

Section IX

AN OVERVIEW IN RETROSPECT

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE

Co-Chairmen: Margaret Mead, George Spindler

Spindler: Today the purpose of this first part is to try to see what we have said, what we wish we had said, what more we might wish to say or do. To start us off in this direction, I'd like to tell you a little bit more than I have about how the conference came into being, and in so doing reiterate to some extent the purpose of it so that we may be able to measure our accomplishment in terms of that aim.*

In the first place, we assumed that the educators wanted some help from anthropologists; so anthropologists, with two exceptions, wrote the papers, and the educators took the role of discussants and reactors. We began to solicit suggestions from educators as to what they wanted help on rather early in the progress of the planning and through the operations of several different planning groups, and we found that they had some rather clear-cut ideas as to the topical areas they wanted help on, but they didn't always have a clear idea of the way in which the topical area should be put into problem form. This is because they were not, understandably, ready to take the role of the anthropologist so that the problem could be stated in their terms. So what we got were such general categories as the teacher as an innovator, the educative process as a process of innovation, intercultural and international understanding. These were rubrics; they were not always problems. Both the educators and the anthropologists tried to create problems out of them to which there could be a specific kind of address. We came up with a whole list of additional topical areas in subsequent planning meetings: the secondary school and the enculturative process; the sociocultural position of the teacher and the personal and social consequences; informal techniques of education; the contribution of anthropology in the design of the curriculum in primary and secondary education; school-defined groups as reference groups, and potential conflicts with other reference groups operative for the child; special problems of the children of foreign-born parents; the varieties of American culture as mediated by the school; and so on. So we ended with problematic areas to which anthropologists might address themselves, but few had sharp definition.

In contacts with prospective contributors and participants, these problems were made more explicit. Cora DuBois, for instance, was invited to write a paper, and Cora DuBois said, "Yes, I would be interested in writ-

* *Note by the editor:* The initiation of the project and the role of the planning groups have been described in the editorial Foreword, so need not be repeated here.

ing a paper on intercultural and international understanding." And then we began to correspond, and both of us said many things in the communications that didn't appear in the paper; but Cora formulated a preliminary approach to the problem of learning intercultural understanding, and I responded to it critically and gave it to the educators with whom I was working to respond to, and we corresponded with each other about it. Then we sent it back to her with some suggestions and statements and some more orientations, some of which were to the point and some of which were not. Then finally Cora came back with this very interesting paper which was formulated out of her own thinking but which had been channeled in part by the reactions of others.

The anthropologist was asked in effect to select from his point of view, from his perceptual system, certain kinds of relevant materials, and to organize those materials to answer what he believed to be the educators' questions, as they were formulated through the mutual collaboration of the anthropologists and the educators who were engaged in the planning. This was a very painful process for each of the anthropologists who did it. There were many reasons for that. One of the reasons was simply that the anthropologists were responding to somewhat amorphous stimuli, and that, to be sure, was not all bad. It was like giving the anthropologist a projective test, like the Rorschach. His perceptions, his field, his personal inclinations and experience found their way into his response in the form of a paper.

Our aim was to push on to new formulations, to be exploratory. This meant being selective in our focus, and not doing a number of potentially worth-while things. That is, for instance, we did not but could have spent a considerable amount of time criticizing and reviewing the contribution of the social class community work that has been done to date. We could have also taken up in detail the question of intelligence and cultural differences, an area in which considerable research has been done. We could have gone off in the direction of the Klinebergian race, culture, and I.Q. approach. And there are other things we could have done. We furthermore selectively rejected the strong feeling on the part of several anthropologists that we should discuss the educational role of the anthropologist in the elementary school curriculum, in the secondary school curriculum, in adult education, in general college education, in the use of anthropological materials in mass media, in museums, etc. We rejected these in favor of bringing the concepts, methods, data of anthropology, and the sensitized structure of perceptions which the anthropologist as a person brought to the situation to bear upon problems, within these topical areas, which had been formulated in planning and conceived as relevant by the educators. We decided in favor of this with the hope that both the educators and the anthropologists would get new ideas of their roles, new ideas about the function of the schools, and some new concepts about the relationships between the educative and the cultural process that would point to new kinds of research leads, that would add to and innovate with respect to educational and culture theory, and—although I think this was always a kind of third purpose—possibly help to solve some of the immediate problems that the educators face. We hoped further that the anthropologists would get some new research leads on cultural process and particularly on the process of cultural transmission, because we were rebounding

our ideas and perceptions against a backboard supplied by the educators, who are specialists in cultural transmission. And we hoped also that the anthropologists would be able to test their concepts and their approaches at a high level of discourse in a particular kind of problem context that is very complex and that would be very rewarding because it involves most of the dynamics of the social and cultural process. In testing these concepts and approaches we hoped that there would be some reflection on them, and perhaps modification.

