

## **Innovation in the Tropics: An Autoethnography of a Multidisciplinary Field School George Mason University Field School: Bali, Indonesia.**

JOHN LUNSFORD

*George Mason University*

*In today's academic environment, institutions often present students with the opportunity to participate in a field school. This allows students to experience an abridged form of fieldwork and provides a hands-on approach to the application of classroom-oriented theory. While field schools vary in topic and length, many remain firmly bound to a specific discipline. Breaching the exclusivity of a discipline-specific field school to accommodate a variety of academic perspectives is itself innovative in approach, as is encouraging trans-discipline collaboration and facilitating opportunities for cross-discipline discourse. In contrast with that tradition, George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution's field school in Bali, Indonesia, takes an innovative multi-disciplinary approach to the field school experience. Additionally, the field school takes a more action-oriented approach to research. Students produce research materials that are immediately usable to the community under study. This paper presents an auto-ethnographic account of this novel field school approach.*

### **Background**

Field schools are valuable academic tools that provide students with an opportunity to participate in an abridged "in the field" experience. As a tool, field schools stem from the activity of *fieldwork*, a prolonged stay in an environment for the purpose of conducting in-depth research into one or more aspects of the object of study. This tradition in anthropology harkens back to its foundations.

Field schools as active pre-fieldwork experience did not emerge in cultural anthropology until the 1960's, though anthropology's sub-discipline of archeology was "not so remiss" (McGoodwin, 1978, p. 175) in providing its aspirants an opportunity for training a decade earlier. By the 1960's, the importance of fieldwork was uncontested, and the academe "saw numerous major publications...concerning how to go about fieldwork" (p. 182). Unfortunately, despite the volumes of professional content produced, little existed to teach burgeoning anthropologists or other aspiring novices on how to successfully conduct fieldwork. For example, Williams (as cited in McGoodwin, 1978) noted that "Student anthropologists rarely study field work itself, but rather only the *results* of field work. The process is analogous to expecting a student pilot to solo without ever having been in an airplane" (p. 175). The creation of the field school, then, reflected a persistent need for students to engage, through practical application, with their respective disciplines in the field. This took place outside the formal confines and support structures of an educational institution.

In recent years, field schools have become more commonplace, though the majority continues to remain anchored to a tradition of mono-disciplinarity. That is to say, they only allow students of one specific discipline to participate. This stands to reason as the traditional notion of a field school is structured to emulate aspects of fieldwork with the goal of preparing students for careers in the field. For example, an archeology field school limits participation to students of archeology (Perry, 2004) and an ethnography school limits their attendees to mostly anthropology majors (Gmelch & Gmelch, 1999). This mono-disciplinarity is sensible. Not only does it prepare the next generation of researchers for the rigors of fieldwork in their discipline, also it ensures that the student participants have similar theoretical grounding and academic expectations. However, a program that allows for an interdisciplinary approach (i.e. combining elements of different disciplines to use in a single research project) for individual students, while still accommodating interaction among disparate approaches, facilitates considerable flexibility (Jacobs & Frickel, 2009). While the option of an interdisciplinary approach to research may not be new to field schools, its conjunction with program-wide accommodation exploration of disparate disciplines is innovative.

## Methods

Autoethnography integrates the typically discreet positions of researcher and research subject such that these positions interpenetrate. This approach brings to bear analytic and observational rigor in the critical evaluation of firsthand experience. As such, this autoethnography is focused on the field school's operations, processes, and experiences, rather than strictly on the study that occurred while taking part in the field school program.

At its core, an autoethnography is a hybrid term combining the approach of ethnography with the critical analysis of the author's own experiences. *Ethnography* is a qualitative methodology for formally studying the behaviors, mores, and rules of a cultural group whose analysis is augmented by an in-depth descriptive articulation of behavior or "thick description" (Geertz, 1973/2000). The term *auto* is a commonly used term in the academy "referencing publications in which the author presents critical reflections and interpretations of personal experience (Hughes, Pennington, & Makris, 2012, p. 209). The method of analysis of an autoethnography is a "critical self-study in which the researcher takes an active, scientific, and systematic view of personal experience" in relation to the object or groups of study (Hughes et al. 2012, p. 209).

