Co-Chairs' Report 2004

We begin by expressing many thanks to the editors of the FOSAP newsletter, John Rhoades and Paul Grebinger. The newsletter brings news and reports and, most importantly, papers from the annual FOSAP-sponsored panels. This keeps you in touch with the concerns and issues important to people in small departments of anthropology.

Thanks also to John Gatewood, the web master, who maintains the FOSAP web site, regularly posting the newsletter and pictures from symposia at www.aaanet.org/gad/fo sap.

With some pride, we report that FOSAP is among the most active committees in the General Anthropology Division (GAD). As you will see in the announcement elsewhere in the newsletter, FOSAP members have organized another series of panels and workshop for this year’s meetings in San Francisco on teaching matters, adapting to academic change, and religion.

The FOSAP Business Meeting is usually where ideas for these symposia emerge, so if you have an idea for a panel for 2005, please come to this year’s meeting. It is scheduled for Friday, November 19th, from 6:15-7:15 at a place announced in the final program. Our tradition is to go out for dinner after the meeting (we still need suggestions for a site).

This year, Kathleen Terry-Sharp, Director of Academic Services for the AAA, will join us. This is an opportunity to talk directly with Kathleen on how the AAA can better serve the needs of small programs. Come with your ideas (if you cannot attend email your suggestions to Cate and Bob).

We will also discuss a possible name change for FOSAP or our newsletter. Please let us know if you have special needs that FOSAP may be able to address. For example, one new service that FOSAP provided this year was to help some small departments find external reviewers for program reviews. If you need help or would like to offer your services as an external reviewer, let us know.

Finally, we remind you that FOSAP membership and receipt of the newsletter is free so long as you are a member of AAA. It appears some people have also allowed their GAD memberships to lapse. We urge you to support GAD and the four/five field approach by paying the annual (small) dues so that we can continue to offer this newsletter and other FOSAP services. We hope to see many of you at the annual meetings this year—in Atlanta.

Cate Cameron ccameron@cedarcrest.edu
Bob Myers myers@alfred.edu

TEACHING US/TEACHING U.S.:
ANTHROPOLOGISTS TEACHING TO AND
ABOUT THE NATIVES AT HOME

Organizers: ROBERT MYERS (Alfred U), ROBIN O’BRIAN (Elmira C)
Chair: ROBIN O’BRIAN (Elmira C)

Teaching the anthropology of the U.S. offers opportunities for anthropologists to enable students to see their culture in a new light and to reflect on those aspects of their cultural experience they may not have considered. Unlike introductory courses, it permits examination of the familiar in place of a focus on distant “exotic others,” still regarded by many students as the subject matter of anthropology.

We explore the experience of teaching about the United States to our students from an anthropological perspective: Is there an American (U.S.) culture? How can one do fieldwork in one’s own culture? How do different subgroups (more typically the subject matter of earlier U.S. anthropology) situate themselves within U.S. culture? How can anthropological methods and perspectives be used to
increase students’ understanding of their own culture? In focusing on U.S. culture, we assert the value to anthropological studies of applying the discipline’s methods and insights domestically, not only by locating subgroups within the larger culture, but through examination of the larger culture itself. In doing so, we examine broader issues of relativism, comparativism, and reflexivity.

[The following papers have been edited to fit size limits of the newsletter, edited deletions are indicated by three dots. Also the comments by David McCurdy at the session were not available (editors)]

Comparing US
E. L. Cerroni-Long (Eastern Michigan University)

Imagine if Margaret Mead, at the conclusion of her fieldwork in Samoa, instead of coming home to the United States to write and publish her influential first book (1928), had remained in the field, had entered a local professional-training program and, having obtained the appropriate qualifications, had started teaching Samoan youth about their own culture, encountering in the process consistent and determined denial that such a culture existed. What kind of pathological mental characteristics would the culture-and-personality anthropologists have imputed to such a culture-denying population? What collective syndrome would such belief patterns have been related to? What manipulative cultural strategies would such an intellectual stance have been thought to adumbrate?

These are instructive questions to apply to the experience of any anthropologist attempting to teach courses on American culture in contemporary American universities. They are particularly intriguing to a foreign anthropologist, like me, who has been studying American culture for the last twenty years through our basic discipline-specific methodological approach: participant observation. When I describe this puzzle to my university students they typically giggle and I can see that they really want to say: “Oh, get off it! Studying us? You are not serious, right? Anthropologists study exotic stuff, possibly in some Venezuelan rainforest or on some Pacific Ocean island, or, if you really want to stick around, in some strange group such as the Amish or the Mafia. American culture is just too big to study. And, in any case, how can you say that there is an American culture when I can have tacos for lunch and sushi for dinner?”

And it gets worse. Since I came to the United States, in the late 1970s, more and more of my fellow anthropologists have been denying that culture—as an adaptive process characterizing our species and giving rise to distinct, distinctive (and “studiable”) cultures—exists at all. Thus, Lee Baker, president-elect of the Society for the Anthropology of North America, states: “What is American Culture? This question is impossible to answer. ... One of the many difficulties is that culture itself is not a ‘thing’ ...” (2003:48). Did we really need the postmodernists to point out that culture is not a thing? Of course it isn’t: no anthropologist ever asserted that it is. What the pre-pomo anthropologists argued, and richly documented, is that cultures differ and that such differences have consequences. Gravity is not a thing either, but if you fall from a high window you’ll certainly experience its consequences. Similarly, illnesses or disabilities are not things but they will mould your behavior, frame your lifestyle choices, define your sense of self, and affect your everyday activities, just as cultures do.

Teaching American Culture in a Comparative Framework

The wealth of available ethnographic materials can be put to good use in teaching about American culture. All that is needed is the organization of all the descriptive bits and pieces into a theoretically sound and cross-culturally applicable framework. This is what I have attempted to do in my initial approach to teaching a course on American culture, for which my texts covered an eclectic spectrum ranging from Rupert Wilkinson’s American Social Character (1992) to Bill Bryson’s The Lost Continent (1990). However, I soon realized that presenting such information in a comparative context is much more effective. Thus, rather than through one topical class, I now teach about American culture through two courses that are actually focused on different topics altogether: one is about US ethnic and sub-cultural minorities and the other is about Japan. In both cases, the adoption of a comparative framework was chosen in order to contain some of the problems intrinsic to the teaching of each topic: the exotic-seeking voyeurism of the students taking the course on Japan, and the complete
incomprehension of the concept of cultural hegemony by the students taking my course on US minorities. The results have been remarkable. It seems that what I am actually teaching, more than anything else, is cultural reflexivity. This is a completely new skill for my students, and they embark upon its acquisition with a sense of awe. Many resist the process, finding it profoundly threatening to their sense of self, but others find the new compass provided by cultural membership quite irresistible.