This concludes my introductory and retrospective remarks, and with that may I turn the meeting over to you, Margaret (Mead)?

OPEN DISCUSSION

Anthropological and Educational Roles: An Evaluation

Mead, Taba, Keesing, Gillin, Shaftel, Hart, Coladarci, Frank, Martin, Brameld

Mead: At this point I think we need more or less quickly to examine what has happened and deal with the gripes that are bound to occur in any conference. So far, the plan is that at the end of the morning I will give some kind of summary statement and try to pull things together. And then this afternoon we start life all over again and deal with segregation; having had closure, we go on back to life, so that we don't run that awful danger of not having had any catharsis. Now, in this intermediate period between George's (Spindler) description of what's happened, as he sees it, and my attempts to summarize certain elements of the conference, there are a bunch of things to kick around, I think. They are the feelings between the two groups. So far as I know, I haven't heard anybody talk publicly—that is, in any group of any size—about the educators having hogged anything. The cross-disciplinary comment has been, on the whole, "Educators didn't produce papers; why didn't the educators produce papers? Why were most of the papers by anthropologists; was it really a two-way interaction if the people behaved differently?" I don't think this particular point is very serious. George has given us a description: The reason that the anthropologists wrote the papers is because they were asked to write the papers, and the reason the educators didn't write the papers is because they didn't ask themselves to write papers. Those are historical facts.

Keesing: It would be interesting to speculate: if the educators had written all the papers and the anthropologists had commented, would not as much as 75 percent or much more of the same discussion have occurred? I have a hunch that it would, regardless of who initiated the formal data.

Taba: What happened actually was that we only took off from the papers. We had some discussions that stuck to the papers; in a sense we started making refined anthropological discussions, but if educators had done that the same thing would have happened from the educators' end. But we took off to generalities which were commonly communicated.

Keesing: And then we got to recurrent themes that appeared again and again as rather critical areas in our intercommunication.

Gillin: I think that occasionally there has been an expectation that everything was going to be settled here between these two fields. To be realistic about this, of course, it isn't. We have to think of going on from here. There are two things that anthropologists might be able to help with: one is the day-to-day problems which quite naturally preoccupy the educators. My own impression is that, at least on the basis of this conference and the personnel here, the anthropologists are not particularly good helpers in that respect: we don't know enough; we're not handy men in the educational institutions. But when it comes to the development of a comprehensive theory of goal values, limits, possible programs, the effectiveness of programs, the use of cross-cultural data, the anthropologists are and should be able to help with that if they're going to make any contribution. In other words, let's not kid ourselves that we, simply because we're anthropologists, can solve *all* the detailed problems of Centerville or some other specific communities until we know a great deal more about Centerville than I happen to, at least.

Mead: There were remarks made yesterday of the possibility of this conference being a precursor of some sort of more structuralized relationships between education and anthropology. The thinking in this conference might be precursor of such more formal institutionalization—a committee of some sort that then comes out with some kind of platform that you take to the Dean, and the Civil Service, and the Director of the F.A.O. team, and all the other people that have to be formally and administratively involved in any procedure.

Taba: I'm not making any institutionalizing suggestions, but I was thinking of what to me look like possibilities of common points of thinking and would make sense to educators. These are:

1. A fuller concept of cultural learning.
2. The comparative problems in cultural transmission.
3. The use of conflicting reference groups.
4. Case studies enlarged to include the cultural case study.
5. The limits and possibilities of the formal materials in understanding an explicit culture. What cues might we use in studying adolescents, teachers, administrators, in contemporary culture in the light of anthropological material?
6. Schools as systems having a culture. The difficulty of traditions—the school populations change while old expectations are maintained.
7. The kinds of alternatives for replacing institutions which no longer are functional.
8. The problem of teaching to treat feelings as facts—requiring people to step out of (a) their community culture, (b) their personal culture, and (c) their national culture—a mental discipline that has to be learned. Anthropologists would have much to say about the ways of learning here.

