



The Disorienting Dilemma in Teaching Introductory Anthropology

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Introduction

After more than a decade of teaching anthropology courses in post-secondary settings, I continue to reflect on a small number of significant moments in which students understood the concepts I was trying to share, but did not actually ‘get it.’ In this reflection essay, I present three teachable moments and show how that when students face ‘disorienting dilemmas’ in learning contexts, their education can be personally transformative (Mezirow 1991; Herbers and Nelson 2009). One of the moments I describe occurred in a mundane classroom setting, shortly after the screening of a provocative film called *Holy Ghost People* (Adair 1967); the other two moments arose in the intentionally exotic venue of an ethnographic field school.

This paper also permits me to reflect on a question that has followed me throughout my teaching career: what is the effect of experiential learning – through field experiences, watching films, and participatory assignments like naturalistic observations of everyday life – on internalizing successfully the concept of cultural relativity? The general answer to this question gnaws at me. I am convinced that students are not always able to apply cultural relativity in their responses to classroom films, readings, and discussion, despite student success at defining cultural relativity on tests. I believe that Jack Mezirow’s notion of ‘disorienting dilemmas’ can aid me and other teaching anthropologists in understanding a lack of connection between test results and more practical applications of ideas. Further, Mezirow’s work helps me identify better situations, ancillary teaching materials, and assignments through which students are likely to grasp anthropological concepts and, by extension, find personal transformation in their anthropological educations.

I taught my first anthropology course in 2003 when I worked as a sessional instructor at what was then called Capilano College, in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia.¹ For the next two years, I taught anthropology in the Vancouver area whenever courses were available. I was lucky. Greater Vancouver boasts two universities with anthropology undergraduate and graduate programs. It is also home to at least four teaching-oriented institutions offering first and second year university courses to students who later transfer to a regional university where they complete undergraduate degrees. These teaching institutions also deliver some upper level courses and confer general degrees in the arts and sciences. They take great pride in teaching practice built around small classes of thirty-five students.

While working at these institutions, I was privileged to learn teaching skills from terrific post-secondary teachers. I also learned through trial and error as a regular faculty member at Douglas College, in New Westminster, British Columbia. At Douglas and elsewhere, I taught sixty-four classes at the first and second year level between 2003 and 2013. My teaching repertoire included courses in introductory cultural anthropology, the anthropology of religion, sexuality and gender, and two courses on the Indigenous peoples of Canada. Now, as a faculty member at the University of Guelph, in Guelph Ontario, I remain committed to introductory students and have taught our first year service course eight times since 2013. As much as I enjoy delving more deeply into concepts and theories with upper-level students and graduate students, my heart remains devoted to teaching students who are beginning anthropological training or, indeed, might never take another anthropology course.

I discuss cultural relativity explicitly in all of my introductory level courses. Departing from textbook definitions – including that from my current textbook which defines cultural relativity by saying that ‘a society’s customs and ideas should be understood in the context of that’s society’s problems and opportunities, culture, and

environment' (Hedican 2012:17) – I like to distinguish between absolute and critical cultural relativities. Even in large lecture classes of several hundred students, I try to provoke reflection on whether or not all cultural practices should be subject to a culturally relativistic stance. Students appear to get it, easily sharing examples of human rights violations to show that there should be some standards surrounding the acceptance or denial of cultural practices. They are quick to ask who should set such standards. And, an informal review of the exams I administered confirms that students test well on this concept. In the past, when I taught smaller classes and gave exams that required written answers, students easily provided a parroted definition of cultural relativity and an example of where an anthropologist might struggle with being culturally relative.ⁱⁱ These days, in my big lecture classes, the tests are multiple choice. Over the past two years, 82% of students scored correctly on one or two questions related to basic definitions of cultural relativity.ⁱⁱⁱ I observe, then, that students learn easily what cultural relativity is. As the dilemmas show below, however, applying cultural relativity in situations outside of testing is more challenging.