The process of recognizing cultural belonging is particularly painful for mainstream students taking the US minorities course. In this class, which is typically taught in a large-sized lecture format, students are introduced to the concept of expressive style as revealing cultural, sub-cultural and ethnic membership. One of their assignments requires that they describe and analyze their own expressive style to sort out its catalyzing matrices. Naturally, students belonging to ethnic minorities, inured to behavioral self-monitoring, breeze through this assignment. It is the mainstream students who truly find it challenging. The process they go through in responding to this challenge involves the following: They tell me that they are "mutts," so they cannot sort out their ethnic background for descriptive purposes. To this I reply that their case is typical of millions of Americans who simply define themselves as Americans; therefore, what they will have to describe is how their Americaness is revealed in their expressive style. To this they reply that they "do not feel particularly American" and they start grasping for possible sub-cultural membership, such as being recovering alcoholics, members of a fraternity, single parents, gay activists, Catholics, from a divorced family, twins, Trekkies, surf-boarders, etcetera. Through class discussion and one-on-one advising we sort through each "identity proposal"---in the process clarifying the meaning of sub-cultural membership---and a few more students get going with their assignment. What is left are the students who are just, inescapably, average Americans. Some of these still resist and ask for an alternative assignment---which I usually make available---but some get down to writing and, inevitably, they end up talking not about expressive patterns at all but about the "mental dimension" of being American, i.e., values, norms, and beliefs. In other words, they write "typically American" descriptions of what it is to be American.

None of this happens in the course on Japan in which I incorporate a comparative dimension. Perhaps it is because this course focuses on cultural wholes rather than intra-cultural variation, or perhaps it is because the assignment in this case does not require a process of cultural self-analysis but rather the isolation and description of comparable cultural facets. Or, perhaps it is simply because this is an upper-division class taken by more experienced anthropology students and offered through a small-sized seminar format. In any case, students have little difficulty in bringing up the description of cultural characteristics they recognize as typically American and profoundly different from parallel Japanese ones. For example, a discussion of Japanese home gardens as compared to American lawns and back-yards always reveals that the students have a clear understanding of the behavioral expressions of American home-ownership ideology and neighborly competition-and-control dynamics. To stimulate cultural reflexivity, the text I find most useful is Distant Mirrors, fortunately still available in its third edition (DeVita & Armstrong 2002), but I also expose the students to classic comparative statements, such as those provided by the Halls (Hall & Hall 1990). However, the "moral improvement" drive emerges even in this class, since many students seem eager to bring up for discussion American cultural characteristics that compare unfavorably with parallel Japanese ones. In other words, students become particularly interested in discussing Japanese cultural features they feel Americans should try to emulate. Also, the difficulty students encounter, after contrasting and comparing specific aspects of the two cultures, is in identifying "the pattern that connects," i.e., the systemic glue making the culture a whole and maintaining and reinforcing overall characteristics through culture-specific feedback loops.

Still, in both classes, the use of a comparative approach, applied either intra-culturally or inter-culturally, seems to lead students toward a clearer understanding of what a culture is and how it works. It also seems to lead to a better grasp of what it means to be an American. This lets me introduce students to the idea that multiculturalism requires a set of basic skills, which I summarize as: reflexivity, empathy, awareness, conciliation, and tolerance (Cerroni-Long 2001). At the conclusion of each of these courses students become aware that American
culture makes the acquisition of these skills particularly difficult, but they also come to understand what it would take to be multiculturally competent and how anthropological training can greatly assist in this effort. At this point many of them get enthused about this enterprise and seek advice on how to become an anthropology major. This is something I usually discourage them from doing, but that’s another story!

References
Baker, Lee
Bryson, Bill
Cerroni-Long, ed.,
DeVita, Phillip R. and James D. Armstrong, eds.
Hall, Edward T. and Mildred Reed Hall
Mead, Margaret
Wilkinson, Rupert, ed.

CONTACT: liza.cerroni-long@emich.edu

Diversity and Homogeneity in American Culture:
Teaching and Theory
Claudia Strauss (Pitzer College)

In teaching, as in any kind of cultural production, you can look at content, or you can look at reception. Here I want to talk about both: the content of what to say about diversity and sharing in U.S. culture, and how that may be received.

The reception issue is one that was forced to my awareness early in my teaching career. It was 1988, and I was a very new Ph.D., teaching a course on my own for only the second time in my life as a visiting professor at Brown University. The course was titled “Culture and Human Behavior.” The students were diverse ethnically and regionally, but almost all U.S. born. My strategy throughout the semester was to show students how their American ethnopsychologies were just one cultural possibility, compared with, for example, Ifaluk and Bedouin ideas about emotion or Greek ideas of intelligence. This, of course, is standard anthropological fare.

However, one of the points I wanted to make was perhaps more controversial. I argued that American culture is dominated by European ways of thinking, so that the dominant or hegemonic culture in the United States is Euro-American. One student was very unhappy with my statements about the Euro-American character of the dominant culture. “Sue” was a second-generation Korean American from a small town in Illinois, as I learned from reading the autobiographical essay that was one of the course assignments. Her essay described being called a “Chink” when she was in elementary school and being asked how she could see out of those narrow eyes of hers. (I know this because I saved her essays; the only papers I saved from the hundred or so students who took the class.) Sue felt that my stressing the Euro-American character of mainstream U.S. culture was another form of exclusion. It did not help that in her discussion group one of the other students said something like, “You don’t look American,” showing her surprise that Sue was born and raised in the Midwest. Sue wrote excellent essays throughout the semester, but showed her unhappiness with the course by walking out of the final exam. It was the most visible statement of anger I have ever encountered in my teaching.

As I prepared this paper, I pondered again what I should have done differently. Was the problem the message? Or did Sue hear my message, in fact critical of many features of the dominant culture, as just like the ethnocentric and xenophobic celebration of Euro-Americanness she had suffered growing up in the Midwest?