Shaftel: I would like to speak on the role of the anthropologist. I got a far broader picture of the ways in which anthropologists work and the

kind of theoretical concepts which would be meaningful for us in education. And I feel that this conference served a very important function for an educator like myself in defining areas of work in which education can learn from anthropology and can team up with anthropologists in solving educational problems. I came with another conception of what anthropologists might do. I'll give you a concrete example: Roland (Force) is studying Milpitas, which is a little town across the bay from Palo Alto. It was just a railroad crossing with a little tiny country school. In that country school, which is now rapidly expanding because a Ford plant is being built in the town, there is a principal who is bewildered by the fact that he suddenly has a new community which is going to consist of people from all over the country with all kinds of problems. We need the help of the anthropologist in helping this administrator, or others in similar situations, to plan their school program and their own roles in the community. It seems to me that there is a research team kind of service, or a consultant role, where anthropologists could make studies, which would help educators, of some of the new phenomena in American life.

Keesing: You have stated the positive side. I'm sure you have also got a little clearer the negative side—what anthropologists cannot be expected to do, where they feel that their professional preoccupations and criteria would limit their participation.

Taba: It became obvious, for example, that anthropologists couldn't tell how to deal with a recalcitrant school board. The strategy is an educational problem. You can't give the administrator a recipe; you can give him some advice about what he needs to look into, or you can help him look into it.

Hart: I think Fannie's (Shaftel) statement was a very valuable one, at least to me—about where and how and under what circumstances anthropology might be valuable to the educator. I want to make one further comment on what she said. You talked about consultants and anthropologists doing some research in communities and so on. Does that mean you only see the use of anthropology to education by education—hiring anthropological specialists? What about the other alternative—that a knowledge of anthropology might help educators themselves?

Shaftel: I assume that, Steve (Hart). This is just a special kind of relationship that I saw as a possibility.

Hart: If I might mention the comments on my own paper, I raised the question of the role of the sacred and the educators said to me: "Well, what about the role of the sacred in the schools—in American schools?" My inclination was to say, "That's your problem; you go and find the role—you go and use our concept of sacredness and what sacredness does, and see how it works out." Instead of which, apparently, the tendency would be to hire me to go in as a specialist and make a study of the role of the sacred in the American school—I think the teacher himself should.

Taba: What's wrong with you doing it—as part of a team?

Hart: Nothing at all; I'd love to do it. But why pay me a high salary

to go and do it, when the teachers to some extent could do it themselves if they were anthropologically sophisticated?

Shaftel: I think that the teacher can develop a certain level of sophistication and a self-conscious use of anthropological material; but by virtue of being generalists and practitioners the educators will not be the people who will do the resource work which you people will do—that is, the really intensive studies of such topics as the ones you cited. Anthropologists could make such studies available in forms which educators could understand.

Frank: It may very well be that the most influential and valuable contribution to the educators will be not so much the content of anthropology as a way of thinking about, a way of judgment upon, the criteria of creditability that they bring, their way of looking at things—which can be infused all through education and not just applied to anthropological material.

Coladarci: That was illustrated here in many ways. I think that one very good example, whether it was by design or by nature, is the reaction of the educators to Fee's (Keesing) discussion of Bernie's (Siegel) paper. This was a high moment, process-wise, for me. So one would assume that an anthropologist can get outside his own shoes; it's part of his uniqueness, it's part of his training, one of his techniques. Fee did this; whether, as I say, it was by nature or design is immaterial.

Frank: We learned that from the mental hygiene people; their most important contribution is a way of thinking about children, which they didn't realize because they had to give specific clinical material which the teachers couldn't handle. I would hate to see anthropology making that same mistake by not learning from previous history that the thing to do is to give a point of view, a way of thinking, rather than too much specific content.

Brameld: Going back to the question of what practical values, what next steps, emerge out of all this, we must not overlook the fact that one of the most practical is the paradoxical step of being clear about our theory. The educational world today is in a state of appalling confusion with regard to its own conflicting theories. One of the practical contributions of this conference, therefore, would be to help educators in clarifying their theories. My impression is that in the last five years or so there has been a remarkable shift among some educational theorists, professional and otherwise, from a "psychological" orientation to what might be called a "cultural" or "social" orientation. But the trouble with the educators is that they get hold of an idea and then wear it to a frazzle until it becomes nothing but a cliché. Then it becomes an obstacle rather than aid to effective theorizing and therefore to effective practice. This happened twenty years ago when educators got hold of the concept of "felt needs." Now the cliché "culture" is beginning to replace that of "felt needs." This is unfortunate, as you would certainly agree. One of the values of this conference ought to be to try to prevent that kind of debacle from happening again.

