been asked regularly by many older adult living communities in the area to deliver talks on my research on Maya culture. Event coordinators shared that their communities had a strong interest in offering academic programming for residents, who quickly tired of bingo, craft activities, and other games. I found each presentation I gave to be both rewarding and inspiring: I loved sharing my work with receptive audiences and was amazed by how engaged residents were in the content I delivered. I was taken in by the thoughtfulness and complexity of their questions after each presentation and learned a great deal from the personal experiences they shared with me.

Reflecting on the literature on anthropology and community engagement and on Menzies and Butler's (2011) article about using collaborative ethnographic methods to design community engagement experiences, I realized the potential for my students to benefit in the same way I had while filling a true community need for lifelong learning. As I planned for my next community engagement course, I used the methods of collaborative anthropology by working with the volunteer coordinators at several older adult residences in the area to develop academic programming for their residents (See Table 1).

In spring 2013, students in my The Maya class prepared mini-courses on Maya culture to teach in the community. These courses were shorter versions of the class that students were taking with me, geared for a nontraditional student audience with no assignments, and were taught at four older adult residences and the public library. In each instance, classes were well-attended and all participants were engaged and learned from one another. In fall 2014 and spring 2016, the students in my Anthropology of the Family and Culture, Politics, and the Family courses embarked on similar community engagement experiences, designing mini-courses on the family for Rollins' Lifelong Learning program. They selected and assigned readings and planned interactive activities for their students.

During both semesters, I received overwhelmingly positive feedback about these projects from students and older adult participants alike. In the weeks and semesters that followed, I got requests for my students to offer similar experiences in the future. During in-class conversation and in the course evaluations and community engagement project assessment surveys, students commented on what they viewed as the value of the project, for themselves and for the community.

First, several students reflected on how their experiences in these projects challenged their stereotypes of older adults. One student wrote, "This [project] makes me see that the older generation shouldn't be stigmatized in such a detrimental manner in greater society." Another stated, "Rollins classes really owe the alumni and the senior community more respect. I would love to collaborate with them more often." Seeing older adults as lifelong learners changed students' perceptions of older adults as closed-minded, inflexible, or incapable or unwilling to learn. One example that students cited in our in-class

Table 1. Course Projects and Design Methods

Semester	Course	Course Project	Project Design Methods	Outcome
Spring 2009	Family, Friends, and Folks	ethnographic interviews with older adults; produce family history portfolios	meetings with college community engagement office and older adult living community staff; consult with IRB	mixed: enhanced student learning, no community benefit
Fall 2012	Anthropology of the Family	ethnographic interviews with older adults; produce family history portfolios; host discussion on family with older adult learners	meetings with older adult living community staff and residents; consult with IRB	mixed: enhanced student learning, no community benefit
Spring 2013	The Maya	College students teach abbreviated version of college course to older adult learners.	participant observation at older adult residences; collaboration with older adult living community staff and residents to assess needs to design course	success: enhanced student learning and achieved community impact
Fall 2014	Anthropology of the Family	College students teach abbreviated version of college course to older adult learners.	participant observation at older adult residences; collaboration with older adult living community staff and residents to assess needs to design course	success: enhanced student learning and achieved community impact
Spring 2016	Culture, Politics and the Family	College students teach abbreviated version of college course to older adult learners.	participant observation at older adult residences; collaboration with older adult living community staff and residents to assess needs to design course	success: enhanced student learning and achieved community impact

discussions was the open-mindedness of the older adult students in our family course on issues of marriage equality. When planning readings and discussion topics for our course, students had elected to omit a discussion of how marriage equality has changed the way that we define family, a topic they thought might be uncomfortable for some of our lifelong learners. During the first session of our class, however, one of the students, a woman in her late eighties, asked what she should call her son's long-term girlfriend. Because they were not married, she wasn't sure if she could refer to her as her "daughter-in-law" even though she viewed her as such. Her question sparked a discussion among all of our older adult students about how to refer to their children's same-sex partners or other individuals they identified as family through "non-traditional" connections. While a few of the lifelong learning students expressed conservative viewpoints on these issues,

most did not. When reflecting on this experience, my students expressed that this conversation, among others, revealed the open-mindedness of many older adults and changed my students' preconceived notions about what it would be like to teach older adult learners.