Disorienting Dilemmas

Transformative learning, says adult education specialist Jack Mezirow, is the 'process of effecting change in a *frame of reference*' (Mezirow 1997:5; emphasis in original). Frames of reference are the 'associations, concepts, values, feelings, and conditioned responses' by which we define our lives and our world (Mezirow 1997:5). Mezirow notes that adults tend to reject ideas that do not fit into our beliefs about the world but, 'when circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience' (Mezirow 1997:5).

A disorienting dilemma is the initial phase of Mezirow's educational transformations.^{iv} As an anthropology teacher, I am particularly drawn to the idea that externally imposed dilemmas and events might cause students to be disoriented or to incur an imbalance in their own belief system (Mezirow 1991:168; paraphrased from Herbers and Nelson 2009:8). While the disorienting dilemma could be an 'eye-opening discussion, book, poem, or painting' (Mezirow 1991:168), any event that causes an individual to struggle to make sense of it may lead to personal transformation (Herbers and Nelson 2009:8). A disorienting dilemma is an experience which does not fit with pre-existing beliefs. It promotes self-reflection because beliefs and values are challenged. From there, critical reflection, dialogue, and action follow and personal transformation can occur especially if an instructor is able to guide the post-dilemma reflections (Mezirow 1991:167-174).

Herbers and Nelson acknowledge that not all events transform (2009:8) and I add that not all students are transformed by an event that transforms their peers. Such dilemmas are struggles for students – they are meant to be – and Herbers and Nelson insist that the 'central feature of a disorienting dilemma is that the challenge is painful and perplexing because it conflicts with one's former ways of knowing' (Herbers and Nelson 2009:8). Nelson and Herbers go so far as to call these dilemmas 'triggering events' which makes me wonder if we need to revisit the negative connotations in higher education with triggering and trigger warnings (Herbers and Nelson 2009:9; also Mezirow 1991:172-173). I suspect that trigger warnings minimize or negate the transformative effects of a disorienting dilemma and I discuss this further, below. In my examples, watching the film *Holy Ghost People* or attending a field school in another cultural milieu provides the basis for the disorienting dilemma. Films and cross-cultural experiences trigger introspection, new orientations to the cultural practices of others, and can lead to the reorientation of beliefs for students.

Holy Ghost People

Holy Ghost People is a black and white film directed by Peter Adair in 1967 (Adair 1967).^v Adair directed the film when he was in his early twenties and, in her review of the film, Margaret Mead called it 'first-class,' praised its usefulness in teaching anthropology, and offered it as an example of 'what an anthropological study based on mutual trust and respect can do' (Mead 1968:655). *Holy Ghost People* depicts a service of the Holiness Church in Scrabble Creek, West Virginia. The worshipers in the film are Pentecostal Christians who, as part of their rituals and services, handle poisonous rattlesnakes in order to show their faith in God. The film shows the congregants handling rattlesnakes, speaking in tongues, and entering altered states of consciousness in which they convulse visibly.

I have shown *Holy Ghost People* many times to small, first year classes of thirty-five students registered in 'The Anthropology of Religion.' Specifically, I show the film four or five weeks into a thirteen-week semester during

lectures on religious practitioners and altered states of conscious. Prior to viewing the film, students hear presentations on what anthropology is and participate in discussions of cultural relativity and ethnocentrism. More topically, the students experience the film after reading about and engaging in lecture-based discussions of general theories of religion, ritual, mythology, symbolism, and magic. I show this seemingly dated film in its entirety and, while this is contrary to best practice recommendations around the use of film in anthropology classrooms (Bird and Godwin 2006), I find the film to be a good, albeit dramatic, presentation of how direct communion with God is accomplished by one group of Christians. The film also provides a wonderful opportunity to talk about the production of ethnography, for Adair never tries to hide his presence or that of the film crew; in one of my favourite scenes, the service leader tells the congregation not to worry about the filmmakers who were attending the service.^{vi}