At least three problems emerge from the culture concept that have

both theoretical and practical importance, and that I should like to see emphasized. First is the values question. What can the anthropologist do to help us educators clarify our conception of values? I'm convinced no single science is available to the educator that begins to compare here with anthropology. Second is the area of resistances to change; how can the anthropologist help us assess and cope with resistances? Here various kinds of resistances need attention. One kind is the resistance that is present in the community, to which John Gillin's paper calls special attention, and which also received attention in connection with my paper—the power structure. Another kind resides in people themselves—what Larry Frank keeps calling our attention to. And still another may be called metacultural resistances: the underlying, deep-seated assumptions which are present in professional educators and, incidentally, in professional anthropologists. We somehow hate to admit them; they're painful to admit. We fight against them, and yet these metacultural resistances in some ways may be the most serious and important of all. The third general problem that I would like to see receive some attention is that of "general education." To what extent can anthropologists help us build an adequate design? Again, I believe that there is no science that can help anywhere nearly as much. There are designs for general education all over the map. Everybody talks about general education, but nobody knows what kind of general education. And nobody has seriously considered whether or not anthropology can really give us the basis for a new design. This problem is theoretical, yes; but too it is eminently practical.

Martin: Most of you seem to be wearing caps and you know what those caps are; I'm not sure what my cap is. But I will say what I think I have gotten out of this conference. I have learned something about anthropology. Is that too simple a thing for me to say?

I have not thought, however, that when the anthropologist ceased to be an anthropologist in these discussions he was any more or less wise than anybody else. In that sense, I am a little inclined to be on Steve Hart's side for a change: I want to know what the anthropologist knows, but, from that point on, what is done about it is the job of the educator, the man on the job, the practitioner. I originally resisted Jules Henry's distinction between fair and unfair questions. Now at the end of the conference I am heartily on his side because I thought the educators were asking questions to which the anthropologists do not have answers. They do not know any more than the rest of us know on some matters.

Now, who uses anthropological knowledge? Well, people like myself. And they use it within the limitations of their wisdom and training and skill in working with people. I don't come out of this conference feeling that if we just had an anthropologist at our side he could solve all our problems. I think he could help us by telling us what he knows. But how we use that information and when we use it, that is up to us practitioners.

Mead: I think that's fine; if people just learned that there isn't something called an anthropologist you can order from the grocery store, it would help a whole lot in every possible respect.

Coladarci: Or from the supermarket.

Kroeber: I want to confirm that sentiment. I consider the value or function that anthropology has in the world does not reside in delivering specific answers; it does some of that too, but most of the specific answers do not really interest the world; they are fairly technical or on limited areas. I think that what we probably have essentially got is an attitude, and if we can put that attitude across, it will be helpful to some other people. But then they must find their own specific answers, as we find our own. I agree entirely with what you say.

Comments by the Observers: Further Evaluation

Marie Keesing, Louise Spindler, Rose Wax, Roland Force

Spindler: The next thing I would like to do is to carry out a suggestion made by Ted Brameld as best we can in the limited time that we have. We have a number of observers here; people who have not entered into the flow of conversation and comments, but who are well trained or especially perceptive because of experience and background in the fields we have been discussing. I'd like to call on Marie Keesing, Louise Spindler, Rose Wax, and Roland Force for comments as to their impressions concerning conference processes and anything else that they would like to put into the record.

Marie Keesing: I am impressed by the enormous resource for the anthropologist who is studying culture change in the materials that the educators have under their control, in their case histories and so on, although these have been very inadequately used as yet for such purposes.

The second point I want to make involves the way some educators regard anthropology. I know that all the people here are thoroughly aware that the anthropologist who is interested in culture change is not a priest or a medicine man, but I hope that comes through in the report because I think that does tend to be the way many educators—not at this level, of course—look to the anthropologist, somewhat as the medicine man, expecting him to have his rituals ready at the drop of a hat on whatever they called him for.

With regard to communications, I perhaps have been one of the people who are particularly aware of the fact that the anthropologists have been doing an awful lot of communicating without benefit of words. And I've been interested that this has been extended to include the educators over the last few days. The interplay of personalities, the knowledge of what a person is going to say before he says it—you see that level of understanding operating below the verbal level.

I've further been very grateful, and I'm sure everybody else has, for the number both of educators and anthropologists here who use clear, simple language. All of us have some tendency to have an accent according to which discipline we've grown up in; the irritation with accents which I seemed to detect a little the first day now seems almost minimal. I hope that this simple language, that minimal use of difficult terms, will come through in the report.

