Teaching Anthropology

2022, Vol. 11, No. 1 pp. 55-57.

Remembering Brian Street and his Work with the International Baccalaureate

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I met Brian in July 1978 when I attended the very first workshop for teachers of International Baccalaureate (IB) Social Anthropology (later to become Social and Cultural Anthropology) at the University of Sussex in Brighton, where Brian was then teaching. I had just completed teaching my first 2-year IB Anthropology course at the United Nations International School (UNIS) in New York City and was completing doctoral courses and exams at Columbia. I'm no longer sure what I was expecting in an IB "Chief Examiner" but having grown up in Oxford, I know I was generally skeptical of academics as knowing much about the 'real world' and worried that a Chief Examiner would not be interested in the dynamics of a high school classroom or the perspectives of 16- and 17-year-old students themselves. Nonetheless I was entirely excited to be there - I had loved my first two years of teaching IB Anthropology and was pretty sure that this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life! I was very wrong about the Chief Examiner but right about myself.

Brian was an eye-opener for me - if this was what being an anthropologist could be like then I was excited to be counted among them. He was accessible, open-minded, enthusiastic about the possibilities of teaching and learning anthropology at the pre-college level, and thoroughly inclusive. There were just six of us on the course, so discussion was informal, and Brian (with his wife Joanna who was then an assistant examiner) immediately made us aware that they believed that they had as much or more to learn from us as we did from them. Looking back at the course content, it seems so long ago as to be almost antique, for example there are only one-line references to gender or to social change; but in his 7-page report that I still have, Brian's discussion of perspective and pedagogy could have been written yesterday, focused on inquiry, questioning, critical thinking and engagement. As part of the workshop, we invited ourselves to visit a group of students in an IB Theory of Knowledge class where, according to Brian's report, we "participated vocally" (Street 1978, Report on the IB Summer Course in Social Anthropology.) My memory is a little different; as somewhat uncertain onlookers, we watched Brian skillfully raise question after question in a discussion about belief and knowledge that threatened to subvert even as they expanded the conversation. He was in his element and relishing every exchange, taking very seriously what the students had to say at the same time as he was encouraging them to reconsider and re-evaluate.

At the time I had given little thought as to how or why Social Anthropology came to be part of the International Baccalaureate from its 'experimental' beginning in 1968, one option in a group then called 'The Study of Man in Society' that initially included History, Geography, Economics, Philosophy and Psychology. Perhaps as an anthropologist-in-training myself the inclusion of Social Anthropology seemed obvious? The IB itself had emerged during the 1960s as the world - people and families - were becoming more mobile. The traditional end-of secondary school/university entrance qualifications remained narrowly national creating a dilemma for many, and several international and other multi-national schools began imagining a new international examination system with a common curriculum that could be taken by all students that would be accepted by universities around the world and hope to promote 'international mindedness' and the development of world citizens. (Peterson, 1987). In 1967, Alec Peterson (since 1958 Director of the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Oxford) became the first Director General of the IB and as the programme began to take shape, these grand ideals were very much in the air - but why Social Anthropology? Certainly, reading the debates in the 1970s, at least in the UK, about the teaching of anthropology in some form or other at the pre-college level (see for example Townley ed, 1973; Association for the Teaching of the Social Sciences 1978; Street 1975) makes it seem quite improbable. Like many unlikely ideas perhaps, the inclusion of Social Anthropology seems likely to have come out of a personal and professional friendship between Alex Peterson and the social anthropologist Godfrey Lienhardt; both were at Oxford and Fellows of Wolfson College at the same time. My friend and IB colleague Marzia Balzani tells the origin story this way:

> A possibly apocryphal story related how Lienhardt found himself discussing the IB Diploma with Peterson who mentioned the necessity of offering a social science in the programme. Peterson was looking for a suitable sociologist as a first chief examiner but was persuaded by Lienhardt that anthropology was a better option for an international education programme. Thus came into existence the first…pre-university anthropology programme to be offered anywhere in the world. (Balzani, Anthropology in Action 17 (2-3) 61-70, 2010).

In 1968, Godfrey Lienhardt became the first IB Chief Examiner for Social Anthropology, and after Godfrey came Brian who was Chief Examiner, serving for two terms, from 1976 -1986. Linked by shared intellectual interests in literature and anthropology, Lienhardt had supervised Brian's PhD at Oxford, and according to Brian's daughter Alice, he "remained an important mentor and father figure until his death in 1993" (Street 2017).