I do not think I was wrong to argue that we can speak of a dominant U.S. culture. I realize that in saying this I run counter not only to most U.S. Americans’ perception that this society is so diverse that one cannot generalize about it, but also to some anthropologists’ critiques in recent years of the idea of “cultures” as shared, traditional, and internalized rather than constructed, contested representations (see, e.g., Wolf 1982, Clifford 1988, Abu-Lughod 1991). Yes, there is a sense in which culture is invented and constructed. But there are different
layers and levels of cultural understandings. It helps to distinguish what I have called degrees of “cultural standing” (Strauss 2004), from the highly controversial, through the disputable, the common opinion, to what is completely taken for granted. Taken-for-granted cultural understandings shape the way people interpret their realities regardless of their ideological disagreements. This last level Pierre Bourdieu called that of doxa, and it tends to be unspoken, in contrast to the heterodox and orthodox dogmas battling at the level of explicit discourses (see also Strauss and Quinn 1997 and Williams 1977).

Thus, for example, William La Fleur’s Liquid Life (1994), on Japanese Buddhist approaches to abortion, brings home the point that despite the considerable differences between Americans who are pro-Life and pro-Choice (see Ginsburg 1989 and Luker 1984), the whole abortion debate in the U.S. takes for granted that what is at stake are individual rights, the rights of the mother or the rights of the child she is carrying. If LaFleur is right, this is quite different from decision making, historically, in Japan that centered on the welfare of the family or nation, not the entitlements of one individual versus another.

My emphasis on the taken-for-granted understandings shared by Americans should not obscure very real disunities, some of which fracture people from within as well as divide them from each other. In terms of subgroup variation, one form of diversity that is often overlooked, probably most so by professors teaching at east or west coast elite colleges, is the difference between what are currently called "red” and "blue” America after the 2000 election night charts that showed Al Gore carrying the coastal states (marked in blue) and George W. Bush the interior states (marked in red). Yes, there are taken-for-granted understandings that unite abortion or gay rights opponents and supporters, but also great differences of outlooks and, often whole ways of life. Regional and class diversity can be easily overlooked as well. Studies of American culture are often based on the suburban middle-class (Bellah et al. 1985 is a prime example), missing the way working-class and rural people may hold alternative views (see Dudley 1994, Strauss 1992). The racial and ethnic differences that we usually highlight in our focus on diversity in the United States should be presented as not single entities but quite variable by class, religious affiliation and conviction, and place.

What about Sue? I’ve said that I would not change the message that there is a dominant U.S. culture at the taken for granted level, one that is quite obvious to foreign observers. U.S. students need that message to go beyond surface differences and realize the profound ways in which their cultural assumptions are only one of world’s many possibilities. Scholarly discourses of identity that make identities a pure matter of choice may themselves be under the sway of voluntaristic views, overlooking the ways in which our outlooks are constructed without our awareness.

Whether that dominant culture is Euro-American, however, I am no longer so sure about. I have never investigated the origins of such typically U.S. American traits as stress on individual rights, including the right to make choices for oneself of a career or romantic partner, the value given to problem-solving and active effort rather than graceful resignation to fate, a fairly rigid set of racial categories, and widespread middle-class identification. Some of these have clear European intellectual antecedents, but may still have been reinterpreted in the United States. What stopped me in my tracks, and forced me to rethink my stance, was rereading the introduction to Bharati Mukherjee’s collection of stories, Darkness. I turned to it because I had remembered she contrasted her experiences living in Canada, a “country [that] is hostile to its citizens who had been born in hot, moist continents like Asia...[and] proudly boasts of its opposition to the whole concept of cultural assimilation” (1985: 2) to the more hospitable reception she received in the United States. (The dominant discourse in the U.S. has not been one of opposition to cultural assimilation but of requiring it in key behaviors, like speaking English, e.g., Urciuoli 1995.) But when I reread Mukherjee’s introduction I saw that the main point she wanted to make about her experience in the United States was the feeling that she could “hear America singing” in the voices of its immigrants. “For me,” she writes, “it is a movement away from the aloofness of expatriation [that she felt in Canada], to the exuberance of immigration” (1985:3). And this made me wonder (I am sure some scholars have written about this, and I would appreciate any references) whether some of the traits I was ready to label as Euro-American are
better characterized as the result of the fact that aside from Native Americans, this society had no centuries-old traditions: its culture was shaped not only by the ideas brought by the immigrants from their homelands but by the nature of the immigrant experience in the new land—one at first dominated by immigrants from Europe to be sure but continuing with immigrants from the rest of the world as well. Probably it is some of each. I wish I could find Sue and talk with her again about these issues, but I will have similar opportunities with future students.

References:
Abu-Lughod, Lila
Bellah, Robert
Clifford, James
Dudley, Kathryn Marie
Ginsburg, Faye
LaFleur, William
Luker, Kristin
Mukherjee, Bharati
Strauss, Claudia
Strauss, Claudia and Naomi Quinn

Writing an American Community: The Ethnographic Directory Project
Catherine M. Cameron (Cedar Crest College)
This paper addresses one of the central questions of this symposium: How to increase students' understanding of their own culture through an anthropological approach. My response comes in the form of an extended example, with the description of a course developed to give students the experience of doing fieldwork at home. The course was designed as an American communities course that included a substantial fieldwork component. The paper details the main writing assignment, the Ethnographic Directory Project, which was meant to be a variant of the standard term paper.

The course described here, called Researching American Communities, was co-designed with a colleague in religious studies, who thought, like me, that a community-based course with a strong field component in it was a useful pedagogical experience. We also believed such a course would help sell our program minors. Both of us had previously used small fieldwork assignments and did field trips in other courses. We had done quite a bit of research on the local region, in my colleague's case documenting religious diversity over the years, and in my own, writing about the economic transitions of the Lehigh Valley that had accompanied recent de-industrialization.

In its original design, my rendition of the course was roughly divided between a classroom and a fieldwork segment. The field locus was Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, a city of about 70,000, in a region
formerly dominated by heavy industry and the textile trade. I knew the region well from a research point of view and had written a number of articles on economic change, cultural tourism, and the museumification of the city’s heritage (see Cameron 1987, 1991, 1992, 1999; Cameron and Gatewood 1994). I had also served for a number of years on the city’s tourism board (Cameron 1997).

The field segment, which lasted about six to seven weeks, involved trips in the college van to selected locales in Bethlehem. We did walking tours of the historic area adjacent to the downtown, and the north side and south side business districts. In several instances, I had arranged for guided tours by local experts. We visited a major community arts facility and the closed steel plant, where we were given a lecture on the steel museum and an auto tour of the location in which it is planned. I found that it was not difficult for student researchers to penetrate the city’s heterogeneous class and ethnic structure.

In the first iteration of the course, the students had to decide on topics for independent research fairly quickly after the field trips began. They were encouraged to work in small groups. In total, they had about three weeks to collect data and write up their papers. While those first year papers were submitted in a timely way, the submissions were fairly uninspired and somewhat superficial. It became clear to me that students found this research task too much to accomplish in the short time period.