I personally have to do an enormous amount of thinking for my own purposes, about this matter of values. I was so glad that we called the

tune on this idea of the traditional anthropological approach as not involving the anthropologist in the normative and not evaluating. I think most of us here were aware that we do, and must do so, but it does us good to make that explicit.

Louise Spindler: There are two things that stood out very dramatically for me, one being very general and one quite specific. Primarily I've been impressed, perhaps because of my field work, with the similarity existing between the processes observable among an acculturating American Indian tribe and those existing here between the educators and the anthropologists. I'm convinced that the processes of change are regular and predictable, viewing this as an anthropologist would. There are the two subcultural systems interacting here—made up of values and concepts of the educators and anthropologists. After the initial presentation of stimuli, consisting of the papers and discussions, the process of selectivity took place in which both the anthropologists and educators in terms of their own perceptual set took what was meaningful to them. And then during the conference, a process of reinterpretation and contextualization—terms we use in anthropology—took place in which these introduced ideas were reworked in the context of the educators' and the anthropologists' subcultural systems. And finally the result, in anthropological jargon, was one of bilateral fusion (in contrast to unilateral fusion), which means that both systems rather equally contributed to a new system of patterned concepts in the form of new problem areas, which came out of the whole interaction process.

The other very significant thing which came out of the conference and which I consider one of the most fruitful ideas that I encountered, was from the educational philosophers. The anthropologists have been preoccupied with making cultural assumptions—both overt and covert—and cultural compulsives explicit, in an effort to avoid biases, but they have for the most part ignored their own basic philosophical assumptions in dealing with phenomena. For instance, they fail to make explicit the assumptions regarding relationships between persons and things, and I think the idea of whether they regard things as external to the person or whether they regard them as something that has been internalized is extremely important and that it influences everything that we have produced.

Rose Wax: I would say that from the point of view of interaction between two disciplines, I'm impressed by the fact that in the early sessions there was a tendency for people to talk, in a sense, at each other, rather than to each other, and a need to defend one's own point of view, and that this seems to have diminished through the days. I feel that this has reversed quite radically, and that now there's a great deal more openness, a feeling that there will be acceptance at the other end and something worth while come out of it.

From my own point of view, I think that I have become aware of what is meant by "cross-culture," in the sense that it isn't just a matter of going to a very different culture, but that people who speak different languages in a sense also belong to different cultures. And this awareness that it happens all the time, even though we don't realize it, is to me rather important. I think also the point that Dr. Mead brought up and that was

brought up in various ways by other people, such as Dr. Taba—that learning in process is really the way you change people—was quite definitely brought out by the occurrences here.

Other things, such as what we do mean by values—we've been ignoring them largely, I think, in anthropology for various reasons; it becomes quite clear where they fit in, both at the most abstract level and also at the more practical level. And I have suddenly discovered that these two levels are not so far apart, that you cannot discuss one without the other. Also, I think that in regard to the original bias that I personally had—that education was something practical, and not particularly related to what we other people think we're doing—I have developed a more healthy respect for the complexities which applied problems have to face, and that in many ways it's more difficult than the clear theoretical statements; we're quite able to spin theories without having to be brought down to earth.

Roland Force: I find most of the things that I was going to comment on have been covered by the other people who have just spoken. There are a lot of minor points of personal observation that could be brought up, but I would rather convey an over-all impression. I've been reminded from the very first of an article that appeared in the *American Anthropologist* (April 1954), in which the author, John Bennett, commented on his own experiences in working in interdisciplinary research; and I'm afraid I brought some of his conclusions with me. I must say at this point, I'm inclined to be encouraged. The view that I had after reading Bennett's article, in which he related his own experiences which were not entirely favorable, was not a happy one. I see now where a number of issues have been resolved in terms of interdisciplinary communication here.

I quite agree with Louise (Spindler) that this is a good example of cultures in contact. This I think is a realization that we've come upon independently because we haven't communicated this conclusion between ourselves. I think it's worth saying that perhaps one of the reasons this may be so, that the bridge across disciplinary lines has been made, is the nature of the disciplines. The disciplines represented here are broadly eclectic, both of them, and perhaps this is particularly advantageous.

Spindler: Thank you for your comments. Now may I ask Margaret (Mead) if she will give the summary she has been planning as a result of an invitation by our Stanford planning group?