My discussions with students in the class and outside of it are fascinating. In a memorable instance, several students expressed disbelief with what they had seen in the film. Some went as far as to ask me whether or not what they had seen was 'real.' Somewhat taken aback by what I assumed would be accepted as real, I responded with a question and asked if they considered events we had seen in other films terms of real or fake as well.^{vii} I asked specifically about the interpretation of oracles by the Azande in the film *Witchcraft Among the Azande* (Singe 1982) and about the ritual warfare among the Dani shown graphically in *Dead Birds* (Gardner 1964). Student responses suggested that those films were uncontroversial and did not pose problems of interpretation.

In the course of the discussion, it became clear that *Holy Ghost People* hit too close to home. Many in the class were Christians and some things in the film were familiar. In *Holy Ghost People*, a picture of Jesus Christ hangs on the wall of the church. The Bible is the congregation's religious text. And, the Holy Ghost is central to the lives of the church members. Yet, because of the vocal testimonies, the snakes, and perhaps the community's poverty, the film showed people who were different enough, odd enough, to cause some students to feel that the people of Scrabble Creek could not really be Christians. In other words, they are sort of like us but not really like us. The Azande and the Dani are so exotic that difference is assumed. The practices of Holiness Church members, however, are only partly removed from student realities and are thus difficult to understand ethnographically. The familiar is truly strange.

There are issues of cultural relativity here too, particularly in teaching and using examples from around the world through film. In their commentary on best practices surrounding the use of film in anthropology classrooms, Bird and Godwin remind me that careful contextualization is critical especially after screening films (Bird and Godwin 2006). They cite visual anthropologist Wilton Martínez in asserting that 'as often as not, ethnographic films confirm ethnocentrism rather than counter it' (Bird and Godwin 2006:287). In subsequent screenings, I tried desperately to counteract the ethnocentrism which might stem from watching *Holy Ghost People*. I took on my own anthropological observation of the participants in the film and produced the 'flow of events' which is reproduced in the Appendix to this paper. I shared that summary of the film with the students in advance of the film and asked them to update it while they watched the film. In effect, I asked the students to keep field notes while they watched the film – and this is a pedagogical technique that could be used with all films. The supporting materials I provided helped the students understand *Holy Ghost People* but they also disrupted the disorientation I hoped the film might inspire. Ultimately, this film laid bare the incongruities between testing well and using effectively a concept like cultural relativity because it forced students to try and understand the rituals of people who appeared to be almost like themselves.

Field School

In 2011, as an instructor at Douglas College, I took twelve first and second year students to live for one month in an Indigenous community called Splantsin. Splantsin is located six hours by car, east of Vancouver in the southern interior of the Province of British Columbia. The field school was a collaborative endeavour in which my students learned the methods and ethics of anthropological research while conducting projects that were of interest and use to the Splantsin people. In advance of moving to Splantsin, the students were provided two weeks of daily instruction on anthropological methods and lectures on Splantsin cultural practices. Contrary to many research field schools, however, this project was not aimed at students who were already anthropologists-in-training. Rather, the students sought interesting educational experiences and, in this case, the pedagogical orientation happened to be anthropology.^{viii}

The Splatsin were wonderful hosts. One community leader acted as a cultural advisor and took our group on hikes and provided insights into elements of local spirituality. We played Indigenous games in community settings, participated in community dinners, and as best we could, we fit into the everyday lives of the community and its members. Students were expected to keep field notes and journals, write blog posts, and provide research reports to the Splatsin research office. If there was one over-arching observation, it was that Splatsin Indigenous identity was never easy to characterize and thus never completely delineated for students who sought such cultural boundedness. These observations have complicated many students' views of Indigenous stereotypes and impressed upon everyone the dynamic nature of culture. As a teacher, these are worthwhile impacts and results and I hope that the students take this with them into all parts of their lives.