Eight students enrolled in the second offering of the course. This time, however, I decided to try a different kind of field work strategy, one in which students would be asked to undertake more specific and concrete tasks in their field research. I envisioned assignments that could be done in tandem and subsequently assembled into a group document. I decided to design something based on the city directory concept.

The directory I had in mind was to be more comprehensive than the standard type, closer to an ethnographic description of a community. The assignment was called the Ethnographic Directory Project. I wanted to feature historical coverage of the city, population statistics, ethnic composition, an economic profile of the area and labor statistics, and information on city government, agencies, non-profit organizations, and the like. I asked students to write about one topic of special interest to them in greater depth, and I provided the students with detailed written instructions to collect data on the following areas:

- Population figures broken down by age, sex, and ethnicity
- Labor statistics
- Levels of Government
- City Government
- Business Associations
- Citizen Groups
- Human Services Organizations
- Media
- Museums and arts organizations
- Bethlehem Steel and the Bethlehem Works Project
- Any additional areas of the students’ choosing

The students were told where they should be able to find this kind of information, for example, text sources such as newspapers and tourist brochures, Internet sites, the public library, city hall, and agencies such as historical societies and museums, the chamber of commerce, arts groups, local businesses and corporations such as the (now defunct) Bethlehem Steel Corporation. I kept print material of various kinds (newspaper clippings arranged by topics, brochures and community publications, charts, etc) in a resource room. I invited a community activist to visit the class to talk about a land redevelopment issue and introduced the students on field trips to people in agencies who were willing to do follow-up interviews.

The students began their own field research in the course of the field trips to the city and worked in groups of two. Each group was assigned specific data collection tasks. They produced a spatial map of the business district and visited selected agencies and organizations. They did photographic work, using their own cameras or disposable cameras that I provided. I asked them to try to take pictures that might help “tell the story of the city”. They were also instructed to keep a field notebook to record their activities, observations, findings, and personal reactions. Their notebook was to be handed in at the end of the semester and was graded as a homework assignment.

I was surprised at the amount of information the internet provided about the region. The city of
Bethlehem has an official web site with useful links to other sites: the county and the state do, as well. Census and labor statistics are available on several sites. Museums, historical agencies, and arts groups have helpful information, as does a local history project run from one of the colleges. The Bethlehem Steel site provides very good historical overview of the company and the city, as well. The students ended up doing quite a bit of virtual ethnography.

At the end of the course, the student groups handed in their data. Much of the data appeared as brief reports and tables, for example, lists of schools and churches, descriptions of local and county government, tables and figures of census reports and labor statistics, and a business index. Some of it was in the form of mini-essays such as brief historical report on Bethlehem Steel and its museum project called the Industrial History Museum, an inventory of arts and cultural organizations, a report on city history, and the like.

I put all the materials together in a very large three-ring binder with a labeled tab index. The front cover of the binder was embellished with a photograph of the blast furnaces of the Bethlehem Steel plant and given the title, Ethnographic Directory for the City of Bethlehem. The side of the directory featured the name of the course and the students. It turned out to be a rather impressive document. As a physical artifact, the directory has an impact which is, in many ways, much more substantial than the course Web site.

The directory project works despite the time bound context of a semester-long course. Meaningful fieldwork is difficult, perhaps impossible, for students to carry out in one semester. Yet, as many teachers of anthropology recognize, fieldwork can be the most pedagogically valuable aspect of an anthropological communities course. The obvious utility of the directory project is that the community ethnography can be broken down in small chunks in which students can be given explicit assignments that can be completed in one semester. When all the pieces are put together, the cumulative effect of the directory is that it is bigger than the sum of its parts.

Another virtue of the directory is that it serves as a resource for the next class that takes the course. Subsequent groups can use the directory as the basis upon which to do additional fieldwork. New topics can be added, and existing ones fleshed out. Thus, over several semesters, the directory expands to include greater depth on certain areas and a wider array of topics until it really does resemble an anthropological ethnography. This will probably require expanding into additional volumes, which can be topically organized. In addition, the directory concept can be adapted for the Web, linked from a course Web site.

The applied value of the directory project is that it can be given to the community upon which it is based. Copies can be made and deposited with local institutions: the local library, mayor’s office and/or city council, schools, and other institutions. If it exists as a Web site, the address can also be circulated. The actual or virtual artifact is a concrete demonstration of what students can give back to a community and, in a more abstract sense, the value of anthropology as a research method.

While we anthropologists perhaps secretly hope that we will send skilled ethnographers into the world, the reality is that the students who do community fieldwork in our courses are probably never going to “do ethnography” in their professional lives. Nonetheless, there is value in students learning ethnographic skills. Such skills, while they may never be used to earn a living, are simply important in life. Everybody whether they know it or not will do some form of ethnography in adulthood, whether it’s when they move to a new place, take a new job, or travel abroad as a tourist. It seems to me that learning how to gather information about a place is something that one can always use in life. This is a skill that we can impart to students in communities course that uses the U.S. as a field site.

References
Cameron, Catherine
Nuf and E-Nuf Among the Nacerima: Capturing Culture for the Classroom
Robert Myers (Alfred University)

The Nacirema, members of a complex, stratified, post-industrial/post-modern, largely affluent, materialist culture of North America, are well known to anthropologists Arens and Montague 1976; Spradley and Rynkiewich 1975). Their body rituals are among the most familiar of any cultural habits anywhere (Miner 1956). Weston LaBarre described behavior at ritual gatherings called koktel partis (2002). Lionel Tiger reported on their diffuse marriage patterns, called omnigamy, a quarter-century ago (1978). Another colleague examined political culture (Weatherford 1981). Ralph Linton described the borrowed inventions of a patriotic everyman (1937). At least two observers prematurely described the demise of the Nacirema (Thompson 1972; Macaulay 1979). As unappreciated, as it is thoroughly conspicuous, is the role of nuf in Nacirema life. Nuf, in both tangible and abstract forms, a quality which permeates or is desired in nearly every facet of Nacirema life, motivates much Nacirema behavior, and figures prominently in the constellation of Nacirema values. It is with some hesitation but little modesty that I announce the discovery of nuf as a significant theme among the nearly 300 million Nacirema, a theme taken for granted by the Nacirema as cultural themes usually are by any group.

Consider the following examples and references to nuf, offered in partial translation:

Nacirema use nuf to frame daily experiences in one of their most common transitional exchanges and phatic greetings: “Have nuf!” they often say when someone departs. Upon a person’s return, he or she will be asked, “Did you have nuf?”

