# DISCUSSION: GRADUATE WORKSHOP
## CASCA 1991

*This discussion paper is a compilation of the questions and comments audio-taped during the hour following the presentations. Rather than transcribing the tape verbatim, the discussion has been paraphrased and summarized (by the Special Editor) according to the major themes that emerged. Several direct quotations are also included. Each individual who participated in the discussion period has been given the opportunity to edit and to further contribute to the written form as it is presented below.*

*Participants included the three presenters -- Gwen Reimer, Cathy Kurelek, and Maria-Inés Arratia, -- four appointed discussants -- Patty Defreitas, Patricia Spittal, Jean-Philippe Chartrand, and Dr. Wayne Warry, -- and three audience participants -- Sandra Niessen, Dr. Fay Cohen, and Dr. Raoul Anderson.*

Two major themes emerged from the Graduate Workshop discussion period: the first was concerned with the process of participatory research; the second is linked to the first, and focused on the problem of anthropological education as it relates to applied and participatory models of research.

One of the tensions raised in each presentation was that of research process as a goal of applied and participatory inquiry, as opposed to the more traditional research goals of problem definition and solution recommendation. Warry enquired whether, *finding solutions is less important than establishing process which can be left behind, leaving individuals capable of finding their own solutions.* This can become particularly problematic with regard to Ph.D. research, where establishing process will likely not fulfil academic requirements of contributing to anthropological theory. In response, Reimer and Arratia agreed that process-orientation does not take the place of solution-orientation, but rather adds to the entire research endeavour as a responsible and communicative social activity. Arratia added that the emphasis on process, as opposed to solution only, *is a reaction against this business of externally driven development projects; it began with the basic needs approach ... [when] people started expecting to have their opinions heard.* Establishing process is part of our theoretical attempt to empower those with whom we work, by, for example, teaching people to priorize their needs in order to acquire external funding for community needs.

Empowerment is also a crucial aspect of the research process which aims toward community control of the research plan, implementation, and results. DeFreitas stressed the importance of community impetus in

generating research projects and development programs. On this note, Anderson commented on the problem of lack of local control over how the way of life of indigenous peoples -- Norwegian whalers, for example -- is represented to outsiders. This in turn bears on more practical issues of how research into tourism development, for instance --particularly 'cultural tourism' -- allows local people to participate in shaping this type of alternative institution. Furthermore, how do we as 'participatory researchers' respond to the contradiction where what we are researching for (tourism as alternative culturally-appropriate development) undermines the activity upon which it is based (commercial whaling), by promoting it as a tourist attraction. As a post-script, Cohen stressed the importance of, *'studying-up' because in fact it is those people who may have our training and background in common, [who] have the power to make the decisions about how the Norwegian whalers' identity will be interpreted.* In Arratia's words, *the 'construction of ethnicity'* ... becomes a complex political and economic activity, ... *a dynamic situation ... that is not uni-directional but multi-directional [that involves] things beyond [the researcher's] control.*

In essence, establishing process as a research goal, involves an exercise of reformulating the research relationship from one that is vertical, to one that is horizontal. In discussing this new relationship, both Kurelek and Arratia commented on the difficulty in sorting out the various and sometimes inconsistent roles -- advocate, professional bridge, data collector, friend -- in which researchers find themselves. Niessen, however, commented that we have not yet reached that horizontal level in the research process: *I [don't] think we [have come] that far; even ... teaching people to priorize [needs] suggests a political relationship, an imposition, [...] and thus continues to suggest a vertical position.* As Anderson pointed out, there continues to be a 'class' problem between the 'subject' and the researcher: the latter generally enters an indigenous community carrying their white-middle-class cultural and ideological baggage. Hence, Chartrand questioned, *to what extent, although you are struggling to apply a participatory model of research, are you coming into the community with a different ideology of research than has been done traditionally in the past? To what extent is this problem of implementing process limited by the fact that you are students, that your research is still an integral part of an academic programme which may not have the priorities or specific integration with the communities in which you are working?*

Chartrand's comment highlights an important aspect of the basic/applied dichotomy in terms of anthropological training; as such, it aptly introduces the second theme in the discussion. Much of the response

to the presentations questioned how our education in anthropology, coupled with our position as student researchers, promotes and/or stands in the way of applied and participatory directions in research. Niessen pointed to the implications of each presentation in terms of the need for a restructuring of our anthropological education, in order to address *the disjuncture between academic expectations and what we do as applied anthropologists*. Reimer, for example, expressed frustration at the probable inevitability of producing two pieces of writing: an applied 'lay' report for community residents and government officials, and an academic dissertation including a literature review, along with expanded methodological and theoretical considerations.

This in turn raised questions of how we can begin to create an 'applied ethnography'. Spittal, for example, asked; *How do the tenets of participatory and collaborative research translate with writing up the project*? For Arratia, this translation is difficult in that it must -- in one piece of writing -- use the dissertation ethnography to defend and to advocate for the indigenous position, to critique both her own and Chilean theories of the participatory process, and to potentially invoke change among her Chilean peers in that process. As Warry concluded, not many students have exclusively attempted an applied focus toward dissertation research; the challenge is to somehow mould the ethnography in order to *fully capture your relationship to the people [...] and the voices of the people you work with.*

The danger, Warry continued, is in throwing the anthropological 'baby out with the bathwater': *There is a lot of strength in traditional methods that anthropologists have used, for example, the distancing process that enables you to reflect on relationships in a way that you are unable to do while actually in the field.* Kurelek indicated a more pragmatic danger in too quickly dismissing anthropological methods and epistemology: recent court judgements on the validity of anthropological knowledge have demonstrated that our own critiques and deconstructions of anthropology may in the future turn against us and against those for whom we may be called upon to defend.

Despite the problematic political, ethical, pedagogic, and methodological issues raised during the discussion period, its tone remained one of both positive and constructive challenge. As one participant suggested, we as students may have particular advantages as researchers: for example, we might advocate for more liberal interpretations of what the value of our research should be. Our freedom from any 'hire and fire' contract situation permits us to explore new alternatives, to test innovative methodologies, and thus to extend the parameters of applied research. Further, our generation has the capacity

to produce greater flexibility in the meaning and practice of applied anthropology.