The field school quickly became a terrific opportunity to think about the relationship between experiential education and the ability of students to work and learn ethically about other people and their lives. It became an opportunity to implement a culturally relativistic stance in a way that a classroom setting could not provide.^{ix} Complicating this was that students were *required* explicitly to be respectful of the Splatsin people and their cultural practices and were made aware that cultural insensitivity – rudeness perhaps – would result in failing the course.

I suspect that this field experience was disorienting and a liminal period for all students. For some, being away from home and the city, living in close proximity with other students, was new and unsettling. The dilemmas some students faced are akin to culture shock, that feeling of anxiety when working in a place when one loses 'familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse' (Oberger 1960:177; quoted in Ferraro and Briody 2016:3), but I am more interested in two examples where disorientation led to new attitudes or awarenesses outwardly rather than in the inward discomfort of culture shock. In the first example, which might be summarized as 'feeling racism,' all thirteen of us were out on the streets of the non-Native town which surrounds much of the Splatsin reserve. We were walking the streets with teachers and toddlers from Splatsin's daycare centre, painting fish logos on the storm drains to call attention to the fact that anything that went down the drains ended up in the local salmon-bearing river. At one point on our walk, we received uncomfortable and nasty stares from a small group of men standing outside of one of the town's industrial buildings. As this happened, I noticed that two of the male students moved to position themselves between the group of children and the men. Afterwards, the students came to me. They were audibly and visibly annoyed. I perceived that they were in a protective stance and while there was no threat of physical violence, these young men were really concerned. The Splatsin teachers confirmed to me later that they had felt the stares too. The situation forced the students to feel, viscerally, racism. As middle-class urban white men, this was unusual and it was unsettling to them.

The second field school example of disorientation is less concrete but more applicable to all students and what we learned collectively during our time away from our homes. As their instructor, I was continually aware that students were experiencing disorienting dilemmas regularly. The students were stunned, for example, that Splatsin people who become their friends and informants were not spoken of well by other people in the community. The work in community revealed fractures between families and this, in turn, startled students who were not familiar with the intricacies of small town life. Further, the students were challenged repeatedly to discern literal and metaphorical truths in what people told them about life in the village. It became clear to the students that community members told stories of kinship and their family origins that conflicted. Some students learned that specific community members were unable to fish or hunt only later to find out that they were very competent at such activities.

As the students spent more time working with specific people or families, they learned that obligations came with being 'part of the family.'^x Becoming close with one family inevitably precludes one from working with other families. Students also learned quickly that Splatsin people do not live today in ways that are consistent with the old ethnographies. They saw first-hand that there was not one singular Splatsin identity. With the benefit of hindsight, I see now that while it was hard for all students to leave the field setting, most students have had a hard time finding their way back to visit or to maintain the relationships which had started in the field school. The field school itself became a large-scale dilemma around the expectations and best practices of anthropology teaching and community-based learning.^{xi} The very act of taking students to the field promotes discussions of cultural relativity and ethics around proper and respectful behaviour in the community of others.

The field school itself served as a series of disorienting dilemmas for students and for me. The Splatsin may have had felt similar disorientations! The students and I spent up to an hour each morning discussing the events of the previous day and planning the activities of individual students for the upcoming day. I spent much more time

speaking individually with each student. This is the tough work of using disorienting dilemmas to shape transformative learning and, despite the possibility of negating the disorientation, in future iterations of a field school I would do more coaching in advance. I know now that some students experienced field school as truly transformative. These students appear to have moved through many of Mezirow's transformative phases like identifying prior assumptions, asking questions, revising views. Some have gone on to graduate work in anthropology. But, consistent with the view that not all students experience transformations from the same dilemmas, other students looked on field school more like a camp or tourism. It was fun, something was learned, new friends were made, but it did not transform views for all of the circumstances in which Indigenous peoples live. The Splantsin remained as different at the end as they were at the beginning. As an instructor, this is worrisome to me because I do not want to promote the idea that people play at the culture of others or, worse, find personal amusement in such experiences.