Central to the ethnographic approach of autoethnography is the data collection method of participant observation. Participant observation contextualizes an otherwise out-of-context set of observations with the collection of raw data through active engagement and familiarity with the object of study (Malinowski, 1922/2002; Mead, 1930/2001; Lindeman, 1924), allowing for the ethnographer to analyze any data gathered through the lens of the hosting cultures values. Through self-reflection, this enables the ethnographer to understand observations in the context of the culture's own norms and avoid superimposing their personal values onto the analysis of an observed culture.

The continual process of self-reflection or *reflexivity* "in the context of social science research...refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research" (Davies, 2007, p. 4). That is to say, *reflexivity* as a tool of research acknowledges the potential for an ethnographer's involvement in the culture of study to change the nature of the situation being studied. Davies observes that "[w]hile relevant for social research in general, issues of reflexivity are particularly salient in ethnographic research in which

the involvement of the researcher in the society and culture of those being studies is particularly close” (p. 4).

The reflexive aspect of ethnography is particularly relevant when situated within cultural anthropology. As a discipline, cultural anthropology utilizes ethnography to study all aspects of culture “...and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (Geertz, 1973/2000, p. 5). To be an ethnographically-reflexive anthropologist, the study of culture requires submersion in a culture to understand it. However in doing so, the ethnographer’s presence can affect the very culture it strives to understand. Similarly, the analysis of such cultures should not be conceptualized as law or universal truth; instead, culture needs to be understood as a group of peoples’ interpretation of the world, including the meaning they assign to everything in it. As such, this meaning can differ from society to society.

George Mason University’s (GMU) School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR) provided an opportunity to practice ethnographic reflexivity in a field school in a post-conflict environment.

### **S-CAR Field School**

The School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR) within GMU is “comprised of a community of scholars, graduate and undergraduate students, alumni, practitioners, and organizations in the field of peace making and conflict resolution” (S-CAR, 2013). It currently facilitates eight field schools, one in the United States, and seven internationally. Its programs are “committed to the development of theory, research, and practice that interrupt cycles of violence” (S-CAR, 2013).

In the summer of 2011, S-CAR facilitated a field school in Bali, Indonesia. The program’s focus was to study the aftermath of political violence that enveloped the island of Bali between 1965 and 1966. This was to be achieved through a six-week immersive program for eight graduate and doctoral candidates from various disciplines across GMU. The contents of the program included daily language lessons, separate homestay arrangements with local Balinese families, lectures, cultural events, and academic classes complete with readings and written assignments. The program culminated in an electively-independent abbreviated three week field study. Students selected a topic of their choosing, were given the option of working

independently or in pairs, and had the option to work within the local community or travel farther afield to achieve their research goals.

The program's goals were threefold. First, it familiarized students, through direct planned experiences, with the context of the environmental and cultural landscape. Second, it exposed students to the difficulties and rigors of fieldwork by conducting primary research. Third, the results of students' studies were required to be shaped into a presentable format that was shared with the community that aided in the research. The intent of this final goal was to provide the community with an opportunity to see the results of the data they helped collect. Dr. Leslie Dwyer, the hosting researcher and program lead, believed that researchers had a reputation of being exploitive by conducting fieldwork in a community and then leaving to write a journal article that the people in the community would never see. This field school endeavored to be innovative by contributing to the local understanding of academic research and directing research results directly to back to the community.

The program required that student research be conducted in such a way as to be preliminary research for a more comprehensive inquiry on the topic. It needed to be refined so that the incumbent researcher or a new researcher could familiarize themselves with the original work by reviewing notes, interview protocols, or other data collection tools and resume or adapt them for a larger study. This was intentional. Three weeks was not enough time to conduct a full ethnographic study. In-depth ethnographic study would have involved months of familiarizing oneself with the local community and language, building relationships, and gaining the trust of key informants, often without existing support structures. The program's ability to achieve results of even an abbreviated study (an activity that could still require months rather than weeks) relied heavily on the relationships of the hosting researcher.

The hosting researcher and leader of the program was American anthropologist Leslie Dwyer, PhD, along with her Balinese husband, Degung Santikarma. Having lived in and studied Balinese culture for years, the two used their connections to staff the program. Also, they provided program participants with their expertise and use of internet at their home, and facilitated access to experienced or knowledgeable persons. As research topics took shape, they used their reputation to establish connections applicable to the topics selected by the graduate researchers. These ranged from survivors of the political violence and former political prisoners

to farmers and politicians. Without use of their pre-established connections, it would have been virtually impossible to build such relationships from the ground up in three or six weeks' time.