Other students were surprised to find the passion that older adults have for continued learning. One student wrote, "I really enjoyed seeing the reactions to the older people as we taught them. I loved that they wanted to continue to learn and this inspired me to remind myself to want to continue and always learn new things." As another student said, "What I learned most about the community engagement was that it wasn't only the students teaching the elderly, they were teaching us so much more too!" Participating in these projects helped to dispel students' biases about older adults and realize their important role in our community.

Students also discussed what they believed to be the community impact of their work. One student shared, “The people we taught really enjoyed their time with us and really wanted to learn,” while another reflected, “I very much enjoyed this course and it was fantastic to go to senior citizen homes to help stimulate their minds. They do not have the opportunity to have many intellectual lectures... .” During class conversation, this point was one that we explored in detail. Students speculated that the lack of opportunity for older adults to engage with academic content stemmed in part from our society’s tendency to discount their societal role and contributions.

Students also commented on the ways in which having participated in community engagement experiences had given them experiences and skills to draw on in their own lives and future careers. One student reflected:

The most challenging aspect but also the most beneficial [aspect of this course], was the community engagement project I did [giving a group lecture to multiple retirement communities]. Until this project, I have always been nervous about small-group presentations and they have not been enjoyable for me. Through this project though, I learned a lot about what my weaknesses are in such presentations and I was able to correct them. By the end of the project I felt comfortable and confident giving my presentation!

Other students expressed similar sentiments, stating while they were uncomfortable with teaching older adults at first, they grew in their public speaking abilities as a result of the project.

Another student wrote, “This [project] also really helped me with public speaking; Being in front of adults and not students is a big difference and will help me for the future,” while another shared, “I’ve learned to accommodate to learning styles and disabilities.” Students could easily identify the skills they developed through their participation in these projects.

One student shared a different take on the real-world value of their experiences. “We learned so much more about the information by teaching it to others with other opinions,” while another similarly stated, “The best way to list your own knowledge is by trying to teach it. This is why teaching course content really solidified

our knowledge.” A number of students also shared that they felt that they built community with one another and with their older adult students through this collaborative experience. It reinforced for them the importance of working on projects that satisfy community needs, they said. It also underscored for them the real-world value of ethnography and of community engagement work, revealing, as Hébert (2008) and Diamente and Wallace (2004) suggest, that participation in community engagement projects enhances students’ experiences in and ability to relate information from anthropology courses to their lives beyond the classroom.

The older adult students we taught in each course echoed my students’ positive feedback on the value of these projects. They would often stay to talk with students about current events, their coursework at Rollins, their lives, or other issues. They enjoyed having a chance to learn new things, they said, and to share their own knowledge with others. During the final meeting of one section of our family class, an adult student stated that our discussion of certain factors, like assisted reproduction and transnational adoption, that shape the way that our society defines the family had helped her make up her own mind about what constitutes family. Others said that they enjoyed the opportunity to read academic articles and discuss and debate them in class.

A conversation that a group of students and I had with a participant following a meeting of our Maya class at one local residence facility best illustrated for me the success of our project in meeting a real and established community need. After one class, a woman approached a group of students and me and shared that while she had not attended our first class, she heard about it from her father, who was a resident at the facility. Her father had not stopped talking about the class since we had been there, approximately a month before. His enthusiasm was particularly remarkable, she said, because he had Alzheimer’s disease. While he could not remember what he did or ate most days, he remembered our visits and the information he learned. She attributed this phenomenon to the fact that her father had been a college professor and the academic content of students’ lessons resonated with him. For my students, her story reinforced the positive impact of their hard work and of service-learning experience. For me, it revealed that because these projects were designed collaboratively, taking into consideration both established community need and my students’

academic goals, they succeeded in having a meaningful and empowering impact while helping my students to relate the information learned in class to the world beyond the classroom.

