Faculty Report

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Proposal title: Binational Nutritional Health Programming and Community Histories as Opportunity: Integrated Student Research in Four Communities in the Valley of Oaxaca.

Country/ies visited: Mexico

Institution visited: Instituto Welte para Estudios Oaxaqueños, CENTEOTL

Dates of travel: June 4-7; June 17-August 4, 2008

Number of student participants: 19

Previous IP proposals submitted and grants awarded (list titles, countries and dates):
1. SDSU Fall Semester Study Abroad Field School in Oaxaca, Mexico, in collaboration with the Southwest Center for International Studies and the Instituto Welte para Estudios Oaxaqueños (with D. Carruthers). January 2002. $1500.00.
2. Latin American Studies Mixteco Language and Culture Area Summer Fieldschool in Oaxaca, Mexico (with J. Gerber, A. Trujillo, G. Talavera). Spring Semester 2003. $3262.00
3. Language, Culture, Gender, and Community Health Education in Oaxaca, Mexico. January to June 2004 (with J. Gerber, A. Trujillo, G. Talavera, K. Coleman). $8040.00
7. Community Based Sustainability: Combining community needs with research and training in Santa María Atzompa, Oaxaca, Mexico (with K. Coleman, T. Pasananti, A. Hidalgo). 2007. $7300.00.

Have all required reports been submitted? Yes.

Other funding for this activity available/applyed for: Summer salary paid by CAL. TA salary paid by NRC funds through Center for LAS.

Proposal Abstract (75 word maximum):
Six years of continuous field schools have resulted in community and interdisciplinary collaborations that focus on: (1) nutritional outreach for bodies plagued by lead poisoning; (2) the development of archival resources for local and international use; (3) ethnographies of changing familial dynamics in migrant based communities; (4) the growth of the grassroots export system of envíos; and (5) the effects of binational urban ideologies in rural life.

Travel report:

I. Opening/overview of intentions/activity
The program in Oaxaca is a unique study abroad experience in that it is geared toward applied anthropological field methods of community based service, extensive qualitative research, and sustainable development practices that derive from collaboratively negotiated projects between community leaders and Professor Pérez. As such, it is primarily a graduate program that allows for some high performing and motivated undergraduate students. In 2008 we had to re-establish bonds with new leadership in the primary field site of Santa María Atzompa that reflected the social tensions that have plagued the state of Oaxaca since 2006. These bonds were solidified with the outstanding work done by the 2008 field team and 2009 students were warmly received. Our program also grew in 2009 to include two new communities, Zimatlan de Alvarez and San Pablo Huixtepec. In these communities we expanded our focus to include collaborations with the NGO Centeotl on nutrition training and on youth reintegration and migratory histories in San Pablo Huixtepec.

II. In preparation for the trip abroad
The Ethnographic Field Methods Program in Oaxaca 2009 was comprised of three primary field sites: Santa María Atzompa, Zimatlan de Alvarez, and San Pablo Huixtepec. All students participated in the seminar series that began in San Diego in May as ANTH 520 Ethnographic Field Methods during Summer Session I and continued throughout their six
weeks in Oaxaca, meeting collectively for seminar on Thursdays from 4:00 to 7:00pm at the Instituto Welte para Estudios Oaxaqueños. Throughout the program they received training and access to colleagues and authors of their readings including Jim Grieshop (UC Davis), Margaret Handley (UC San Francisco), Arthur Murphy (UNC Greensboro), and Jeff Cohen (OSU), as well as invitations to freely participate in Arizona State University’s History Seminar that takes place in Oaxaca.

Arrangements were made for a team of students to work in the archives on Tuesday and Thursday of each week in Atzompa from 10:00am to 2:00pm by Professor Pérez and Teaching Assistant Ryan Gwynne at their preliminary meeting in early June with the Presidente Municipal and his cabildo. Ryan Gwynne, the teaching assistant for the program, arrived the first week of June to arrange for space and materials.