The first few weeks of the field school included numerous classes, lectures, and excursions. The classes were not formal constructions held behind desks of an academic institution. Instead, they were most often conducted at Dr. Dwyer's home. Despite the informal location and relaxed demeanor, the content of the classes reflected the rigor of a master's level course. Mirroring a course one might find within an institution, classes were held at relatively the same time on the same days (i.e. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM, and another from 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM) -despite a common Balinese tradition of flexible start and end times for events. These classes often saw discussions related to the following: application of theory in fieldwork, current experiences and future appointments, and discussions of reading and writing assignments from previous sessions. From one week to another, it was not uncommon to have 100 pages or more of materials to review in addition to writing assignments that critically analyzed experiences, research methods, and theory. Continuing the theme of academic rigor, the classes and resulting assignments were held in addition to a daily regimen of lectures, cultural events, and ethnographic data collection.

Events and trips took many forms during the field school experience. One of these occasions featured an artisan cooperative. They consolidated resources from multiple artisans to collectively sell their wares online and ship them overseas, allowing them to avoid heavy government taxation. Another focused on cooperatively purchased farmland for trees and coffee. Others were tourist attractions that featured traditional Balinese cultural events and performances, accompanied by a post-event discussion with local Balinese. They discussed how the projected and performed image of Balinese culture differed from the actual. Other trips included a day trip to Ubud, the cultural center of the island, and a rafting trip past where the movie *Eat, Pray, Love* was filmed. Not only did the field school incorporate trips to national landmarks, innovative social and economic constructions, and famous locations, also it included attendance at the local ceremonies. The largest was *Galungan*, a Hindu ceremony that celebrated the Balinese ancestral spirits. Clad in traditional dress supplied by host families, the graduate researchers along with our hosts, program assistants and leaders, spent a day in the community temple observing the traditions and activities associated with *Galungan*.

The lecture topics and the lecturers themselves were as eclectic as the scheduled experiences. While not all of them could boast an extensive academic background, their expertise and experiences more than compensated for the lack of traditional academic tutelage. Some speakers were academics; one was a PhD candidate (now recently graduated) from Harvard's Anthropology Program; another was the cinematographer for the documentary film *40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy* (2009). Other presenters were a former police officer, teacher, grassroots activist, gay rights activist, and a newly released political prisoner.

The project, lectures, discussions, and planned experiences presented opportunities for innovations in cross discipline and cross-topic collaborations among the field school students. Our eight person cohort came from the following academic disciplines: two from cultural anthropology, one from psychology, one from film studies, and four from conflict analysis and resolution. This was especially relevant during the design of the research projects, as each discipline had its own operating procedures for conducting an ethnographic-styled study. This gave us the opportunity to collaborate across our various disciplines. We could shape our studies to be reflective of the needs of the project and not be constrained by limiting them solely to the methods of our respective disciplines. In one instance, this allowed me to share the concept of *reflexivity* in the ethnographic method with a film student. With it, she integrated reflexivity into the analysis of documentary filmmaking, which opened up discussion about the researcher's presence affecting the object of her observations. In turn, she contrasted these perspectives with the benefits of having an object (in this case her camera) between her and her respondents. She felt that the camera was able to remove her as a focus of the story, which afforded greater attention on the experiences of the objects of study. This insight became particularly useful when viewed in the context of my key respondent's role as a gatekeeper, a situation explained below.

Although a variety of academic disciplines were represented, no two members of the cohort had the same academic focus or concentration. In conjunction with the varied disciplines, that meant topics of presentation often resonated differently with each person, enriching numerous post-lecture discussions. However, the graduate researcher concentrations did not emerge during the field school; rather, they were preexisting areas of interest that we had gravitated toward in our previous academic coursework. In this way, each graduate researcher brought his or her own interests and specialization to the field school and applied this lens to

their experiences. Where one graduate researcher focused on women's rights, another sought a top-down evaluation of the current political climate. My research focus was the degree to which technology mediated human experience, and how people, consciously or unconsciously, interacted and re-presented themselves through technological mediums. When one of the invited lecturers spoke about a digitally-based Balinese social interest group, my interest was piqued.