Where disorienting dilemmas and the teaching of anthropology are concerned, I observe that our field school promoted empathy for other ways of living. But, at times, it prompted sympathy and even pity for observed or assumed levels of poverty or stigma perceived as an element of being Indigenous. Certainly, the experience of living in an Indigenous community did not fit into student expectations of life in communities especially around the level of gossip and the fact that some people say nasty things about those who the students concluded are their friends. Is a field school like this a transformative educational experience by the very nature of taking students out of the classroom? The answer depends on the student but I believe that all students came away with a new appreciation for the 'anthropological other' through the challenges they faced when they suppressed their own opinions and embraced the opportunity to observe and learn from other people.

Intriguingly, and contrary to overt transformations through disorienting dilemmas, the Splantsin community was prepared to accept the possibility that the students might act on latent transformations at some point in the future. As one of our hosts shared with me as we were preparing to leave the community, the students got a taste of the racism members of the community live with every day. He continued, noting that even if the formal field school reports were limited in their utility, the general education each student received about the lives of Indigenous people, and the racism they face, make the entire project worthwhile. He expressed hope that, one day, a field school student would be sitting across from him at a negotiating table and he would know that the empathy I had intuited existed in that person. I found that reflection to be kind and satisfying.

Conclusion: On Triggering Change

My intention in this short paper is to introduce to anthropology teachers to Mezirow's ideas about transformative learning and, in particular, his widely applicable concept of the disorienting dilemma. This disorienting dilemma is only the first phase in Jack Mezirow's list of phases, which contribute to transformative learning (Mezirow 1991:168-169). Attending to the other steps is important for anthropology teachers. It is in those steps that the disorienting dilemma – the initial triggering event within anthropological learning – are discussed, debriefed, and made sensible to students. This is our important role even if much of the work of transformation, of fully appreciating the impact of the new as it is expressed in the dilemma, is the responsibility of the student.

Mezirow uses the word 'trigger' when discussing transformation (Mezirow 1991:172-173), but his use of that word is in relation to a specific model of transformative learning and it pre-dates trigger warnings on contemporary course materials.^{xiii} These days, trigger warnings tend to refer to course content, which may trigger flashbacks to traumatic events, or, more generally, be disturbing. Dean writes thoughtfully about the dimensions of trigger warnings in anthropology teaching (Dean 2014:8-9). Dean notes that it comes down to the challenge of finding ways to create safe spaces for learning while remembering that 'education is supposed to be troubling. It is supposed to make one uncomfortable, to destabilize worldviews, and to expose students to new ideas' (Dean 2014:8). It is in this latter, destabilizing sense that I see room for Mezirow's disorienting dilemmas. Mezirow expects, after all, that such dilemmas will overturn established beliefs and values. Indeed, the trigger warnings, which have become popular on syllabuses and prior to lectures on challenging, difficult, or controversial subjects point to disorienting dilemmas that permeate our anthropological teaching. The trigger warnings may, in fact, signal not material to be avoided or fearful of but, rather, material to embrace as the initial phase of truly transformative teaching and learning.

Disorienting dilemmas are more common in anthropological teaching than I initially considered. I see now that they can start from the discussions that surround cultural relativity as a central tenet of lower level anthropological instruction. These 'textbook' discussions of cultural relativity in my classroom are designed to provoke reflection on topics like universal human rights. Unfortunately, in my classrooms of largely middle class young people, culturally relative human rights discussions are simply illustrative and theoretical. Questions about them are easy points on exams. The more intriguing dilemmas that encourage a culturally relativistic position are visible in student reactions to films and, perhaps less commonly, in responses to unexpected situations in the field. As Nelson and Herbers say:

Educators can structure experiences that prompt students to challenge assumptions, question ways of knowing, and critically examine alternative perspectives. Likewise, we can use current events as teachable moments to achieve similar results for students and ourselves (Herbers and Nelson 2009:31).