Nuf occupies space. The Nacirema refer to “nuf-filled” events and times. Family life should be “nuf-filled,” and if it is not, there are suspicions that something has gone awry.

Distinctions between work and other-work (formerly known as leisure), and once separate realms of activity have blurred with the rise of nuf. The Nacirema work very hard to have and acquire nuf. Work itself should be “NUF”, a theme in many office management books of the 1990s. (Papa John’s [pizza] mission statement includes: “Make work nuf.” 6/02)

Education is thought to be more effective through nuf activities. “Children learn better when they’re having nuf” asserts one early education company. (NoodleKidoodle)

Science and science education are supposed to be fun. Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry uses the logo, “We’ve got nuf down to a science.”

Nuf is thought to be an important dimension of the vast Nacirema world of sporting activities.

The Nacirema Federal Emergency Management Agency in a radio ad, in part, suggested, “For nuf, have your children practice diving for cover.” The Nacirema National Park Service associates “Nuf and Safety” and “Adventure and Nuf” in brochures. The Nacirema Postal Service encourages collecting commemorative stamps because, “They’re nuf. They’re history. They’re [Nacirema].”

A half-century ago Martha Wolfenstein reported the emergence of a type of “nuf morality” in Nacirema baby training guides (1951). Since then, nuf has permeated nearly every aspect of Nacirema child-rearing efforts, from toilet training devices (Tinkle Time Targets) to early socialization toys (first nuf laptops) to “underwear that’s nuf to wear” (Underoos) to “nufbops” (with which children practice punching each other). One of the most popular authors of children’s books wrote, [did you ever do this or that or that], “If you never did, you
should. These things are nuf and nuf is good” (Dr. Seuss 1960).

Nuf is a popular euphemism for sex. In the advertisements for sexual mates which Nacirema place in their newspapers and in electronic form, and use in face-to-face communication, they refer to “hot nuf,” “nuf-loving,” “romantic nuf,” “intimate nuf,” and “adult nuf.” In a famous film renown Nacirema actor Woody Allen declared to his mate, after they had sex the first time, “That was the most nuf I’ve had without laughing.” (Annie Hall)

Within the belief systems of many Naciremans, Professor Conrad Kottak, one of our teaching gurus, has observed that since the Nacirema were unable to put nuf in their religion, they made a religion of nuf (1994: 522).

The Nacirema are famous for their commercial and marketing vigor and the range of products packaged as some form of nuf. A popular brand of camera is the “Nuf-saver.” (Kodak) Subway day tickets are sold as “Nuf Passes” in the largest Nacirema city. Examples are endless.

Recently the Nacirema have been noted for their increase in weight and girth. Perhaps nuf plays a role here too, as many foods and “snacks” are packaged as being nuf. “Spread the nuf.” “Squeeze the nuf.” “Nuf to eat, no need to heat.” “Let the nuf out!” (Rediwhip). “Put a little nuf on your bun.” “Zero calories. 100% nuf!” (actually, that was a car ad)

Nuf has an adjectival first cousin, e-nuf which the Nacirema apply in a wide range of settings to imply aspects of the idea of nuf, although its usages often fall into one of two extremes of meaning. Nacirema refer to something being “e-nuf”- ha-ha, meaning amusing or comical, or to “e-nuf” peculiar, meaning strange or unusual. He’s “e-nuf” can mean a person is humorous, or it can mean he’s odd. One sees and hears these usages daily in Naciremaland. Entertainments and entertainers in particular measure their success according to the degree in which they are e-nuf.

Because of its varied forms and its near ubiquitous presence in Nacirema life, nuf is an ideal classroom vehicle for demonstrating the complex and influential nature of “culture.” In many ways, “nuf” is to the Nacirema as “culture” is to anthropologists. The culture concept, anthropology’s most significant contribution to the larger society, has become widely used in everyday commentary. Yet understanding clearly what “culture” means, or comprehending its many meanings, or the ways in which it molds behavior, remains elusive.

However, much more than many other important cultural themes (e.g., individualism, independence, self-reliance, freedom), “fun” (now working in complete translation) is coupled to so many physical objects, behaviors, words, and phrases that once accumulated, its meanings and roles can be decoded. Using fun expressions, artifacts, and associated behaviors, through conversations with students in the class, I show how “culture operates at the level of taken-for-granted assumptions about human nature and social relations which are expressed and transmitted through everyday phrases, ritual and practices” (Schalet 2000: 76). And I would add, through legions of physical objects and their advertisements.

Its role as culture, while important to understand, is only part of fun’s usefulness. Fun, in its many incarnations as a theme, also teaches about the ways Nacirema society, the students’ own society, and hence the students themselves, are shaped by a particular concept, nuf. Nuf objects, nuf quests, nuf as matrix for the entertaining Dreamtime, to borrow from Lee Drummond’s analysis of popular films (1996), embody the ideational dimension of nuf and serve as part of the “tool kit” with which people construct “strategies of action” (Swidler 1986: 273).

How to use nuf, or fun, in an introductory cultural anthropology classroom:

I introduce the concept of nuf following a discussion of the concept of culture, an explanation of the anthropological perspective, and after students have acquired a tongue-in-cheek distance from their culture through Miner’s article. Even then Nacirema students do not expect to hear that part of their course will focus upon “nuf.” I give the first few minutes of class time over several weeks to the gradual introduction and examination of Nacirema fun. I have their attention. Over the weeks, I lead them from a popular, superficial notion of something taken for granted and presumed to be of trivial importance to a gradual realization of its pervasive presence in American culture. We explore; we probe; we brainstorm. (If the truth be known, we probably even have some “nuf.”) This is a far cry from the teaching of anthropology examined forty
years ago by Mandelbaum, Lasker, and Albert (1963) and much more akin to the styles discussed in Kottak, et al. (1997) and by Coggeshall (2002) and Metz (2002).

Initially, I ask students to define “fun” and to give examples of fun activities, as well as activities which definitely are not fun, on a large note card. They soon react with surprise to the assignment, “Bring in as many examples or artifacts of nuf as you can find.” I encourage students who have studied abroad to recall examples of “fun” from other countries. Weekly, I challenge them to search more widely for examples and to keep producing them for class. Slowly we accumulate a substantial collection of “fun,” much of which I have displayed in my office which doubles as “The Myers Museum of Fun.”

We list, group, and examine further the fun words, phrases, advertisements, songs, objects, packages, and examples that students bring to class. Socratic (with apologies to the philosopher) and rhetorical questions abound.