This presenter's demeanor was unassuming, polite, and soft-spoken. A web development and graphic design freelancer in his mid-20's, he shared information about the Bali Bloggers, a local group which sought to improve their community by using a grassroots approach to increasing technological know-how by supplying equipment and using digital tools. He emphasized the term *group* because *organization* implied a formal institution. Formality was degree of institutionalization that the group struggled to avoid for reasons that were not apparent to me at the time. The unique attribute of the Bali Bloggers lay in the way they approached the application of social media tools as a mechanism for addressing social, economic, and political interests. This was particularly relevant because it directly followed what popular media had dubbed the 2011 Arab Spring. During this time, many communities in the Middle East used social technologies as tools of mobilization and protest. The Bali Bloggers, on the other hand, used many of the same tools but instead of expressing anti-policy, election, or government sentiments, they utilized technology to promote community-based initiatives of building knowledge by creating or expanding communication networks and skillsets. Rather than employing flash-mob tactics of protests, they elected to lay the foundations for self-sustaining community-based mutual support structures. With time, these could challenge the status quo on previously censored or inaccessible topics such as the killings of 1965 and 1966. The way this group engaged with and shaped their message through technology, revealed them to be an ideal candidate for study.

### **Learning how to apply anthropological methods**

The methods I employed for my research project combined survey tools and unstructured and semi-structured single and group interviews. I chose these methods because they took advantage of tools that contained structure and flexibility. Surveys captured snippets of data and were easily deployed and collected in short amounts of time. The unstructured component of interviews allowed conversations to follow a more meandering path. This was particularly



useful in the discovery phase of the study as this group had never been documented previously. Unstructured interviews allowed the respondents to lead the conversation into areas they found significant (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). Semi-structured interviews were utilized later in the study once I had established a familiarity with the basic structure, goals, and motivations of the group. By providing more structure to the questions, these interviews helped me explore specific topics more deeply.

The method of finding respondents was performed through the tactic of *snowball sampling* (Bernard, 2006). This describes a process where a researcher is introduced to an initial key respondent who introduces the researcher to someone else, and so on. In *snowball sampling*, the technique requires that the ethnographer establish a rapport with the respondent so that they are willing to provide a reference to another person and so on. However, as time for the study was very limited, I did not have the opportunity to establish the relationships needed to successfully perform the *snowball sampling* method.

Through the presentations, I was introduced to my initial key respondent, Sunjay<sup>1</sup>, the Balinese presenter who spoke to the group of graduate researchers about the Bali Bloggers group. After having initial interviews, Sunjay introduced me to a second person, Leeroy. I adapted a cross-disciplinary tactic to the sampling approach so that it was more recursive in a way that continually invoked the influence and access of Sunjay as was a well-respected member of the community I was studying. This innovation occurred to me as the direct result of an earlier theoretical discussion with a film student concerning the role of her camera described above. Instead of departing the scenario after introducing me to Leeroy, Sunjay continued to accompany me with the next respondents, Marvin, Locke, and Claude, among others. In doing so, Sunjay served in the role of *gatekeeper* as he held the key relationships that I used to connect with members of the community. In a way, the surrogate ethnographer was to me as the film student's camera was to her. However, not in a way that relegated the *gatekeeper* to the position of an inanimate object, but rather he was a buffer between me and the objects of my study. While he never conducted an interview in my stead, he took the burden of trust traditionally assigned to the ethnographer, during the referral portion of the snowball technique. He used his

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<sup>1</sup>For the purpose of this paper he is referred to as Sunjay. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of all respondents.

own existing reputation in lieu of my recently formed one. Additionally, he served as a translator when necessary.

Not all my encounters were with one other person at a time. It was not uncommon that Sunjay introduced me, unexpectedly, to a group of people after which a group interview ensued. While a little more chaotic than the individual interviews, these provided a different social dynamic that was beneficial to the research. According to Bernard (2006), this is significant because each grouping needs to be evaluated within the context of any existing or preexisting social or cultural association that could influence the responses (i.e. the data) collected by the researchers.

It was not uncommon for an individual interview to morph into a group interview. At one point, Sunjay and I were scheduled to meet a respondent, Rex, for dinner around 11pm. After a 30 minute motorbike ride, we arrived. Instead of a single person greeting us, it was a group of six that had seen each other in passing and decided to stay for the interview. This very fluid social gathering was common to Bali, and I was unprepared for my first interview to be with six excited Balinese locals. However, after that evening, I made sure to always carry extra copies of short surveys, handouts, or questions. The unexpected behavior occurred a few more times, and each time it blurred the lines between single and group interviews; it represented the fluidity of Balinese social life. This simple fact was my most poignant introduction to fieldwork; it forced me to reconcile that my best laid plans of academic study only lasted until the very first interview. Ultimately, that flexibility aided me throughout the rest of the study.