As anthropology instructors, I think we already give students opportunities to be incredulous. Our readings, films, and classroom exercises expose students to new ideas. And, we offer the contextual conversations through which such incredulity is overcome and made sensible. Mezirow and others like Bird and Godwin give our pedagogical materials and approaches a name and point nicely to ways to move beyond the disorienting, teachable moment. Learning follows quickly.

Acknowledgements

This reflection is only possible because of hundreds of students at Douglas College, the University of Guelph, and at other institutions in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, who have learned about anthropology along with me. I thank them warmly for allowing me to be disoriented by their questions and for giving me the time to piece such disorientations back together before reintroducing ideas into our classes. I thank the Splatsin community for welcoming me over the years and particularly for finding space and time for twelve students to visit. Douglas College was a wonderful place to teach and the College was gracious to allow me to conduct the field school. And, I am lucky that my colleagues at the University of Guelph see the value and importance in my continuing work with first year students. Lori Barkley (Selkirk College, British Columbia) and Laura Tubelle de González (San Diego Miramar College, California) provided helpful editorial suggestions and useful references to an early draft. Lori and Laura are wonderful anthropology teachers and conversations with both of them have pushed me to develop my teaching skills. I thank them both. I presented a version of this paper in San Diego, California, in 2012 at the Annual Meetings of the Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges (SACC), a member organization of the American Anthropological Association.

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Appendix: Flow of Events in Holy Ghost People

I use *Holy Ghost People* in lectures in a first year course called The Anthropology of Religion. I show the film during classes on ritual and altered states of consciousness. I developed this timeline while watching the film with students. I share it with students in advance of watching the film to help students see both the nuances of content in an otherwise raw film presentation. I want them to anticipate the possibility that the film itself has an almost hypnotic effect on viewers through its pacing. This is a component of contextualizing the film. It is a kind of trigger for the disorienting dilemmas that appear in the film and, yet, it does not seem to detract from the surprises that appear when watching it. I grant permission to use and adapt this outline.

- A) Narrator's Introduction to Scrabble Creek, West Virginia
- B) Testimonies
- 1) Young Man
 - Got the Holy Ghost when he was 13
 - Was a 'bad fella' and repents
 - Describes the loss and recovery of ability to speak in tongues
 - The laying on of hands on a young girl
 - Faith healing
 - Need to show evidence of speaking in tongues (evidence that 'we've got it')
 - 2) Middle Aged Man
 - Story of coming into the church
 - Personal explanation of arrival of the Holy Spirit on him
 - Felt paralyzed
 - 3) Young Woman
 - Testimony about receiving the Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues, drinking strychnine
 - Is she possessed as she speaks? Is it emotion?
 - Feels a tingling in her stomach
 - 4) Middle Aged Woman
 - Exuberant description of possession experiences
 - Is she possessed as she speaks?
- C) The Service (11:30 into the film)

Kissing, greetings

Song: 'Bring Down the Rain, Lord'

Introductory Words, Welcome 'Just Be Yourself'

Preaching 'Everybody's just people'

Concern that the filmmakers are present?

Prayers for Healing at Front of Church

Preaching 'Idols and Idles'

Shrieking

Prayers in Small Groups Around Church

Convulsions

(Speaking in Tongues)

Action Picks Up

Preaching 'It's a Disgrace to Touch a Serpent'

Testimonies 'I gotta be just what I am'

Action Slows

Song: 'Lord Please Be Still' (27:50)

Action Picks Up

Testimonies 'The Little White Bowl'

Action Slows

Song: 'A Nation Shall Be Born'

Clapping

Dancing

Convulsions

Prayers

(Speaking in Tongues)

Action Picks Up

Snake Handling

Convulsions

Song: 'Down in Jesus Land'

Dancing

Snakes Away

Collection of Money 'Nobody Say We Can't'

Music

Snake Handling 'You feel good *after* handling snakes'

Actions Slows

Action Picks Up

Snake Bite 'It's God's Word'

Prayers

Speaking in Tongues

Convulsions

Group Prayer

Action Slows Slowly

Endnotes

ⁱ In Canada, sessional instructors are hired on a class-by-class basis when instructors are needed. In the United States, people who fill these teaching roles are called adjuncts. Capilano College is now Capilano University.