What makes something, some activity, or some person fun? How would you define “fun”? Are there categories of fun activities and things? Are some things more fun than others? Why?

Is “fun” the same as “play”? Is fun-seeking behavior an innate human characteristic or culturally constructed and variable from society to society?

Are there ideas or attitudes related to fun which fill out a Nacirema feel good tool kit? (such as “happy,” “smile,” “being liked,” “have a nice day”)

Are there age limitations to fun? Is fun different for males and females? How does fun vary across ethnic groups?

How does the theme of fun fit with other American cultural themes, such as individualism, independence, and self-reliance? Life, liberty, and the pursuit of . . . fun?

Might there be a theory of fun?

Finally, to what extent does our notion of the value of fun shape our sense of ourselves and the world around us?

To further explore an anthropological perspective, students can do additional research on fun:

--Has the nature of fun in the U.S. changed over time? [history]


--has an American conception of fun, and even the English word “fun,” spread throughout the developed world? [diffusion]

--How can we describe fun holistically? How many disciplines can contribute to an understanding of fun? [holism]

In conclusion, fun, because it is a familiar, though not well understood dimension of contemporary life (as well as an idea which is “good to think, and because it links values and actions with symbols and practices) is a perfect illustration of the concept of culture defined as “the publically available symbolic forms through which people experience and express meaning” (Swidler 1986:273). Through fun we can acquire an understanding of “how culture shapes or constrains action” and how “culture provides a repertoire of capacities from which varying strategies of action [which are cultural products themselves] may be constructed” (Swidler 1986: 284).

In the introductory classroom where students first encounter our discipline, “fun” offers an engaging, and grounded (Metz 2002) subject for understanding ourselves as well as the central concept of culture. But for now, enuf fun already.

References


LaBarre, Weston 2002 Professor Widjojo Goes to a Koktel Parti.
Teaching about Us/U.S. to Native American and Other Students

Julie A. Pelletier (University of Minnesota, Morris)

This paper is perhaps more specialized in its focus, teaching Native American anthropology to a particular student demographic, but I am hopeful that my experiences, insights, and methods, which are ever-evolving, may be of use to others who teach anthropology in the U.S. This is only my second year at the University of Minnesota, Morris campus but most of us were taught that the fieldworker’s first impressions are often valuable, revealing in an often tangled jumble of impressions key characteristics or factors about a particular culture. UMM is a small four-year branch of the larger system, with just over 1,800 students, of whom 134 or 7.2% are Native American (UMM Institutional Research), making up the largest minority group on campus. This percentage is high due primarily to the Indian tuition waiver at UMM. Native Americans make up 1.5% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau) and most schools do not have even one percent Indian enrollment.

This campus had its beginnings as the Morris Indian School, founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1887. Students were recruited primarily from the Turtle Mountain Ojibwa in North Dakota, that community being mostly Catholic and Métis. Financial and other problems led to the closing of the school only 22 years later. As an expression of policy changes in Indian education, the Morris Indian School was purchased by the federal government which then transferred ownership to the State of Minnesota, on the condition “that Indian pupils shall at all times be admitted to such school free of charge for tuition and on terms of equality with white pupils” (Ahern, 1984). I am indebted to my history colleague at UMM, Bert Ahern, who has researched the history of the school, for this information. The tuition waiver stands today as a powerful incentive for Native American students

CONTACT: myers@alfred.edu

? ? ?

I teach several courses in Native American
anthropology and many of my students are Native American, mostly Ojibwa and Dakota/Lakota/Sisseton-Wahpeton. Most students at UMM are of Northern or Western European descent, primarily Norwegian and German, and they fill in the rest of my enrollment, with a smattering of Black, Hispanic or Asian students. I am one of only two Native American faculty at UMM, the other being my colleague in English who specializes in Native American and African American literatures.

Teaching anthropology has certain challenges that most of us encounter. We try to combat ethnocentrism with cultural relativism; encounter attacks on biological evolution; and walk that sometimes fine line between promoting appreciation for diversity while discouraging exoticism. Teaching Native American anthropology at UMM has presented me with a new set of challenges and perhaps I am foolishly optimistic but it seems that these challenges can lead to better understandings of the material being explored and presented. I find myself frustrated, annoyed, even angry at times in the classroom but also deeply intrigued by this process.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to teaching Native American students a course in my chosen discipline is the dislike/disdain/hatred of many Native Americans for the field of anthropology. Gerald Vizenor, Minnesota Chippewa and distinguished writer, notes in a discussion on trickster discourse, that “Modern variations on this (Ojibwa) narrative turn anthropologists into cloacal tropes to power, shit mounds at the end of the trail in social science” (204). Anne Schulherr Waters, self-described “philosopher, lawyer, feminist, lesbian, woman of color, Jew, and American Indian,” criticizes anthropologists who claim “to be an authority about a culture to which the anthropologist does not belong” and accuses archaeologists of refusing to accommodate indigenous origin stories when they teach about the Bering Strait land bridge (161). Vine Deloria, Jr., in his well-known book, Custer Died for Your Sins: an Indian Manifesto (1967), devotes an entire chapter to anthropologists (as we are often called by Indians), arguing that “Behind each successful man stands a woman and behind each policy and program with which Indians are plagued, if traced completely back to its origin, stands the anthropologist” (81). Somewhat paradoxically, he concludes his book with the observation that “This book has been hardest on those people in whom I place the greatest amount of hope for the future - Congress, the anthropologists, and the churches” (275). My students have learned from parents, grandparents, and other kin and friends that anthropologists have stolen their sacred items, profited from their knowledge, and dug their ancestors out of the ground. During my first semester at UMM, a Native student told me that he would never take a class in anthropology and that I am a traitor to my people.

Other challenges of teaching Native American anthropology to Native American students may reflect the more broadly applied “arrogance of youth and inexperience” as well as a more specific sense of privileged knowledge. Many come to my classes with a set of assumptions that can only remain intact at their peril. One assumption is that they know everything, everything about Indians, everything about their particular tribe. Another, more startling assumption is that all tribes are like theirs, a sort of tribalcentrism. Several have assumed that they will get an A in the course because they are, after all, Indians and it is a course about Indians, duh! This final assumption is, happily, the first to disappear as we go through the course syllabus on the first day and yes, we are going to read eight books this semester, and write papers as well! The non-Native students in the Native American courses face particular challenges as well. They often seem intimidated by the more vocal Native students who sometimes quote specific treaties and talk knowingly and darkly about the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Many also, not surprisingly, arrive with many misconceptions about Native Americans, based primarily on what they have seen in the movies. One young man infuriated his Native American classmates by begging them to describe their hunting and gathering activities, then criticizing them for having given up bows and arrows.