Arrangements for the Zimatlan project, were made by Evan Rubin and Marie Rodriguez before the students arrived. The research in Zimatlan focuses on a collaborative research project between Professors Grieshop, Handley, Cohen and Perez on the issue of lead poisoning in food products originating in the communities governed by the municipality of Zimatlán and in documenting changes in meal planning, preparation, and food sharing. Funding for the materials, housing of the students in Zimatlán, and travel of the other professors and Evan Rubin (SDSU) and Marcie Rodriguez (UCD), both graduates of the summer training and currently serving as project leaders, were born by grants from Grieshop. Housing for six students with local families were made for the students from Monday through Wednesday of each week; allowing them to return to Oaxaca for seminar.

Conference calls with Angel Vazquez, Director of CENTEOTL were made by Jim Grieshop and Professor Pérez in May and June to discuss and agree upon the nature of our collaborative project, arrange for student housing, and secure office space for the students to work during the week.

The Oaxaca Research Team: Jim, Ramona, Margaret, Marcie, Chuy, Domingo, Nicandro, and Angel at the Instituto Welte.

III. Upon arrival/specific activity
Students were broken into various groups that attempted to reflect their general interests but also the dynamic of the projects. Returning students who were not registered for
credit and who there to conduct their own research are not included in this report description unless they also participated in these activities.

List of Participants (All participants are Graduate students unless otherwise noted):
LAS
Rubin, Evan (Project leader in Zimatlán)*
Gwynne, Ryan* Teaching Assistant
Armenta, Richard (MA/MPH)
Morello, Monica (MA/MPH)
Clinton, Sarah (MA)
Toms, Lauren (MA)
Serrano, Fernando (MA)
Meckel-Parker, Krissy (MA/MPH)*

PUBLIC HEALTH
Hugo Salgado (PhD)

ANTHROPOLOGY:
Merino, Nadia*
Calvario, Velma*
Bates, Jessica
Johnston, Kat (undergraduate)
Hendrickson, Eric

CRIMINOLOGY
Mejia, Noe (MA/MPA)

OTHER UNIVERSITIES (Open U Registration):
Crosby, Joshua (USF)
Hernandez, Maya (UCSF) (PhD Global Health)
Carolina Talavera (UCSC)*
Rodriguez, Marcie (UCD) Project Leader in Zimatlan*
*Indicates returning student from previous program.

Santa María Atzompa and San Pablo Huixtepec
We focused on two primary areas of inquiry and collaboration this year: preservation of their archival materials and the elicitation of oral histories in preparation for their community museum.

Archival and Oral History Team:
Last summer we discovered that rare and important materials that we had digitized including three lienzos with dates from the 17th, 18th, and early 20th centuries along with two Libros de Nombremientos from the 19th century had gone missing during the turn over of governance. Fortunately we did digitize these and have excellent copies and this is what endeared us to the community. This year we smoothly moved into work at the archives, joined by one youth from the community. Seven students were assigned to the
archives and elicitation of oral histories. They included: Jessica Bates, Kat Johnston, Lauren Toms, Velma Calvario, Fernando Serrano, Erik Hendrickson, and Noe Mejia. Velma Calvario also worked at the health clinic conducting surveys on belief systems surrounding diabetes.

The team completed the digitizing of the death and civil court records from the 19th century and into the 20th century; completed the inventory of the records currently stored in the archives; and moved most documents by topic into acid free storage boxes. We elicited the oral histories of key community leaders associated with the preservation of culture in the community, the comisario de ejidatarios, and a few other political leaders; we continued the elicitation of myths and legends from several key informants and began histories in the colonias.

The same team worked on archives in San Pablo Huixtépec along with several youth from the community. In addition, we started two important ethnographic and community based projects. As part of the community’s history, they asked us to begin to document the stories of migration that have come to define the community. SP Huixtépec has close to 60% of its community in Seaside, California. Many move back and forth between Seaside and Huixtépec, while others do not have such freedoms. This has created shifts in family structure that we began to document through interviews and participation with the community. Equally important, the community has had many youth return with histories of gang involvement. These groups have begun to perpetuate in SP Huixtépec and Noe Mejia from Criminology worked with us to begin the process of documenting their presence and effect on the larger community. We were extremely fortunate in that the groups came to trust us and helped us understand their territories, reasons for existence and needs to more fully integrate with the community. This is a long term project but one where we believe we can aid in the reintegration of youth.