Experiences like the one mentioned in the previous paragraph were common amongst my fellow field school students. The program was designed not only to collaborate on theory but also on experience. In fact, Thursday afternoon was the time dedicated to sharing experiences of fieldwork, insights, and suggestions. That did not mean we could not share at other times; however, it was important enough to make a point that there was specific time etched into our schedules for collaboration of experience. Additionally, while many of these encounters were between cohort members, Dr. Dwyer was always present to offer her insights and input, though sometimes only if asked. She was more likely to allow freeform discussion about experience with relatively limited structure. This practice I found helpful as it allowed us to dedicate more time to questions we found important rather than predetermined ones.

The idea of predetermined questions elucidates one of the underlying attitudes of the Bali field school. Where other field schools have strictly planned assignments, this program found innovation in allowing a more freeform exploration of topics. This was because Dr. Dwyer operated under the opinion that fieldwork is unpredictable, an opinion informed by her own experience as a researcher. She believed that one can approach fieldwork with plans and structure, but ultimately, they become guidelines between which self-reflection and adaptation, if fostered, can flourish. That was in addition to the goal of simulating the lack of institutional support structures in actual fieldwork. That is not to say that she did not offer support when it was needed, but like much of the program, that support was fluid, based on the needs of each individual student.

The only difficulties I encountered with the fluid structure of the program were the transition to open ended assignments and a healthy amount of materials to review. Where some field schools are more regimented (Perry, 2004), this one left writing assignments open, and intentionally assigned more reading than what could be critically read in the short amount of time available. On the one hand, this forced us to prioritize which materials are most pertinent to the study, and on the other hand, it exposed us to a volume of related, cross-discipline, literature that we would not have been exposed to had it been strictly a discipline-specific field school.

### **Research Field School Research Project**

The abbreviated studies were designed to give something tangible back to the communities in which the studies were conducted. While an activist role in research is not a new phenomenon (Hale, 2001), this fieldschool articulated community activism in the form of academic involvement by creating a forum in which researchers presented the results of the research to the community of study. Doing so created an opportunity to see the results of the research and critique it for accuracy. This presentation combined with a more formal research paper was innovative because it facilitated the graduate researcher's exposure to both applied activist research while still simulating the responsibilities and rigor of producing a more formal piece of academic institution oriented research. The forum the projects were presented in was an open air community meeting of roughly 100 people from local and surrounding villages. This number is hard to name exactly because many people would come and go throughout the

evening. Doing this gave us, the graduate researchers who were responsible for the interpretation of our data, a task that was reviewed during the community presentation at the end of the field school. This turned out to be a very enlightening experience as it allowed for direct dialogue with the community and supplied real world application and direct feedback.

The topic of my research was grassroots activism, to which I applied a symbolic interpretive method of analysis. This method looks at cultural symbols and their relationship and significance to the construction of meaning within a society (Geertz, 2000). The subjects of the research all came from the organization Bali Bloggers. The Bali Bloggers began as a small group of like-minded individuals whose shared interest empowered their community through open communication and knowledge. This goal was achieved through expanded communication and organizational networks, which allowed people the ability to freely and openly discuss issues in their society.

Since the inception around 2003 (they were not even sure), the bloggers were an unorganized, informal group of individuals from across Bali that shared ideas, opinions, and experiences via digitally hosted journals known as blogs. Conversations through blogs fostered discussions on message boards; soon after members began to meet with each other in person. The group expanded as relationships made in the blogging community traversed both physical and digital social networks. Some people would discover the group that had no previous affiliation with it or its members, but more often friends would introduce friends, and those friends would introduce more friends. The effect was a cascade of new membership. Eventually, the group began organizing structured meetings. Whereas the initial meetings saw five people in attendance, some of the more recent would see 50 or more. As more people were inducted into the group, each bringing with them new ideas or opinions, the group found itself with membership not only from across Bali, but other islands and provinces in the Indonesian archipelago (e.g., Central Java, Papua New Guinea).

Bolstered by the influx of new members and ideas, the group became more proactive first by creating a website and data repository and later through community outreach. The term community at this point should be understood not in a way that stresses locality (i.e., the island of Bali or the city of Jakarta). Instead, it spanned the physical communities that the members of the blogger community were a part. The role of the website was to supply the bloggers with a place to interact with each other as a community rather than separately in multiple blogs and to

act as a repository for discussions and information that remain accessible to old and new members alike.