ⁱⁱ A typical short answer question was: 'What is cultural relativity? Why do anthropologists struggle with this concept? In your answer, provide one example of a situation in which anthropologists might struggle with being completely culturally relative.'

ⁱⁱⁱ Between 2014 and 2016, the total number of students quizzed was 1831. They took introductory anthropology in eight distinct course sections.

^{iv} Mezirow's transformative learning includes ten phases. I am most interested in the initial disorienting dilemma but I appreciate that the remaining nine phases are central to students completing the transformation. Mezirow's ten phases of transformative learning are: 1) the disorienting dilemma; 2) self-examination; 3) assessment of epistemic assumptions; 4) recognition that one's discontent is shared; 5) exploration of new roles and actions; 6) planning action; 7) acquisition of knowledge and skills; 8) trying new roles; 9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles; 10) reintegration into one's life based on new perspectives (Mezirow 1991:168-169).

^v *Holy Ghost People* is available to view and download freely at archive.org; see bibliography for full URL.

^{vi} In her review of the film, Mead wrote: 'The film makers came in and out of the community and were welcomed by the church members. Their filming was entirely open, and fulfills better than any modern film I know, the basic anthropological tenet of full disclosure of purpose. It contrasts sharply with the current cinematographic rage for presenting scenes and postures that could never be viewed by participant observers, and which are, therefore, a violation of the privacy of both subject and viewer' (Mead 1968:655). For me, this is one of the film's enduring strengths.

^{vii} Prior to viewing *Holy Ghost People*, students in the course have watched segments of *Witchcraft Among the Azande* (Singe 1982), *Voodoo* (Holender 1993), and *Dead Birds* (Gardner 1964).

^{viii} The act of taking first and second year students to conduct field work was questioned by some senior colleagues outside of my institution. They felt that students needed more theory and method training prior to conducting research in the field. I believed, at the time, that it did not matter whether field experience or formal theory and method training occurred first in one's anthropology training. On reflection, the disorienting dilemmas of field school were powerful because the students had limited training and had not discussed thoroughly critiques of the cultural homogeneity that appear in some ethnographies. Still, the work of the students was indeed less useful to the community because the students were largely untrained prior to entering the field.

^{ix} I have asked students in introductory classes to conduct fifteen minute observations of people in public settings and then to write about those observations. On occasion, such work precipitates disorienting dilemmas and these dilemmas are expressed in decidedly ethnocentric statements about behaviours in their own communities.

^x This is an old trope in anthropological fieldwork and one that I am grateful my students experienced. Jean L. Briggs writes extensively about the challenges of living with an Inuit family (Briggs 1970). Kan's collected essays on the adoption and naming of anthropologists discusses the obligations, challenge, and rewards of such intimate relationships (Kan 2001).

^{xi} This is a disorienting dilemma for me, of course, as I am committed to long-term relationships with the people and communities where I conduct anthropological research. I still find myself asking if it was ethical to take students into the field knowing that, for most, they would never return. Surely, that's a problem for both the students and the community members who invested themselves in coming to know each other.

^{xii} Mezirow is referring to work by Jane Taylor. In Taylor's model of transformative learning, she indicates that 'trigger events' may be life-shattering occurrences such as natural disasters, or they may be personal upheavals, troubling contradictions between meaning systems, external social events, or cumulative internal changes' (Mezirow 1991:173). Such trigger events may be self-induced, the result of life's events, or caused by others including educators. They precipitate transformative learning.