After our first meeting in 1978 in Brighton, when I next heard from Brian in 1981, his letter eventually found me in the southern Andes of Peru where I was completing the first of two years of fieldwork: his letter invited me to become an IB assistant examiner, joining his wife Joanna and Johan Pottier - then we were four! (As of this year there are some 130 examiners signed up.) It's sometimes hard to remember just how informal, working relationships were in those early days, especially in Anthropology where our numbers were small and formal systems of assessment still being developed, sometimes by us as we sat on each other's beds in charming but small hotel rooms! However, as Brian noted in his invitation, by 1981, 11 years after the first experimental exams were given to a very small cohort of students (in 12 schools from 10 countries): "IB is now becoming more tightly organized, with full-time exam specialists devising "marking schemes" and other formal systems to give it credibility." (Street B. Personal communication, May 1981).

Brian had quickly come to realize that if we were to expand the small number of schools then teaching IB anthropology, more had to be done to support teachers who, while enthusiastic about the subject, often had limited training in anthropology, and in 1984 he asked me to write a 'Teachers Guide'. Brian was quite specific about the goal of the Guide: it was "to provide teachers - especially those who have little formal training in anthropology or are out of touch with the subject with help in the basic selection and presentation of materials to students" and "to broaden the range and base of 'success' of the students." (Street B. Personal communication concerning the framework for the Teachers Guide, February, 1984). Brian's constant concern was to find ways to reach out to support and encourage both students and teachers, and in this case an examiner too, as writing the Teachers' Guide represented my first 'professional' project.

Working closely with Brian in these early years I discovered the extraordinary care he gave to marking student work and to moderation of my own marking, often recognizing something of value that I had missed, yet never undermining my own comments, and reporting this all back to me in very detailed letters – fortunately typed! Rereading these now from 1983 and 1984, his care seems even more remarkable as I now know that in 1984 Brian was at the same time getting ready to publish his critical text, *Literacy in Theory and Practice.* Brian's letters also remind me of the constant effort he made to advocate for IB Social Anthropology in practical terms – for example, establishing a Subject Committee and searching for ways to fund teachers' workshops despite our small numbers – as well as his pleasure in working collaboratively across subject areas throughout his tenure as Chief Examiner as a member of the Board of Examiners on matters of general principle.

For example, we were determined to change the name of Group 3 from "The Study of Man in Society" to something more inclusive but this was not easy - the name had to be gender neutral in French and Spanish as well as English and take into consideration the various opinions of the other Chief Examiners – but eventually "Individuals and Societies" met the test. In a similar vein Brian reported with relish an argument with Gerard Renaud (then the IB's second Director-General) about the French translation of our Subject Guide because "they had reverted from our attempts to avoid sexist language . . . I have written Gerard a mini-lecture on the 'generic masculine' as misconceived, linguistically dysfunctional etc." (Street B. Personal communication, May 1986). These were the kinds of arguments that Brian surely enjoyed that also advanced some basic principles that mattered to him, and with hindsight, a small example perhaps of why Lienhardt all those years earlier, had argued for anthropology as a "better option for an international education programme."

Certainly, in retrospect the choice of Brian as Chief Examiner seems to me to have been extraordinarily fortunate: it was Brian's commitment, energy and early strong and continuous advocacy, that almost singlehandedly kept IB Social Anthropology alive through the 1970s and 1980s and laid the groundwork for continued development in terms of curriculum, materials and workshops in the future. As a pre-university course it has continued to confront some of the problems evident in the debates of the 1970s, (common misperceptions

leading to hesitant parents and reluctant school boards as well as the lack of trained teachers) and remains small in comparison to other IB Group 3 subjects. Nonetheless the 40,000 to 50,000 candidates who have taken the course since 1976 (this is my estimate, based on specific numbers for 2002 to 2021), represents a sustained commitment not only from teachers and students who have often found the course literally transformative (some have gone on to become anthropologists, to teach IB Anthropology and even to become examiners themselves), but also from the IB itself that has been critical. I believe in no small part, that the foundation for that was laid by Brian. Brian's commitment to international education and the IB did not end when he completed his second term as Chief Examiner in 1986; in late 1987 Brian was appointed Chief Assessor for Theory of Knowledge, a core course in the IB programme and taken by every Diploma candidate, a position he held for some three years, guiding important work on assessment and overseeing the completion of a long awaited Teachers Guide there too, (Newsletter for Theory of Knowledge Teachers, 1990). Meanwhile Brian continued to work as an IB examiner in Social and Cultural Anthropology and with the Subject Committee into the 1990s even as his work as chair of the RAI Education Committee, reflecting his deep conviction that Anthropology belonged in the pre-college classroom, eventually led to the development of the Anthropology A level in 2010.

Brian was a wonderful mix, a lifelong academic and intellectual who was deeply committed to his work at the same time as he recognized and loved our diverse yet shared humanity; people and ideas mattered and so did education as action. Thank you, Brian, for who you were, for all that you did in ensuring that IB Social and Cultural Anthropology remained alive and well in its early years, and for providing such an inspiring example of ways in which anthropology can and should be engaged with the world if we are to hope to change it.

Disclosure statement:

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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