From 2008 to 2011, the bloggers group had experienced a period of expansion and growth. During this time, many members of the blogger community expressed interest in sharing the information with others, but could not due to some people's inability to access the internet or their lack of technological knowledge. Both instances precluded an individual from participation in digitally-hosted discussions. To solve this dilemma, the group pursued opportunities for outreach. Group members traveled to communities and held in-person classes in homes, community centers, classrooms, and restaurants. The topics of instruction in these classes varied depending on the needs of the community; it was not uncommon for one class visit to provoke many more. The topics included subjects like basic website and blog creation; how to setup a Facebook, e-mail or online bank account. Other topics included how to use a keyboard, search engine, website, cellphone, or computer. These classes were so successful that companies like Nokia would send representatives to showcase the newest technologies to the group. Additionally, government, military, and non-governmental organizations requested similar instructional classes. While any class for the community was free, the group would charge official organizations a service fee. The proceeds went toward funding additional classes or purchasing equipment.

There were times when increasing knowledge was not enough. The recipients of that knowledge did not have access to the technology required to make use of it. In these situations, the group would raise funding to purchase equipment and subscriptions for internet access. While they did not have the means to give every household access, as internet was very expensive in Bali, they were often able to set up a central location for community access. More recently, they began a new program to familiarize farmers, particularly those in remote locations, with technology. Some of these farms were on small islands only accessible by boat. Through this outreach, the Bali Bloggers hoped to promote solidarity and cooperative efforts between farms. As a result, some farmers used their newfound skills to share farming tactics and coordinated logistics to get their wares to a market. In one instance, a number of island farmers banded together to coordinate a harvest and crop delivery so that they only needed to collectively hire a single boat to transport their crop. This saved them precious resources.

The bloggers built, discovered, or otherwise supplied the forums, both physical and digital, for discussion. They enabled and empowered the communities to teach each other. The idea behind this action was to make the group self-sustainable. As new members joined, archived data and older members would teach them about the group. Within the digital forums, conversations on everything from celebrities and clothing styles to global politics and Indonesian public policy took place. It was used as a staging platform to organize protests, art shows and local concerts. The only topic not allowed was religion. When asked why, the response was it was too complicated and caused too many problems. In their eyes, the discussion of religion was emotional; emotion implied passion, and passion was not a productive tool of discussion as it turned discourse into argument.

From September 30, 1965 into the early months of 1966 estimations of over one million people were killed across Indonesia. During this time, Bali bore witness to some of the worst of the violence (Cribb, 1990). Afraid to speak openly, many people joined the Bali Bloggers group because it supplied them with a location for discussion, the means to access it, and the knowledge to use it. In the ensuing 50 years since the killings, through propaganda initiatives, veiled threats, and overt punishments, political and military entities used the silence to perpetuate the structural violence that surrounded the killings. At the time of the field school in 2011, there were whispers of the propaganda statement “beware the latent threat of communism” being nailed on the front doors of particularly vocal advocates for open communication. Others received it as an anonymous SMS message from burner cellphones. Advertised or public discussions and official inquiries to the government were met with both indirect and direct action. Indirect action, like the aforementioned propaganda statement, was more anonymous and meant to subdue someone that could cause trouble. Direct action was intended to deal with someone already causing trouble and took the form of a firebombed building, alleged disappearances, and incarcerations. One of the program speakers was one such political activist, imprisoned for his outspoken views concerning the killings.

The Bali Bloggers offered a digital forum in which individuals could express their thoughts and find information on the 1965-1966 killings with comparative secrecy. Hidden amongst a thousand other topics was a place to discuss, share, and search with relative freedom. Not only that, these places increased people’s exposure to the topic of the killings. Some in the Indonesian community refuse to talk about the events of those months, even when asked by their

children or grandchildren. These forums gave others, predominantly younger generations, an avenue to learn and understand that did not require their loved ones to relive those events.