I would like to share some of the methods I have used and am still developing to address these particular challenges to my teaching:

- Since my students are predominantly Dakota/Lakota and Ojibwa, I strive to include texts on tribes that have very different cultural patterns from what is familiar. I also select texts on their tribes that present the material in an innovative way or give them information they seem to lack. This approach also helps counter the overwhelming emphasis on Plains cultures
most of the students have been exposed to through movies and other media.
• I encourage and enable a solid grounding in the history of U.S./Native American relations. This is usually new material for students who have not attended tribal schools, as U.S. history texts are notoriously poor sources of information on people of color.
• I express respect for and interest in the experiences of Native American students but not to the exclusion of all other sources of information. I also pay attention to the experiences and thoughts of the non-Native students, many of whom have grown up near reservations in Minnesota or the Dakotas.
• I mention other Native American anthropologists, such as Bea Medicine and Edward Dozier, and their commitment to anthropology as a way to help their people (Medicine, 5); I also mention other tribes' attitudes toward anthropological research that are different from the perceived norm.
• Demonstrating mastery of the material is critical. I balance this with a willingness to learn from students. For example, I can often impress the Ojibwa students with my pronunciation since my fieldwork was done with an Ojibwa tribe but my pronunciation of Dakota/Lakota is the cause of great hilarity. I am working on that, with student help!
• I encourage the non-Native students to be fully involved members of the class; to discuss and present material; to attend or become involved in Native American events and activities outside of the class, if they are interested.

I facilitate and often instigate discussions of substance abuse, tribal membership, casino gambling, and treaties. These are frank conversations that often reveal ethnocentric, biased, misinformed, or just confused ideas about both Indian Country and the U.S. in general.

• Anthropology professors who teach about the Bering land bridge theory soon discover that Native American students react to this theory as fundamentalist Christian students react to the theory of evolution. I handle both situations in the same way: there is science and there is faith; I am not questioning your faith but teaching a scientific theory that you should understand on an intellectual level.

• This final point takes us outside of the classroom. My involvement in and support of Native American student activities and activism; and the extension of the same support to non-Native American student groups and organizations appears to have a positive impact on the classroom atmosphere.

I am still deciding how much to reveal about my own identity in the classroom. It is a very small campus so most students enter my classroom knowing that I am some sort of Indian. It is clear from my appearance that I am a mixed blood and, as I mentioned earlier, this is a touchy subject among Native Americans as well as most groups in the U.S. I fear that I will, by my presence or my statement of identity, impede frank discussion and discourage disagreement. This concern is balanced by an awareness of the teaching moments that emerge when students ask me where I am from, who my people are, and why I became an anthropologist. My position as an assistant professor challenges preconceptions about race/ethnicity and social class that may be held by both Native and non-Native students.

I hope that my experiences in the classroom can be of benefit to other anthropologists teaching in the U.S. Just as anthropologists can no longer write as if the people they have studied will never read their work, we who teach anthropology can not teach as if our students are a homogeneous group, all white middle-class Christians with similar life experiences. Teaching to a more diverse student body is complicated, challenging, and, I would argue, enriching to both student and teacher.

Postscript: The student who accused me of being a traitor to my people is currently enrolled in my medical anthropology class. A partial victory and a very sweet one!

References
Ahern, Wilbert

Deloria, Vine Jr.

Medicine, Beatrice
The United States and the Power of Myth
Clare L. Boulanger (Mesa State College)

When teaching a course on Usan (i.e., US) culture, I describe the United States as a nation that coheres through a compelling corpus of myth. For Usan students, myth is something that affects other peoples who, lacking the sophistication and scientific curiosity of Usan, struggle to apply some sort of sacred text to an understanding of their circumstances. Hence, my suggestion that Usan society is grounded in myth is met with incredulity. My students, who cannot shake the impression that a myth is essentially an untruth, believe Usans are not taken in by myths, but, on the contrary, labor to dispel them. Clearly what is immediately called for is a fundamental reworking of their understanding of myth along the lines of Middleton's definition: "...a statement about society and man's place in it and the surrounding universe" (1967: x). Beyond this, their ideas on how myth is disseminated must also be adjusted, because Usan mythology, though it certainly may be ensconced in a musty, seldom-consulted tome, or shared by a revered elder entertaining a circle of rapt young listeners at day's end, is far more likely to be broadcast via magazines, radio, television, film, and the internet. Through such ubiquitous media Usans are in fact at least as immersed in their mythology as any other society.

My favorite Usan tale is what I call "The Myth of the Bad Mother," which I introduce in my course under the rubric, "Manifest Destiny—It's a Guy Thing." As these titles indicate, the Bad Mother myth is first and foremost a myth about gender. The Bad Mother stands in contrast to the Good Mother, who expeditiously individuates her child. The Bad Mother, however, refuses to release him (masculine pronoun intended) to become his own person. She may keep him shrouded in infancy, and/or she may feminize him, jealously preventing him from attaining his rightful manhood by misdirecting him toward womanly pursuits. The climax of any retelling of the Bad Mother myth is when the young hero breaks away from his mother's crushing grip, and becomes productive not only on his own account, but on behalf of others beyond his immediate kin.

Like so many Usan phenomena, as Linton (1937) pointed out many years ago, the Myth of the Bad Mother has its origins elsewhere. Indeed, it seems to reach into the most ancient layers of Indo-European thought. For example, in one version of his life story, the Greek hero Heracles undergoes a period where he is taken in by Queen Omphale. He dresses as a woman and does women's work until such time as he realizes he must resume his adventures. Similarly, Odysseus is distracted from his quest by the nymph Calypso, who detains him in a womblike cave. Gilmore (1990: 39) reminds us of the German legend of Tannhäuser, who escapes the indulgent care of Venus to return to glorious, manly battle. But the retelling that addresses most specifically the notion of masculinity as it has been celebrated in our society is that of the master mythographer Sigmund Freud, in, among other sources, Civilization and Its Discontents (1961). According to Freud, there is nothing the (male) infant desires more than cathexis with a love object, i.e., his mother, at least in the earliest stage of his life. For the sake of civilization, however, it is imperative this desire remain unfulfilled. This is because the dyad of mother-infant is a sterile one; it is only when the infant is thwarted in his desire to unite with the love object that he learns to channel his productive energies outward, toward the needs of society. Hence civilization is tragically but necessarily founded on the defeat of this most basic form of self-gratification, and only a Bad Mother would interfere with such an essential dynamic.