Entrance to the plaza and Church where students worked, Atzompa.
Ryan, Velma, Kat and Lauren hard at work, SP Huixtepec.

Ryan Gwynne learning to pick maiz before an interview, Atzompa.
2009 Research Team and the Secretary of Education at the municipio in SP Huixtepec.

Nutrition Outreach Program:
The Nutrition Outreach Program did not continue in 2009 in Atzompa due to local issues. Instead, we focused on creating a new program that would address the same issues of high blood lead levels as well as document the changes in meal patterns among families with high out migration. Using the program established in Atzompa we developed a program that could be administered as part of an existing micro-credit program. Women who have received loans must meet once a week with an economic promotora from Centeotl. We created a program on basic nutrition that students administered and then the two program leaders, Marcie and Evan, trained the economic promotoras on its continued administration.

In addition, students lived with local families three days each week and shadowed the primary food preparer as she shopped, cooked, and fed the family. Students fully participated in all of these activities, administered surveys, and documented through open ended interviews the families’ perspectives on food, nutrition, and health.

Women and their guests and the clausura of the nutrition program. The details of the program are below.

Zimatlán
The Zimatlán program was centered on two primary ethnographic inquiries: discovering the extent of the household use of lead based ceramic ware in daily use to correlate in the use of food production for family members in the U.S.; and the dynamics of mealtime and food changes between generations that would aid us in our work with migrant families in San Quintin and the U.S. These two inquiries were embedded within the project needs of CENTEOTL (Centro de Desarrollo Comunitario Centeotl A.C.), an organization dedicated to the improvement of the lives of communities through gender
equality, sustainable development, environmental improvement, and the improvement of the lives of the most marginalized, among other issues. Our students were asked to work within CENTEOTL’s outreach program, communicated through promotores and structured through colmenas, or beehives. The colmenas consist of women’s groups that have received financial assistance through a microcredit program called Bancomunidad. The students visited approximately 30 colmenas in communities that they hiked into to see housing projects that were built through communal labor and adobe, water recapture and distribution and a fish farm and hand made wooden toy workshop that has brought new life to the community of La Soledad. The community, a once almost abandoned town of women, children and the elderly, is now functioning and even prospering as they have found a sense of pride in being able to support themselves and their children. While their sense of prosperity is not one that even meets the standards of minimum wage for Mexico, it is enough for them to live comfortably, send their children to school, and obtain local health care.
Meeting of a colmena and the plastic banners used for nutrition training.

Joshua teaching an interactive exercise on nutrition at one of the colmena meetings.
Nadia giving a lesson on nutrition to an interested group of women.

Enjoying Noe’s family in the Mixteca and the special treat of a live band just for us!
Students were also invited to the Gueleguetza Popular in both Atzompa (shown here) and SP Huixtepec where Dr. Perez was honored as a special guest.

IV. Conclusion, recommendation, and next step?

The field school in Oaxaca has been an extremely successful program in terms of training graduate and highly motivated undergraduate students in applied research. Sixteen different MA theses in Anthropology, LAS and Public Health have been or are currently being written on research from these summer programs of which nine students have gone on to doctoral programs where they will continue their research in Atzompa or Oaxaca; two undergraduate senior theses have been done that resulted in one student being accepted to Cornell and another chose between four doctoral admission offers (UCSB, Michigan, Iowa, and Ohio); four students have been accepted into our McNair program; thirty eight students have presented at professional meetings; and one student received a Fulbright based on her involvement in 2004. Three of my students have won Sally Cassanova PreDoctoral Summer Internships based on their work in Oaxaca.

I have published two articles that directly acknowledged funding from OIP. All research is conducted under 3 IRB protocols that I hold except for those students who are conducting individual research as a result of prior experience in the area. These students submit and obtain their own IRB protocol for data that will be used in their MA theses, professional presentations, and future publications. The recent collaborations with UC Davis, UC San Francisco and Ohio State University have resulted in several grants that continue to offset the expenses of the program, maintaining an affordable experience for students.

V. Additional Information

A meeting was held in February with the research teams in Oaxaca and the program and projects for 2010 are well underway.