Prior to my arrival, the Bali Bloggers had not documented their own activities, objectives, and goals in a centralized location. The PowerPoint presentation I created was tailored to address three major undertakings: community outreach, records, and digital distribution. The project outlined the types of outreach the bloggers perform, the available resources for community improvement, and the methods of getting in contact with them. Its delivery focused on raising awareness within the community so that other members had the ability to access the resources. The second undertaking revolved around recordkeeping. The Bali Bloggers had not kept records of all of their previous works or capabilities and their services were delivered *ad hoc*. By revisiting interviews coupled with a few supplemental conversations, I was able to form a rough list of services that they had previously rendered, to use a resource for reference and easy distribution. The presentation outlined previous projects such as community internet setup packages, classes, and seminars they had been able to offer thus far. Additionally, it supplied a sample recordkeeping sheet to document future services. Lastly, the PowerPoint functioned as a point of digital distribution. Similar in concept to raising local awareness, the digital file was given to Sunjay at the conclusion of my presentation to the community; he could deploy it on the Internet wherever they deemed it would be helpful. Sunjay was pleased with the presentation, and afterward asked my permission to send it to his friends to post online. Even today, the PowerPoint exists as an online resource of the Bali Bloggers.

### **Operational Critique**

Field schools have come to be a key method for students to learn about conducting fieldwork in a supportive environment. However, historically these schools have been siloed by discipline. An innovative approach to the academic tool of field school lies in S-CAR's Bali field school's flexibility in incorporating multi-disciplinary perspectives in the experience and application of theory. Providing for a multi-disciplinary program affords students the opportunity to disembark from regimented ways entrenched in their academic discipline, and in my case, adapt the core methods of ethnography during the research process. However, such an open multidiscipline approach has both benefits and detractions. Accommodating for so many

competing theories can be difficult. It also increased our workload while simultaneously lessening the structure of the program.

Exposure to video documentaries, historical, political, and gender-based modes of analysis, combined with my own symbolic interpretative perspective, allowed me to broaden the angles from which I approached ethnographic research. It encouraged me to view data collected from different angles. However, such a broad array of approaches also increased tensions amongst the researcher students. Many arguments arose out of discussions regarding methodological superiority. Not everyone agreed on which approach offered the best analysis and interpretation of the research.

The increased literature workload exposed us to a variety of perspectives, but often took so much time to cover that it infringed upon time needed for research. Meanwhile, the program's flexibility tried to accommodate the increased workload by allowing us to regulate our time while attempting to simulate an untethered experience of fieldwork. However, this was sometimes counterproductive as the time needed for the freeform simulated fieldwork experience collided with time required for more formal academic lectures, reading responsibilities, and written assignments. I found this particularly difficult the deeper and more involved the research became. As the more formal assignments were what determined most of the letter grade received for the field school, this culminated in contentions that juxtaposed a more in-depth fieldwork experience against a better letter grade. The demands for time allowed for the pursuit of one of those options.

As both a difficult and enlightening experience, there were many productive lessons that came out of the fieldschool experience. Because of the innovative approach, it exposed me to new methods of analysis. As I continued my studies after the field school, I found myself augmenting anthropological work with some of these other approaches. Additionally, by creating a workload that could not have been completely addressed in the given amount of time, the fieldschool articulated very poignantly the reality that there is not enough time to always read all the material. In addition, when exposed to the same material, peer groups disagree. This made me reflect on hard academic decisions; there is not enough time - especially when conducting fieldwork - to do and read everything to the degree that I wish. Therefore, difficult choices must be made that are not always ideal. This was a simple but profound lesson.



## Conclusion

S-CAR's innovative incorporation of multi-disciplinarity tactics in the Indonesian field school was manifested in the program's construction, design, implementation, events, and discussions. It fostered cross-disciplinary exposure in the breadth of planned reading assignments, events, and resulting discussions. By incorporating a variety of cultural, religious and famous events, it set the platform for participating in cross-disciplinary experiences and encouraged collaborative discourse. Additionally, by allowing for flexibility and flow in the design of class content, it provided the opportunity to discuss in-depth, experiences and theoretical comparisons that were implemented throughout experiences of the field study.

The field school was a seminal point in exposing me to cross disciplinary collaboration. Prior to my experience in the field school, I had planned on applying to anthropology PhD programs. I found anthropology to be particularly interesting for its exploration of subjects across disciplines. However, by not employing a multidisciplinary approach to its methods of investigation, the sole use of its methods revealed itself to be inadequate in addressing topics of a multidisciplinary nature. As a result of this experience, the flexibility, strength and support a cross-discipline approach can lend to a study caused me to reconsider. I am moving the program of application from a mono-disciplinarily one of anthropology to a cross-disciplinary one in Science, Technology and Society.

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