Best Practices: Using Collaborative Anthropology in Community Engagement

The growing body of literature on community engagement and anthropology highlights the intersections between the two fields and their potential to enhance one another. Recent scholarship suggests that using anthropological methods in designing and implementing community engagement projects strengthens their outcomes and impact both in the community and on student learning. It also reveals that the integration of community engagement projects into anthropology courses enriches student learning. The projects that I present and examine here uniquely highlight the value of using specifically collaborative ethnography methods to design community engagement experiences that are impactful and that meet student and community need. The family history projects in which my students engaged during the first years of teaching failed to make a real impact on my community partners or my students because I did not work collaboratively with community partners to determine their interests and implement projects. In these cases, I prioritized my vision for the classes and my students' academic goals over the community's needs, a common pitfall of community engagement projects that is well-documented in the cited body of academic literature. Reflecting on the lack of success of these projects, I turned to collaborative anthropology to reevaluate how I could use service-learning to help meet existing community needs.

Collaborative anthropology strives to identify, assess, and satisfy community needs through research projects, the dissemination of knowledge, and community collaboration. Using collaborative methods, anthropologists include community members in the research and writing processes, ensuring that their voices are included in the resulting cultural representations. My decade-long collaborative ethnographic project in San Juan Chamelco, Guatemala provides one example of how community-based anthropology can help communities with projects of political and cultural importance. Despite my commitment to collaboration in the field, I had not integrated these same principles into my teaching. By employing the principles that guide collaborative

ethnographic research to approach community engagement projects, I worked alongside my community partners to identify their established needs and design projects that satisfied them while enhancing my students' academic experiences.

By presenting anthropology courses to older adult students, my students learned anthropology by teaching it. As their own comments suggest, they needed to process the material they learned in my class in a more profound way to share it with their older adult students. In addition to improving their public speaking skills and building community in the classroom and beyond, my students changed their preconceived notions about older adults by viewing them as flexible, open-minded lifelong learners. These community engagement projects did not just satisfy my students' academic goals, but also made a positive community impact by offering greatly needed opportunities for academic engagement to older adults in our community, an established community need.

My students and I used the methods of collaborative anthropology to design our three successful projects in the following ways. I had observed the communities of older adult residences in which we worked for years as I was repeatedly invited to present my research to their residents. However, by working in tandem with the residences' volunteer coordinators to design this project, I did not prioritize the perception of community need that I had after my participant observation (Simonelli et al., 2004), but rather worked to include the voices and experiences of the community members with whom we would be working in the design and implementation of the project. As students in the courses, the older adult learners with whom we worked shaped the direction of course discussion and activities and even students' teaching styles. In these ways, they played an active role in the project itself. By incorporating the community's self-identified needs and perspectives into the design of our service-learning experiences, we undertook projects that were beneficial for all participants.

To use the methods of collaborative anthropology in the design of community engagement projects, scholars should first ask to conduct participant observation of potential community partners to learn about the organization's culture, norms, and practices. Then, once they are familiar with the organization, they should arrange a meeting with a representative group of potential participants in their project to get to know them more deeply and assess

their needs and interests. Having learned more about the organization they might serve, scholars should then work with possible participants and other members of the community organization to determine if collaboration will help meet an existing need and be in all parties' best interests. If they decide to proceed with their project following this conversation, they should work in tandem to design a project that meets everyone's desired goals. The integration of community voices in the design of community engagement projects is an essential step. Scholars should seek participant feedback regularly throughout the implementation of the project to ensure it continues to meet their needs and interests and to make any necessary adjustments. They should also meet with participants at the conclusion of the projects to share any outcomes of their collaborative work and conduct a final evaluation. By using the methods of collaborative anthropology in this way, scholars can enhance the impact of community engagement projects both for students and community partners.

This article, then, contributes to the wide body of literature on community engagement and the teaching and learning of anthropology by suggesting that using the principles of collaborative anthropology to guide the design and practice of community engagement is a key step in teaching students to become engaged scholars and learners who make a meaningful and lasting impact on the communities they serve. This article also outlines these best practices and reveals that participation in well-conceived community engagement projects designed using collaborative principles not only helps students to develop important skills that they can draw on in their future careers, but also underscores for students the value of ethnography, and ethnographic skills, in their lives beyond college.

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