The Bad Mother mythic formula is central to the plot lines of many classic Usan books and films. The famed WWII romance Casablanca, for example, can be seen through this lens. Rick, an able-bodied and intelligent expatriated American, could be
contributing substantially to the war effort, but instead languishes in Morocco, running a seedy café. Any greater ambitions on Rick’s part are scuttled by the memories of a love affair from which he has never fully recovered. His love object is Isla, a Bad Mother who haunts him because she has not been effectively rejected. Circumstances conspire to bring Isla back into his life, thus giving Rick a second opportunity to win his freedom, but not before it seems he might once again succumb to the blandishments of cathexis. Eventually, however, he manages to shake off his ill-starred attraction, and nobly restores Isla to her husband’s side. Only then is Rick able to undertake his own manly share of battle, and the conclusion to the film implies that he, in concert with his (male) partner-in-crime, will go on to frustrate many a Fascist design.

Like all myths, the Myth of the Bad Mother is subject to variation. The Bad Mother, for instance, is not always represented as female or even as feminine, though the effect she has on her victim remains the same. Mind-altering substances, machines, and socialist systems of government have also been cast in the role of Bad Mother, depriving men of their individuated masculinity. Despite Freud’s belief that rejection of the love object is a key component in the making of civilization, in some media products civilization is depicted as over-elaborated, and hence itself takes on the qualities of a Bad Mother. In One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, for instance, McMurphy and his asylum mates are beset by an especially oppressive Civilization, represented by the avatar of castrating bitches, Nurse Ratched. When McMurphy and his merry band contrive to escape from the asylum, it is hardly coincidental that their outing involves drinking, whoring, sailing, and other masculine pastimes. The Shawshank Redemption echoes the plotline of Cuckoo’s Nest, although Shawshank is less overtly misogynist and ends far more happily.

In class, however, I only touch on these examples to save time for a full examination of my favorite source of Usan mythology—and here I am in good company (see, e.g., Kottak 1990: 101-105)—Star Trek. Bad Mother figures abound in the original series, although they are not absent from The Next Generation, the Borg being perhaps the most prominent. But when the original Trek came out, the United States was in need of the sort of renewal Bad Mother mythology might provide. Our efforts to stop Communism had bogged down in Vietnam, and the number of Usans drifting away from the conviction that the Usan way was the only true way had grown alarmingly. Unsurprisingly, then, Trek featured several stories where Bad Mothers reminded us of the evils of Communism, and of the self-indulgence that might cause us to relax our vigilance against such wrongheaded paths. Episodes that fit this mold include “The Return of the Archons,” where a machine strictly regulates the behavior of its humanoid subjects; “The City on the Edge of Forever,” where Captain Kirk must allow the woman he loves to die so that the timeline that leads to the glorious conquest of space can be restored; “The Apple,” where a machine maintains a population of infantilized humanoids in an idyllic but unproductive environment; and “The Paradise Syndrome,” where Kirk, stricken with amnesia, settles into marital bliss with a comely Indian maiden (no kidding) until First Officer Spock rudely recalls him to duty. For my course, however, the Bad Mother show I use is entitled “This Side of Paradise.”

In this episode, the Bad Mother is a consciousness-altering substance called “spores,” but there is a distinct feminine cast to the evil involved here in the person of Leila, a woman from Spock’s past who lures him into spore use. Leila belongs to a contingent of humans charged with setting up an agricultural colony on Omicron Ceti III, but well after the colony had been established, it was discovered that the planet was uninhabitable due to chronic radiation. Kirk and the Enterprise crew had been assigned the unhappy task of retrieving the bodies of the colonists, but upon reaching their destination, they are astonished to find the colonists alive and well, though not living in the way proper humans should—they engage only in the amount of agricultural activity necessary to sustain them, and there has not even been any population growth from the time they arrived. It turns out the spores are responsible for this steady state, since while they protect the humans from radiation, they also strip a man of his drive to achieve. Over time everyone from the Enterprise falls under the spell of the spores, and the crew prepares to abandon its mission to join the colonists. Kirk, however, recovers the strength of will to throw off the spores, and then induces the others to do the same. The colonists suddenly realize they have been deterred from their aspirations. The first words uttered by their leader, Sandoval, as he
regains his presence of mind, are "We've done nothing here. No accomplishments, no progress." Since the colonists cannot survive on the planet without the spores, they are evacuated to a new planet where, as Sandoval says, they can "get some work done." Back on the Enterprise, Dr. McCoy compares the ship's departure to a second exile from Eden. Kirk counters with a stirring speech on how men were not meant to live in Paradise, how they must "struggle, claw their way up, scratch for every inch of the way." Spock's final assessment of his experience was that he was happy for the first time in his life. But this happiness, of course, had to be displaced by the necessary discontent that accompanies the state of being civilized.

How motivational is the Bad Mother myth? In concert with other Usan myths and the way they are operationalized economically, socially, and politically, I believe the Myth of the Bad Mother is in fact an effective call to action. Henry (1963) once identified all culture as absurd, and the secret to maintaining a culture is to prevent its adherents from fully recognizing that fact. In the United States we accomplish this through a very well-integrated set of institutions, along with a ruthless suppression of alternatives, although enough of these are allowed to exist in the margins to cull off troublemakers. Those contradictions that occasionally emerge in the mainstream become objects of ridicule, as Usans, perhaps more so than other peoples, deploy a cutting sense of humor to force those aspects of Usan life that make us most uncomfortable into a conceptual cage where they are less threatening (Robbins 1993: 66-67). All of these mechanisms are well developed in the United States, turning out Usans with the courage of their convictions, a courage that is sometimes sufficient to blind other peoples to Usan absurdity even when they have not directly been subject to our military wrath or economic displeasure.

References
FOSAP 2004
Officers
Co-chairs:
Cate Cameron (Cedar Crest College, ccameron@cedarcrest.edu)
Bob Myers (Alfred University, myers@alfred.edu)
Membership chair:
Betsy Baird (University of New Hampshire-College for Lifelong Learning, rebaird@megalink.net)
Executive Secretary:
Ann Hill (Dickinson College, hillan@dickinson.edu)
Webmaster:
John Gatewood (Lehigh University, jbg1@lehigh.edu)

Website: www.aaanet.org/gad/fosap

FOSAP Newsletter Co-editors:
Paul Grebinger (Rochester Institute of Technology, pfggss@rit.edu)
John Rhoades (St. John Fisher College, jrhoades@sjfc.edu)